HUMPHREY McQUEEN

a new britannia

Revised edition

UQP

A
NEW
BRITANNIA

Humphrey McQueen scratches for a living in Canberra. Since the appearance of the first edition of *A New Britannia* in 1970, he has published another thirteen books, and a couple of million words in articles, columns and reviews. He does his bit to keep alive the principles of social equality through the Socialist Alliance and its journal *Seeing Red*.

A
NEW
BRITANNIA

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For my mother and father
in loving memory

'*My true name is Labour, though priests*
call me Christ.'

Victor Daley

Contents

PART THREE

Preface to the Fourth Edition

A New Britannia deserves to be read as a statement of its time. In the late 1960s, the mood was established by the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution in China, the Tet Offensive in Vietnam, the May Days in France, the Prague Spring and the O'Shea strike. At its best, and its worst, this is a book with the wind in its sails.

The first edition appeared late in 1970. In 1975, a second reprint let me correct a few more errors. A new 'Introduction' stressed that the book was an account of the Australian Labor Party. Changes to the text were minimal. In 1985, Penguin Books decided on an illustrated edition, which required resetting the text. Again, any temptation to rewrite was resisted. Almost all the nearly one thousand adjustments were stylistic, with the aim of clarifying views held in 1970. Footnoted information was taken into the text. Additions to the chapters on 'Japs', 'Socialists' and 'Laborites' strengthened the intention of investigating the Labor Party.

Rather than recast the argument in 1986, I added an 'Afterword', sketching my understanding of Laborism and racism in the context of monopolising capitals ('Lenin's Imperialism'). In proposing a research strategy, the 'Afterword' remained faithful to the argumentative spirit, if not the descriptive tone, of the original. That 'Afterword' has been expanded for this edition, principally by bringing the analysis up

to the globalised present. In 1986, I quipped that, by then, I knew too much to write *A New Britannia* but not enough to rewrite it. Today, I see how it could be rewritten. A schema is set out in the revised 'Afterword'. Surveying the materials from a different perspective, my 1996 biography of Tom Roberts could have been subtitled *The making of the Australian petit-bourgeoisie.*

Meanwhile, the historical profession has suffered a loss of nerve in its scope and scale. No doctoral student today would be allowed to attempt the expanses of Russel Ward or Robin Gollan. More than ever, students are directed to topics that could hardly matter less in a tiny patch covering less than a decade. Meanwhile, the effort to enrich class analysis with gender and ethnicity has ended up by jettisoning concern with state power and capital accumulation. For example, *Australian Historical Studies* escaped from politics as the view from Government House verandahs to slump into an antiquarianism masquerading as post-modern.

Humphrey McQueen
Canberra
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Historians

I do not believe that this re-writing will come from the Universities, though they will greatly assist the work of the creative writer. It will not come from the Universities, because they, instead of being the fiercest critics of the bankrupt liberal ideal, are its most persistent defenders. Then too they have been made afraid by the angry men of today with their talk about 'corrupters of youth'.

C. M. H. Clark, 1956

The Australian legend consists of two interwoven themes: radicalism and nationalism. In the minds of their devotees, these concepts were projected into 'socialism' and 'anti-imperialism'. Nineteenth-century Australia was seen as a spawning ground for all that is politically democratic, socially equalitarian and economically cooperative, while our nationalism is anti-imperialist and anti-militarist. According to this view, an arch of Australian rebelliousness stretched from the convicts to the anti-conscription victories of 1916–17, buttressed at strategic points by the Eureka stockade and the Barcaldine shearers.

The legenders included Russel Ward, Geoffrey Serle, Ian Turner, and to a lesser extent Robin Gollan and Brian Fitzpatrick. None of these historians would object to being described as socialist; some welcomed the title Marxist, as I do. The difference between us is that for them socialism had become a thing of the past, something to lament, and, lamenting,

touch up with rosy hues ere the pall of death become too apparent. Their tale was a sad one, a tale of decline, a ballad of a once radical people led astray by their own victories. In essence, they pictured radicalism, and with it socialism, as chances gone for ever. There was little to which to look forward beyond king-making and wire-pulling in the ALP.

It was the historians who had suffered the decline. There had been a time when they sought in Australia's past a proof and a justification for their own socialist hopes. This quest was historically determined and yet universally valid. The necessity arose with the challenge of fascism, a system which appealed to tradition to solve the disorder and despair resulting from the wars and depressions generated by monopolising capitals. Revolutionaries sought to combat fascism by establishing the validity of revolution as a tradition. In the struggle for a popular front, and in the great patriotic war, the definition of revolutionary became increasingly elastic. Anyone who had ever expressed a democratic sentiment was enlisted into the fight, as were all manner of nationalists. The *Workers Weekly*, 15 September 1935, pictured the Communist Party as 'the real inheritor ... of the Dunmore Langs, Parkeses and Wentworths'. Instead of the radical–nationalist interpretation of Australia being the preserve of liberals and whigs, it was promoted by the people who should have been demolishing it, namely the communists.

When the great disillusion came in the 1950s, the tradition that had been laid as a seed-bed for the future was 'All ashes to the taste'. By 1970 the legend was anti-radical and counter-revolutionary. By harking back to great days of yore, it played the brigand of contemporary hopes and debased current struggles. Australian socialists had to exorcise its spectre to approach the tasks of revolution with the understanding that Lenin provided in *The Development of Capitalism in Russia* and Mao provided in *The Investigation of the Peasant Movement in Hunan*.

The most influential account of radical nationalism, Russel Ward's *The Australian Legend*, is concerned almost exclusively with domestic affairs. It traced the growth of a national character within Australia. Ward glossed his account with the addition of the frontier thesis. As developed in the 1890s by F. J. Turner for the United States, the frontier thesis had justified individualism as the dominant spirit in American life. Ward reversed this process for Australia and argued that our frontier produced a collectivist ethos because geography and legislation made it impossible for the small farmer to succeed, or for anyone to live in isolation. Although I reject Ward's account of the typical Australian, there is merit in considering yet another version of the frontier thesis. Instead of confining the discussion of nationalism to developments within Australia, it will be beneficial to examine Australia as a frontier of white capitalism. Such an examination would combine events in Australia with Australia's position in the world. Only by relocating settler Australia in the mainstream of world developments will it be possible to understand the nature of our radicalism or of our nationalism.

Australia's prosperity, based on wool and gold, was the prosperity of expanding capitalism. Geographically, Australia was a frontier of European capitalism in Asia. The first of these circumstances gave rise to the optimism that illuminated our radicalism; the second produced the fear that tarnishes our nationalism.

It is not my purpose to deny that nineteenth-century Australia was radical or nationalistic. It was often both, though not as completely so as is sometimes supposed. Not all the conservatives were transitory Englishmen. Australia produced its own crop, one of the most notably being the first W. C. Wentworth with his proposal for a bunyip aristocracy. Nor were all the nationalists radicals. Radicalism and nationalism cannot be equated. Many conservatives were nationalists.

My purpose is to reveal the components of this radicalism

and nationalism and, in penetrating beneath the surface of words, confront the experiences and attributes that were their substance and dynamic.

A brief sketch of these components may prove helpful, providing it is not taken as a substitute for the workings of the argument. Primarily, *A New Britannia* is an essay on the ideology of the Australian labouring classes up to and including the Great War. The aim is to show why they could not produce a socialist party. Instead, the ALP embodied the values of a petit-bourgeoisie.

Chapter by chapter, the argument runs like this:

Nationalists: Australians wanted the Empire to be strong so that it could protect them, but they did not always trust Britain to put Australia's interests first.

Racists: The threat from the north made Australian nationalism essentially racist.

Invaders: Australians developed a siege mentality.

Sub-imperialists: In their attitudes towards the indigenes of Oceania, Australians took up the racial chauvinism of European imperialism.

'Japs': Before 1914, Australian fears settled on Japan.

Militarists: In order to keep Australia 'white', democratic militarism became an essential part of Australian nationalism.

Navalists: In order to keep Oceania under 'white' control, navalism became an essential part of Australian nationalism.

Poets: These attitudes were expressed in the versifying of Lawson and others.

Pianists: Property became a paramount concern of Australian workers; this aspect was symbolised by the piano.

Immigrants: In the main, the settlers were the upwardly striving section, those who were dissatisfied with their lot in Britain and thus sought independence and comfort within the more elastic colonial economy.

Convicts: The convicts were largely professional criminals who believed in nothing so much as individual enterprise. The

convicts did not establish a tradition of 'mateship'. Their acceptance of the acquisitive values of capitalism, and their not infrequent successes, set the pattern for the free labourers who succeeded them.

Diggers: Gold had three important effects in the formation of the petit-bourgeoisie consciousness of nineteenth-century Australian labourers. First, it often provided an amount of ready capital so they could escape wage-slavery. Secondly, the discovery of gold eased the process of capital formation in Australia; the source of capital accumulation, the surplus value of workers, could be softened in Australia. Most important was gold's effect upon the outlook of the people. Gold mining strengthened the ethos of acquisitive competition and underwrote a possessive individualism.

Selectors: Most of those who came to Australia wanted to escape from urban industrialisation far more than from a system of individual enterprise. Nineteenth-century Australian politics were dominated by questions of land ownership and use. From the earliest days, there were demands to 'unlock the lands'. At every point in the campaign to establish a yeomanry, the people were ideologically subordinate. They thought they were avoiding the problems presented by capitalism by escaping into self-proprietorship. They were also organisationally dominated by bourgeois liberals.

Democrats: A most important fact about settler Australia is 'that its entire history occurred after the French and Industrial revolutions'. This timing meant that the issues that split European society into irreconcilable classes were more easily contained within a framework for collaboration.

Socialists: 'Socialist' ideas in Australia were part of the largely pre-industrial environment in which they flourished. Moreover, the requirements of a colonial economy demanded governmental intervention. It was therefore no novelty when the labour movement demanded a program of public works to assist the unemployed, or when they insisted that these works

be carried out under a system of day labour. Reeves's phrase 'colonial governmentalism' is a truer description than 'state socialism'. This dependence on the state had consequences in the development of labouring-class expectations.

Unionists: The chronic labour shortage meant that wages in Australia were higher than those obtaining in Britain. This experience conditioned class consciousness. The motto of the unions speaks volumes for their purpose. Although the wording changed from 'United to relieve not combined to injure' to 'Defence not Defiance', the meaning remained clear. Union leaders wanted nothing better than to talk to their employers; and when the employers refused to talk, the officials and rank-and-file wanted the government to make them.

Laborites: The Labor parties that emerged after 1890 were in every way the logical extension of the petit-bourgeois mentality and subordinated organisations that preceded them. There was no turning point. There was merely consolidation, a confirmation of much that had gone before. Nothing in the behaviour of the Labor Party in the 1920s gave any indication that it had changed. Thirty or so 'state enterprises' were not 'socialism by stealth'. They were never intended to replace capitalism. More telling was the rich tradition of strike-breaking by Labor governments.

Afterword: This evolutionary line of argument is rejected in favour of an account of the origins of the Labor parties which relies on the disruptions produced by the switch from free trade to monopolising capitals (Lenin's 'Imperialism') in the final quarter of the nineteenth century. The Labor parties are seen as a response to this rupture, not as the outgrowth of the previous hundred years. The version of this self-criticism given in 1986 was amended in 2003 to include the current phase of so-called globalisation.

PART ONE

ONE
Nationalists

We are guarding the last part of the world, in which the higher races can live and increase freely, for the higher civilisation.

Charles Pearson, *National Life and Character*

Seventy years ago Brian Fitzpatrick published his pioneering *The British Empire in Australia*. The argument that follows could best be summed up by reversing his title to *Australia in the British Empire*. Fitzpatrick presented Australia as the victim of British imperialism, whereas it was a willing, often over-anxious partner. The connection between Australia's prosperous optimism and the expansionist confidence of pre-1914 capitalism will be discussed below. What will be shown here is that Australian nationalism was the chauvinism of British imperialism, intensified by its geographic proximity to Asia.

To the extent that international relations have entered into previous discussions of Australian nationalism they have been concerned with Australia's growing independence from Britain. It is rare for this idea to be elaborated and almost unheard of for it to be explained except by resort to an analogy in which Britain is the mother country and Australia is the child who reaches maturity, flexes its muscles and engages in several other pleasing metaphors. There is nothing wrong with analogies if they illustrate an argument which has been demon-

strated. In the case of Australian nationalism, the analogy has all too often been the only evidence offered.

It is central to the present discussion that anti-British feeling was not the mainstay of Australian nationalism, nor was such feeling widespread. Where it existed it was a response to Britain's imperial role. Australia's primary concern before 1904 was that Britain should protect her from predatory European powers, and after 1904 that it should protect her from Japan. Most anti-British and anti-imperial feelings arose because Australia was not always treated as if she were Britain's only responsibility. Before 1920, Australians were suspicious of Britain's loyalty to the Empire.

Anti-British and anti-imperial sentiment in Australia must be seen against this background. Many Australians believed that the British government would put the interests of her polyglot Empire above those of Australia, and that Australia would be betrayed in the diplomacy of empire. This fear is what William Lane was driving at in *Boomerang*, 25 January 1888, when he said that Australians wanted to be left alone:

> We don't care whether Canada loses her fishing monopoly or not: or whether the Russian civil servants replace the British pauper aristocracy in Hindustan offices; or whether China takes missionaries and opium dealers together and sends them packing; or whether the sun sets on the British drum-beat or not — so long as the said drum-beat keeps away from our shores.

This outburst was the most extreme response to the distrust of Britain's intentions. Better to cut loose at once, Lane reasoned, than wait to be sold out unprepared. The more usual attitude was to cling to Britain in the hope that blood would prove thicker than gold. The small group of anti-imperialists in Australia before 1914 was far from being nationalist, and the nationalists were only anti-imperialist in the limited sense that they were distrustful lest Britain's global interests should endanger Australia. Just as William Lane's socialism was not connected with Marx's, neither was his anti-imperialism re-

lated to Lenin's. Even at the moments of greatest disagreement it was always 'the Cabinet' or some particular official who was opposed. Never did Australian nationalists shed their race patriotism and reject the British people.

This acceptance applies to 'new chums' in Australia as well as the folks at Home. Much of the evidence that Australians disliked 'new chums' comes from Alexander Harris who, as a 'new chum' himself, was quite well treated by the 'old hands'. The emphasis of colonial disdain was on the 'new' rather than the 'chum'. English immigrants could become 'old hands' within four years of their arrival; William Lane, for example, was a rabid Australian patriot in a shorter space of time. Within Australia, Henry Lawson defended the 'new chum', especially the upper crust, in poems such as 'The New Chum Jackeroo' and 'A New John Bull'.

It is more important not to confuse disdain for 'new chums' in Australia with opposition to Britain's power throughout the rest of the world. Lawson's early verse 'The Distant Drum' sums up the ambiguous attitude that Australians had to British power:

> Let Britannia rule for ever
> O'er the wave; but never, never
> Rule a land great oceans sever
>   Fifteen thousand miles away.

Britannia's naval supremacy was seen as the precondition of Australian independence.

Attachment to Britain was by no means restricted to conservatives, any more than nationalism was the exclusive preserve of radicals. Mr Justice Higinbotham, who walked from his chambers to the Melbourne Trades Hall to make a weekly contribution to the strike fund in 1890, observed:

> Apart from sentiment, we get from the old country many more benefits both in times of peace and war than we give to her. It is our clear interest to cleave to her as long as she is willing to leave us freedom.

The official report of the second Inter-Colonial Trades Union Congress held in Melbourne in April 1884 was prefaced by 'The British–Australian Cantata' dedicated to the Earl of Rosebery. After suitable greetings had been exchanged, 'Britannia' and 'Australia' joined in singing:

> By noble bonds of race,
>   By closer ties of blood,
> That nought can e'er efface,
>   We Britishers have stood
> Together in the past;
>   And in the future will
> Our Greater Britain last,
>   Till Time himself stand still.

Other instances show how widespread British race patriotism was among Labor men, including some usually thought of as being on the left. The first Labor premier of New South Wales, McGowen, brought the various elements of this thinking together when he said that 'While Britain is behind us, and while her naval power is supreme, Australia will be what Australians want it, white, pure and industrially good'.

George Pearce, Labor Defence Minister, spoke in similar terms in 1910 when he welcomed the first Royal Australian Navy vessels at Fremantle. Although the establishment of an Australian fleet was the culmination of fears about British unreliability, Pearce told his audience that there was no surer guarantee of the carrying out of the higher ideals of humanity which his party was trying to realise than the Union Jack, the symbol of Empire. It would be a calamity to English speaking people and the world if the Union Jack should be humiliated by any foreign power. They had to look further afield than the mere defence of Australia and be prepared to defend that Flag and all that it represented.

It is also interesting to note that Pearce was quite happy with the Committee on Imperial Defence because it produced results. Consequently, he was totally unmoved by Richard

Jebb's strictures against its imperial bias and unconstitutional nature. The niceties of national pride meant little compared with preparing for war.

Most surprising of all are the views of Maurice Blackburn, a radical Labor politician. In June 1916, that is, after the Easter Rebellion, he expressed support for the British Empire because 'loose voluntary unions of states with common institutions and language are a step towards internationalism'. (Stan Keon later pictured Blackburn with 'A red flag in one hand and a Union Jack in the other'.)

Australian–British relations, especially at the official level, were not roses all the way. Typical of the events that were magnified by Australians into evidence of Britain's deceitfulness was the withdrawal of imperial troops from New Zealand while the Maori wars were still in progress. A catalogue of British 'sins' will be traversed below. Particular attention will be paid to conflicts relating to colonial immigration restriction Acts and the annexation of New Guinea. The rift that developed because of Britain's increased friendship with Japan receives fuller attention in Chapter 5.

RESTRICTIVE IMMIGRATION

Anti-British feeling stirred over colonial demands for a 'White Australia' policy, during the struggle for which the distinction between the 'British Empire' and 'Britain's Empire' became of practical importance. This conflict commenced with the difficulty of excluding from the goldfields Chinese who came from Hong Kong, since they were British subjects. The problem intensified as Britain established treaties with the Chinese government, which expected its nationals to be accepted as equals in Britain's colonies. A Chinese Imperial Investigating Commission toured Australia in 1887–88 to study the position of Chinese nationals. Australians looked upon this action as an

unwarranted interference in their affairs — an interference which could occur only because Britain placed commercial considerations above those of blood and race.

At the 1897 Colonial Conference, Joseph Chamberlain attempted to gain equal immigration rights for Indians with the argument that 'the traditions of the Empire make no distinction in favour of or against race or colour'. (It, therefore, could not have been racial prejudice that led Queen Victoria to decline a proposal of marriage from the Emperor of Abyssinia.) Although Chamberlain did not press the point, he increased colonial suspicions regarding the sincerity of British race patriotism. Indians, however, were not the real substance of the dispute. That honour was reserved for the Japanese, with whom Britain had signed a commercial treaty in 1894. For the treaty to become effective in the colonies it required their individual endorsement, which only Queensland, much to its regret, provided.

Other colonies were not content with negative prescriptions and set about producing legislation which would positively exclude Japanese immigrants. Some of these Bills were so blatantly offensive to Japan that the Colonial Office refused them royal assent and eventually hammered out a formula which was acceptable to the Japanese but resented in Australia. These negotiations were complicated by the ineptitude of the British Minister in Tokyo, Sir Ernest Satow, who unwittingly misled the Japanese in regard to Australian pliability. Needless to say, this error was not seen by the Australians as innocent or unintentional.

As Professor Yarwood recognised, it is easy to

> appreciate, therefore, the later decision of the Commonwealth to conduct at least its own preliminary negotiations with Japan on Immigration questions, a move that was regarded by the British Government as a challenge to its special responsibilities in the field of diplomacy.

This step was but one of the instances of Australia having a

foreign policy of its own long before Dr Evatt. Significantly, it occurred in the field of race relations.

Even crusty old conservatives such as Sir William McMillan, Member for Wentworth, told the House that he was prepared to follow the example of the United States if Britain ever placed the interests of India over those of Australia in relation to immigration. He did not think this outrage would happen and defended himself against charges of disloyalty. Yet rather than allow Asians to land in Australia, he felt it was better to cut loose from Britain.

NEW GUINEA

The attempted annexation of the eastern half of New Guinea by the Queensland government in 1883 should be seen in the context of Australia's emerging 'Monroe doctrine', outlined below. The case shows that Australian nationalism was not anti-imperialist but was merely opposed to non-British expansion. Anti-British feeling arose because Britain appeared to submit to European pressures.

Inevitably, there was a procession of 'scares' in relation to New Guinea long before 1883. A Melbourne adventurer, Colonel Scott, tried unsuccessfully to interest Bismarck as well as the president of France and the Tsar in the area. Stories of a French expedition in 1876 gained currency but were denied and certainly never actualised. Colonial pressure for British annexation was rarely absent. Until 1883, Britain could always avoid saying 'yes' on financial grounds, since the colonies were unwilling to meet the cost of administration. Matters came to a head when the Premier of Queensland, McIlwraith, received a copy of *Allgemeine Zeitung* with which he convinced himself that a German annexation was as imminent as his colony's elections. To forestall the German advance, McIlwraith took possession on Britain's behalf in the belief

that once the flag had been hoisted it would never be hauled down.

McIlwraith's precipitate action probably cost him total victory. The financial question had been settled, but Britain was not to be stampeded. The British prime minister, Gladstone, followed an ambivalent policy. Perhaps his gravest objection to colonial annexation of New Guinea stemmed from his recognition of the appalling treatment that Aborigines and Pacific Islanders were receiving in Queensland. Gladstone's old friend, Sir Arthur Gordon, at that time High Commissioner for the Western Pacific, wrote to him deploring any suggestion that Queensland could be considered a fit and proper authority for native peoples.

British unwillingness to support Queensland did not indicate a lack of concern. When the Italian *chargé d'affaires* in London called on the Foreign Secretary in May 1883 to discuss the possible establishment of an Italian penal settlement in New Guinea, he was warned off in no uncertain terms. At the other extreme, Gladstone even flirted, probably out of malice, with the notion that the presence of Germans in New Guinea would be in Britain's interest as it would bind Australia more securely and more submissively to Britain. This proved to be the case.

After Britain's failure to endorse McIlwraith's action, he arranged with the Premier of Victoria, Service, to call a convention of all the colonial premiers. This body met late in November 1883 and established the Federal Council, which was a precursor of Federation in Australia. The meeting also enunciated Australia's 'Monroe doctrine' for the Australasian area.

Despite assurances to the contrary, a German expedition occupied the north coast of eastern New Guinea in September 1884. In November, Britain declared its protectorate over the southern coast. A boundary was eventually established. For

the next thirty years Australia had a common border with Germany because, it was believed, Britain had not really cared.

Although McIlwraith did not see the letter that the Colonial Secretary, Lord Derby, sent to the Foreign Secretary, Lord Grenville, on 6 March 1885, McIlwraith's experience would have led him to recognise the bitter truth of Derby's sorrow that 'we can do no more for Australia, but agree that the question of Egypt overrides all others'. General Gordon had been killed six weeks previously.

Relations between Britain and Australasia maintained their uneasy appearance, but their substance can be discerned by examining Australia's response at crucial moments of stress: the Sudan campaign, the Boer War, the Boxer Rebellion, Federation and the First World War.

SUDAN

The Australian response to the Sudan campaign was related to recent disappointments over New Guinea. Some who opposed sending troops based their objection on Britain's decision to place the defence of Egypt before the security of Australia. Commenting on the Sudan campaign, the *Age* thought it 'lamentable that the Cabinet which has undertaken this burden upon itself cannot be induced to acquire a bloodless dominion in the Pacific'. Far more numerous were those who supported the sending of Australian troops in order to stiffen future British imperial resolve.

While the major Australian sacrifices in the Sudan were made by the fifty horses on loan from the Sydney Omnibus Company, public debate raised all the elements that were to be the stuff of nationalism for the next thirty years. Speakers extolled the military virtues and claimed that Australia was being transformed into a nation of heroes: one Member of Parliament felt that the sins of Botany Bay would be washed away

by the waters of the Nile. From the other side came talk of the machinations of Jewish bond-holders in the Suez Canal Company. This anti-Semitism reappeared in the *Bulletin's* anti-Boer War propaganda, and again in Frank Anstey's *Kingdom of Shylock* during the Great European War.

Most important, though, was the attitude of dependence on Britain that the acting premier of New South Wales, Dalley, invoked: 'As members of the Empire we are defending ourselves and all most dear to us just as much in Egypt as if the common enemy menaced us in this colony'. In a splendid article, B. R. Penny has shown that the general line of reasoning was that the fate of Australasia ... might be settled in the Soudan, in Egypt, in Afghanistan, in Cape Colony, or in the English Channel. Let England be defeated and humiliated, no matter where, and the colonies would suffer for it.'

Those who opposed sending the New South Wales Contingent accepted the premise of this argument but drew a different conclusion. Involvement in Britain's wars would 'cause Australia to be identified with England's quarrels and thus ... bring a hostile army to (y)our own shores'. This was accepted in part by the *Sydney Morning Herald*, which on 30 April 1885 said that the people of New South Wales would not have assented to the dispatch of the Sudan Contingent if the war had been with Russia:

> Not because they would have been lacking in sympathy for the mother country, but because the men's presence would have been required here, and because the interests of the Empire would have been best served by keeping them here.

The pattern is clear: the primary concern of 'imperialists' and 'nationalists' alike was the defence of Australia. They disagreed on how this end might best be accomplished. Yet the imperialists who based their strategy on Britain's continued strength were not impervious to the problems that their com-

mitment involved. Nor were they so imperial-minded as to follow Britain blindly in each and every conflict.

BOER WAR

Australian support for Britain in the Boer War further illustrated the peculiar nature of Australian nationalism. The jingoism of the conservatives need not detain us: the Australian Natives Association, at first cautious, eventually raised companies of volunteers and subscribed the largest fund within the Empire for the families of war dead.

More pertinent is Richard Jebb's 1911 observation, in *Studies in Colonial Nationalism*:

> Some of the most wholehearted supporters of the sending of contingents were nationalists who knew that the undertaking of responsibility would develop national self-respect, and the respect of the authorities in London for Australian nationhood.

Here again is the policy of taking out insurance with a great and powerful ally.

Radical support for the war was widespread. South Australia's liberal premier, Kingston, initiated moves for that colony's contingent. Initially, the Trades Hall Party had been unenthusiastic but fell into line with full support for Britain after 'Black Week', that is, after it appeared that Britain might be defeated. Like most Australian nationalists, the South Australian Labor Party accepted that any defeat for Britain meant a danger to Australia.

A similar pattern emerged in Queensland where the *Worker* claimed it was a 'simple matter to see through the plot of the Jew capitalists' and attacked the handful of Laborites who supported the war. The defeats of 'Black Week' changed all this: Dawson, leader of the Labor Party, seconded the premier's motion to send extra Queensland troops, declaring that the struggle was now for British supremacy in Africa in the face of

a 'continental conspiracy against the Empire'. As the one-time president of the New South Wales Trades and Labour Council, E. W. O'Sullivan, argued:

> ... the conflict between the British and the Boer must, therefore, be regarded not as a fight against a few score thousand brave and hardy farmers, but as a war to uphold the British prestige all over the world.

Opponents of the war were not necessarily anti-British. O'Sullivan's compliment to the Boers as 'brave and hardy farmers' was shared by many Australians who saw in the Boer the visage of the bushman who would soon be needed to drive the invading hordes out of Australia. Although 'Banjo' Paterson supported Britain and Lawson defended the Boers, both shared an admiration for the men of the veldt who manifested so many typically Australian characteristics. In the 1890s, British commander of the New South Wales armed services, Major-General Edward Hutton, lauded Australians as 'the beau ideal of Mounted Rifleman'.

According to Norman Lindsay, the *Bulletin*'s opposition to the Boer War depended almost entirely on its editor, Archibald, as most of his staff were pro-Britain. There can be no questioning the intensity of Archibald's campaign. However, it must be seen against the background of Archibald's reasoning. He regarded the Boer War as the product of the greed of international Jewry and labelled the volunteers '*Cohen*tingenters'. Lawson's opposition embraced a different form of racism:

> If you come across any niggers, learn to sleep calmly notwithstanding the fact that a big, greasy buck nigger (a perfect stranger to you) is more than likely to crawl in, without knocking, through a slit in the tent, any minute during the small hours, rip out your innards with a nasty knife, and leave without explaining.
>
> (*Australian Star*, 28 October 1899)

In Victoria, the Labor weekly *Tocsin* for 2 January 1902 returned to one of its favourite reasons for opposing the war:

> Over 200 Hindoos are working in the Mallee district as farm labourers for 10s per week. No wonder that out-of-work white farm labourers have to go to South Africa to fight, notwithstanding that the result of the war there will mean that the cheap nigger will displace the white man.

Radical support for the Boers was often nothing more than support for the White Australia policy.

Opposition to the war came from a small but undetermined group. Only six of the seventy-five members of the House of Representatives voted against the government's 1902 resolution supporting Britain's actions in South Africa. Even opponents such as Senator Pearce adopted a 'yes–no' attitude by speaking against the war and then voting for it. Pearce was careful to point out that his opposition was confined to giving *unlimited* support to Britain. Any motion of assistance should,

> having regard to the safety of our future actions … (be) worded in a more general way. While we must be loyal to the Empire we must remember that our first duty lies to Australia. The Ministry who rules the destinies of the Empire in Westminster may not always have the best interests of this part of the Empire at heart.

Like other opponents of the Boer War, such as Hughes, Earle and Holman, Pearce would leave the Labor Party in 1916 because of his support for conscription.

Holman voiced stringent opposition to the British war effort. In reply to an interjection and intoxicated with his own rhetoric, he declared his belief that 'this is the most iniquitous, most immoral war ever waged with any race, I hope that England may be defeated'. The *Worker* defended Holman's speech as

> an unanswerable indictment of the Rhodesian policy in South Africa, and … the only serious attempt made during the debate to review the history of the trouble. When the crowd has become hoarse with singing 'Rule Britannia' and begins to think matters

over, Mr Holman's slip will be regarded more kindly than at present, and those who stand firmly against the creation of a military caste in New South Wales will have their reward.

The *Worker* could not deny the popularity of the war: 'Meanwhile the drum and the trumpet, "Soldiers of the Queen" and "Rule Britannia" carry all before them'.

BOXER REBELLION

Not all Australia's imperial enthusiasm was directed towards Africa. There was sufficient to send a naval contingent to China to help put down the Boxer Rebellion. Supporters of the expedition in the New South Wales Parliament 'conjured up chilling pictures of the "yellow peril" and insisted that white soldiers (not Indian Troops) must vindicate the honour of the white race'. By this time many race patriots agreed with criticisms from the wags who sang:

> We don't want to fight,
> But, by Jingo, if we do,
> We'll stay at home and sing our songs
> And send the mild Hindoo.

Opponents of the scheme argued from a similar standpoint:

> The real trouble in China would come when the great powers fell out among themselves over the carving of the Chinese Melon. Australia must be ready to defend her shores if this happened and to aid Britain if she were really hard pressed.

Yet again we see the nature of Australian anti-imperialism, which accepted British domination of the world as a precondition for Australian independence.

The colonial governments were most anxious for their navies to participate, as the venture would provide valuable experience. Significantly for Australia's distrust of Britain's military capability, British niggardliness over pay and organisation diminished Australia's ultimate contribution.

FEDERATIONISTS — IMPERIAL AND NATIONAL

Differences between the Imperial Federation League and the Australian Natives Association (ANA) were once considered to be significant. The Imperial Federationists were presented as British loyalists battling against the aggressive nationalism of the ANA. C. S. Blackton has shown that the area of disagreement was more apparent than real. There were even some prominent joint members, including Alfred Deakin and the ANA president, Purves.

The origins and growth of the 'imperial federation' idea in Australia are pertinent to the present argument. The concept was first raised in the 1840s by a liberal editor in Sydney who saw it as a means of strengthening Australia's security. In 1868, this argument was repeated in an attempt to retain British troops in Australia. This element became important in the arguments that raged till 1914, in which the imperialists believed that Australian security could be best guaranteed by tying Australia as closely as possible to Britain, which would then be obliged to come to Australia's aid.

According to Blackton's account of the first meeting of the Imperial Federation League in Melbourne in June 1885, 'Jingoist speakers voiced exaggerated fears of France and Russia, and of the need for Imperial Tars and Tommies to hold Australia's coasts'. *Young Australia*, the League's journal, constantly restated this defence argument, sometimes with realistic appraisals of Australia's position and sometimes with sensational articles on 'an imaginary descent of Russo-French forces on Australia's naked coasts'.

After the League's collapse in the 1890s, individual advocates of imperial integration continued to propagate the line that only Britain could save Australia from 'the Jap, the Cossack and the Frank'. This alarm was the substance of G. C. Craig's *The Federal Defence of Australia*, published in 1897, wherein the author claimed to have information indicating

Russian ambitions in New Zealand, a French appetite for Queensland and Teutonic plots to seize Western Australia and Fiji. Australian domination of the Pacific was as central to the Imperial Federationists as it was to the ANA.

The League's chief critic was the *Bulletin*, which agreed on the reality of threats from abroad but suspected the Imperial Federationists of being equivocal on coloured immigration. According to the *Bulletin*, 23 April 1887:

> Imperial Federation was a monstrous plot to institute aristocracy and privilege in democratic Australia, to destroy the decency and livelihood of the working man by opening the country to 'leprous Mongols' and every unwashed tribe of the British dominions.

There was no disagreement, however, when *Young Australia* engaged in an outburst of anti-Semitism at rumours of an influx of Russian Jewish refugees in 1888.

Even on defence matters the disagreements were largely the product of misunderstanding. The League's view was that, in the event of war, British forces would defend Australia. The *Bulletin* saw imperial federation as a device to denude Australia of fighting men in the defence of Britain's nigger Empire. In fact, both sides were concerned with Australia's security and differed only on how it could be guaranteed.

Australian Federation made imperial federation more attractive to nationalists such as Deakin, who became the president of a reconstituted League in 1905. A united Australia would be better able to pressure Britain into recognising Australian requirements. Gone were the grandiose schemes for an Imperial Parliament. In their place were cold formulae for the defence of Australia.

Arguments in favour of Australian Federation were not dissimilar to arguments for and against imperial federation. Defence played a major part in all three. Britain's failure to annex New Guinea gave new force to the view that 'in order to speak with a united voice, which would be heard in Downing Street,

in regard to what were then called "our foreign relations", it was necessary that we should have a central representative body'. The Federal Council established in 1883 proved inadequate for the task. Six years later, Major-General Edwards reported that 'the colonies have now been brought face to face with the fact, that an effective system of defence cannot be established without Federation'.

As much as radicals such as O'Sullivan disliked the terms of the constitution proposed in 1898, they were prepared to accept it because of the international 'menaces' that they considered overwhelming. Some weight was given to their fears by a sombre speech from Lord Salisbury, by extensions of the fortifications at Hong Kong, and by Russian armament around Port Arthur. Hughes saw 'defence' as one of the two virtues to be gained from Federation.

After 1901, such anti-British feeling as there had been declined because Australia was 'independent'. The emergence of an acceptable trading pattern removed another cause of discontent. C. P. Grimshaw's conclusion is perfectly accurate, though a trifle apologetic:

> Once it became almost universally accepted, as it was by 1900, that Australian nationalism was compatible with continued Empire membership a form of Empire imperialism became a component of the nationalism of possibly the majority of Australians, and to underestimate this element is to misinterpret Australian nationalism at that time.

That caution would apply to Australian attitudes for decades to come.

THE GREAT EUROPEAN WAR

Significant as these minor wars were for what they revealed of Australian sentiment, they are necessarily dwarfed by the Great War. Fisher's oft-repeated and oft-quoted pledge of 'our

last man and our last shilling' was far from hollow rhetoric.
The call was approved by the sixth Commonwealth Confer-
ence of the ALP, which resolved that 'during the coming year
[the King's] reign will be crowned by victory for the British
and Allied armies in the great war of freedom and the realisa-
tion of an enduring peace'. More importantly, the promise was
translated into action. Of the first 53 000 enlistments, 23 000
were unionists. Peter Bowling, the coal-miners' leader who
had been taken to gaol in irons in 1909 when he had been a bit-
ter opponent of Hughes, was none the less a virile supporter of
the war and eventually had five sons at the front. George Black
dedicated his booklet on *The Origin and Growth of the Labor
Movement in New South Wales* to the memory of Sergeant
Edward Larkin, MLA for Willoughby, who had fallen while
leading his men at Gallipoli.

Patriotism was by no means the preserve of right-wing La-
bor. Clifford Hall, of the Hobart United Labourers Union, in
1915 expressed the view that Labor's parliamentary represen-
tatives had done 'nothing' towards 'easing the burdens of
those who elected them'. Hall was killed in action. Almost 64
per cent of the AIF were tradesmen or labourers. Official La-
bor support for the war was sufficiently strong in 1918 for ev-
ery parliamentary Labor leader in Australia to attend the
Governor-General's conference on recruiting. Among union
organisations, only the Industrial Council of Queensland and
the Tasmanian Trades and Labour Council declined.

Even after the Labor Party split late in 1916, the majority of
anti-conscriptionists remained pro-war. (This division paral-
leled the attitudes of the soldiers at the front.) Queensland's
Premier Ryan consented to a suggestion that the first thousand
men recruited in Queensland after 22 May 1918 be named the
'Ryan Thousand'. Senator Ferricks, one of the few members of
parliament to express opposition to the war in 1914, accepted
voluntarism as a tactical manoeuvre in his subsequent battle

against conscription. This strenuous support for recruiting shows how deep the attachment to Britain was.

It is by no means clear who really was against conscription. Frank Tudor, who was to become leader of the anti-conscriptionists, resigned from Cabinet, not because he opposed conscription but because he considered that talk of conscription had seriously interfered with voluntary recruiting. Moreover, it seems fairly certain that Tudor was not only pro-war but pro-conscription as well. George Pearce recalled that Tudor told him that he knew 'conscription was right, but that Richmond [his electorate] won't stand for it'.

Tudor was by no means alone in his lack of resolve. J. H. Fenton left the Caucus room with Hughes but returned shortly afterwards because he could not find where the conscriptionists were meeting. Three Tasmanian senators, Guy, Long and Ready, who stayed with the Labor Party in 1916, allowed Hughes to use them in 1917 in a attempt to prolong parliament. As the official war historian observed: 'There was, thus, not quite an epidemic among Tasmanian senators, but a breakdown in the health of three of them'. Another Tasmanian politician, 'King' O'Malley, tried to sit on the fence and was notable in the 1916 campaign for his absence.

The obverse of pro-British sentiment was an anti-German feeling which ran high at all levels of society. Some patriots smashed their German pianos. Melbourne University dismissed its two German lecturers and the academic staff swore themselves to total abstinence for the duration. Before 1914, sections of the Socialist International had agreed to industrial action in the event of war. With some honourable exceptions (for example, Lenin's Bolsheviks) this measure of internationalism was betrayed. Nowhere was its spirit more outraged than in Australia, where there were nine recorded instances of industrial disputes leading to stoppages of work because employees objected to working with Germans. In addition, there were numerous occasions upon which strikes were threatened

if Germans were not dismissed. The strikes ranged geographically from quarrymen at Townsville, to Cockatoo dockyard workers, to railwaymen at Newport, Victoria.

German atrocities were manufactured for the Commonwealth government by the journalist Critchley Parker to such good effect that they convinced the Minister for the Navy, Joseph Cook, that:

> The Germans are a foul brood. They kill babies. They torture and mutilate prisoners. They destroy and defile. They sink unarmed ships, fire on crews and passengers, strike medals for the Lusitania. They say treaties are scraps of paper. They are fearful liars and the Champion bullies of the world.

Anti-German hysteria was not confined to poorly educated workers or gullible politicians. A man as sensitive and cultured as Chris Brennan became a vocal pro-war propagandist and produced a dirge entitled 'A Chant of Doom', the essence and quality of which can be gauged from its chorus:

> Chime his fame and chime his name;
> Rhyme his title, rhyme his shame;
> German faith and German trust;
> German hate and German lust:
> — Bury the Beast unto the dust.

Brennan's anti-German feelings were intensified by his marriage to one.

A letter which Brennan wrote to the *Sydney Morning Herald* (7 December 1917) defines the intellectual progress of many other pro-Boers:

> I have written on this subject purely as an Australian, who desires no other abiding city than the city of his birth. But among other things, I was an obscure and undistinguished pro-boer, as the term was, a convinced and unrepentant one, say of the type of Louis Botha and Jan Smuts. Now, when a man comes along and tells me that those times are back on us again I can only stare at him in amaze ... While writing as an Australian, I cannot forget that I am Irish in blood and bone. My belief in Home Rule has survived

even the great betrayal of 1891. The Sinn Fein I have judged entirely from their own statements and those of their apologists, and have condemned them only for their alliance with Germany. This is their crime, their sin.

While conscription and Ireland were moving a body of Australians away from loyalty to Britain, the war convinced previous doubters that the interests of the Empire and Australia had to be treated as one.

TWO
Racists

We do not object to a man because his complexion or the cast of his eyes differs from our own, but because his complexion and the cast of his eyes are inseparably connected in our experience with certain qualities of mind to which we do most emphatically object.

Tocsin (editorial), 4 October 1906

Racism became the pivot of Australian nationalism. It is in their discussion of racism that the radical historians failed most seriously because they attempted to minimise its significance even when, like Robin Gollan, they were painfully aware how widespread was its influence. The most Gollan could bring himself to admit in his study of *Radical and Working Class Politics* is that racism 'was perhaps an inevitable aspect of Australian nationalism developing under the conditions we have described' (p. 117). His use of 'perhaps' and 'inevitable' indicated that he considered it foreign to the solid core of radical nationalism.

Russel Ward was far more brazen in his attempts to relegate racism to the realm of marginal importance. The burden of Ward's defence was that since the typically Australian characteristics were formed before the gold rushes, racism (which he claims came after 1850) was not 'necessarily a part of the Australian ethos'. To which one is forced to add, neither were

there many Asiatics before 1850, and when they did appear in anything approaching regularity they evoked a racist response from the colonial radicals. What is doubly tragic about Ward's position was that he was genuinely concerned to combat the racism he saw in contemporary Australia, yet could not bring himself to accept that it was the linchpin of his precious nationalism.

The racism inherent in Australia's economic and geographic position as the advance guard of European conquest will be explored elsewhere in this work. Three elements discerned are: the destruction of the Aborigines, the dominance of the Pacific, and the fear of an Asiatic invasion. This section will deal with only one side of this last factor. It will be concerned with the fear of an unarmed conquest of Australia by cheap Asian labourers who would destroy the workers' prosperity and prospects. The connection between racism and radicalism was thereby established.

The most usual explanation for racism is precisely this fear of economic competition and the importance of this fear cannot be denied. Without it, racial intolerance would never have become as deeply embedded as it did. But once started, prejudice did not stop at purely economic objections. Its development can be traced from its 'economic base', through its social reinforcements to its articulated acceptance by the workers and their employers.

ECONOMIC ORIGINS OF RACISM

Although by the 1840s British policy was to reserve 'The continent of New Holland as a place where the English race shall be spread from sea to sea unmixed with any lower caste', this aim had not always been there. Matra's 1783 plan for a British settlement in Australia approvingly quoted Joseph Banks's opinion that 'we may draw any number of useful inhabitants

from China'. This idea was modified in Governor Phillip's instructions to the extent that he was permitted to import 200 island women as wives for the convicts. Some reason — racial and/or moral — decided him against it. However, two Maoris were kidnapped in 1793 in the vain hope that they could assist the floundering flax industry at Sydney.

Edward Gibbon Wakefield's *Letter from Sydney*, published in 1829, struck at the heart of the question by relating coolie immigration to the chronic labour shortage in the colony. It was this very shortage which produced the high wages, independence and prospects of all-round advancement for the colonists, whether convict or free. This link led in turn to their opposition to assisted immigration. In the 1840s, the struggle to end transportation carried over into the fight against indentured Hindus, coolies and kanakas.

The first Asian labourers appear to have arrived in the late 1830s to work in the pastoral industry as shepherds; one estimate put the total at over a thousand. While this inflow benefited the squatters, even they had doubts on account of 'paganism' and 'colour'. The depression in the 1840s sharpened working-class opposition to indenture more Indians. The labourers petitioned the Colonial Office in 1843. Their views matched those of that department's 'Over-Secretary', Sir James Stephen, who had already advised his superiors that they should earn posterity's censure 'if we should colonise Australia from India'. Stephen was looking 'forward for five or six generations' when a white Australia would be of inestimable benefit to Britain and Christianity.

If the decision to keep Australia white found little opposition in England it equally found no want of support in Australia. A motion of the Melbourne Town Council in 1842 declared its opposition to the importation of 'cannibals and coolies'. The tone of this resolution is interesting in the light of Russel Ward's claim that racism was largely a post-gold rush phenomenon.

The adventurer Ben Boyd is a strong contender for the honour of being the first person to use coloured labourers to break a strike in Australia, when he prepared to embark with a crew of New Hebridean islanders instead of his regular sailors. Henry Parkes was not far behind. He brought out twenty-five to thirty Eurasian printers to work for four years at £4 a week. His aim was not cheap labour, but regular workers. The paper on which they were employed, notwithstanding, attacked Chinese immigration late in December 1850 as 'an act of treason to society'. This attack too was a pre-gold rush expression of views more sinister than a desire for high wages.

None the less, the gold rushes produced a qualitative change in the nature of this racism: what had been negative contempt turned to a positive hatred. Disappointed miners blamed not their luck but

> the incursions of a swarm of Mongolian locusts who have forced us to fly with our wives and families from all other diggings in the country until we are obliged to turn at bay upon this our last resting-place — our only hope of establishing a homestead — and drive the moon-faced barbarians away. (*The Miner and General Advertiser*, Lambing Flat, 6 March 1861)

Anti-Chinese riots occurred on many goldfields, some of the more serious ones being at Hanging Rock (1852), Bendigo (1854), Buckland River (1857) and Lambing Flat (1861). Juries acquitted European rioters on the grounds that, since all Europeans looked alike to the Chinese, individual offenders could not be identified. Eventually, Chinese immigration restriction Acts were passed in Victoria in 1855 and in New South Wales in 1861, by which time the Californian legislature had passed similar measures to exclude Australians as undesirables.

Even when the Chinese were defended, it was in terms which made them objectionable to the labouring classes, with more than one writer praising their 'docility, industry and sobriety'. This industrial servility made them excellent strikebreakers, for which purpose they were used by Peter Lalor at

his 'Grand Truck' mine in the 1870s, at Clunes in 1873 and in Queensland in 1875. About seventy Chinese were employed as strikebreakers in the Riverina in 1891, prompting 'Banjo' Paterson to the lines:

> I asked a cove for shearin' once along the Marthaguy:
> 'We shear non-union here,' says he. 'I call it scab,' says I,
> I looked along the shearing-board afore I turned to go —
> There was eight or ten dashed Chinamen a-shearin' in a row.

The maritime dispute of 1878 gained importance, not so much because of the large numbers involved, but because of the response to the shipping company's attempt to have 'aliens of inferior mental and physical capacity or endurance ... supersede ... the indomitable valor of British seamen'. Not only was the opposition to the Chinese expressed in these overtly racist terms, but the strikers also obtained the support of almost every section of the Australian population. Class divisions, such as they were, overlapped. At a protest meeting, 'The Mayor of Sydney was elected chairman, and was surrounded on the stage by many of the best known public men and leading citizens'. At the same time, the Queensland government notified the shipping company that if it did not comply with the terms of the 1877 anti-Chinese legislation, its mail contract, worth £7000 per annum, would be cancelled.

The Melbourne *Argus* (9 December 1878) reported that

> a very large anti-Chinese meeting in Hyde Park got out of control, and about 2000 larrikins, bent on mischief marched to lower George Street, the area of principal Chinese residences. They swept up the street with the old Lambing Flat cry 'Roll up, no Chinese', and endeavoured to set fire to the Chinese workshops. Before they were dispersed by the police, several people, both Australians and Asians, were seriously injured.

A few days later, an editorial in the *Illustrated Sydney News* (21 December 1878) went a long way towards explaining the intensity of the rioters' hostility:

It may be a foolish prejudice that neither reason nor religious principle can justify, but we cannot get over our repugnance to the race, whose tawny, parchment coloured skins, black hair, lank and coarse, no beards, oblique eyes and high cheek bones distinguish them so widely from ourselves, and place them so far beneath our recognised standards of manliness and beauty.

Economic fears and racial prejudice were by now inextricable, with each feeding the flames of the other's fire. So naturally did they go together that the fourth Inter-Colonial Trades Union Congress in Adelaide in 1886 unanimously agreed that coolie immigration should be totally abolished because 'first, the competition of Asiatic against European labour is entirely unfair; second, it is well known that the presence of Chinese in large numbers in any community has had a very bad moral tendency'.

SOCIAL REINFORCEMENT

Humankind's capacity to embroider necessity with myth made it possible that economic competition of itself could have generated the cultural racism noted already. But that inventiveness was not necessary. There was plenty of non-economic evidence to substantiate the moral degeneracy of the Chinese. Once the Chinese were perceived as an economic threat, the belief in Anglo-Saxon superiority quickly turned Chinese customs into conclusive proof of oriental infamy.

Primary among the non-economic factors was Chinese sexual activity. There was but a handful of women on the diggings, a circumstance which made prostitution and buggery as inescapable as they had been for the white convicts and pastoral workers. Moreover, most of the prostitutes were European. That circumstance was interpreted as proof that Chinese men lusted after white women. In 1883, in the pastoral camps of the Riverina, there were 800 Chinese males but only two Chinese females. The balance was hardly restored by the thirty-six Eu-

ropean women who were married to Chinese, though it was somewhat redressed by the activities of thirty-seven prostitutes.

The 'right to marry' was never far from the minds of Australia's legislators when they proposed restrictive measures. Henry Parkes raised it in 1888. The first Labor prime minister, J. C. Watson, could not have been clearer when he told the House of Representatives in 1901: 'The question is whether we would desire that our sisters or our brothers should be married into any of these races to which we object'. A subsequent interchange between two opposing non-Labor members showed that all three parties were united on this issue. When Mr Lonsdale, a Free Trader, stated 'We don't want them to marry our white women', Alfred Deakin, Protectionist, immediately agreed: 'No we want them to go back to China and marry there'. Intermarriage was subversive of the racial purity that the White Australia policy was designed to maintain.

Those who think that 'White Australia' was purely economic could ponder this extract from the Wagga *Hummer* of April 1892 in which a William Lane stressed that, while he should not do a black man harm, he would rather see his daughter dead in her coffin than kissing one of them on the mouth or nursing a little coffee-coloured brat that she was mother to'. He went on:

> If this is a wicked thing to say, then I am one of the wicked ones, and don't want to be good either; and I'd pray daily to be kept wicked if I thought there was any chance of my ever getting to think that the colour didn't matter.

In July the same year, the Melbourne Trades Hall Council heard a submission from a group of women who were establishing a white women's cooperative laundry and were desirous of union support against Chinese competition. According to a report in *Commonweal* (23 July 1892):

One woman, Mrs Krossley, related how her daughter, fourteen

years of age, had answered an advertisement for a nursegirl, the occupants of the house in Fitzroy to which she applied being Chinese. Now, surely the police can take cognisance of this statement and prevent the defilement of the young girls of our community by the almond-eyed procurer or his leprous associates.

Opium-smoking was another obvious proof of degeneracy. Cases of smallpox and leprosy were discovered among new arrivals around 1880. Equally alarming was the deportation of Chinese criminals to Australia from 1866 to 1876. Even when the Chinese tried to oblige the Europeans, they often provided evidence of barbarism. In 1883, crates of bones for burial in China were sent from Albury via Sydney where they arrived in a 'stinking' condition. To avoid repeating this offence, the Chinese scraped and washed the next shipment. Unfortunately, they did this cleansing in the Bungambrawatha Creek which supplied fresh water to a section of Albury.

Trollope's view of the Chinese in Australia as 'thoroughly vicious and inhuman' had some basis in reality. Australians did not invent all of it, nor was it invented for them. They saw examples of it with their own eyes and, as in all cases of prejudice, they transformed the activities of some into the attributes of all.

Despite ample evidence that the Chinese were extremely law-abiding, this docility did not endear them to Australians, who interpreted it as something sinister and threatening. Or, as the *Bulletin* put it in 1886: 'When he is simply vicious the vice is destructive; when criminal, a menace to the State; when industrious, he threatens revolution to the social structure'. No matter what the Chinese did, they were bound to give offence simply because they were Chinese.

The islanders on Queensland's sugar plantations were far less law-abiding, doubtless the result of being totally alienated from their surroundings. In 1891, for example, they represented 1.72 per cent of the population but 5.52 per cent of the

gaol population. Between 1895 and 1905, they accounted for 45 per cent of the state's executions.

Racism in Australia was not a response to a tiny minority. Although the percentage of Chinese in the total population of Australia remained small, there were times and places when they were in the majority. This was the case in some of the southern New South Wales goldfields in the 1860s. At the Palmer River diggings near Cooktown in 1877, the Chinese outnumbered the Europeans by 17 000 to 14 000. In Narrandera in the 1880s, every second man in town was Chinese. Most important was the fact that in the mid-1850s one adult male in five in Victoria had been Chinese. These concentrations served to keep alive the belief that those already here were but an 'advance guard of the great army of coloured men who when they go back to their country, as the advance guard of the Israelites did of old, will tell their compatriots of the splendid opportunities which await them in the promised land'.

By the last quarter of the nineteenth century, racism influenced all manner of otherwise unconnected policies. Henry George's single-tax proposal was opposed as the most 'deadly blow aimed at labour' because its implementation would abolish the 'poll-tax on Chinese', and thus destroy 'the security of labour against Mongolian Immigration'. More directly economic perhaps was the 1896 Victorian Factories and Shops Act in which a factory was defined as any place where four or more persons or one or more Chinese were employed. One of the consequences of this Act was the formation of a Chinese Workers' Union which immediately demanded higher wages. Although assisted by the Furniture Trades Union, the Chinese were refused affiliation with the Melbourne Trades Hall Council.

RESPONSES

If it is true that propaganda alone cannot create racism, it is

equally true that propaganda is needed to inflame and direct it. The tribunes of racism in Australia largely came from the leaders of the Labor Party. Instead of combating racism as a tool of oppression, Labor leaders almost invariably articulated and reinforced it. Indeed, they must bear responsibility for purveying the filthiest lies, and inflaming fears. During the 1901 House of Representatives debate on White Australia, one Labor member claimed that those Asians 'who do raise themselves to the level of the whites get as cunning as foxes, and, notwithstanding our laws and our detective skill, they beat us at every turn'. The early Labor MPs matched the Labor Party in the Rand, which was the first party in the Union of South Africa to make segregation a plank in its political platform.

Founding Labor leaders such as George Black and William Lane were outspoken racists. Black was a member of the Anti-Chinese Immigration League in 1883–84 and later a journalist on the *Bulletin* which eventually took as its motto 'Australia for the White Man'.

Lane was a fanatical racist. It has been suggested that his motive for leaving Australia to found a settlement in Paraguay was his fear of the Asian hordes. Although *A Workingman's Paradise* is his better known novel, Lane also wrote *White or Yellow? A story of Race War in A.D. 1908*, serialised in the *Boomerang* from February to May 1888. The action takes place in Queensland, when wealthy Chinese, supported by some Europeans, have established a dictatorship which is challenged by a 'revolutionary race war' for Australian democracy. Lane's distaste for capitalism was strengthened by his belief that it was the capitalists who encouraged Asian immigration. The tone of Lane's *Boomerang* was well expressed in Henry Lawson's poem 'Cambaroora Star', written to commemorate the closure of another newspaper, the *Republican*, co-edited by his feminist mother Louisa:

There was strife about the Chinamen, who came in days of old
Like a swarm of thieves and loafers when the diggers found
    the gold —
Like the sneaking fortune-hunters who are always found behind,
And who only shepherd diggers till they track them to the 'find'.
Charlie wrote a stinging leader, calling on his digger mates,
And he said: 'We think that Chinkies are as bad as syndicates.
What's the good of holding meetings where you only talk and
    swear?
Get a move upon the Chinkies when you've got an hour to spare'.
It was nine o'clock next morning when the Chows began to
    swarm,
But they weren't so long in going, for the diggers' blood was
    warm.
Then the diggers held a meeting, and they shouted: 'Hip hoorar.'
Give three ringing cheers, my hearties, for the *Cambaroora Star.*

The importance of the struggle to end islander labour for the emerging Labor Party in Queensland cannot be overestimated. When Labor won the seat of Bundaberg at a by-election in 1892 on a policy of White Australia, the *Worker* greeted the victory with the headline 'Bundaberg Goes White'. Labor's opposition to kanaka labour prevented its opposing capital punishment in the first decade of this century, because so many of the condemned were Islanders. In 1901 the *Worker* commented on one such hanging:

> The Queensland Cabinet helped ruin the sugar industry by hanging a kanaka on Monday and the *Courier* did not protest. If the Government goes on hanging kanakas like this, there is a grave danger of Queensland becoming a white man's land.

Or, as the Minister for Home Affairs would put it in 1918: 'The policy of the country is that the Chinese population shall gradually become extinct'.

Geographic proximity to Asia seems irrelevant to the intensity of feeling. Though Tasmanian Labor was backward in many respects, it yielded to none in the fervour of its hatred of the Oriental. The Tasmanian Labor paper, the *Clipper*, habitu-

ally wrote of the Chinese in the most offensive terms and suggested, for example, that the abominable Hobart drainage was due to the fact that a 'dirty Chinaman' might have seven votes for the City Council while a white artisan remained disfranchised. In Zeehan and Queenstown, the newly formed Workers Political League scored its earliest successes with boycotts of Chinese laundrymen.

What Lane was fond of calling 'the piebald issue' dominated the thinking of the Labor Party to such an extent that when the objectives of the Federal Labor Party were adopted in 1905 'the cultivation of an Australian sentiment based on the maintenance of racial purity and the development in Australia of an enlightened and self-reliant community' took precedence over 'the securing of the full results of their industry to all producers by the collective ownership of monopolies and the extension of the industrial and economic functions of the state and the Municipality'.

In its own words, the Labor Party was racist before it was socialist.

'White Australia' served as a rallying point to unify the first Federal Labor Caucus, split as it was on the question of free trade versus protection. Free traders, such as Hughes, completely agreed with the protectionist Reverend James Ronald from Victoria when he called on Labor members to keep before them 'The noble ideal of a White Australia — a snow-white Australia, if you will. Let us be pure and spotless' and let there be no attempt to 'blend a superior with an inferior race'. This plea came from a Presbyterian clergyman whom the *Age* denounced as unpatriotic and pro-Boer. Hughes employed his invective to advocate 'White Australia', which he saw as the major virtue in Federation. Speaking to the *Bulletin* early in 1901 on the Labor Party's program in the inaugural parliament, Hughes made it plain that 'Our chief plank is, of course, a White Australia. There's no compromise

about that! The industrious coloured brother has to go — and remain away!'

No longer were the Chinese the primary cause of concern. Their place had been taken by the Japanese who 'by most accounts [are] able to successfully compete with the white workers in all the skilled trades, whilst at the same time working longer hours for much less wages'. The rise of Japan as a military and industrial power was to have serious consequences for Hughes, the Labor Party and Australia, when he split the Labor Party over conscription in 1916.

Anti-conscriptionists in *Labor Call* (26 October 1916) announced that they would

> vote NO because [they believed] in keeping Australia a white man's country. YES would commit Australia to sending 16 500 men away monthly for an indefinite time. Soon all except those utterly incapable of service would be gone, and this country would have to resort to importing labour.

The *Worker* warned its readers: 'If we vote to send the white workers out of the country, we vote to bring the coloured workers in'. Frank Anstey felt that the plebiscite should have been called the 'Coloured Labour Referendum'. Maximum effect was milked from the arrival, a week before the 1916 vote, of a boatload of Maltese, who although they 'were not coloured people, but still they helped to prove the point'. During the subsequent election campaign in 1917, the *Worker* once more raised the spectre that a vote for Hughes would 'bring to ruin your White Australia policy'.

Racism was by no means confined to the labouring classes or to the Labor Party. Some employers feared the competition of Asian business rivals just as much as their employees feared Asian labourers. Alfred Deakin, influenced by Professor Pearson, was no less fanatical than Hughes. Pearson had been Professor of Modern History at the University of London before coming to Australia, where he became Minister for Public Instruction in Victoria in the 1880s. On his return to England,

he published *National Life and Character: A Forecast* in which he prophesied that the 'higher races of men' would soon find themselves 'elbowed and hustled and perhaps even thrust aside, by peoples previously considered innately servile. Pearson regarded Australia as among the last strongholds of the white race, but one already threatened by the Chinese and on the brink of destruction. While his book's sales were small, they were significant. Gladstone and Theodore Roosevelt were in full agreement with Pearson. Barton quoted from Pearson in each of his 1901 speeches on restrictive immigration.

Henry Handel Richardson's novel *Australia Felix* revealed the degree to which racism became an unquestioned part of the outlook of Australians. Its author never betrayed the least qualm at portraying the Chinese as lacking any redeeming feature. She recaptured all the complaints made against them during the gold rushes, the period in which her novel is set: they use 'extravagant quantities of water'; they 'are not such fools as to try to cheat the government of its righteous dues; none but had his licence safely folded in his nosecloth, and thrust inside the bosom of his blouse'; they provide Melbourne's worst 'dens of infamy': and so it goes on until the actual appearance of Ah Sing the vegetable man:

> 'You no want cabbage to-day? Me got velly good cabbages,' he said persuasively, and lowered his pole.
> 'No, thank you, John, not to-day. Me wait for white man.'
> 'Me bling pleasant for lilly missee,' said the Chow; and unknotting a dirty nosecloth, he drew from it an ancient lump of candied ginger. 'Lilly missee eatee him ... Oh yum, yum! Velly Good. My word!' But Chinamen to Trotty were fearsome bodies ... [they] corresponded to the swart-faced, white-eyed chimneysweeps of the English nursery.

What is significant about this portrayal is that Henry Handel Richardson had left Australia in 1887 when she was seventeen and returned but briefly in 1912 to gather material. Most

likely her childhood experiences were similar to Trotty's. But whatever the source of her image of the Chinese, she certainly, in Professor Crawford's phrase, presented her 'Australian material with unerring authenticity'. That judgment has been endorsed by the acceptance that *Australia Felix* found in this country. Few Australians were offended by her implicit account of their racist attitudes. Indeed, so widely accepted were these prejudices that it is likely that they were not considered racist. They were just white Australian.

THREE
Invaders

One of the first problems which faced the British when they decided to colonise Australia was whether Australia was to be considered a 'settled' or a 'conquered' colony. If it were a settled colony the law of the indigenes would apply only until superseded by new colonial laws. This possibility had obvious importance for the ownership and control of land. Needless to say, Australia was considered a settled colony, so that the Aborigines were not accorded even the rights of a conquered people. Perhaps it was the memory of the ease with which the British invasion of Australia had been accomplished which kept alive the fear of a further invasion in the minds of Australians. It is less likely that the alarms sprang from feelings of guilt.

In 1813 when Blaxland, Lawson and Wentworth crossed the Blue Mountains, they stressed the military advantages of their discovery, arguing that 'the only pass to it, although of easy access, is through a country naturally so strong as to be easily defended by a few against the efforts of thousands'. The arrival of these 'thousands' was a perennial concern for Australia's settlers. First, there was fear of the French, which revealed itself as early as 1792 when the presence of François Peron's ship in Sydney Harbour aroused the prospect of a simultaneous French assault and a convict uprising. Next came the belief that Australia had been marked down by Bonapartist cartographers to become *Terre Napoléon*. In or-

der to prevent French intervention such as had occurred in Canada and India, military posts were established at Port Dalrymple in Tasmania, Port Phillip in Victoria and Port Essington in the Northern Territory.

The late 1820s saw a revival of this consternation. To forestall a French seizure of the western half of the continent, a naval settlement was placed at Albany in 1826. Threats from France, and from the United States, contributed to the decision to permit a British colony at Swan River three years later. Nothing could prevent the French maintaining a naval station at Akaroa on the South Island of New Zealand from 1829 to 1840 when Britain, after much colonial prompting, took formal possession. In this manner Australasia was spared the fate that jigsawed Africa.

Although the French aroused fresh alarms in 1853 when they annexed New Caledonia, the Russians soon occupied the position of principal marauder. The material prosperity that shaped radicalism also contributed to the local belief that other powers saw Australia as a valuable prize. When the Crimean war broke out in 1854 there were constant scares. So agitated had the colonists become that, on 7 September, when some ships in Port Phillip exchanged greetings with cannon and skyrockets 'the exclamation "The Russians!" passed from mouth to mouth ... and a large body of infantry — many of whom were armed with sticks, umbrellas, pick-handles' moved toward the Bay. As the *Herald* observed on the next day, 'Byron's description of the excitement in Brussels, on the eve of Waterloo, can alone give any idea of the state of Melbourne last night'. To Richard Mahony's acquaintances, 'the vital question was: will the Russian Bear take its revenge by sending men-of-war to annihilate us, and plunder the gold in our banks, us months removed from English aid?' The supporters of the Eureka rebels placed as much emphasis on 'defence' as on 'liberty'. A typical resolution demanded that

all headlands, commanding the harbours of Melbourne and Geelong to be immediately fortified and floating batteries built for which purpose one of the public foundries to be hired to cast long-range cannon ... for the defence of the Colony from any external attack ... a military college to be forth with established.

Alarms recurred in January 1862 when a Russian screw-frigate visited Victoria in order 'to spy' on its fortifications. There was another Russian scare in 1863–64 when a Russian flagship visited Melbourne; a Polish resident 'exposed', with the assistance of the press, yet another plot. The success of the Confederate raider *Alabama* in cutting the Northern army's supplies during the Civil War served to underline the conviction that Australia was also vulnerable to flying assaults. So generally was this accepted that E. W. O'Sullivan had no difficulty in convincing the readers of his *St Arnaud Mercury* of the veracity of a short story about a Russian attack which he printed in 1877. He followed the fiction up with the caution that what was a joke today could well be a tragic reality tomorrow.

Panic sprang afresh with a Russian naval unit's visit in 1882. So credulous were colonists that the *Age* (23 March) published an article which claimed that Russia was planning an attack on Australia as part of a general war against the Empire. Melbourne and Sydney were to be held to ransom for £5 million each. 'Our obvious duty is to take time by the forelock and prepare for the worst', the *Age* concluded, before its informant, 'a former Russian agent', was exposed as an ex-convict and notorious confidence man who gave himself away by trying to touch the Governor for a loan.

Not to be outdone, the *Sydney Morning Herald* on 5 February 1885 warned that 'The citizens of Sydney might awake to see four or five swift armoured cruisers in position across the harbour, their guns ready to lay the town in ashes if the required ransom of £5m. were not paid in forty-eight hours'.

Asia in the nineteenth century did not present a military

challenge, although Sir Henry Parkes was fond of quoting Napoleon's saying that if only the Chinese had a navy they would conquer the world. The prospect of an unarmed invasion by what the *Australasian* in 1878 characterised as a 'swarming race of three hundred million, which lately had shown such an inconvenient disposition to mobility', was terrible enough without conjuring up a militarily potent Asia. When this spectre became a reality in the form of Japan after 1904, the resultant dread produced some truly wonderful contortions on the part of Australia's spokesmen. These verbal acrobatics were nothing compared with the pyrotechnics of our prose writers.

Around 1909 England enjoyed a surfeit of 'invasion' literature, the literary counterpart of the 'We want eight, We won't wait' mentality that sprang up in the wake of the *Dreadnought* scare. Le Queux peopled his novels with German spies. Major Guy Du Maurier's play, *An Englishman's Home*, in which 'the muddied oafs of the football field' confronted 'the disciplined hordes of clearly Teutonic invaders', drew multitudes to Wyndham's Theatre. This genre enjoyed a similar success in Australia but with one vital difference: the invaders were not German but Japanese.

Literary forms for these fantasies varied from novels and short stories to plays, one of these latter being F. R. C. Hopkins' *Reaping the Whirlwind*, in which the villain, a socialist agitator in the pay of Japan, initiates a general strike during which his oriental masters — with the connivance of Great Britain — take over. This plot is unusual inasmuch as it usually is the conservatives who ally with the Celestials in order to obtain cheap labour. The dastardly role of Britain was a constant feature and a reflection of hostility towards the Anglo-Japanese alliance.

Two novels, *The Australian Crisis* (1909) by C. H. Kirmess and *The Big Five* (1911) by Ambrose Pratt, revolve around the establishment of an extensive colony of Asians in the Northern Territory. The first of these works has been described as

'extremely realistic'. The British play their habitually treacherous role by withdrawing their warships from the Pacific. Despite the valiant efforts of 'the White Guard', the Northern Territory is swamped by the Japanese before the novel ends with its author reminding the world that 'AUSTRALIA IS THE PRECIOUS FRONT BUCKLE IN THE WHITE GIRDLE OF POWER AND PROGRESS ENCIRCLING THE GLOBE'.

The *Bulletin* (through its offshoot *Lone Hand*) was deeply involved in the dissemination of this kind of literature. Not only did it serialise the above-mentioned *Australian Crisis*, it also printed numerous short stories with similar themes and even more incredible plots. One of these, *The Deliverer* (1909) by Aldridge Evelyn, is little more than a rehash of the ideas that were the stuff of defence and foreign policy debates at the time. The central proposition is that once England is involved in a war with Germany, the Japanese fleet will be free to move in the Pacific. Stage two is the arrival of the Japanese off Sydney Heads despite the gallant resistance by the newly formed Royal Australian Navy. Stage three is a peace treaty which, in the author's words, 'will allow every Chink and Jap under the sun to land in Australia and become a citizen'. Salvation is at hand in the person of a providential squatter who had privately bought and secretly assembled a submarine for just such an occasion. The enemy is destroyed and the story ends with the vessel's captain happy in the knowledge that his daughter's Australia shall be white.

FOUR
Sub-Imperialists

They speak as Giants of the South Pacific
And treat the islands as their stepping-stones.

James McAuley, *True Discovery of Australia*

Just as Australians were anxious to prevent seizure of any part of the continent by a foreign power, so they were concerned to keep the Pacific as a British, indeed an Australasian, reserve. In the process, they developed their own Monroe doctrine. Having secured the continent by 1829, they demanded the annexation of New Zealand. Similar pressures persisted right up till the signing of the Versailles peace treaty in 1919. These demands found their dynamic in continual commercial hopes and in the fear of attack from an enemy strategically placed nearby.

These sub-imperialist enterprises not only reacted on the prosperity of the colonies but were coupled with notions of racial superiority, such as those expressed editorially by the *Fiji Times* of 24 May 1873:

> ... true to the instincts of the Anglo-Saxon race we have come to this *ultima thule* of creation, to bring a savage race within the pale, and to partake of the benefits of our civilisation; let us hope to bring them beneath the sway of the British sceptre, and thus to open up more fully a new and profitable field for British enterprise.

A white settler was less circumspect about the white man's burden:

> Is it not an insult to this House, and to every white man in the country to have an old nigger like the King set up, as he is being set up? King indeed ... he would be more in his place digging or weeding a white man's garden when he would be turned to profitable account.

The Brisbane *Courier* of 30 January 1919 echoed these sentiments:

> It must be our business to teach the native, who is too lazy to work unless he has to, that his physical and moral salvation lies in having an occupation which imposes on him a physical tax ... The island population is diminishing because of the enervating effects of idleness.

These attitudes penetrated the radical tradition in Australia. When the Victorian Labor Party issued its federal election manifesto in April 1910, it was sanguine in its hope that:

> When a majority of the people of the principal nations, such as the United States of America, Germany, and Great Britain are converted to the Labor Gospel, war as we know it will cease. The only use for armies and navies then will be to police the world, and keep the small and less civilised nations in order.

It is significant that Japan and China were not mentioned as 'principal nations', although neither could be dismissed as small.

Similar attitudes had quickly developed towards the Australian Aborigines. From his survey of European chauvinism, *Lords of Human Kind*, Victor Kiernan shows that many pioneers had concluded that, since undeveloped races could not adapt themselves to 'civilisation', they were bound to die out. 'From believing this to expediting their departure to another world was no great step'. In the last quarter of the nineteenth century, psuedo-Darwinian 'survival of the fittest' notions gave such exterminations a gloss of scientific rectitude.

The wealth to be gained from the Pacific had become apparent within the first decade of the first settlement at Botany Bay. If Blainey is right, it was with this wealth in mind that the settlement had been established. Sandalwood, pork, seal-skins, whale offal and trepang provided the infant colony with its earliest entrepreneurial impulses. Indeed, export income from the sea exceeded income from wool until around 1835. Yankee whalers began the century-long competition with Australians for the commercial profits of the South Pacific.

New Zealand was the most important prospective area for expansion, with William Charles Wentworth attempting to purchase twenty million acres for £200 a year there in the late 1830s. The gold rush there in the 1860s greatly assisted Australia's economy to recharge after its own post-rush depression. As Brian Fitzpatrick pointed out, as far as nineteenth-century economic development is concerned, New Zealand must be considered as an integral part of Australia. New Zealand's own ambitions centred on Fiji and were summed up by the speaker of the House of Representatives in 1903:

And now that we have visited
    The islands, great and small,
We find, as a possession,
    Fiji the best of all;
A land with room for thousands,
    A country bound to rise;
Where rich reward assuredly
    Awaits on enterprise.

Later in the century, the Pacific provided yet another profitable activity — blackbirding for the sugar plantations of Queensland. British reluctance to accede to colonial demands for annexations was influenced by a desire to suppress this traffic in indentured labourers. In 1885 the Governor of Victoria, Sir Henry Lock, confirmed that 'there are many men in the colonies who would not hesitate under certain eventualities, to dispatch them [Australian warships] to seize Samoa, the New

Hebrides, or any other place or island on which they had set their desire'. That point had been brought home when Queensland had attempted to annex eastern New Guinea two years previously.

Britain's opposition to these sorties placed Australian radicals in a quandary. On the one hand, they saw Britain's unwillingness to act in support of colonial demands as further proof of her untrustworthiness. Yet they opposed expansion into the Pacific because they rightly saw its connection with the islander trade and its threat to the White Australia policy. All Australians could oppose France's dumping convicts in New Caledonia, from where 247 of them are recorded as escaping to Australia between 1874 and 1883. Austria and Italy also planned to establish penal stations in the Pacific around this time.

Nor was the military aspect neglected. In their campaign to secure British approval for Queensland annexation of New Guinea, the colonial premiers notified London:

> That further acquisition of dominions in the Pacific South of the Equator by any Foreign Power would be highly detrimental to the safety and well-being of the British possessions in Australasia and injurious to the interests of the Empire.

This claim was particularly relevant to the passage through Torres Strait, which cut some two thousand miles from the journey to Europe, via the Suez Canal.

Not long after, the Australian Natives Association, concerned lest the Antarctic be claimed by Germany, sought to finance polar exploration.

Significantly the inter-colonial military committee that met in Sydney in 1896 recommended that 'Instead of thinking in terms of the continent and Tasmania ... the defence region of Australia be extended to include New Zealand, New Caledonia, the New Hebrides, New Guinea, and portions of Borneo and Java'. By the turn of the century, the energetic imperialism

of Joseph Chamberlain was no less alert to Australia's interests than were the Australians themselves. Chamberlain saw the acquisition of Hawaii by the United States as detrimental to Empire trade, while from a defence point of view, the annexation of the Islands would bring the United States some two thousand miles nearer to New Zealand and Australia, and would give the United States good ground for increasing the strength of its fleet in the Pacific and thus threaten Canadian possessions on the West Coast, as well as Australasia.

Australians did not see the world that way. The United States had been a commercial competitor, a possible coloniser of Australia's west coast and, during the gold rushes, the major source of seditious republicanism. These concerns were in the past; some Australians were beginning to perceive the United States as a protector against Japan. For these men, American involvement in the Pacific was not to be deplored; rather, it was welcomed a source of infinite security.

Situated almost two thousand kilometres east of Cairns, the New Hebrides were to become to Anglo-Australian relations in the first decade of the twentieth century what New Guinea had been in the 1880s. In many ways the question of the New Hebrides even in the 1880s was as important as the annexation of New Guinea, although subsequently overshadowed. Australians had displayed commercial and military interests in the New Hebrides during the 1870s and were piqued by the dominance of French settlers. Following so quickly on the German 'invasion' of New Guinea, the arrival of French troops in the New Hebrides in June 1886, ostensibly to protect French citizens, alarmed and outraged the Australian governments. The matter came to a head at the 1887 Imperial Conference when Lord Salisbury, the British prime minister and Foreign Secretary, made a speech suggesting that the islands should go to France. Deakin, Berry and Service all replied with such vigour that Salisbury instructed the British Ambassador in Paris not to yield. A joint Anglo-French convention in 1888 left the

New Hebrides with an indeterminate status which at least warned off other powers.

Britain was willing enough to act on Australia's behalf but genuinely failed to see that the possession of the islands by France could pose any threat to Australia's security, seeing that France already had New Caledonia which was a good three hundred kilometres closer. From a strictly military point of view, the British were doubtless correct, but they ignored the vision splendid that Australia had of itself in the Pacific. They ignored the hope expressed by John Dunmore Lang in 1871:

> that such principles will be recognised and established, with the concurrence of the Imperial Government, as will make this city of Sydney, like the ancient city of Miletus in the flourishing period of Grecian colonisation, another mother city of a whole series of flourishing colonies in New Guinea and in the numerous and beautiful islands of the Western Pacific.

In his biography of Deakin, Professor La Nauze paid special attention to the New Hebrides as the earliest piece of 'foreign policy' undertaken by the Commonwealth. So important did the Barton Cabinet consider the matter that one of its first decisions was 'to approve the journey ... [thence] ... with expenses paid secretly, of an agent to secure information about the state of affairs there'. The spy reported at the end of November 1901. 'Further instances of cloak and dagger work' persisted until 1906 when France and Britain agreed to a new convention asserting their joint 'paramount rights'.

Commercial considerations were an essential component of the Australian government's activities, which were urged on by Burns Philp & Co. (Robert Philp was Premier of Queensland from 1899 to 1903.) The Commonwealth provided and extended subsidies to this company for the maintenance of shipping and mails to the islands.

Negotiations between Britain and France over the islands followed their *rapprochement* of May 1903 but, much to Australia's annoyance, were conducted without her involvement.

Deakin urged outright annexation or purchase but accepted the 'joint rights' formula after he learnt that German firms were buying properties in the New Hebrides. He was by no means pleased with the way matters had been conducted or how they had turned out. Professor La Nauze concluded:

> The Australians saw only a failure to appreciate the true interests of 'the Empire', which appeared to require that Britain should act to secure whatever might seem wise to united Australia; in this case the 'long-cherished hope' of seeing the New Hebrides made part of the Empire.

In Deakin's second reading speech on the 1901 Restrictive Immigration Bill, he suggested that 'We may have in the future some development which may call for the application of the Monroe Doctrine in the Pacific'; for the present the declaration of a White Australia 'is the Monroe Doctrine of the Commonwealth'.

During a visit to New York in June 1918, Hughes would take up this theme:

> So we come to you, our great ally, seeking your steadfast and wholehearted co-operation and aid. Hands off the Australian Pacific is the Doctrine to which by inexorable circumstances we are committed.

Back in Australia in 1919, Hughes 'defended' the League of Nations by saying that it did not apply to Australia's sphere in the Pacific; that was covered by our Monroe doctrine, which was directed against Japan.

FIVE

'Japs'

The marvellous uprush of the Japanese Power has created no small uneasiness in these colonies. It is tolerably certain that were Japan to turn her naval arm against what lies in Australian waters, we should go down against her.

Courier (Brisbane), 30 November 1893

No issue produced more concern or tension for Australasians than the rise of Japan as a naval power. Despite abortive attempts in 1876 by a conservative South Australian government to colonise the Northern Territory with indentured Japanese labourers, most Australians were probably unaware of the presence of Japanese in Australia until a group of divers drew the winning horse in Tattersalls Melbourne Cup sweep in 1891. Ten years later, the Japanese occupied the major place in Commonwealth debates surrounding the White Australia policy.

A number of factors occasioned this change. The most important was Queensland's experience with Japanese after it, alone among the colonies, had adhered to the Anglo-Japanese commercial treaty of 1894. Japan did not object to restrictive immigration policies, providing they were not directed specifically against Japanese, or did not treat Japanese as if they were Chinese. Tokyo illustrated this finesse in its response to Acts passed by the Queensland parliament in 1898, 1899 and

1900. The 1898 Pearl Shell and Beche-de-Mer Fishery Act excluded all non-British subjects from taking out new pearling licences. Because this Act was non-discriminatory against Asians, it was accepted by Japan even though it involved severe financial losses for some of its citizens. The 1899 Aborigines Protection Amendment Act denied Asiatics the right to employ Aborigines, and the 1900 Sugar Works Guarantee Amendment Act limited the grant of governmental financial aid to sugar mills that employed only European labour. Both were opposed by Japan, which perceived them as racial slurs, although no financial loss was involved. As a result of these disputes, the first session of the Commonwealth parliament, in 1901, had to devise a restrictive immigration mechanism which would not offend the Japanese. The result was a dictation test.

It was not out of any peculiar love for Japan as such that Australian legislators professed this concern for Japanese sensibilities, but rather sternly strategic considerations. Japan's victory over China in 1894 made Japan a useful ally for Britain against Russia. With the exception of the *Bulletin*, this policy was largely welcomed in Australia. Japan's victory did not provoke much anxiety because Australians were so confident of their racial superiority that the victory of monkeys (Japanese) over baboons (Chinese) was of no concern to human beings except that it was now possible to employ these monkeys instead of rebellious Indians to fight the Empire's battles.

Early in 1902, Britain signed an alliance with Japan. Although limited in scope to China and Korea, its import did not escape Bertrand Russell, who was 'glad England should be ready to recognise the yellow man as a civilised being, and not wholly sorry at the quarrel with Australia which this recognition entails'.

Australian complacency was shattered by Japan's destruction of the Russian fleet in 1905. When the war began, the Australian press supported the Japanese as Britain's ally, but

when the full implications of Russia's defeat sank home, the editors quickly swung round to the position that papers such as *Tocsin* and the *Bulletin* had occupied for some time. The extent of the panic that ensued can be seen in a speech by a Victorian Member of Parliament opposing the extension of municipal suffrage to married women which, he alleged, introduced 'a very important problem, whether the extending of the suffrage to women involves the same responsibilities and duties as attach to men in the maintenance and defence of the State'. He continued:

> That problem must be considered. As the conditions in Australia are very rapidly changing ... prior to the war between Japan and Russia the question may arise in Australia very shortly whether it will be necessary for every man who is able to shoulder a rifle to undergo a course of military training. We know that women cannot be expected, and are not physically able, to perform this duty in defence of their state, so that it could not be expected that they should be asked to do so. With half the voters in this country women, who are naturally predisposed to peace, how are we going to maintain a defence against the hordes of Asia?

George Pearce, later Minister of Defence, gave up his anti-militarist convictions as a direct consequence of Japan's victory. The 1905 Interstate Political Labor Conference supported citizen military training and only narrowly defeated making it compulsory. A year later, the Labor Party fought the election partly on the 'yellow peril' theme.

Japanese 'spies' began to appear. Our early military intelligence service was concerned solely with the operation of Japanese pearling luggers in northern waters. A visit by a Japanese training squadron late in 1906 provided the *Bulletin* with an opportunity to engage in its wildest racist fantasies: Japanese sailors were accused of distributing pornographic postcards, while visitors to the ships were reportedly shocked by the presence of naked prostitutes.

In the decade between Japan's victory and the outbreak of

the Great War, numerous Australians made it their business to travel to Japan. One of these was Dr Maloney, Federal Labor member for Melbourne. Maloney had been 'pro-Boer' and 'anti-Empire'. The Japanese menace ended all that. With the help of a journalist, Maloney gave an account of his journey in a 1905 booklet entitled *Flashlights on Japan and the Far East.* The journey commenced at Thursday Island which was entirely in the hands of the Japanese, replete with prostitutes and assassins, and their 'absolutely unscrupulous cohesiveness' (not to be confused with mateship). Maloney drew conclusions from what he saw:

> In this decade or in the next ... the East will most assuredly insist on what she may regard as her rights; and those rights may include the domination, if not the occupation, of the Eastern Hemisphere. How stand we then? ... Little will all that [home defence] avail us if once the whole volume of the East is permitted to break on our shores. The dividing line must be drawn on the ocean, and far to the north of Cape York.

He attacked Britain for not building up Russia against Japan, which he believed would claim leadership of China and India.

The nature of Australian anti-imperialism became clearer when Maloney advocated granting India her independence in order to prevent her falling into the clutches of Japan. But this concession can be no more than a delaying tactic, since 'The awakened East, which, obedient to the natural laws of expansion, or in retaliation, or in the undying and unchangeable desire of conquest, must seek to advance'. Consequently,

> it is the business of the Commonwealth to begin forthwith to arm every man, to fence with the latest and most terrible scientific devices, every port, to establish armouries, and arsenals, to put its people in a position both to make and wield arms, so that the whole may stand as one strong man, well-armed whenever the foe may seek to intrude.

Anticipating Curtin by thirty-six years, Maloney ended with a call for an alliance with the United States:

> The road thither may be very distasteful to much that is aggressively, rather than self-sacrificingly, British. But even if, with cap in hand, it were better thither, and with that purpose, than ultimately, with sackcloth on our loins and ashes on our heads, to put our neck beneath the heel of the Eastern conqueror.

Maloney was far from being alone in his advocacy of a U.S. alliance, often in preference to ties with Britain.

On 1 July 1911, *Lone Hand* pointed out that 'Against the two white peoples with important establishments in the Pacific, the United States and Australia, are arrayed the millions of brown men, ambitious, arrogant and poor'. On 17 March 1914, Winston Churchill told the House of Commons: 'If the power of Great Britain were shattered on the sea, the only course of the five millions of white men in the Pacific would be to seek the protection of the United States'. Hughes reasoned that 'Nothing but the fact that America possesses a population of eighty million, and that any attempt to crush such a country would demand the forces of a nation at least similarly numerous ... causes Japan to hesitate to declare war'. Although Australia had a population of five million, 'we are isolated from the rest of the world, and we have a second rate, or third rate, naval detachment, which under the terms of the Naval Agreement, may, at any moment, be withdrawn'.

The practical impetus came from the prime minister, Alfred Deakin, who in 1909 made 'a proposition of the highest international importance' when he suggested to the British government that the protective guarantees of the U.S. Monroe doctrine be extended to cover the South Pacific. The year before, Deakin had caused a sensation when he bypassed the Foreign Office to invite the U.S. fleet to Australia. His request was a twofold snub to Britain. First, it indicated Deakin's lack of faith in the Royal Navy; secondly, it broke protocol for a Dominion to engage in its own diplomacy. Deakin was not

worried about Britain's sensibilities, as he confided to Richard Jebb:

> The visit of the United States Fleet is universally popular here not so much because of our blood affection for the Americans though that is sincere but because of distrust of the Yellow race in the North Pacific and our recognition of the 'entente cordiale' spreading among all white races who realise the Yellow Peril to Caucasian civilisation, creeds and politics.

Not that the US visit was without its racial problems. The *Age*, very much in favour of the visitation, none the less played up the fiendish appearance of Black crewmen, as in its report of the robbery of a woman in Auckland, or their lack of civilised manners and childlike 'coonery' as seen in a Sydney bar.

New Zealanders were, as usual, somewhat more reluctant to break with Britain, as was underlined when one member told the House of Representatives that he was

> not going to Auckland to welcome the American Fleet as the future saviours of this Dominion from the yellow fiend ... to go there and grovel before our visitors and say 'John Bull is too old and feeble now to protect us; we come to you, Uncle Sam, to save us from the Chinese and Japanese' ... but if the time does come when the white race has to fight the yellow one ... it will not be only the Stars and Stripes that will float in the Pacific Ocean — the Union Jack will be there also to the front as usual, and I dare say the fleets of other nations as well.

Although the speaker may not have been in sympathy with the proposal to ally Australasia with the United States, he left no doubt that such an alliance was the issue.

The reasons for such an alliance were clearly stated by the Wellington *Evening Post* for 10 August 1908:

> Instead of inspiring us with the enthusiasm it aroused in the Mother Country, the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, more particularly in its later and more intimate phase, has been received here with not a little suspicion and uneasiness. If she had no white colonies in the Pacific, Britain's alliance with Japan might be an admirable thing from every point of view; but she cannot expect it to be so

regarded by free colonists who see their country exposed to the risk of being turned from white to yellow by her entanglement with an Oriental power. As the champion of white ascendency in the Pacific, America, therefore, represents the ideals of Australia and New Zealand far better than Britain has hitherto been able to do in this respect.

Imagine, if possible, the effect that the following item would have upon the Australian population were it to appear in tomorrow's newspapers:

It was announced today in Washington that the Senate has ratified a Treaty between the People's Republic of China and the United States of America. Complete details of the Treaty will not be made public but it is reliably understood that the United States will withdraw most of her forces from the Pacific in order to concentrate on her Atlantic responsibilities. American obligations under ANZUS will henceforth be fulfilled by Communist China.

Although no comparable announcement was ever made by Britain in relation to Japan, it eventually became clear to Australasia that the practical consequence of the Anglo-Japanese alliance was of this character.

Before the Anglo-Japanese alliance was signed in 1902, the dominions were neither consulted nor unduly alarmed. Only after Japan's martial, or rather naval, prowess revealed itself in 1904 did the alliance become a source of concern. Britain had initiated the Treaty in order to contain Russia; with the destruction of the Russian fleet, Britain felt free to remove five battleships from the China station. Australasia did not share this summation. Rather, it felt that the emergence of Japan should have led to an increase in the size of British forces in the Pacific. For, as Billy Hughes observed, 'save for our alliance with Japan, never were people in as parlous a position as we'.

No simple solution arose to the problems presented by the alliance. Unlovely as Japan appeared as an ally, the prospect of Japan as an enemy, moreover as an enemy tied to Germany,

was far more horrific. This ambivalence persisted until 1921 when Hughes, who had been very rude to the Japanese at the Versailles peace settlement in 1919, fought hard to preserve the Anglo-Japanese alliance.

British reluctance to spell out the full import of the alliance was matched only by Australia's unwillingness to find it out. The moment of truth came when the new Labor prime minister, Andrew Fisher, went to London for the 1911 Imperial Conference. Before leaving Australia, Fisher told a meeting at Ballarat that he would not hesitate to haul down the Union Jack if Australia's interests demanded it. In other words, he would ally Australia with the United States if that were the only way he could save Australia from the Japanese. Once in England, Fisher began to see the wisdom of Sir Edward Grey's argument that

> if we denounce the Japanese Alliance we can no longer rely on the assistance of the Japanese Fleet and we must prepare for the possibility that Japan may enter into arrangements which may bring her into hostility with us.

Fisher ended up by advocating a policy of 'All the Way with Edward Grey'.

By promising Britain total loyalty, the Australasians, particularly the New Zealanders, hoped to secure Britain's unequivocal support in return. Matters did not remain at this pass. More and more, Britain concentrated her navy in the Atlantic and delegated the task of defending the Pacific to Japan.

Moreover, a new First Lord of the Admiralty, Winston Churchill, had spelt out to the Pacific dominions what his predecessors had been so solicitious in concealing from them. Even then, the Prime Minister of New Zealand, Massey, had difficulty in grasping the situation. 'I do not want to do Mr Churchill an injustice', he said, 'but if he means that the people of Australia and New Zealand are to be satisfied with the protection afforded by Japanese ships and Japanese sailors, then Mr Churchill is very much mistaken'. The Australian Prime

Minister, Joseph Cook, was no less astute and declared that 'when Australia was asked to rely on the Japanese Treaty alone for peace in the Pacific a very serious situation was created'. It was all very well to have a scrap of paper with the Japanese signatures upon it, but surely no one could trust slit-eyed devils who, as Hughes had said, possessed vices so terrible that they could only be hinted at.

Australia's worst fears were realised with the outbreak of war in August 1914. In the preceding May, George Pearce, in response to a request from the Governor-General, had outlined Labor's attitudes on defence. He laid particular stress on the role of naval defence, insisting that 'there ought to be a British Fleet for the Pacific, [as] without it ... we are compelled to allow our policy to be dictated by our ally'. The truth of this comment became all too clear when Australia failed to occupy all of Germany's Pacific possessions because it was fully involved in tracking down German battleships.

At the outbreak of hostilities, Britain advised Japan that its assistance would not be required and that Australia and New Zealand would take possession of the German colonies. This plan was upset by the escape of von Spee's squadron into the Pacific. The Japanese navy was called in and visited German possessions north of the equator; pressure built up in Japan to annex these islands. The Colonial Office tried to outmanoeuvre Japan, but by November, when the Australian expedition was ready to leave, Japan had occupied all important islands north of the equator. When it looked as if Japan might relinquish her newly won control of the island of Yap to the Australians, riots in Japan provoked fears that, if concessions were made, the pro-British party would be replaced by pro-Germans. Australia was surprised and hostile, yet as always had to walk the tightrope between restricting Japan and retaining her goodwill. By the end of 1914, Australia and Japan were direct neighbours; each had advanced towards the other in an atmosphere of mistrust.

When the European war did not end by Christmas, Britain

was reluctantly forced to call upon Japan for more assistance. This reliance posed a serious problem for Australia. The more Britain leant on Japan, the greater would be Japan's say in any postwar settlement. In particular, Japan would most certainly annex the Pacific islands it was holding and might even make demands for immigration rights to Australia.

CONSCRIPTION

The conscription disputes of 1916–17 tell a different story in the light of this most uneasy of alliances. All the old reasons, ranging from outraged Irish feelings to Hughes' vanity, retain their relevance. Accounts that ignore the government's perception of a Japanese menace are inadequate to the point of being wrong.

The traditional version of Hughes' decision to introduce conscription gives central importance to his visit to London in April 1916 where it is alleged he was duchessed and deceived concerning recruitment figures. Both of these might well have happened, though Hughes was the least likely Australian to fall for either. He heard more grevious matters, as he explained to his deputy, Pearce, in a letter dated 21 April 1916:

> The position is aggravated — I will not say it is critical — by the fact that Britain has approached Japan with a view to obtaining naval (and, or, military assistance) — say in the Mediterranean — and that the Japanese Government, while ready to grant this, asks for some evidence of Britain's friendliness to her in order possibly to justify her action or placate the opposition. And, as Grey says, if we say: Well we are very friendly towards you and we want your aid to win this war — *but* — (1) you must not get any concessions in China; (2) your people cannot come to Australia; (3) you are not to be allowed most favoured nation treatment with Australia (or other parts of the Empire), Japan can hardly be expected to treat our protestations of friendship very seriously.

That Grey had sounded Hughes out as to what concessions

could be made to Japan is evident from another passage in the letter to Pearce: 'I told Grey that Australia would fight to the last ditch rather than allow Japanese to enter Australia. Upon that point we were adamant'. Before the end of the year, Hughes had come to believe that the best way to keep the Japanese out of Australia was to lessen Britain's dependence on Japan. Australia's last-ditch fight would take place in France with conscripts.

On Hughes' return from England he spoke in Adelaide of the danger from Asia. *His speech was censored* under the War Precautions Act which forbade criticism of allied nations. This rule applied particularly to criticism of Japan. Any insult might provoke a crisis in Japan and result in a pro-German Cabinet there. The censorship was effective and it is consequently impossible to determine from newspaper reports how much importance Hughes and his colleagues attached to their fear of Japan in their pro-conscriptionist campaign. We are not reduced to Hughes' April letter to Pearce, since the government's increasing concern with Japan is evident in its actions, if not in its published statements.

In May 1916, the Australian government cabled Britain requesting a reallocation of Allied warships so as to remove Japanese vessels from Australian waters. In June, the Defence Department brought a lecturer from overseas to teach Japanese to selected army staff cadets. This move was all the more remarkable when the shortage of officers for the Western Front is remembered. No less significant was the secret session of federal parliament held on 31 August 1916, where Hughes 'referred to the danger to which Australia was exposed, owing to her close proximity to hordes of the coloured races, with particular reference to Japan, who although our ally in the then World War, might at some future time be our enemy'.

In the course of the plebiscite campaigns, pro-conscriptionists such as Deakin and Senator Bakhap advocated a 'Yes' vote 'to keep Australia white'. This attitude is

inexplicable except in terms of the Japanese menace. Pro-conscriptionists argued that the only way to keep Australia safe from Japan was to support Britain to the hilt in the hope that, while Britain remained undefeated in Europe, Japan would not dare to advance in the Pacific.

Even if Britain were undefeated, all was not automatically well. A weakened Britain might call upon Japan for more aid in return for postwar concessions that could only be disagreeable to Australia. Alternatively, a wounded British empire would lead the Japanese to question the worth of their alliance, possibly to the extent that the pro-German faction would come to power in Tokyo. All three possibilities pointed to the same conclusion: Australia must give total support to Britain. In Henry Lawson's phrase: 'Conscription had to be!'

From this evidence, it is clear that Pearce, Hughes and Deakin had not forsaken their nationalist loyalties for imperial ones. Rather they differed from their erstwhile colleagues and supporters only in the tactics they would use to best defend Australia's interests.

Anti-conscriptionists were equally concerned with the threat from Japan. The most notable of these was J. H. Catts, MHR, who left his office as director of voluntary recruiting in New South Wales in June 1916 to become secretary of the 'vote no conscription' campaign three months later. Catts was in favour of Britain winning, but not in favour of leaving Australia defenceless. He was arrested seven times under the War Precautions Act because 'he dared to tell the truth concerning the War aims of Japan'. A typical statement from him proclaimed:

> Instead of sending every available man left in Australia out of this country, the remaining manhood should be prepared for the great struggle of the future ... He could not sufficiently emphasise Australia's decidedly perilous position from the Japanese menace.

The ALP's paper in Victoria, *Labor Call* (6 April 1916), braved

the censorship to argue in an article entitled 'Back to Barbarism' that:

> While the Whites are butchering each other, Asia is waiting and grinning. Behind the fatalistic Buddha stands a new nation with knowledge of War and Cunning, to lead the Asiatic hundreds of millions ... None of the Allies can reproach Germany for her alliance with bloodthirsty, barbarous Asiatics. Germany did not begin the thing. The other warring nations brought their savages, Africans of the lower type, Mohammedans of a better type and hordes from Asia to help kill the Europeans. The immediate result of this war ... will be a vast Asiatic conquest, a period of darkness and misery over Europe.

The attack on Pearl Harbor came as no surprise to Australia, but fulfilled the anxieties of a century.

RACE WAR

Before the outbreak of the Great War, Labor had succeeded in appropriating the defence preparedness of the Commonwealth. Deakin's efforts had been hamstrung by the Constitutional limits on spending, which ended in 1910, the year Labor gained absolute control of both Houses of the Commonwealth Parliament. This fiscal change enabled Fisher to spend far more lavishly, and Commonwealth defence expenditure rose 300 per cent between 1910 and 1913. To some extent, Labor paid for and reaped the benefits of policies initiated by Deakin but, in the minds of a large majority of the electorate, Labor had emerged as the 'Defend Australia' party. When war broke out a month before the 1914 elections, it was natural for Labor to receive the highest percentage vote it has ever obtained in a Commonwealth election.

Labor could not escape the duality of its achievement. The more successful it was at denying its augmented and recently self-aware working-class component, the greater danger it ran of splitting if this contingent found itself being neglected. This

danger deepened during the Great War when unemployment rose and real wages fell. The first victim of the Labor dilemma was George Pearce, the Minister of Defence, who was unofficially expelled by important sections of the Victorian Party early in 1915. Wider disillusionment followed the abandonment in December 1915 of the Powers referendum, which would have given the government control over prices. Almost a year before Hughes walked out of the caucus meeting after the defeat of conscription, *Labor Call* asked, 'Is the Prime Minister of the Commonwealth a Labor Member or the representative of the Chamber of Commerce and the Employers' Federation?'

Moreover, Hughes and Pearce seemed prepared to sacrifice the 'White Australia' policy. Nothing was further from the truth, yet, to a sizeable portion of Labor supporters, conscription presented that danger. Either coloureds would be needed to replace whites at the workplace, as in France, or Australia would be so depleted of defenders that Japan would find her an easy prey. *Labor Call* put its claim in August 1915:

> The White Australia question is going to be Australia's *bête noire* in the near future. How is Australia going to prohibit Indians or Japs, our allies, entering her gates? We don't hear much about the monkey and the turbaned man, nowadays. The caricatures in the *Bulletin* and the other comics are missing.

Hughes might have been able to ride out the storm around his economic policy; without the appeal to racism he was unable to hold to him all the Party's centre and right. Hughes lost control of the Labor Party when he was deprived of racism as a weapon, just as Labor lost its electoral supremacy because it could not sustain its militarist appeals in the face of sectional economic demands. Conscriptors of the last man marched one way, while collectors of the last shilling departed in the other.

Labor's resurgence in 1940 returned to this point. As the custodian of 'White Australia', the Labor Party had the advan-

tage once the military threat came from Japan. The electorate could trust Labor to be implacable in its opposition to a 'Yellow Peril'. A pro-war government advertisement in April 1942 confirmed this venom: 'We've always despised them', it said, 'now we must smash them'.

SIX
Militarists

The martial spirit is strong in all the colonies ... Plain living and high thinking are no more popular with us than with our kinsfolk elsewhere, but plain living and hard fighting, if on horseback, come very near indeed to the ideal of thousands of young Australians ...

Alfred Deakin, *The Federal Story*

The defeat of the conscription plebiscites in 1916 and 1917 nourished the legend of anti-militarism as a component of Australian radical nationalism. The defeat of the plebiscites was not an anti-war vote. An examination of militarism in Australia will define its nature more closely.

At the beginning of Chapter 1 of *The Australian Legend*, Russel Ward claimed that the legendary Australian 'hates officiousness and authority, especially when these qualities are embodied in military officers'. Yet he also wrote, some 229 pages further on, that 'the Australian tradition being what it is, it is natural that it should be particularly potent in wartime, because active military service reproduces so many of the conditions of life in the nomad tribe'. Moreover, he clinched his discourse on the 'Apotheosis of the Nomad Tribe' by quoting a war poem in full. This seeming contradiction can be resolved once it is realised that before 1914 anti-militarism in Australia did not mean opposition to war but opposition to wars fought

by military cliques. The demand was not to end war, but a call for all men to share in the fighting. Universal military service was once more the companion of universal suffrage.

The revolutionary armies of France were the first to put this ideal into practice with a *levée en masse*. It was enshrined in the US Bill of Rights, which recognised that 'A well-regulated militia being necessary to the security of a free state, the right of the people to bear arms shall not be infringed'. Indeed, it would appear that compulsory military service is the usual way in which new or revolutionary states bind their members together, and to the state.

Moreover, universal conscription was a radical, at times a revolutionary, demand. It existed among the Chartists: Fergus O'Connor, for example, linked his 'Land Plan' with a national militia 'who will fly to the cry of "My Cottage and my Country are in danger" '. In line with this tradition, 'The New Constitution and Order of Things', proposed in Victoria the day after the attack on the stockade of Eureka, contained three military proposals out of eight. One was that 'Every male between sixteen and sixty years of age to be at once enrolled as citizen soldiers; each man to provide and bear arms and ammunition; elect officers'. That demand had two sources. First, there was the threat of Russian attack; secondly, there was a belief, amply justified at Eureka, that a 'standing army means the military caste, altogether antagonistic to democratic practices and ideals'.

This view was strengthened by Colonel Tom Price's command to 'aim low, boys, and lay them out!' during the Maritime strike of 1890, and the Queensland Rifles' suppression of the shearers' strike around Barcaldine in 1891. Shortly afterwards, when radical nationalists perceived Australia to be in need of an army they had no hesitation in choosing universal service. A democratic militarism was the logical consequence of our radical nationalism.

Militarism was the last component to be added to Austra-

lia's radical nationalism. Although it found early support from people like Henry Lawson and Billy Hughes, it was not until after the defeat of Russia by Japan in 1904–05 that it gained almost universal acceptance. In this hesitancy, Australia was not exceptional. After the final defeat of Napoleon in 1815, Britain engaged in only minor wars — Crimea included — for the next one hundred years. Despite innumerable skirmishes and scares, 'total war' was absent for almost a century.

Equally important was the nature of Britain's, and Australia's, strategic requirements. It was very easy for Britain to maintain a holier-than-thou attitude towards German militarism because Britain's defence lay in its navy. Navalism has somehow never been as reprehensible. Australia in the nineteenth century was likewise dependent on naval defence, and on Britain's navy at that. Because Australia's defence was someone else's responsibility, it could avoid martial fervour, except when Britain was at war, as in Crimea, the Sudan, and against the Boers. Australia's imperial patriotism on such occasions was no less than that of Britain herself and a good deal more intense than Canada's.

Despite the predominance of navalism, even Britain showed some signs of militarism around 1870 and after. This shift was connected with the Franco-Prussian war, but was more generally the natural accompaniment to the acquisition of a new empire. Two relevant books appeared. Chesney's *Battle of Dorking* in 1871 told of the repulsion of an invasion of England and heralded a revival of British pride in her fighting men. Clausewitz's *On War* was published the following year.

Writing in 1902, Herbert Spencer observed that 'for a generation past, under cover of the forms of a religion which preaches peace, love, forgiveness, there has been a perpetual shouting of the words "war" and "blood", "fire", and "battle"', while 'certain hymns are used in a manner which substitutes for the spiritual enemy the human enemy'. The working class was not immune to this transformed theology,

thanks to the work of the Salvation Army. Henry Lawson's militarism swelled in praise of 'Booth's Drum'.

Militarism in Australia had proponents before it became a way of life. An *Age* editorial (written by Pearson) in July 1883 claimed that 'Our men are splendid material for an army; very much above the average of the line in physique and intelligence'. As Victorian Minister of Public Instruction, Pearson made every effort to prepare his charges for war: by 1890, some 14 000 state school children were taking military drill and about 2000 were being trained as cadets to form a 'reserve, from which the militia could be quickly recruited in any emergency'.

S. G. Firth argued that the pre-1914 education system gave children ' "proper" ideas of conduct and "proper" attitudes to important issues: Australia's obligation to Britain, the true meaning of patriotism, the glory of war, Britain's place in history, the difference between good literature and bad, the hierarchy of races, the causes of progress'. He went on:

> About subjects such as these the public schools offered their pupils something more than mere facts, they offered them the 'truth'. Moreover, the child who came to believe in the world of the *Commonwealth School Paper* would have been ... a person proud of belonging to the British race and the civilisation which it was taking to inferior races, confident that British courage and armaments held the secret of British victory, determined to do his duty and play the game like a true patriot, ready to die for his country and Empire, and aware that he might soon be called upon to make that sacrifice.

William Lane's *Boomerang* was often criticised for its militaristic utterances by the Sydney anarchist S. A. Rosa who, in 1895, published a 'novel' entitled *Oliver Spence, the Australian Caesar*, which described the coming to power of a radical military dictator.

The Boer War broke upon the new century and the new

Commonwealth with the militaristic ardour that was to stamp their characters. Chris Brennan's poetic sequence *The Burden of Tyre* expressed his horror at the appearance of the militarism he had learnt so much to dread during his years in Germany. H. B. Higgins lost his seat in parliament because of his anti-war opinions. The ambiguous response of Australian radical nationalists to the Boer War stemmed not from any anti-imperialist sentiment but from their vision of the Boer as the prototype of the Australian warrior who would eventually have to fight to keep Australia white.

Militarism in Australia was the logical outcome of the racism described above. Time and again, Labor leaders made the connection explicit. 'It is useless to say "peace" ', Hughes told the House of Representatives in 1907, 'when there is no peace'. He continued:

> We should be prepared for the serious contingency of warfare, which will inevitably overtake us sooner or later. Our population is less than five million, and we propose to maintain the policy of excluding coloured persons from the country, although Australia is within a few days steaming distance of countries inhabited by nearly a thousand million coloured people. We can maintain this policy only by preparing to defend ourselves by an armed force.

Senator Pearce likewise had been convinced that 'The only doctrine these races respect is the doctrine of force. Our white Australia legislation is so much waste paper unless we have rifles to back it up'. Or, as the *Worker* (15 March 1905) declared: 'Militarism is a curse of the greatest, but it is less a curse than the armed occupation of your country by invaders — possibly by invaders of an inferior race'.

This argument carried the vote in favour of conscription at the 1908 Labor Conference where the party's federal leader, J. C. Watson, stressed that Australia 'had to face the position with respect to a people who were clever and warlike and who were not governed by altruistic motives'. For good measure he invoked the prospect 'of the awakening of the sleeping giant

— China'. At the 1913 Australian Workers Association conference, a motion condemning the Commonwealth's compulsory military scheme was defeated on the grounds of the danger of an Asiatic invasion.

This fear worked against Hughes in the 1916–17 plebiscites because his success would have left Australia even more vulnerable to attack. The 'yellow peril' had a belated triumph at the 1918 Federal Labor Conference in Perth. Despite the recent departure from Labor's ranks of most of the more vociferous warmongers, the conference came out in favour of continuing with compulsory military training for service within Australia. Some delegates were converted to support when extracts from Kayahara Kwazan's *Third Empire* were read: 'Japan's Destiny lies South of the Equator ... Australia is indeed a land destined for the Japanese by God, but stolen, years ago, by the English. There is really no need for hesitation in our desire to go to Australia'. According to a letter of Don Cameron's, which was intercepted by the censors, the fear of Japan resulted in some delegates voting against continued support for recruitment for the European war because it was leaving Australia helpless in the face of a probable Japanese assault.

The rise of democratic militarism in Australia can be traced through the career of its lifelong advocate, William Morris Hughes, 'the little digger', whose military career began in earnest in England in 1884 when he joined a volunteer battalion of the Royal Fusiliers. In an interview with the *Bulletin* (13 February 1901), Hughes sketched his approach to military questions, complete with the mythos of yeoman heroes:

> The standing army means the military caste, altogether antagonistic to democratic practices and ideals, as seen in the insolence and cruelty of the German officers to civilians. Citizen soldiers are cheaper, and the Boer War has proved their efficiency for defence. The whole population (male) ought to be trained to arms, every male between 18 and 21 undergoing three months training every

year, of which six weeks should be continuous. By 21, he should be a fair soldier and a respectable shot. After 21, the term might be shortened so long as he kept his shooting up to a standard. I take it this country doesn't want an offensive army, but an armed people who can shoot straight, and a regimental machine so that every man can fall automatically into his place no matter how suddenly the trouble comes. Straight shooting should be encouraged by assistance to rifle clubs and national prizes for good marksmanship. Encourage shooting till it becomes the national sport, as archery used to be in England.

In the first Commonwealth Parliament Hughes raised a lone Labor voice in his call for compulsory military training. By 1903 he had gained two supporters, J. C. Watson and W. C. Spence. The turning point came with the Russo-Japanese War. The year 1905 brought the formation of National Defence Leagues which counted among their numbers almost every Labor politician in the country, notably Hughes, Pearce, Holman, Maloney and, somewhat surprisingly, the liberal H. B. Higgins.

Thus strengthened, Hughes returned to the attack. In August 1907 he initiated a parliamentary debate on the motion

> That in order to effectively defend the Commonwealth against possible enemies, it is imperative that all able bodied adult males should be trained to the use of arms and instructed in such military or naval drill as may be necessary for the purpose.

Supporting his motion, Hughes spelt out the connection between universal suffrage and conscription:

> As we have gone so far in establishing an order of things in which every man and woman has an equal right to all the privileges and benefits conferred upon any person in the country, we must at least do something towards fitting ourselves to maintain this happy but unusual state of affairs. It must, then, I think, be admitted, that it is the duty of every man in a democracy to defend his country.

He concluded with an argument designed to appeal to his crit-

ics on the Left: socialists believe in compulsion and therefore should support conscription.

The socialists remained unconvinced. At the 1908 Labor Conference they were in a minority of seven against the twenty-four who supported 'the principle of compulsory training for all males ... as the only method of giving effect to the plank providing for a Citizen Defence Force'.

Armed with Labor's official sanction, Hughes' 1909 defence speech presaged his wartime oratory. He 'treated parliament to an emotional declamation of the oath of a Swiss soldier, in which he reached great heights of militaristic ardour!' So extreme had Hughes become that a week later the deputy leader of the New South Wales Labor Party, W. A. Holman, called upon all Labor men to repudiate publicly any idea that the movement to which they belonged 'was to be robbed of the opportunity of working out social reforms because of a mad spirit of Jingoistic nationalism — of military extravagance'.

Holman's plea went unanswered. In 1910 the Fisher Labor government introduced compulsory military training for all young adult males. Australia was the first country in the English-speaking world to adopt such legislation in peacetime. During the three years in which Labor held office, 1910–13, defence expenditure increased fourfold, until it accounted for almost a third of Commonwealth finance.

War gave Hughes an emotional environment in which his oratory reached such peaks that the Professor of Classics at Melbourne compared it to that of Demosthenes. The don translated some of it into Greek to prove his point. By 1916 Hughes was propounding that 'War prevents us from slipping into the abyss of degeneracy and from becoming flabby ... War has purged us, war has saved us from physical and moral degeneracy and decay'. In order to maintain a steady flow of these superior types, the minimum height of re-

cruits was lowered from 5 feet 6 inches in August 1914 to 5 feet in April 1917.

The case for militarism as a component of Australian radical nationalism remains incomplete without a word from the poets. Paterson, the Kipling of the South, spent the war years as remount officer with Allenby in the desert. Lawson's devotion to militarism is explored in another chapter.

K. S. Inglis's 1965 study of C. J. Dennis's *The Moods of Ginger Mick* traced Mick's progress from a larrikin to a dead hero at Gallipoli, in the course of which Mick's 'Pride o' class' is replaced by 'Pride of Nation and Race'. Mick 'has been ennobled by warfare. He gives up the booze for his country, gets physically fitter, becomes a corporal, and reflects: "I know wot I was born fer now, an' soljerin's me game" '. As Inglis pointed out, the Bloke is redeemed through his love of Doreen and through becoming a farmer. For Mick there can be no redemption outside death. Lawson employed the same theme in 'The Ballad of the Black Sheep'. An earlier poem by Dennis, 'The Austral-aise', alluded to the armies of revolutionary France. Six years before the Great War began, Dennis was mocking the jingo:

> Fellers of Australier
>   Cobbers, chaps and mates,
> Hear the — enermy,
>   Kickin' at the gates!
> Blow the — bugle,
>   Beat the — drum,
> Upper-cut and out the cow
>   To Kingdom — come!

Although militarism was a late corner to the nationalist tradition, it was by no means incidental to it. As the machinery for keeping Australia white, its importance is immediately established. Although its acceptance in the form of conscription was delayed until 1910, its roots lay within that view of man embodied in the mythical Australian with his attention to

physical attributes. Certainly, this outlook needed a major war before it could reveal its logic, just as the mythical bushman needed the war before his ethos could be accepted by the majority as their national type. It had to be a war. Only a mass sacrifice of individuals for the nation in defence of the Empire could bind together the hitherto diverse but nonetheless complementary strands of the Australian experience. Racism, democracy, nationalism and imperial loyalty formed ranks to storm the parapets at Gallipoli. Only with their reconciliation could Australians make a nation.

SEVEN
Navalists

By naval predominance, and that alone, the way has been kept clear for the unimpeded development, on British constitutional lines, of a group of flourishing states forming 'one continent-isle' whose bounds are 'the girding seas alone'.

E. Scott, *Terre Napoléon* (1910)

For a country with twenty thousand kilometres of coastline and situated twenty thousand kilometres from its principal market and major defender, it was natural that Australia should become highly sensitive to naval questions. Attention has already been paid to the fear of invasion, to democratic militarism, and to racism, particularly in reference to Japan. Analysis of the naval relationships that existed between Britain and Australia before 1914 will weld these forces into a pattern, within which disagreements between Britain and Australia were worked out.

Australia would have preferred to have been able to rely completely on Great Britain. Britain had demonstrated that it was not entirely reliable, since the interests of its 'nigger empire' were not always synonymous with those of Australia. Consequently, Australia followed a seemingly contradictory policy of alternatively falling all over Britain and of breaking away from her. If Australians were trying to have it both ways, most knew that their long-term interests lay with a strong

Britain. The rise of an Australian navy illustrated this conviction.

Early fears were confined to the possibility of a flying raid by Russian warships. Crimea in 1854 stimulated the Victorians to purchase a 580-ton war-steamer which would serve as a floating battery in Port Phillip. So concerned were the Australian colonies with their defences that in 1859 they alone of Britain's possessions were paying more than 50 per cent of their defence costs. Victoria, with the most to protect, paid £94 000, while Britain provided another £76 000.

Britain was becoming more economy-conscious. In 1862 the Mills Committee on defence planning decided that the colonies would be responsible for internal law and order, while Britain would help with protection from external attacks. All through the 1860s, Melbourne requested additional naval defences, but none of the schemes devised suited the Victorians, the Admiralty and the British Treasury. The disputes dragged into the 1880s. In 1881, for example, the Inter-Colonial Conference decided that colonial naval defences were entirely inadequate and ought to be increased by imperial expenditure.

Britain was not being obstructive without cause. The colonial governments wanted ships that could move out into the open seas in order to seize Pacific territories. Queensland purchased the *Gayundah* with this aim expressly in mind. Britain had no objection to coming to Australia's aid if she were attacked. Whitehall resisted being dragged into a European war because some colonial premier had attacked a French or German ship in order to indenture a few more labourers.

Matters came to a head after Britain refused to ratify Queensland's seizure of New Guinea in 1883. Two years later, the leader of the Opposition in Queensland, Samuel Griffith, endorsed the view that

> until the colonies take the matter to some extent in their own hands, that degree of security will not be attained which we

should like to feel, and which, with our geographical position and wealth, we are entitled to expect and bound to insist upon.

Nothing could be plainer; Australia was isolated and worth attacking but it was inadequately defended and consequently resentful.

The year 1887 saw the adoption of a naval agreement which, if not entirely satisfactory, went a long way to gaining as much as could be expected from Britain. The compact was to last ten years. Britain was to supply five fast cruisers and two torpedo gunboats at a cost to the colonies of little more than £120 000 p.a. for upkeep and depreciation. Most importantly, *the ships could not be removed from Australian waters without the consent of the colonies*. This clause overcame the major source of concern, since there was no point in paying for a fleet in peacetime if it were to be taken away once an attack became imminent.

Deakin was not pleased. In a lecture to the Australian Natives Association he expressed his desire

> to see the time when a powerful fleet for which Australia shall pay, will patrol our coasts and prevent the approach of any hostile cruisers; and I may perhaps even hope to see the day when Australia shall send out for the control of these seas a fleet built, manned, equipped and maintained by herself which would give her control of the Pacific.

His oratory led Deakin on to say more than he perhaps intended, if not more than he really believed. His address ended with a defiant call:

> Let each say 'our community is ready for defence, and if necessary for offence'. Then let the ambassadors of Britain take the position in the courts of foreign nations which ancient Rome took up at the court of Carthage, and say, 'We yield you peace or war; have which you will' and let us in these Australian colonies take as our motto 'Advance Australia!' but let us add also that gallant motto of old Scotland, 'Nemo me impune lacesset'.

Britain was barely sympathetic to either of Deakin's objec-

tives. It did not relish the prospect of Australian imperialism or of a major war, both of which Deakin seemed prepared to take in his stride.

There were, of course, some intrepid souls who, even in 1888, were prepared to oppose the annual naval grant to Britain on the grounds that Australia should devote itself wholeheartedly to building up its own fleet. While this outcome was the conclusion of Deakin's position, very few were prepared to forego British protection in order to launch upon such a major and, in the short term, risky undertaking. Most had to be content to build within the framework Britain offered. None the less, by the late 1880s the Australian colonies were better defended than the rest of the Empire. This situation altered during the 1890s when auxiliary Australian forces were allowed to run down partly because the 1887 agreement provided protection and partly because the colonies could not afford further expenses during the depression.

The signing of the first Anglo-Japanese alliance took place, unheralded, on 30 January 1902. Its scope was limited to offering each other support in China and Korea. It was not necessarily seen as such in Australia, which had just spent so much time in its first Commonwealth parliament devising means of keeping Japanese out. This British indiscretion was compounded five months later at the conference of colonial premiers which adopted a naval agreement totally reversing the 1887 policy. The Admiralty came forth with its strategy of 'one sea, one fleet' arguing that:

(i) Naval Defence cannot be a matter of merely local interest;
(ii) Naval Defence consists of a general offensive designed to destroy the enemy ships wherever they may be;
(iii) Since 'the seas are one', this offensive must be under a single control; therefore there must be a single Imperial Navy.

The New Zealand Premier, Seddon, concurred that an enemy attack on Australasian trade would centre at the Cape of Good Hope and not off the coasts of Australia or New Zealand.

Only an imperial fleet would cope with this style of engage-
ment. The final agreement showed some sensitivity to Austra-
lian opinion. The Admiralty was bound to maintain a fleet in
the western Pacific but was free to shift it anywhere in the
Australian, China or East Indies stations. This power of re-
moval was a blow at the 1887 principle under which ships on
the Australian station could be moved only with the assent of
the colonial governments. After 1902, as the naval historian
A. W. Jose pointed out, 'The new squadron was not theirs at
all; nay, it was deliberately assigned for imperial duties in the
very sphere — the China seas — to which a large body of Aus-
tralians had already taken grave objection'.

Responses in Australia were predictably hostile. Barton's
reputation suffered irreparable damage as a consequence of his
acquiescence. Reid and the Labor Party attacked, while
Deakin, though in the ministry, was less than enthusiastic. The
necessary Validation Act was passed only after Barton had
made the vote one of confidence and with the addition of a
clause whereby 'purely Australian naval defence forces' were
to be maintained in addition to the new imperial squadron.
'Such Australian forces, ships and armament ... shall be main-
tained by the Commonwealth and be solely under its control.'

Various schemes emanated from Australia in the wake of
Japan's accession to Pacific pre-eminence. These plans were
the work of Captain William Creswell who had been ap-
pointed Director of Commonwealth Naval Forces late in
1904. Deakin realised that the 1902 agreement would not eas-
ily be overthrown. Since Commonwealth expenditures were
restricted till 1911, an Australian navy could be financed only
with Admiralty support and would attain maximum effective-
ness only if the Admiralty accepted it as part of its strategic
planning. Britain was not willing to agree, for reasons that
Deakin explained to the House in 1907:

> At the very outset [of the Conference of 1907], the Prime Minister
> of Great Britain met us with the frank avowal that the British

Government preferred no claim for money in relation to naval defence, and went on to add the extremely pregnant statement that the control of naval defence and foreign affairs must always go together. If honourable members appreciate the force of the axiom, they will see that it implies such both now and in the future. It implies that for the present, seeing that we have no voice in foreign affairs, we are not obliged to take any part in Imperial naval defence. It implies, also, with equal clearness, that when we do take part in naval defence, we shall be entitled to a share in the direction of foreign affairs.

This reasoning made the possession of a navy vital to Australia. Influence on foreign affairs meant influence on Britain's relations with Japan, which meant life or death to Australia.

After much negotiation, Deakin realised that Britain would give in only to action, not to mere entreaty. In 1908, he indulged in the boldest act of foreign policy and invited President Roosevelt to send his 'Great White Fleet' on a visit to Australia. Deakin's purpose was twofold: he wanted to shock London and to stimulate among Australians the demand for a local navy. In both he was successful and the *Age* (3 August 1908) publicised his view:

Without such a navy a war declared tomorrow between Britain and almost any hostile Power would infallibly involve us in the direct trouble. The Imperial Australian squadron, poor thing that it is, would be withdrawn immediately from our waters to the more distant scenes of conflict. Of this there is not the smallest shadow of doubt. Britain has repeatedly warned us that we must expect it. Our situation then would be positively hopeless, hideously helpless.

Deakin did not confine himself to propaganda. He was proceeding to build a navy for local defence purposes when he was replaced as prime minister by Andrew Fisher, who took over the plan. Deakin's initiative paid dividends. In 1909 the British government willingly agreed to Fisher's suggestion for an imperial defence conference to discuss Australia's moves and to deal with the *Dreadnought* scare.

Australian response to the *Dreadnought* scare is illustrative of the delicate, and seemingly ambivalent, balance that marked relations with Britain. Australasians wanted Britain to rule the waves. Whenever it appeared that she might no longer do so, they rushed to assist her. The matter was never simple. There were other threats, other alliances, particularly with Japan. New Zealand recognised that it could never provide itself with adequate naval protection and so did everything it could, by word and deed, to increase the power of the imperial forces. In 1909, it gave Britain a battleship for reasons which Churchill most eloquently explained to the House of Commons five years later:

> In giving a splendid ship to strengthen the British Navy at a decisive point, wherever that point may be, according to the best principles of naval strategy, the Dominion of New Zealand have provided in the most effective way alike for their own and for the common security. No greater insight into political and strategical points has ever been shown by a community hitherto unversed in military matters. Two or three Australian and New Zealand Dreadnoughts, if brought into line in the decisive theatre, might turn the scale and make victory not merely certain but complete. The same two or three Dreadnoughts in Australian waters would be useless the day after the defeat of the British Navy in home waters. Their existence would only serve to prolong the agony without altering the course of events. Their effectiveness would have been destroyed by events which had taken place on the other side of the globe, just as surely as if they had been sunk in the battle.

By this time, New Zealand was not so sure of the wisdom of its action. New Zealand's attachment to Britain was not purely a matter of sentiment or climatic similarity, but the result of its total dependency. It never considered, as some Australians did, that it could stand alone. New Zealand had but one course it could follow, that of complete involvement with Britain. Australia was in a position to spend some taxes either way.

This division was apparent in Australia's reply to the *Dreadnought* scare. Deakin and the *Age*, both of whom had

campaigned vigorously for years for a local navy, came out in favour of donating a Dreadnought or its equivalent to Britain, the alternative being preferable because it might mean an increase in local forces. Fisher spoke for the 'Defend Australia' faction and refused to budge from the demand for a local fleet, though he was prepared to make compromises in order to achieve it.

In his study of *The Dominion Partnership in Imperial Defence*, Professor D. C. Gordon pointed to three problems associated with the creation of an Australian navy:

1   Australia was not a sovereign state yet its ships would range the high seas, making Britain responsible for their actions.
2   How could Australia legislate for control of its sailors once they were outside its territorial waters?
3   How could uniformity of training and discipline with the Royal Navy be secured so that there would be ample opportunity for promotion and integration should the need arise?

Fisher confronted these problems in 1909 when his party was in a minority and hard-pressed by the embryonic coalition of oppositions around the issue of defence. To placate British and local distress Fisher agreed to the following:

1   When the ships went beyond the Australian station they would be under the command of the senior officer of the Royal Navy on that station.
2   Naval discipline could rest with the Royal Navy.
3   In time of war or other emergency, all vessels would come under the control of the Admiralty.

This final point was withdrawn by Deakin in 1910, restored by Fisher in 1911, and acted upon by Cook in 1914.

When the conference on imperial defence met in July 1909 it adopted a scheme which, if it had been carried out, would

have satisfied at one extreme those Australians who wanted
their own navy, and at the other extreme those New Zealand-
ers who believed in augmented imperial forces. It was decided
to establish a Pacific fleet based on three units — an Australian
one to be provided wholly by Australia; an East Indies one by
Britain; and a China one by Britain using the New Zealand
Dreadnought as its armoured cruiser.

As it transpired, the new agreement was broken in two im-
portant respects. First, the *New Zealand* was placed in the
North Sea and not in the Pacific; second, Britain failed to fur-
nish a third vessel similar to the *New Zealand* and the *Austra-*
lia for the East Indies unit. Moreover, both were done without
consultation. This failure resulted from Britain's increasing
concern at German naval strength in the North Sea and Chur-
chill's plans to station *all* the Dreadnoughts at Gibraltar
where, as he told the House of Commons on 26 March 1913,
they would be twenty-eight days steam from Sydney,
thirty-two days from New Zealand, and 'the Channel a very
much shorter time'. The message finally penetrated to New
Zealand, which in December 1913 authorised expenditure on
its own naval force because, the Defence Minister, Colonel
Allen, pointed out, 'The Chief partner of the 1909 Agreement
— namely, the Mother Country — has failed to carry out her
obligation'.

Professor Gordon's conclusion was apt:

> When the war came there was no Eastern Fleet of the Empire. The
> most powerful vessel on the China Station was of the pre-Dread-
> nought era, and the most powerful form of British Power in the
> Pacific was the Australian unit, which had alone been carried to
> completion along the lines of the 1909 understanding.

The *Bulletin* (2 April 1914) could lament that the Pacific was
now a Japanese sea.

Australia's commitment to a 'White Ocean Policy' for the
Pacific was evidenced in a speech by the Labor Member for
Melbourne, Dr Maloney, to the House of Representatives on

28 August 1912. Maloney subsequently issued the speech as a pamphlet under the title 'Proposal for Building an Empire Fleet', which sums up his intention. Significantly, he began by recalling that he 'was returned to the State Parliament as an avowed republican, but returned from that visit to the East with my views modified, and with the intention, so far as I was able, by thought or speech, to keep firm and strong the links that bind us with the Home Land'.

Ever since his visit to Japan in 1904 when his 'eyes were first permitted to see something of the concentrated millions of the East ... the subject to which I propose to address myself today has occupied my thought'. Just how great this attachment to the Empire had become revealed itself when he described his proposal as 'coming from one born in Australia, and loving his native land, with the blood from an English mother coursing through his veins, and desirous of giving to the country that gave his mother birth the best of his help as far as voice, vote or hand can do it'.

In reply to an interjection, Maloney offered to volunteer himself in the event of war, if it would help. The burden of his argument was that land armies were not sufficient to the task. Only an Empire fleet could prevent Australians from 'becoming German helots or Japanese slaves'. Prophetically, he realised that, in order to attack Australia, Japan would have first to attack the Philippines, which would bring the United States to our rescue.

Maloney never became specific in his proposals, but he showed a keen recognition of the dangers to Australia inherent in the reigning naval agreement and in the weakness of the Australian fleet:

> If England were to go down, the result would be disastrous to the Anglo-Celtic-Saxon race all the world over, whether they were living under the Stars and Stripes, the Union Jack, or our Australian flag. If England were only injured in the northern seas, we should be rendered helpless against one of the greatest fighting na-

tions the world has ever known. What could we do unaided against such a nation? We might die bravely in defence of our country — and I know that Australians would gamely face any odds — but ... victory lies in large battalions of men.

Maloney concluded with a torrent of imperial rhetoric:

The seat of the British Empire is in Europe; the heart of the race is in the capital of the English world. If that be injured or destroyed then all our hopes and ideals, the greatest the world has seen, must sink into the gloom of oblivion, and the world be the poorer, that our civilisation, with all its wider life and greater opportunities, was strangled ere it had a chance.

Not bad for a pro-Boer.

EIGHT
Poets

Poetry is the true nation-maker; yea, mayhap at the Last Day the nations shall be judged by the poets they have produced!

<div align="right">Bernard O'Dowd, 1904</div>

There are those whose historical good sense makes them doubt statistics, quotations, footnotes and other paraphernalia of scholarship. If any such have opened this book they will not have read any of the preceding chapters but, knowing gold from dross, will have turned to the chapter on poets who are the true measure of Australian radicalism and nationalism. Even readers who have followed the argument from the first page may be wondering what the balladists and versifiers thought about the goings on recounted, and it would be impolite to leave so many unconvinced through lack of their favourite evidence. Notice will be paid to three poets: Bernard O'Dowd, A. H. Adams and Henry Lawson.

It is difficult to disentangle O'Dowd the social reformer from O'Dowd the nationalist. Indeed, he often considered social reform as a step towards Australian greatness rather than as a good thing for its own sake. His most widely known poem, 'Australia', begins by counterposing possible futures:

Last sea-thing dredged by sailor Time from Space,
Are you a drift Sargasso, where the West
In halcyon calm rebuilds her fatal nest?

Or Delos of a coming Sun-God's race?
Are you for Light, and trimmed, with oil in place,
Or but a Will o' Wisp or marshy quest?
A new demesne for Mammon to infest?
Or lurks millennial Eden 'neath your face?

The conclusion, however, is optimistic, since there is a

Cross upon your forehead sky,
A virgin helpmate Ocean at your knees.

This sonnet was written before 1901. Any doubts O'Dowd may have had concerning Australia's greatness were soon dispelled and in 'Our Land' Australia becomes a 'New Jerusalem':

From Northern strife and Eastern sloth removed,
Australia and her herald gods invite
A chosen race, in sternest ordeals proved,
To guard the future from exotic blight.

Testimony to O'Dowd's humanity and gentleness is legion. It is, therefore, indicative of the power of racist militarism that even he could write:

Yet on our margin other folk are set
Who, it is well, should keep a while away,
Too long apart to mingle wisely yet
(E'en I who love the Hindoo, Chinese, say!)
Yea, will we steel us to the death to fight —
In such poor means alone avail — whome'er,
Or Asian throng, or island brown, or white
Blood-brother e'en, would cloud our prospect fair,
To guard the future from exotic blight!

Combined with O'Dowd the pacifist and humanist there was, inexorably, O'Dowd the Australian who could not escape the passions that ruled his 'chosen race'.

O'Dowd's mistress and fellow-poet, Marie Pitt, had no qualms in demanding severe penalties for white Australians who had sexual relations with Chinese. First offenders were to be deprived of their citizenship rights while second offenders

were to be deported to China. In a slightly earlier verse, O'Dowd had been less reticent in his racism and recognised, in language reminiscent of Lawson's, Australia's position as the vanguard of European imperialism, which he called civilisation:

And not alone to feel the mouths of children at her breast
Australia wafts her sibyl call wherever white men are;
But, warden of the boundaries, lone outpost for the West
She dare not risk the paling here of splendid Europe's star.
Out in the night we seem to see piratic dangers sparkle,
And, on our moon's horizon growing, omens grimly darkle!
O come ye of the white race hither, come ye to her call!
'Tis not alone for us the word she sends you o'er the sea!
As ye shall rise while up we soar, our failure means you fall
The fall of truth, the fall of love, the fall of liberty!

Remote from O'Dowd's archaic style was the epigrammatic voice of A. H. Adams, who succeeded A. G. Stephens as editor of the *Bulletin* 'Red Page' in 1906 and later became *Lone Hand* editor. Much of Adams' verse was personal in character, but where social questions arose no one was more devastating for sustained racism. Adams described *The Jew* as

... the lord of all
The spoiler of his kind.

who

... now his retribution nears,
And now the tale is told,
And all the strokes of all the years
Must be repaid — in gold.
For him your armies win — and lose:
His toll he takes alway.
The Jackal of the world can choose
Disdainfully his prey.
He slinks about your trade, your wars;
His mouth is ripe to drain
The red wine of the conquerors —
The red blood of the slain.

Fear of Asia and the militarism that it provoked are evident in
'One Hour — to Arm':

> Along the frontier of our North
> The yellow lightning shudders forth;
>   But we have shut our eyes.
> Yet in the tropic stillness warm
> We hear the mutter of the storm
>   That all too soon must rise!
> After the flash the thunder comes,
> And now the menace of the drums
>   Wakens this pregnant calm.
> Prolong this hush of warning, Lord,
> That we have time to clutch the sword:
>   *Grant us one hour — to arm!*

The discussion now concentrates on Lawson. H. M. Green,
author of a massive *History of Australian Literature* (1961),
claimed that 'If we were set the impossible task of finding
some single work to represent Australia it would have to be
one of Lawson's. For an Australian to read him in another
country is to breathe the air of home'. Russel Ward included
Lawson in his trinity of nationalist authors alongside Paterson
and Furphy.

It will be a somewhat novel Lawson who appears in the fol-
lowing pages. Some of the themes to emerge will be racism,
and anti-democratic temper, anti-intellectualism, militarism,
and anti-semitism. The combination of these in any other
writer would place him in the category of 'fascist'. Indeed, in
1969, an Australian Nazi declared:

> If Lawson had written in this style today, he would definitely have
> been classed as a bigot, a racist and a 'Nazi' ... Lawson stood for
> his White Race, his People and strong Nationalism against the
> Communist policies of integration and internationalism.

This is not to say that Lawson and Hitler were as one. Rather
Hitler might have had to dispose of Lawson as he did the lead-
ers of the SA (the Brownshirts) who wanted to push ahead

with the anti-monopolist part of their program. Lawson was a fascist in the sense that fascism is a movement of protest against big business and Jewish financiers. That this kind of fascism rarely comes to power, and when it does is promptly squashed by the traditional conservatives (as in Rumania in 1941), does not mean that it is not one of the many varieties of fascism.

The usual view is that Lawson was a socialist. On the centenary of his birth in 1967, the Communist Party's paper *Tribune* devoted eight pages to a 'celebration' of 'one of Australia's best known and loved writers'. Evidence for Lawson's socialism comes from poems such as 'Faces in the Street'. Yet there is nothing specifically 'left' about this kind of sympathy. Numerous passages in *Mein Kampf* deplored the suffering of ordinary people:

> The peasant boy in the big city walks the streets, hungry; often he pawns and sells his last possessions; his clothing becomes more and more wretched; and thus he sinks into external surroundings which, on top of his physical misfortune, also poison his soul. If he is evicted and if (as is often the case) this occurs in winter, his misery is very great.

What is important is an author's view of why these sufferings occur and how they can be eliminated. Lawson's occasional calls for 'revolution' have led some critics to see him as aggressively class-conscious. This is not so. Like the rest of the radical movement in the 1880s and 1890s, he was a firm supporter of the old middle-class leaders such as Jack Robertson and Sam Lilley.

Moreover, Lawson's disapproval of the 'rulers' was never complete. They were not pictured as wholly bad or as irrevocably so. He had a Dickensian view of kings and squatters as being good men at heart: the fire in 'The Fire at Ross's Farm' is eventually beaten because of the arrival of the squatter. Nor was Lawson always opposed to English gents:

> Let bushmen think as bushmen will,
>   And say what e'er they choose,
> I hate to hear the stupid sneer
>   At New Chum Jackeroos.

And in 'After the War' Lawson told his readers that he:

> ... never believed that a dude could fight till a Johnny led us then,
> We buried his bits in the rear that night for the honour of
> Pitt-street men.

The first man to volunteer to remain on the sinking *Seabolt* is:

> ... a merchant stout,
> His face was brown and tan:
> 'I'll volunteer to stay on board,
>   For I'm an Englishman!'

Lawson's support for unionism did not outlive the century. 'I'm Too Old to Rat' has been misinterpreted: the speaker is saying that he is seriously disturbed at the trend of events in the labour movement but cannot bring himself to leave it. It is a cry of resignation, not defiance. By 1899 Lawson was describing the union creed as 'narrow', that is, not national. Ten years later in 'The Land of Living Lies' his account of the strikers is that:

> They were men professing nothing, yet Australians through and
>   through,
> And their every act was hampered by the canting 'Comrade' crew,

and further on:

> (Socialist be damned! for: 'Ists' and 'Isms' are as naught to me —
> Our ideal was a real and broad Democracy.)

Here are hints of his nationalism and anti-intellectualism. Yet surely the final line contradicts the earlier claim that he was anti-democratic? Lawson was in favour of government 'for the people', but not of government 'of or by the people'. Instead, he longed for a strong ruler, as in 'Cromwell', who

... in my country's hour of need
    For it shall surely come,
While run by fools who'll never heed,
    The beating of the drum,
While baffled by the fools at home
    And threatened from the sea —
Lord! send a man like Oliver —
    And let me live to see.

Such a man would become 'The King of our Republic' and

If you find him stern, unyielding, when his living task is set,
I have told you that a tyrant shall uplift the nation yet;

The connection between a popular dictator and militaristic na-
tionalism was thus made clear. But it was an old theme of Law-
son's, one which he expressed in 'Australia's Peril', written five
years earlier in 1905:

Listen through House and Senate — listen from east to west
For the voice of one Australian who will stand above the rest;
Who will lead his country's dawning, who will lead in his
    manhood's noon —
The man will come with the hour — but the hour may come too
    soon.

Lawson's objection to 'democratic politicans' was that
they factionalised and divided the nation. His view of na-
tionalism was the organic one common to fascism. He ob-
jected to:

... *thirteen* little kings
Of thirteen Parliaments.

Attacks on those who opposed the oneness of Australia, polit-
ical as well as geographic, became more frequent in the poems
Lawson wrote from 1905 to 1910. His paramount concern was
not a class one but a national one. He believed that the destiny
of Australia was to produce the 'Dynasty of Man'.

Yet this destiny was imperiled by a combined assault from

international Jewry and Japanese monkeys. The Jews planned to use the Japs to destroy this new paradise. ('The East is backed by the Jews'.) There was a heavy populist strain in these writings as, for example, in 'Freedom on the Wallaby', where the promise is to 'make the bankers feel the sting', or in 'Australia's Peril', which contends that 'with the Jews we belied the farmers'.

Lawson's account of the Boer War was that:

> ... the dirty Jewish talon reached from palaces and slums
> Till a hundred thousand English died to stop the farmers' drums.

Indeed, he believed that most wars are engineered by the 'Syndicates and a monarch "in" with the Jews'.

Jews were also blamed for Australia's economic distress in the 1890s and Lawson suggested that 'If the crimson flag was hoisted 'twould be bad for prophets such as Jacob'. All the references to Jews in his poems were unfavourable except in 'Joseph's Dreams and Reuben's Brethren' which, having painted the Jews as people who sell their brothers, and that 'For more than twice his worth', fell back on to the cliché '(My best friend is a Yid)'.

Late in 1893 Lawson published a pseudonymous poem defending 'Arthur Desmond', an anti-semitic revolutionary who saw himself as the literary reincarnation of Wodin. The substance of the defence was that Desmond merely had the courage to say what everyone else felt.

The anti-Semitism of European fascists festered not only on the supposed financial power of Zion but also on the image of the Jew as the carrier of the new ideas associated with the liberal professions. This element did not arise in Lawson's anti-intellectualism, perhaps because of the level of intellectual life in Australia. He none the less warned that when things were better organised 'the rich an' educated shall be educated down' and he objected to the psychological dramas of 'Ibsen and Pshaw'. Australia's future, he maintained, rested with:

Boys who are slight and quiet, but boys who are strong and true,
Dreaming of great inventions — always of something new;
With brains untrammelled by training, but quick where reason
    directs
Boys with imagination and unclouded intellects.

These intellects would do something manly and useful by becoming Australian engineers on Australian ships to drive away the Japanese.

Fear and detestation of Asians was the central theme of Lawson's political verse and it infected everything he wrote in this connection. The threat from Asia was at the base of his militarism but it was not its cause. Long before the rise of Japan, Lawson was praising war as a good thing for its own sake, irrespective of the cause:

From grander clouds in our peaceful skies than ever were there
    before,
I tell you the Star of the South shall rise — in the lurid clouds of
    war.
It ever must be while blood is warm and the sons of men increase;
For ever the nations rose in storm, to rot in a deadly peace.
And this we learn from the libelled past, though its methods were
    somewhat rude —
A Nation's born where the shells fall fast, or its lease of life
    renewed.
We in part atone for the ghoulish strife and the crimes of the peace
    we boast,
And the better part of a people's life in the storm comes
    uppermost.

('The Star of Australasia')

When searching for an image of life and manhood Lawson turned time and time again to war and the battlefield, as in 'The Friends of Fallen Fortunes' and 'Fall in, My Men, Fall in'. In 'The Dons of Spain' Lawson praised heroism for a cause he opposed:

And here's to the bravest of Freedom's foes who ever with death
    have stood —

> For the sake of the courage to die on steel as their fathers died on
>   wood;

Some of these poems were written in the 1880s long before Lawson became a drunkard and a psychotic and cannot be attributed to these personal traits. Moreover, his poems were printed by some of the most widely read journals in Australia, especially the *Bulletin*, where his ideas found a receptive audience.

Lawson's response to the Boer War was ambiguous. In 'Ballad of the Cornstalk' he told of a restless bushman who was killed, and of the girl who waited for him. It combined sympathy for the soldier's motives in going with compassion for the woman left behind. Though 'The Blessings of the War' was patently ironic, it cannot conceal Lawson's longstanding beliefs:

> I'm in favour of the war, and of half-a-dozen more;
> And I think we should have had one long before —
> There is nothing to deplore; I'm in favour of the war
> Independent of all statements made by Briton or by Boer.
>
> 'Tis a healthy stirring up of the dregs of sorrow's cup;
> 'Tis a joyful thing, as I have always held,
> For it brings us something new. And I'm looking forward to
> The festive time when Sydney shall be shelled!

Lawson supported the Boers, whom he saw as the prototype of the bushman who would have to save Australia.

Some of Lawson's poems at this time indicated that his militarist views had not been as popular when he started to write:

> And they lounged on the rim of Australia in the peace that
>   had come to last,
> And they laughed at my 'cavalry charges', for such things
>   belonged to the past;
>
>   ('The Heart of Australia')

After the Russo-Japanese war, the outlook changed and, in

1905, triumphant though still fearful, he combined militarism with racism in a poem 'For Australia':

> Now, with the wars of the world begun, they'll listen to you and me,
> Now while the frightened nations run to the arms of democracy,
> Now, when our blathering fools are scared, and the years have proved us right —
> All unprovided and unprepared, the Outpost of the White!

Lawson's sympathies were evident in 'The Vanguard':

> 'Tis the first round of the struggle of the East against the West,
> Of the fearful war of races — for the White Man could not rest.
> Hold them, IVAN! Staggering bravely underneath your gloomy sky;
> Hold them, IVAN! we shall want you pretty badly by and by!
>
> Fighting for the Indian empire, when the British pay their debt,
> Never Briton watched for Blucher as he'll watch for IVAN yet!
> It means all to young Australia — it means life or death to us,
> For the vanguard of the White Man is the vanguard of the Russ!

The seemingly anti-war poem 'Nemesis' has to be seen in its context. It was designed to cool down the demands for war between Russia and Britain after Russia's fleet had sunk some British fishing vessels, mistaking them for Japanese torpedo boats. Thus he opposed 'War because of one poor blunder made in panic far away'. He was concerned to form an alliance of all the white nations against the East, especially Japan.

The victory of the Black Jack Johnson over Tommy Burns in Sydney on Boxing Day 1908 provided Lawson with a premonition of race war:

> For 'money' and 'sporting' madness — and here, in a land that was white!
> You mated a black-man and white-man to stand up before you and fight
> And many — God knows how many! — sons of a white man's son
> 'Backed the nigger to beat him' — and *flocked to see it done.*

You thought about, talked about, raved about nothing else under
    the sun —
In a time of National danger with National rights to be won!
While madness made laws for madmen, and the soul of Australia
    moaned,
And the paltriest Acts were 'partied', and the great State Question
    postponed.
You flocked to your fairest city, for a Thing that you would not
    miss —
To see a sight that could never be seen in a land but this.
You paid and you cheered and you hooted, and this is your need
    of disgrace;
It was not Burns that was beaten — for a nigger has smacked
    your face.
Take heed — I am tired of writing — but O my people, take heed,
For the time may be near for the mating of the Black and
    the White to *breed.*

('The Great Fight')

The vision of race-war recurred over and again, as in 'To Be
Amused' where he saw

... the stricken city fall
    The fathers murdered at their doors,
The sack, the massacre of all
    Save healthy slaves and paramours —
The wounded hero at the stake,
    The pure girl to the leper's kiss —
God, give us faith, for Christ's own sake,
    To kill our womanhood ere this.

I see the brown and yellow rule
    The southern lands and southern waves,
White children in the heathen school,
    And black and white together slaves;
I see the colour-line so drawn
    (I see it plain and speak I must),
That our brown masters of the dawn
    Might, aye, have fair girls for their lusts!

Lawson's interweaving of sex with race again indicates that economic competition was not the sole source of prejudice.

In 1912 the government introduced military training for all boys between twelve and eighteen years of age. There were almost 30 000 prosecutions for failure to attend the drill parades, and several parents, including prominent socialists, were gaoled. Lawson's response was:

> There's many a schoolboy's bat and ball that are gathering
> dust at home,
> For he hears a voice in the future call, and he trains for the
> war to come;
> The schoolboy scouts of the White Man's Land are out on the
> hills today;
> They trace the tracks for the sea-beach sand and sea-cliffs grim
> and grey;
> They take the range for a likely shot by every cape ahead,
> And they spy the lay of each lonely spot where an enemy's
> foot might tread.

('Here Died')

The inevitability and nobility of war were as persistent in Lawson's poems as was the danger from the East. In 1913 he warned:

> Beware of the East, O Christian, for the sake of your fairest
> and best;
> It is written, and written, remembered, *that the tide of invasion
> goes West.*
> You built a wall, O China! to keep your enemies out;
> You cradled the mightiest river and you conquered the flood
> and the drought.
> Patient and peaceful and honest — children of Industry —
> Wise with the wisdom of ages — yet they could not let you be!
> Nor wall nor mountain nor ocean justice or peace could win.
> You built a wall, O China! *Let them see that it keep you in.*

('The Old, Old Story')

This stanza shows that Lawson realised that the Europeans had provoked the Asians, but his conclusion was that it would

result in a war of races, not of classes. Moreover, he was not blind to the virtues popularly attributed to Asians — patience, endurance, industry. Like so many others, he feared those very virtues most; they were virtues only as long as the Chinese remained walled-up inside China.

Lawson once pictured a Chinaman in a favourable light, in the story *Ah Soon*. Commenting on this tale he wrote:

> I don't know whether a story about a Chinaman would be popular or acceptable here and now; and, for the matter or that, I don't care. I am anti-Chinese as far as Australia is concerned; in fact, I am all for a White Australia. But one may dislike, or even hate, a nation without hating or disliking an individual of that nation.

Some of his best pals were Chinks: he had used the same defence against the charge of anti-semitism. It is a part of racism that the 'race' should possess characteristics not found in individual members of the race.

When war broke out in 1914, it was not the war Lawson had looked forward to. It was not race war, but a war between Europeans. Hence, he has 'The Foreign Father' tell Australians:

> … who make sport your ideal, down there by the Southern Sea;
> *There's a menace more deadly and real than ever the*
>   *German could be.*

He nonetheless supported the war and Britain — and conscription — since it would

> Make men of weeds! Give muscle thought and feeling!
> Reduce the Fat (and here and there make men)!
> Give brains to brawn! The pregnant time is stealing
> Close to our shores — Ah! you shall know it then!
> Fear not the plunge! — If we can only strike it,
> The track is clear to perfect nationhood.
> And — you'll get used to discipline and like it,
> For I was disciplined and found it good.

<div align="right">('Conscription, 1916')</div>

Some twelve months earlier, Lawson had put the same ideas in different words, through the mouth of a German:

> You say that our discipline's brutal, because you are paying
>   the debt,
> You say that conscription is deadly; it hasn't killed Germany
>   yet.
> See the weeds in your Southern cities hawk and spit between
>   race-board and pot!
> Would discipline make them or mar them? Or your citizens
>   miss them, or not?

Lawson was convinced that war, violence and discipline would produce 'men'. His view of 'man' is purely physical, the view that Mussolini had of himself.

Events in Russia in 1917 confirmed Lawson's fatalistic view of history and of the inevitability of war:

> 'Tis the Great Law Periodic till the stars shall be no more:
> War, and war, and revolution — and then, after that, the War!

Lawson maintained a sympathy for ordinary people and some of his most effective lines describe the horrors suffered during war, as in 'Antwerp' (1914):

> Blue smoke from the embers curling, and the morning is fresh
>   and fair;
> And the dead and the charred and the mangled, and the
>   wounded are everywhere.
> And out on the paths of the fleeing, where remnants are
>   scattered like chaff,
> The terrible silence of children, and a soldier's hysterical laugh.

Yet, on Armistice Day he wrote:

> Now is all business stopped, and work and traffic,
>   To give a doubly needless holiday;
> Now do cold-footers howl and yell and 'maffick',
>   And 'flappers' fling all modesty away.
> This is the Anti's day, the day for shirkers,
>   And racecourse scum, and touts — and worse than they —
> For monkey tricks that shame all honest workers,

And pranks no decent larrikin would play.
I raise my window sash, and sit and wonder,
    While gazing upwards at the starry dome,
Will men say in their hearts, that grand sky under —
'If this be peace, God send us war at home?'

                        ('Peace')

For, as Lawson's anthologiser, Colin Roderick, summed it up: 'Lawson always praised war as the maker of nations, peace as the canker that rotted the national frame, and he welcomed the holocaust of 1914–18 as the fulfilment of his prophecies.'

To recapitulate: an investigation of Lawson's verse has revealed the following characteristics:

1   an organic concept of the nation
2   idealisation of manly virtues
3   hostility to finance capitalism
4   elitist notion of leadership
5   racism, including anti-semitism
6   militarism.

If these concepts demand a reinterpretation of Lawson, how much more do they demand a reappraisal of the Australia that Lawson has for so long epitomised?

INTERLUDE

NINE
Pianists

A good deal of the Australian legend depends upon folk-song and ballad which in turn call for portable instruments such as banjoes, fiddles and bones. Something must be said about the 700 000 pianos reputedly brought into Australia during the nineteenth century.

The pianoforte, unlike its keyboard predecessors, did not require incessant tuning. Its function in the social life of the nineteenth century was analogous to that of the stereo system today. It provided popular entertainment and the only opportunity that most people had of hearing symphonies and operas, most of which were issued in piano arrangement.

It would be wrong to assume that the nineteenth-century piano was not a portable item. Despite its bulk, it was brought not only twelve thousand miles across the ocean but often another one thousand miles inland where it could become one wall of a hut. As Roger Covell has pointed out:

> Middle-class values have rarely expressed themselves with more touching gallantry and tenacity than in the sacrifices and discomforts endured by countless families in order to bring this cumbersome symbol of higher values to their chosen home in small unstable ships and on grinding bullock drays.

Occasionally the piano was an instrument of oppression of the lower orders, as when Lady Hindmarsh forced six sailors to carry hers from the beach to Adelaide. Sometimes, the pres-

ence of a piano indicated that the good things of life were not to be reserved exclusively for those in authority. At least one convict, John Grant, brought a harpsichord with him into exile.

Australians took their pianos to Fiji in the 1870s in pursuit of fresh wealth and in the firm conviction that the Pacific was their pond. They had to sell them when things went bad.

The piano was the inevitable accompaniment of colonial hopes and despairs. Richard Mahony's first desire for his wife was to buy her a piano — all her friends had one. On the day he made two thousand pounds on the stock market he fell asleep 'to the happy refrain: Now she shall have her piano, God bless her! ... the best that money can buy'. If its purchase gave Mahony pleasure, its eventual sale to his erstwhile servant upset him more than anything else. Not only did it signal the collapse of his old life; it reminded him forcefully of the upward social mobility that he had found so distasteful.

Pianos were often the final evidence of some past dream or splendour. It was as if to sell the piano was proof that it was all over. Alfred Joyce, who had started life as a cockney, ended his days at his Norwood property with the sale of his Collard & Collard. What more piteous sight could there be than Thomas Peel's 'miserable hut': 'Everything about him shows the broken-down gentleman — clay floors and handsome plate, curtains for doors and piano-forte, windows without glass and costly china'.

The piano was not the preserve of the middle classes. It was also the pinnacle of working-class aspirations. In the fulfilment of these hopes, Mahony's servant was not exceptional. In 1892 the young radical critic Francis Adams observed that the urban tradesman generally owned 'a small, iron-framed, time-payment piano, on which his daughters, returning well shod and too well clothed from the local "public school" ... discoursed popular airs with a powerful manual execution'.

A working class that could afford such luxuries wanted nothing to do with revolution, a fact which William Lane's novel *A Workingman's Paradise* made clear when the protagonist, a European socialist named Geisner, played 'The Marseillaise' on the piano. His playing did not invoke the cry 'to arms' but was a 'softened, spiritualised, purified' rendering, signifying the struggle in men's hearts.

The role of the piano in Australian history was not confined to its usefulness as a barometer of class consciousness. It was not a passive partner in the making of the Australian legend but an active participant, as an examination of the origins of 'Waltzing Matilda' will reveal.

The story began in Victoria in 1865 when Alice Macpherson played the piano for a bushranger, Morgan, the night before he was shot. Shortly afterwards, the Macphersons escaped from the Selection Acts and took up a new property, Oondooroo, in Queensland. In 1895, 'Banjo' Paterson holidayed there and heard the yarn that provided him with the theme for his ballad. But, argued John Manifold, 'nothing might have come of it if fate had not thrown a piano and singer in his way'. With the assistance of Alice Macpherson's daughter, Christina, Paterson produced the work that has come as close as any other to being a national anthem. Yet, despite its theme of sheep-stealing, it was written around a squatter's piano, where, Manifold tells us, 'A Thousand Miles Away', 'The Freehold on the Plain' and 'The Eumerella Shore' were probably also written.

While it is true, as Russel Ward pointed out, that 'Waltzing Matilda' epitomises his mythical Australian's attitude to authority, it became 'the most popular of Australian folk-songs' only because it received the imprimatur of Thomas Wood, a pianoforte examiner from the Trinity College of Music. Wood's visit took place in 1932. Before then, 'Waltzing Matilda' had been considered impolite. But what, asks Covell, 'could be more respectable than an English music examiner?'

Thus we are forced to ask: what kind of nationalism is it

that must await the visit of an English music examiner before its anthem can become accepted? And what kind of radicalism is it that allows such a prominence to pianos?

PART TWO

TEN

Immigrants

But never let our sons forget,
Till mem'ry's self be dead,
If Britain gave us birth, my lads,
Australia gave us bread!

Marcus Clarke, *An Australian Paean*, 1876

'Men migrate in hope.' This statement was certainly true of the
million or more people who came to Australia in the nine-
teenth century. They hoped to escape from the oppressions of
industrial capitalism. They hoped to find economic, social, re-
ligious and political independence. If they did not fully realise
these expectations, most of them did sufficiently well to en-
courage others to follow. In order to appreciate these hopes, it
is necessary to see them in the context of a relentlessly expand-
ing urban, industrial capitalism which destroyed the old ways
of independence and agriculture.

The London artisan had sought to preserve his independ-
ence first through becoming a master himself, then through a
collective independence in the Owenite upsurge, and finally
by becoming a hawker of bootlaces, oranges or nuts. The agri-
cultural labourers pined for the parcel of land that would guar-
antee their liberty. But whichever form independence took,
the immediate response to capitalism was a rejection of its
technology rather than a demand for the abolition of its prop-

erty relationships. From the revolutionary Robert Owen, through the radical Cobbett, to the reactionary Young Englanders the response was the same: Down with industry! Down with cities! Divide the land! Every man a master!

In England, these demands were necessarily doomed to failure. Not so in Australia, a country with expanses of 'unoccupied' land, and seemingly limitless opportunities for the thrifty, hardworking craftsman. The more enterprising convicts had won their successes before Macquarie's arrival in 1810. Although any impression of unending joyiosity among the convicts would be misleading, it must be admitted that the minority whose principal misfortune in Britain was to have had no property were often able to remedy this situation in Australia. Free settlers were even better placed. Michael Roe has shown:

> Between 1800 and 1806 about 1000 immigrants came to NSW who (or whose children) can be traced in the muster of 1814 and/or the Census of 1828. Of these less than 200 describe themselves in the later returns as mere 'labourers' or 'servants' totally bereft of any land or stock; another 100 were landless tradesmen, whose wealth cannot be assessed. The remaining 800 all owned something: be it James Daly's fifteen acres and two head of cattle, or the 14 000 acres and 1000 head belonging to John Dougan. The norm was fifty acres (most cleared and cultivated), a couple of horses, and ten to twenty stock-animals.

Despite being selective, the statements in Caroline Chisholm's pamphlet *Comfort for the Poor* give a fair indication of the improvement achieved by the vast majority of the pre-gold rush emigrants. This rise was particularly true of Irish settlers; in 1845 John K of Dublin could write:

> What do I think of the country? Why it's twice the country it is at home, I am sure; I can kill my own cattle here, and have a store of 150 bushells of wheat. I am better off than ever my father was at home — he could not feed me as I can feed my children — and I have fowls in abundance beside eggs and milk.

As this was being written, Ireland, from where 20 per cent of Australia's population had come, was in the grip of the potato famine during which over a million people died. Severe as the 1840–44 depression was in Australia, there is no evidence that it resulted in even one death by starvation. The tenacity with which many Irish tenants clung to their holdings during the famine, despite overwhelming odds, was in part due to their recognition that their landlords were sometimes prompted to pay passage money to Australia in order to be rid of them.

Late in December 1848, the radical newspaper *The People's Advocate* gave an accurate appraisal of the emigrant mentality: 'the mechanic who emigrates to this colony has the same object in view as the capitalist. Ask any one what he came to the colony for, and his answer will be: to better his condition'.

Edward Hargraves's publicity campaign on behalf of Australia's gold resources set the seal on her image as the land of opportunity. One of the last convict mutinies was in 1852. The Colonial Office was considering abolishing transportation to Van Diemen's Land as the gold discoveries on the mainland had finally demolished the Antipodes as a place of terror. Fearful that their sentences might not be carried out, convicts in the hulks at Woolwich mutinied and 'impudently asserted that the government had "broken faith" with them'. Even in the 1820s, a magistrate had testified that 'many persons have asked me what extent of crime would ensure them transportation'.

Early hopes that sufficient gold could be won to enable permanent retirement into gentility were soon replaced by the hardly less attractive prospect of finding enough gold to set up in business or to equip a farm. Gold established the dominance of wealth as the social barometer. In 1852 it was reported that the claim 'I landed in this colony without a shilling, and am worth a hundred thousand pounds' held more charm for the Australians than did the boast 'I am the descendant of a lord, and am as poor as a rat'. A man did not have to find gold to be

well off. In 1852 a wage-earner could write that he had 'had no prospects in England but here thank God I have, and I have never yet regretted leaving my native country and I hope I never shall do'.

High wages were not the only boon to the new chum. The rigour of the Australian sun was important in the drive for the eight-hour day, which Melbourne stonemasons achieved in 1856. (They still worked a forty-eight-hour week.) Most significantly, during the struggle for this 'boon', and in the even more tenacious battle to maintain it, sections of the workers were prepared to accept a wage cut proportionate to the reduction in hours. What workers today could afford to give up 10 or 20 per cent of their income? The 1850s in Australia deserved the designation 'affluent' more than the 1950s.

It was no wonder that, in 1857, John Askew advised every working man in England who could afford the fare to emigrate to Victoria, where 'any one willing may find plenty of work, and skill and perseverance are sure to lead to affluence and independence'. He continued:

> Compare the state of the working man in Victoria with that of the English workman. The former has from 10s. to 15s. per day and full employment; whilst the latter in many parts of England (Wiltshire for instance) has only 10s. and sometimes even 7s. per week. The one has animal food for every meal and other luxuries besides; while the other does not taste animal food more than once or twice a week, and at some seasons not oftener than once a month.

Material prosperity among the lower orders was matched by their participation in the political life of the colonies: Sir Henry Parkes arrived in 1839 as a penniless immigrant. In 1857, William Westgarth observed that 'Already, in Victoria, the tradesman and the artisan have been pre-eminently conspicuous for originality, influence, and usefulness in public life'. Adult male suffrage in Victoria, New South Wales and

South Australia was a decade in advance of the second Reform Bill in England.

This economic and political mobility played havoc with the none-too-firmly-established social barriers of colonial life. The *United Service Magazine* reported to its English subscribers in 1852:

> In so new a country there can manifestly be no aristocracy, properly so called; industry, skill and capital are the only qualifications necessary to win success. If he possesses these, and uses them to advantage, one man is as good as another. Hence, the temperature of the social atmosphere is calm and undisturbed.

Russel Ward accepted all this evidence, for it is basic to his legend that the lower orders had an independence of spirit. Moreover, he pointed to the 'relatively very small "middle class" ' and the absence of a 'traditional aristocracy' in Australia as important factors in intensifying the breakdown of English social distinctions and in the establishment of a more egalitarian ethos. In support, he quoted the 1841 census:

4477 (14.80%) upper class (squatters, bankers,
    professional men)
1774 (3.10%) middle class (shopkeepers and retail traders)
50 158 (82.10%) lower class (mechanics, labourers, servants)

He concluded that because of 'the disproportionate weight of the lower class group' their values came to dominate the Australian ethos. Such reasoning is an example of the numbers game at its most banal: numerical superiority does not mean ideological supremacy. More important than sheer weight of numbers is the total environment in which a class is formed. Ward appreciated that the total Australian environment led to a mood of independence among the lower class. This claim merely scratches the surface.

The total life experience of the lower class on the Australian mainland, especially in the half-century from 1840 to 1890,

was such that even if some were treated violently, the over-whelming majority were convinced that acquisitive competitiveness produced improved circumstances. The acceptance of this outlook by the lower class was a triumph for bourgeois hegemony. (Hegemony occurs when the lifestyle and world outlook of one class are accepted as valid by another class, particularly in questions of morality and aesthetics. An example of a hegemonic concept in a capitalist society is the view that 'humankind is naturally competitive'.)

What happened can be seen by referring back to the 1841 census figures. The 'recentness' of the upper class and the smallness of the middle class resulted in a lower class dominated by the prospect of establishing not a classless society but a one-class society, and that one class would be petit-bourgeois in orientation. Even those who failed to become self-employed were subject to the attitudes of those who succeeded. Or, as the radical journal had observed, 'the mechanic who emigrates to this colony has the same object in view as the capitalist'.

Optimism thus leavened the character of Australian radicalism and nationalism. Nineteenth-century Australia was a comparatively radical society, but it was radicalism of an aspiring petit-bourgeois kind. The Australians sought to avoid or escape their proletarianisation within capitalism. That objective was worthy, and easier to achieve than the creation of a socialist society. They reformers supported a socialism that would obtain such governmental support. That backing would install the establishment of a utopia of independent proprietors. Inasmuch as Australia represented the material embodiment of these hopes, the continent became the object of 'nationalistic' reverence. High living standards, moreover, depended on the exclusion of 'cheap labour'. The optimists became nationalists via racism.

Optimism is not a self-sustaining state of mind but requires more than occasional success to persist. The remaining chap-

ters will look at economic manifestations among the convicts (and bushrangers), the diggers, the selectors and the unionists; and at political consequences among the democrats, the socialists and the Laborites. The social implications for 'mateship' will be considered in respect to each.

ELEVEN
Convicts

Upon the same principle, there is some risk that transportation
will be considered as one of the surest roads to honour and to
wealth; and that no felon will hear a verdict of 'not guilty' without
considering himself as cut off in the fairest career of prosperity.

Rev. Sydney Smith, 1803

In 1922 Professor Arnold Wood asked the question that ex-
pressed the folklore that was growing up around Australia's
founding fathers: 'Is it not clearly a fact that the atrocious
criminals remained in England, while their victims, innocent
and manly, founded the Australian democracy?' Atrocious
criminals, such as Viscount Castlereagh, remained in England,
yet the 166 000-odd souls who were transported were, on the
whole, anything but innocent and manly. Lloyd Robson's sta-
tistical analysis of the convicts has shown that at least
two-thirds had had previous convictions. Equally fallacious is
the notion that they were merely poachers or political offend-
ers. Less than 1 per cent were poachers and only about 3 per
cent were in any sense political exiles. Indeed, the majority
came from the professional criminal elements in the major
cities.

Yet it is these very convicts who, according to Russel Ward,
were the founders of the Australian tradition. Ward claims that
all we know about the convicts shows that egalitarian class sol-

idarity was the one human trait that remained to 'all but the most brutalised'. From this claim, we must conclude that Ward knew little about the convicts and that he misinterpreted the skerricks he did know. It is misleading to clothe the convicts in the aura of class struggle. For its first fifty years at least, settler Australia did not have a class structure, but only a deformed stratification which had been vomited up by the maelstrom that was redefining class in England. If a class formula can be applied to the convicts it must be lumpen-proletarian, or petit-bourgeois. The outlook of these is not dissimilar, and both can be described as independent people 'who hate officiousness and authority, especially when these qualities are embodied in military officers and policemen'. Such an attitude is bourgeois in origin and content, and hence well suited to the déclassé, small proprietors, dispossessed labourers and professional criminals who made up the bulk of the convicts and who had shown their active acceptance of the ideology of capitalism by acquisitiveness.

The convicts lacked, although through no fault of their own, any feeling of class consciousness. Their interrelationships were based on the all-too-flimsy basis of the honour of thieves, which will be shown to be no honour at all. The explorer Edward Eyre presented the matter in a different light: 'Many of them [the convicts] were most excellent, careful, industrious, trustworthy servants. The worst almost had a sort of honour among thieves and though they might rob anyone else would rarely plunder their own masters'. If the convicts to 'a man were very intent upon their liberty' they were by experience only too ready to acquiesce to the only legal means by which it could be obtained and guaranteed — individual effort. While the emancipists were the enemies of the rich settlers, they shared their opponents' belief in the efficacy of hard work, since such legal rights as they had depended upon that virtue. Moreover, when the source of their advancement was threatened, they joined forces with the squatters to defeat

Governor Gipps's land policy. The desire for self-improvement that had led most of the convicts to be transported combined with an economic situation in the colony to enable this fond wish to be achieved in accordance with the principles of British justice.

Colonial culture was dominated by the necessity to make money, 'honestly if you can, but you must make money'. The pursuit of material gain to the exclusion of all else gave opportunities to those whose principal error in England had been the lack of opportunity. Certainly, it was believed in England that convicts made good: Magwitch in *Great Expectations* is but one expression of this view. It remains to document this improvement a little more, remembering that conditions were always worse in Van Diemen's Land, which received over 40 per cent of all transportees.

Matra's 1783 plan for a settlement in New South Wales outlined a policy of reforming the convicts by giving them grants of land. This policy was put into effect in 1789 when James Ruse received thirty acres, and continued for almost forty years. Those who felt 'the value of regaining some footing in society' almost invariably did so: Kable, Underwood, Larra, Fulton, Mealmaker, Greenway and Redman were the best-known examples. The thief turned merchant Samuel Terry became known as the 'Botany Bay Rothschild'. Advancement was by no means confined to material prosperity. John Pascoe Fawkner, the son of a convict, was himself convicted of abetting convicts to escape, but is rightly remembered as one of the co-founders of Melbourne, where he sat in the Victorian Legislative Council for almost two decades. William Henry Groom arrived as a ticket-of-leave man in 1849 and was convicted on a further charge of theft in 1855. This background did not prevent his becoming Speaker of the Queensland Legislative Assembly in 1883 and a foundation member of the Commonwealth Parliament.

A number of ex-convicts shared in the rum trade. A. G. L.

Shaw pointed out that 'the "officers" have often been too much blamed for the activities of their ex-convict competitors'. Roger Hainsworth's study of the shipping 'interests', like all detailed investigations of the economic life of the period, confirmed that

> for a very substantial number of felons, transportation provided a golden opportunity which they grasped very effectively. Of about 127 owners so far identified in the period 1800–1821 no less than fifty-four were emancipists or time-expired convicts, sixteen were probably ex-convicts.

Asked by the House of Commons select committee on transportation in 1812 how many convicts chose to settle in Australia, ex-Governor Hunter replied: 'I cannot say what proportion, but there were many who did return to this country. When I returned to England numbers applied to me for permission to go out again, for they said they could live there but they could not live here'.

Advancement awaited the convicts' children who otherwise rejected their parents' station and habits. Despite the imbalance of the sexes in the colony, Commissioner Bigge found that the sons of convicts were unwilling to marry convict women, owing 'chiefly to a sense of pride approaching to contempt for the vices and depravity of the convicts even when manifested in the persons of their own parents'. Sir William Burton, Chief Justice of New South Wales from 1833 to 1838, found that the currency lads were the most law-abiding section of the community, even more so than free labourers. The pursuit of wealth extended to the youngest members of the population. Joseph Holt's son, Joshua, at the age of thirteen, 'was earning £60 a year as overseer of a gang of twenty convicts'. There was nothing unusual about a thirteen-year-old working in the early years of the nineteenth century. Children worked in England but were not offered the same opportunities as they were in Australia where their spirit was not broken by Methodism and repetitive exhausting tasks. If young Aus-

tralians grew up uneducated, they did so in open spaces and with an open future. The pressures that were then forming the working class in England did not begin in earnest in Australia until the 1880s.

Even when forced to work for wages, the ex-convicts were better paid than their English counterparts, and sometimes, as in whaling and sealing, they shared in the profits. Morever, said Hainsworth, 'the sealers would receive their earnings in a lump sum. The far-sighted might reckon that one or two seasons on the grounds could earn them enough capital to establish a business or buy a farm'. The method employed by lesser-known emancipists and ticket-of-leave men was not always that of 'honest and dilligent exertion'. According to Governor Bligh:

> Instead of reaping a benefit either from their labour or skill in any mechanic branch, the greatest part of them became hucksters and dealers in various articles of food, and especially during the famine, enhancing the price of every commodity on the people, and making them their prey.

Old habits obviously found new opportunities for reward in the colony.

Judge Therry's *Reminiscences*, published in London in 1863, gave the following picture of the effect of transportation:

> Even in the class of the more depraved convicts transported for a serious crime, the instances of a reformed character were numerous and gratifying. London pickpockets and convicts from Dublin, Liverpool and the large towns of the United Kingdom, who from their childhood upwards had been brought up in ignorance, and had led lives of habitual crime, if not from principle, from obvious motives of interest in the prospect of becoming independent in a land of abundance, altered their course of conduct and became industrious members of society.

In 1850, the Convict Department reported to the Colonial Adjutant-General that, of approximately 60 000 felons who had been sent to New South Wales since 1788, '38 000 are now fill-

ing respectable positions in life, and earning their livelihood in the most creditable manner'. The report continued: 'Of the residue, death and departures from the colony will account for the greater part; and I am enabled to state that only 370 out of the whole are now undergoing punishment of any kind'.

The quotations from Judge Therry and the Convict Department report are taken from Ward's *The Australian Legend*. There is little dispute that convicts 'rose'. The point at issue is the social consequences of this upward social and material mobility. Ward rightly argues that it produced a feeling of 'independence' which he claimed was the basis for the legendary mateship tradition. It is here contended that 'independence', produced a spirit of individual self-assertion. In order to test these propositions it will be necessary to examine the extent to which the convicts 'stuck together'.

Tom Inglis Moore, in *Meanjin* in 1965, observed that:

> the loyalty of convict mateship seems to have been dictated mainly by self-interest, fear, and intimidation, so that the betrayals of mates were a common feature. This common treachery is especially worth noting in that it is often glossed over by contemporary historians and writers. Thus Price Warung's stanzas of the familiar Convict Oath used by the dreaded Ring are quoted as evidence of the strength of convict mateship:

> Hand to hand,
> On Earth, in Hell,
> Sick or Well,
> On Sea, on Land,
> On the square, ever.

But there is no mention of the fact that in Warung's story where the Oath is given the three veteran convicts murder their three 'mates' callously as soon as the victims have served their purpose in saving rations for the escape planned. In the sequel story one of the three survivors in the 'Murderers Pit' is first murdered, then the other two are killed trying to murder each other. Thus the oft-quoted Convict Oath is turned into

the grimmest mockery, and convict mateship is pictured as a series of treacherous murdering of 'mates'. So, too, there has been quotation of the episode where Maurice Frere asks Gabbett when the giant convict is recaptured about his mates 'as though a "mate" was something a convict was born with — like a mole, for instance', but there is no mention of the significant fact that Gabbett had not only murdered his 'mates' but had also feasted on their flesh. Marcus Clarke throws further light on convict 'mateship' when he pictures Captain Frere as telling how he rules by setting the convicts to spy on each other since treachery was common and 'It's just because no man can trust his neighbour that every mutiny falls to the ground'. *Ralph Rashleigh* also provides substantial evidence of treachery among convicts from the time when Ralph himself was first betrayed by a mate to the settlement at Newcastle where 'no man dared trust his fellow'.

The extent of this treachery is shown in this description of the Second Fleet:

> When any of them were near dying, and had something given them as bread ... the person next to him or others would catch the bread, etc., out of his hand, and, with an oath, say that he was going to die, and therefore it would be of no service to him.

Norfolk Island produced its share of 'brutalised class solidarity'. Mortlock related that 'Men betraying their companions or accepting authority over them, are often called "dogs" and sometimes have their noses bitten off — the morsel being termed a "mouthful of dog's nose" '. Until 1823, convicts were assigned to ex-convicts and were usually badly treated by them. In addition, the convicts incessantly stole from each other. It is no wonder then that, in 1867, a clergyman summed up the influence of convictism on the social conscience of Australians as being 'What is the use of a friend ... but to take the use of him'. What is surprising is that Russel Ward quoted this remark without realising its significance.

Of course, there were examples of 'class solidarity' among the 'rising felony'. A storekeeper, Charles Williams, fell into disgrace with his fellow-convicts and ex-convicts for an act of treachery against another transportee. Equally, divisions that split the outside world — nationality, religion and social class — also divided the convicts. During the Castle Hill rebellion of 1804, convicts at Parramatta sent Governor King an address of loyalty, while some other convicts were in the bands of soldiers that put down the uprising.

The phenomenon of convicts joining the police force leaves something of a hole in Ward's notion of the origins of the mythical Australian. As early as 1791, Phillip reported that 'three or four convicts offer themselves as soldiers'. In the 1790s there were a series of proposals to recruit convicts for the Indian army. Permission for this was refused but, in 1797, Portland authorised Hunter to 'emancipate such convicts as are ready to enlist and whose good conduct since their arrival shall best entitle them to such an indulgence'. So pleased was Governor King with the performance of the convict soldiers in suppressing the Castle Hill uprising that he wanted to employ thirty more as mounted troopers.

Eric Hobsbawm in his study *Primitive Rebels* made the point:

> The tough man who is unwilling to bear the traditional burdens of the common man in a class society, poverty and meekness, may escape from them by joining or serving the oppressors as well as by revolting against them ... Retainers, policemen, mercenary soldiers are thus often recruited from the same material as social bandits. Individual rebelliousness is itself a socially neutral phenomenon, and consequently mirrors the divisions and struggles within society.

Mortlock recognised the significance of a police force 'consisting (on the principle of *divide et impera*) almost entirely of persons who had been or still are in the same positions' (that is, convicts). Between 1802 and 1811, of the 108 members of the

Loyal Associations, ten were convicts, thirty-seven were ex-convicts, seven were free settlers, and the other half were of unknown origin. George Loveless commented that the convicts chosen were 'long sentence men', those 'most expert in their roguery'. Vandemonians in uniform were the cause of much of the digger resentment in the 1850s. Eventually most of the police forces were staffed by ex-convicts. Two emancipists reached high office: John Redmond became chief constable of Sydney and George Barrington chief constable at Parramatta and later superintendent of convicts. Of the 803 men in the ranks of the New South Wales police force in 1872, 479 had been born in Ireland, a country famed in song and legend for its hatred of authority. One heritage of the convicts has been corrupt police forces.

Treachery marred almost every attempted rebellion. Hardly a protest was planned without its being betrayed. A noble exception to this was Paddy Galvin, a young man who 'would have died upon the spot before he would tell a single sentence', according to the Reverend Samuel Marsden, who had him flogged three times in September 1800 in the hope of obtaining information about a suspected uprising by the United Irishmen.

Not even the political prisoners were free from the taint of commercial exploitation and treachery. The behaviour of one of the earliest political convicts, Maurice Margarot, was such that it was once fashionable to describe him as a police spy. His actions aboard the *Surprise* on the voyage out earned him the praise of the captain and the condemnation of his fellow-exiles who accused him of concocting a plot which involved their seizing the ship. This dispute followed Margarot to his grave, and beyond. In 1844 a committee to build a monument to the Scottish Martyrs split between Margarot's defenders and detractors.

If Margarot epitomised the factiousness endemic in colonial politics, his fellow Scottish Martyr, Muir, was the earliest ex-

ample of a political convict accepting the mores of the materialistically dominated culture of New South Wales. On his voyage out he commenced dealing in the rum trade. This interest in alcohol was deep-seated and he was often under its influence as early as eight in the morning. Muir was so well treated in his early days in the colony that he felt that 'gratitude' would 'ever bind him to the officers, civil and military'. Palmer and Skirving also participated in the rum traffic.

The Cato Street conspirators of 1819 had been convicted as a result of the activities of an agent provocateur. None the less, they had agreed to his prompting to assassinate the entire British Cabinet as a signal for revolution. This degree of commitment marks them off from many of the other political exiles. But this background could not save them from the corrupting influences of New South Wales. One of them became chief constable at Bathurst, while another conspirator served under him until he received a pardon and became a fashionable tailor. A third became Bathurst's leading baker. 'Grevious as was their crime', observed Sir Roger Therry, 'the three Cato Street Conspirators I met with became reformed and useful men in New South Wales.'

Of the seventy-five Unionists and Chartists transported between 1839 and 1842, only three of the Chartists escaped from the particularism that dominated the politics of the vast majority of the exiles. In 1839 Frost led a band of men in armed attack upon Newport. In Van Diemen's Land his only public activity seems to have been a lecture in refutation of Hume's disproof of miracles. On his return to England he campaigned vigorously against transportation, largely on the grounds that if it were not ended, England would meet the fate of Sodom, so prevalent was unnatural vice in Van Dieman's Land. Frost's two companions, Williams and Jones, took up positions as superintendent of a mine and schoolmaster respectively. Williams made a couple of unsuccessful attempts to escape. Notwithstanding, he was sworn into the police force in Janu-

ary 1844 where he rendered humane service to the unfortunates in his charge. After much turmoil and skullduggery on the part of his associates, he eventually died a wealthy coal-mine owner. The fate of Jones was equally instructive. He too served as a constable, but following a quarrel with Williams he rode all night to Hobart to inform of his mate's attempted escape.

Two surviving convict songs represent the extremes between which the historians must choose if they are to decide the relevance of the convicts in the formation of the Australian tradition. On the one hand, there is Jim Jones, who promised that on

> ... some dark night when everything
> Is silent in the town
> I'll kill the tyrants one and all
> And shoot the floggers down.
> I'll give the law a little shock,
> Remember what I say:
> They'll yet regret they sent Jim Jones
> In Chains to Botany Bay.

Jim Jones is threatening assassination, not social unrest; his protest is a personal one against brutes such as Price and Logan. And with the exceptions of Price, Logan and 'Black Francis', the promise of the last two lines remains unfulfilled.

Alternatively, there is the attitude of the educated author of 'Moreton Bay' who, having related the death of Logan, ends by exhorting

> My fellow prisoners, be exhilarated
> That all such monsters such death may find!
> And when from bondage we are liberated
> Our former sufferings shall fade from mind.

Here we see the expectant acceptance of those who made their prosperous way.

Attempts to find the origins of 'mateship' in the activities and attitudes of the convicts are doomed to failure. What can

be discovered there is a prefigurement of the dominating influence on the labouring classes for the remainder of the century: a belief in opportunities for economic and political advance within the framework of the existing society.

In the absence of a class-conscious proletariat in nineteenth-century Australia, radical historians have allowed their sympathies for the oppressed to weigh their scholarship down with sentimentality. The convicts had to be rescued from the embarrassment of their obvious lumpen-bourgeois practices by more than their petit-bourgeois outlook. Historians 'hunted for the proletariat' long before the conditions for its existence had come into being. Because the convicts did the work, they were endowed with proletarian values. In particular, they came to embody 'egalitarian class solidarity' which they passed on to gold-miners, shearers — and bushrangers.

BUSHRANGERS

In real life it was but a short step from being a convict to becoming a bushranger. The first bushrangers were runaway convicts. Late in 1829, for example, Ralf Entwistle, having been unjustly punished, fled his position and began building a troop which, for a time, numbered almost eighty men. They rampaged through the Bathurst district for nearly a year before being broken up by a 'posse'. Entwistle had conceived a plan to attack Bathurst where he expected support from the currency lads; the latter grew cold on the idea and the attack never eventuated.

Moreover, convicts and bushrangers shared many characteristics. Most of the points already raised in connection with the consequences of convictism for the Australian tradition apply equally to bushrangers. Before discussing the implications of the legendary bushranger, it will be beneficial to examine the species in its habitat.

Overwhelmingly, bushrangers were no more, and often a good deal less, than louts of the contemporary bikie variety. They roamed the countryside terrorising small farmers and stealing their poultry. As such, they were thoroughly detested by ordinary people who had more immediate tasks to perform than writing ballads in praise of the hoodlums who added appreciably to the difficulties they experienced in a harsh environment.

One of the bushrangers' great sources of moral strength — the folk song — is a flimsy structure upon which to base popularity. Folk songs are almost invariably written long after an event or far away, and thus present a romanticised picture of their subject. They are particularly keen in their suppression of brutality and murderousness. How much credence, for example, can be placed on ballads recounting Ned Kelly's chivalry if they omit to mention that at the age of fifteen he sent a neighbour's wife a pair of bullock's testicles with the suggestion that they might be of use to her husband? Perhaps the reason few anti-bushranger ballads have come to light is connected with the very nature of the ballad as a literary form. If future historians were to rely on ballads for an assessment of the popular esteem in which anti-Vietnam activists were held in Australia in 1970, they would go sadly amiss.

Far from being gentlemen and thieves, the earliest bushrangers were footpads. The first to organise a gang was named Whitehead. He showed his mettle when he killed a halfwit, 'Looney' Hopkins, by tying moccasins filled with bull ants to his legs. Shortly afterwards, Michael Howe, in a fit of temper, shot and wounded his Aboriginal girlfriend. Perhaps her racial origins enabled him to live down this act of chivalry in order to become 'the great name of this island', Van Diemen's Land.

Mark Jeffries' life provided another example of how bushrangers endeared themselves to the folk. Late in 1825 Jeffries and two 'mates' attacked a homestead where they first killed the settler and his hired man and then bashed out the brains of

a five-month-old child against a tree-trunk. When they were brought to Launceston, the population turned out to lynch Jeffries. Safely in gaol he proceeded to inform on his former associates. Equally appealing was John Lynch in New South Wales in the early 1840s. He killed nine people, including a young girl, with an axe, and strangled a dog with his bare hands.

As R. B. Walker has noted: 'Public sympathy for the bushrangers can also be easily confused with the fear they aroused'.

The mateship tradition must have been on vacation the day Morgan shot a shepherd: the wounded man had to ask seventeen people before one of them dared to help him. Cold-blooded murders were committed by the Clarkes in 1866 and by the Kellys in 1878. The bushranger's chivalry to a woman meant that he robbed her without raping her, a circumstance capable of more than one explanation.

Equally revealing is the 'mateship' that operated among the bushrangers themselves. In 1831 two associates of Bold Jack Donahue's, Walmsley and Webber, both offered to give evidence in return for a pardon. Walmsley's offer was accepted and his information led to the arrest of dozens of small settlers for receiving. Australian experience with bushrangers more than confirms Eric Hobsbawm's contention that the primitive rebel is always betrayed. Many minor figures, such as Gordon, Lynham, Scarry, Lloyd, Baldwin and Foran, were captured or killed as the direct result of intelligence received. Riley was betrayed by his girlfriend, who turned him in for the reward. Gilbert was similarly treated by the grandfather of one of his associates. The most notorious 'treachery' was Aaron Sheritt's betrayal of the Kellys.

A second generation of bushrangers arose with the gold rushes from the 1850s and 1860s. Instead of stealing food from farmers, the bushranger could now take gold from the diggers, with whom bushrangers became far from popular. A miners-protection committee was set up at Kiandra, for instance,

to frustrate Gardiner's raids. When Gilbert and Gardiner and some others attacked the gold escort from the Araluen field in March 1865, they were driven off by fifty diggers who had rushed out to protect their gold. If the diggers contributed to the mateship tradition, they would have been hard put to include the bushrangers within its compass. Diggers did not sympathise with the men who stole their gold; rather they lacked sympathy for the police who were supposed to protect it. Opposition to the police does not mean support for thieves. It more likely means that there would be demands for more efficient police to wipe out the bushrangers. Yet another aspect of this popular antipathy appears in Adam Lindsay Gordon's poem 'The Sick Stockrider'. With his dying breath, the stockrider recalls the pleasure of hunting down dingoes and bushrangers.

One of the bushrangers' constant fears was that they would be given poisoned food by the farmers upon whom they depended for information: Morgan accepted nothing but boiled eggs. Bushrangers were often forced into further robberies in order to make their generosity equal the rewards being offered for them. Even the beloved Kelly found it expedient to insult his 'telegraphs' with a percentage of his takings.

Yet, when all the murders have been recounted and all the acts of treachery catalogued, it remains undeniable that, as Ward says:

> ... while every child knows something of Ned Kelly, Macquarie, even to a great many adults, is just the name of a Sydney street favoured by medical specialists, and Deakin, if known at all, is the name of a trans-continental railway siding or Canberra suburb. It is this fact which is singular and demands some explanation.

What are we to make of Ward's further claim that 'the "old Australian" elements of the population ... tended to look upon the bushrangers ... as themselves writ large'? In order to accept that idea it would be necessary to distinguish the louts who ranged the bush from the occasional victims of injustice

who were forced outside the law. These 'outlaws' could become an embodiment of the universal expectation of a material advance, especially to the extent that they expressed an idealised selector discontent. Australians who chose a racehorse (Phar Lap) and a bushranger (Kelly) as their heroes expressed the same get-rich-quick, Tatts syndrome.

TWELVE

Diggers

California and Australia are two cases which were not provided
for in the Manifesto: creation of great new markets out of nothing.
They must still be put into it.

Engels to Marx, 21 August 1852

The title, *The Rush That Never Ended*, that Geoffrey Blainey
gave to his account of mining remains an excellent summation
of this vital aspect of Australian history. But Blainey did not
explore the wider implications of his title to the extent he did
later with the *Tyranny of Distance*. He was so fascinated with
mining techniques that he was unable to spare time for the so-
cial and political consequences of his theme. Where he did
comment, his observations were apposite:

> Gold had a magnetism which the welfare state has dulled. To win
> gold was the only honest chance millions of people had of better-
> ing themselves, of gaining independence, of storing money for old
> age or sickness, of teaching their children to read and write. The
> 1840s had been a decade of revolution and misery and famine in
> Europe, and now across the globe was a gigantic lottery in which
> all had a chance and the strong-armed labourer the highest chance.
> Gold was the magic formula in an age without football pools or
> state lotteries or social services.

In August 1851, Engels had given a wider context:

> It is to be hoped that the Australian gold-shit will not hold up the

commercial crisis. However, it momentarily creates a new, mainly fictitious market and raises the price of wool, since the flocks of sheep are being neglected. Apart from this, it's a very fine business. Steamers round the world will be in full swing in six months, and our prophecies about the supremacy of the Pacific are being realised even more rapidly than we could expect. During this occasion the English will be thrown out, too, and the United States of deported murderers, burglars, ravishers and pickpockets will furnish the world with an astonishing example of what a State of unconcealed blackguards can do in the way of miracles. They will beat California hollow. While in California at least it is the blackguards who are being lynched, in Australia one will lynch the *honnêtes gens*, and Carlyle will see his aristocracy of rogues established in full glory.

This chapter explores some of the social and political effects of these rushes. First, it will be necessary to catalogue the more important strikes that made mining so important that by 1900 mining towns contained one-eighth of Australian's male work force.

To restrict the Golden Age to the 1850s would, as Blainey showed, be a mistake. True, those were the years of discovery when the first rush of excitement caused gentlemen to froth at the mouth, ladies to faint and children to throw somersaults. If the succeeding decades did not produce as much gold for as many people, they none the less still held out the promise of sudden fortune. Their effect on social consciousness was immense. The rushes sustained the belief that advancement was possible, that the small man could make good, that capitalism was incompatible with independence. And so the hopeful made pilgrimages, if only of the mind, to New Zealand in 1861, Young and Forbes in 1862, Gympie in 1867, Ravenswood in 1868, Charters Towers and Etheridge in 1872, Palmer River and Hodgkinson in 1873, Mt Morgan in 1882 and Croydon in 1886, and to a hundred and one other Ophirs. Even those who stayed at home were able to participate by playing the stock market. Share-buying was not the preserve of the

well-to-do. Indeed, because of the employees' intimate knowledge of the mines, they made the first killing.

When times were tough, as in the 1890s and 1930s, gold came to the rescue. In the 1890s at least £1 million a year was sent from West Australia to Victoria to support 8000 families. The multiplier effect of this spending cushioned the intensity of the depression in and around mining towns such as Ballarat. The importance of these transfers should not be overlooked in any account of the retarded growth of the labour movement in Victoria.

The search for gold was one of the mainsprings of Australian imperialism in the Pacific. The rushes to New Zealand, which started in the 1860s, were followed by ones to New Guinea from the 1870s. The most important find was in Fiji in the 1930s. The Fiji gold mines were developed by a syndicate which included John Wren, Frank Packer and sometime Labor leader Ted Theodore. The capital for the project came from a series of share transactions in the Sydney newspaper world, which eventually gave rise to another of gold's contributions to Australian culture, *The Women's Weekly*.

Hard times in the 1930s produced a fresh stimulus to Australia's domestic gold output which rose from £2 million to £16 million within the decade. In the first half of the 1930s, gold production in the Mandated Territories of Papua and New Guinea grew from almost nothing to be worth more than £2 million in 1935. This upsurge led to a reawakening of copper and silver-lead-zinc mines as far apart as Tennant Creek and Rosebery. Lasseter became the folk-hero of these latter-day diggers, numbered in their thousands. In Victoria, the government gave a tent, mining tools, a prospector's guide and a free rail-pass to each of 16 000 unemployed. The depression also resulted in a doubling of the price of gold, so this 'barbarous relic' regained its fascination.

Blainey pointed out that 'all but a few of Australia's main metal fields were opened during, or soon after, recessions'

because such capital as was available was freed from other sources of investment, and for the simple reason that there were lots of people anxiously looking for available ore bodies.

As suggested in the two quotations from Engels, the gold discoveries had implications other than those connected with the domestic economies of Australasia. The gold rushes to California and Australia helped capitalism out of the chronic slackness of the 1840s by setting up a demand for a wide variety of products. Blainey followed Engels:

> The voyage from Europe to the goldfields was so popular and so long that more ships were needed for the traffic, and ship-building yards in Boston and Glasgow and Tyneside prospered. The wages they paid revived trade in their own vicinity; the timber and hemp and iron they imported as raw materials spread prosperity to other industries and other countries like a chain letter.

Once the revival took place in the 1860s, capital started to flow in the opposite direction, from Britain to Australia, for the long boom in the Australian economy from 1860 to 189093. Eventually, the compliment was returned when an Australian mine, Mt Morgan, provided the capital for British exploitation of Middle Eastern oil.

Higher wages were the first economic consequences of the gold discoveries in 1851. In Victoria's Western District, the shearing rates increased by almost 50 per cent in the first year. By 1854, wages on average had doubled. Yet, as Margaret Kiddle pointed out, 'even at such inflated rates labour was difficult to find while surface gold was still plentiful'. Once it ran out, the labour market was overfull until the early 1860s when the New Zealand rush siphoned off some of the excess. The long boom had commenced.

Even the ending of the early halcyon days could not obliterate their social effects. Expectation of upward mobility had too firm a hold. An English journal in 1852 reported the following interchange as typical of colonial mores:

'My good fellow', said a spruce newcomer to a rough-looking fellow, 'carry this bag, and you shall have a shilling'. The other coolly transferred a quid of tobacco from one cheek to the other, as he placed a cowhide-shod boot on a convenient stone, with the words, 'Here my fine lad, tie my shoe and here's half a crown for you'.

Although all historians have noted the feelings of independence that the goldfields produced in colonial working men, they have not all seen the implications of this attitude for the nature of the labour movement. Some writers have seen this independence as productive of solidarity and mateship. Their logic is hard to follow. Pursuit of wealth was the reason for men being on the goldfields. Claim-jumping was a daily occurrence, for the diggers had to compete with each other for the prize. The gold rushes substantiated the lament by a Sydney stonemason in July 1854:

> The historian will seek a cause for the latter phenomenon and find it in that love of gold which has so thoroughly individualised us. There is not that degree of sociability existing amongst us that ought to exist and, until men's minds are cultivated, a high social state of feeling cannot supersede.

By contrast, Labor personalities such as William Lane and W. G. Spence regretted the passing of the golden fifties of self-promotion. In *Workingman's Paradise*, Lane looked back longingly to the time when each man was able to live in 'freedom, justice and democracy' without an employer. *Australia's Awakening* opened with a dirge for the shallow gold leads that had enabled the diggers to avoid wage-slavery.

Not every mine employee was a wage-slave. Some Cornish miners worked in South Australian copper or Victorian gold mines for thirty years on 'tribute', a system by which they were paid a share of the value of the ore they mined. Even when wage-slavery could not be avoided, the wages were usually quite high. At Charters Towers, for instance, wages ranged from £3 10s to £4 a week and never fell below £3. Ac-

cording to Geoffrey Bolton, 'This gave everyone the possibility of becoming a homeowner, and often a surplus for dabbling in investment'. In addition, a little extra could be stolen; Blainey suspected it might have been as high as 5 per cent of the total. Queensland's Department of Mines reported that in 1888 'some here [Charters Towers] who were working-men a few years ago are now drawing incomes of over £20 000 a year from the gold mines; others are receiving smaller amounts; and a large number have at least made what in the old land would be considerable competencies'. The success of these few held out hope for the masses.

Sometimes, the effect of a gold rush could be direct in its impact upon the labour movement. In the 1890s, in the Armidale district, the Hillgrove boom brought prosperity and lessened the force of the depression so that the large mining population 'had neither acute grievances nor any strong political interest'.

Universal in its influence was the effect gold had upon the economy and upon social consciousness during the three decades of economic prosperity that preceded the establishment of the Labor parties by unions which had had their outlook formed in those thriving years.

Gold contributed to the consciousness of the labouring class in a number of ways, all of which served to reinforce the belief that there was something to be gained under capitalism, perhaps that most prized of all possessions, economic independence. The direct economic contribution of gold ranged from higher wages to relief in a depression. More important were its mythopoeic properties. Even men who had never seen unminted gold knew that it could be found and was being found by the likes of them. Or, if not gold, then silver or some precious stone. 'Gold' combined with 'Land' to sustain the hopes of aspiring labourers, to hold out to them a chance of escape from wage-slavery. Gold might never offer sufficient to retire, but a man could set up a small business or a selection.

These ideological consequences were as important in subordi-
nating the labour movement as were the prosperity and
promises that gold spread.

THIRTEEN
Selectors

It is the farmer who 'gives his girls and boys to the big cities to infuse ... red blood into a society that is constantly decadent, and whose only salvation is the virility it draws from the rural section'.

Southern Argus (Wagin), 31 January 1920

To understand the intensity of the desire to possess 'land', it is essential to realise the mythical, indeed religious qualities with which it can be endowed. Fascist propagandists exploited this connection with their emphasis on the soil as the source of life, food and blood. The shift from agriculture to industry devastated those who experienced its worst features in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Britain. The enclosures forced thousands from their land. The Industrial Revolution dragooned countless others into factories and towns which were the denial of the independence and sociability associated with rural life. There was a general longing for a return to the status and security of land ownership.

It is in these intangibles as much as in any material reward that the profound power of land rests — a power evident even today although its precise forms have altered. Santamaria's land schemes, demands for decentralisation, and the suburban sprawl remind us of the importance of land in the ideals of the Australian people. Our land-myth flourished upon a tripod of forces: peasant faith in land, utopianism, and an abundance of

untilled acres. The first two were imported in the baggage of convicts and free settlers alike.

Peasant faith in land was strongest among the Irish, some four thousand of whom were transported for participating in anti-eviction societies. One observer in Ireland in 1839 wrote that 'it is not enough to say that land is desired; it is envied and coveted ... and when it cannot be occupied by fair means, it is seized by crime'. In the latter part of the nineteenth century, an entirely new political weapon, the boycott, sprang from the pledge of the Land League never to purchase land from which a tenant had been evicted for non-payment of unjust rent. The desire for land was tied to the fight for Home Rule and thus carried significance for Irishmen unconnected with agriculture. When the Irish, whether convict or free, came to Australia their demand for land was undiminished, even if, like Joseph Furphy's parents, they had to wait twenty-five years before they could secure a holding.

English utopians responded to industrialisation by seizing upon 'land' as the source of salvation. Initially, this association carried over the Jacobin hatred for the aristocracy, expressed in Tom Paine's *Agrarian Justice.* In the depression that followed the Napoleonic wars, discharged sailors and soldiers responded to orators who concluded that 'the earth is at all times sufficient to place man above distress ... if he had but a spade and a hoe'. In the cooperative community of Owenism, the yearning for land acquired its first organised voice. All through this era, Cobbett expounded the cause of the displaced rural workers — not that they needed anyone to tell them from where their troubles sprang, as their revolt in 1830 showed. Some 460 of these riotous followers of 'Captain Swing' were transported to Australia.

With the 1840s came the most extraordinary exhibition of the potency of the land myth as an escape from the evils of urban industry. In the years 1845 to 1848, Fergus O'Connor enrolled into his Chartist Land Plan almost 70 000 contributors

who recognised that they had very little hope of ever finding their names on a list of chosen settlers. Yet they were aroused by the call of

> Courage, poor slave! deliverance is near.
> Oh! she has breathed a summons sweeter still:
> Come! take your guerdon at O'Connorville!

O'Connor won his supporters in the face of opposition from other Chartist leaders. He recognised that 'his plan has no more to do with Socialism than it has with the Comet', and was essentially conservative in character. This appraisal remained true for the various land schemes that attracted the Australians.

Despite severe disagreements between them, Caroline Chisholm and Edward Gibbon Wakefield were agreed that the emigrants desired land, and not a mere reproduction in Australia of the wage system. Mrs Chisholm favoured settling poor immigrants on plots of four to twenty hectares immediately on their arrival. Wakefield opposed this policy, arguing that unless land was of a 'sufficient price' to prevent everyone buying a farm the moment they set foot in the colony, there would be no end to the chronic labour shortage and hence a bar to the accumulation of capital. Wakefield did recognise that the establishment of a 'yeomanry' was so strongly desired by the emigrants that it could not be ignored. He proposed that the 'sufficient price' be low enough to enable farm labourers to save, within five to seven years, adequate funds to take up a property of their own. His theory foundered on the rock of how such a price was to be determined. Eventually land prices were fixed, as in South Australia, or determined by auction, as in the Port Phillip district. The result of the latter was as Wakefield had predicted: only the rich could afford to buy. Marx made merry with Australian experiences in the final chapter of the 1867 volume of *Capital*.

The depression that hit the colonies from 1840 to 1845 ac-

centuated the precarious position of the landless labourers who intensified their cry for a yeomanry. Alexander Harris, who was in Australia at this time, noted in *Settlers and Convicts* that the existing land regulations caused

> A very bitter and continually deepening feeling of disaffection to the British Government ... in the minds of the colonial youth ... They say and truly enough — Great Britain sends out two classes here: one of these being rich, originally obtained vast grants of land for nothing, and is still allowed to buy on terms to which it can conform; the other, as being poor, is not even allowed to buy, because the very condition of purchase is that the purchaser be rich.

This disaffection took a curious turn in 1844 when Governor Gipps announced two sets of squatting regulations. Although these rules aimed to secure tenure for squatters, they were neither presented nor perceived as such. Wentworth, by then leader of the 'exclusivist' faction, set up a hue and cry against Gipps. The squatters' traditional enemies, the small landholders and town labourers, joined forces with the squatters against the Governor, who had made himself unpopular in the years 1840–44 by forcing up the minimum price of land. The land-hungry were driven into the arms of those who were the real enemies of open selection and went into battle, as on so many other occasions, in the interests and at the command of their masters.

The fight against Gipps led to a new set of land regulations in 1847. These amendments gave the squatters almost everything they wanted. Too late the landless realised they had fought behind false colours. Three years on, the discovery of gold set the stage for a more ferocious attack upon the squattocracy in the form of the Free Selection Acts of the 1860s. 'Selection before survey' was the culmination of a decade of campaigning to unlock the land so that the diggers, successful and failed alike, could contribute to the young nation's wealth by participating in its agriculture.

The disposal of land in Australia was more complex than indicated by the present sketch, which is concerned with its ideological implications for the aspiring classes. Just how important land was in the formation of the political and social consciousness of the Australian people will be examined by recounting some of the prolonged battles they waged in order to establish a 'yeomanry'.

The desire for land coloured two otherwise unconnected features of nineteenth-century Australian thinking. The Church and School Corporation, established in 1824, was supposed to be financed from a land grant 'comprising one seventh part in extent and value of all land in each colony'. The opposition that this aroused found life later in the campaign for secular education. A small grant of land in the Port Phillip district was made to an Aboriginal welfare organisation: 'To the squatters, this was an abomination'.

Australia had a greater percentage of its population in towns than almost any other country: more than 50 per cent in 1891, and more than in the United States. For, as James McAuley wrote in his fragment from *The True Discovery of Australia*:

> though they praise the inner spaces,
> When asked to go themselves, they'd rather not.

It is in the contradiction between a stated desire for land and a refusal to quit the cities that the utopian face of land reform can be divined. Large numbers of immigrants wanted to be farmers. For many others, land represented a mystical hope — the Promised Land — the alternative to the wage slavery of the factory towns. The farm was not real in the sense that every stonemason intended to leave Sydney for the bush. Rather, it was real in the sense that the demand for land was an affirmation of their desire for the freedom and security that capitalism had destroyed in Britain and was again constricting in Australia. As one new arrival put it in 1853, 'My great hope and

ambition was that ... I might become the owner of a plot of land to settle down upon and live in peace and contentment, and, what is still better, independent of the whims and caprice of an employer'.

In the early 1850s the editor of the then radical *Argus* coined the slogan 'Unlock the Lands' — a cry taken up by every reform movement in the second half of the nineteenth century. In range of political sentiment, the clamour united the quasi-Marxist Democratic Association of Victoria and the New South Wales landowner John Robertson; in time, it extended from the Ballarat Reform League at Eureka in 1854 to the Australian Labor Federation around Barcaldine in 1891. Because of the opposition it encountered in the squatter-dominated Legislative Councils, land reform became integral to democratic reform. Whether its particular manifestation was a Selection Act, a Village Settlement or a Single-Tax League, the view of land as the source of wealth and security proved central to the thinking and practices of the burgeoning labour movement.

Early in the 1860s, New South Wales and Victoria passed Selection Acts. Scholars have shown that these Acts were not intended to create a yeomanry. They did not flow from the disinterestedness of the urban middle classes. They were part of a battle between the urban capitalists and the squatters. The leaders in the fight for free selection were men such as John Robertson, a landowner. The labouring classes tied their hopes to the bourgeois, only to have them dashed once more. The workers were political pawns and their demand for land became a stepping stone for the politically ambitious:

> Unlock! Unlock! throw open wide, the portals of your land,
> Let all enjoy those blessings given by an all bounteous hand ...
> Then to the poll, your votes enrol, each tradesman, farmer, thrasher,
> Unlock the Lands! cry out all hands, and Vote for Morris Asher!

Graham Berry in Victoria in 1877 used the demand for a pro-

gressive land tax to gain the premiership though he was far from sympathetic to the proposal. That the Selection Acts were an instrument in a struggle between fractions of capital, and because the laws put so few people on the land, does not diminish the popular support for access to land. Indeed, the politics of the second half of the nineteenth century were notable for the consistency with which the demand for land recurred, to be woven into all other proposals for progress. The battles also revealed the immaturity of the labouring classes: first, in their belief that the land offered an escape from capitalism, and secondly, in their political obeisance to bourgeois liberals. It remains to trace out the contours of these relations.

The *Times*, 23 December 1851, thought it 'an undoubted fact that most men emigrate for the sake of obtaining land', even at the height of a gold rush. Certainly, within twelve months of the first miners arriving in Victoria, an organised voice called for land reform. The subservience outlined above emerged in the next six months: the spokesmen were established radicals such as Fawkner, the 'Cobbett of the South'. None the less, the demands for farms were heartfelt. In December 1852, 13 000 diggers at Castlemaine petitioned for blocks of seven to thirty hectares. Under Fawkner's influence, a Colonial Reform Association was launched in November that same year with land reform its main objective. By the following June, the Association had presented 7000 signatures petitioning for land.

Even though the high price of land was more pressing at this time, there was a widespread belief that once the land was unlocked all would be well. The decision to 'unlock' came in a dispatch from the Secretary for the Colonies in March 1854. The new Governor, Hotham, was too busy fining miners to do anything except appoint a Royal Commission, which proved to be an excellent waste of time. The much desired 'unlocking' came and went almost unnoticed.

Three days after Eureka, a public meeting in Melbourne de-

manded that 'All land of the colony, not actually purchased and paid for, be leased to *bona fide* cultivators in Farms of 250 acres each at a nominal rent'. The difficulty faced by the diggers in their quest for land had contributed to their rebellion, but was not a necessary or a direct cause. More relevant was the high price of foodstuffs, because the administration would not sell land round the diggings. The grievance was limited to the removal of administrative injustices and did not yet assume the outright anti-squatter characteristics that soon dominated. The demand for farms quoted above had ended with proposals to compensate the squatters.

By January 1855, even someone as insensitive to public feelings as Governor Hotham realised that 'the real fight will be for the land'. The findings of the Commission that inquired into Eureka were more accurate as prediction than as history in relation to land matters. Until 1854, those desirous of land had been largely provided for. With the end of alluvial mining it was certainly most urgent that 'the flocks and herds ... give way to the human families' if Victoria's recently acquired population were to be maintained. No one was more anxious that this should be so than the merchants who interested themselves in land reform: 3000 people attended a meeting called by the mayor of Melbourne to consider the best means of opening up the countryside.

Illustrative of the change that immigration wrought in radicals was the attitude of Charles Southwell to the land question which, he asserted, could be solved by 'vision on the part of the governing classes'. When he stood for the Legislative Council, the *Age* exposed his 'revolutionary' past. He had broken with Robert Owen whom he claimed was altogether too moderate.

Despite organisational setbacks, 1855 saw the publication of perhaps the most radical demand for land reform to appear in the whole campaign. Its author, 'Peter Papineau', remains a mystery, but his intentions were clear enough: *Homesteads for*

the people and manhood suffrage. Papineau decried 'the stupid cuckoo cry, "Unlock the Lands" ', which he declared to be nothing more than an opportunity to

> buy bad land at a low price, or fair land at a high price; low-priced bad land that would be dear as a gift, high-priced fair land which, if he buys in a large quantity, swallows up his capital and leaves him without the means of settling upon it properly.

The wise alternative for the working man was 'not to attend the land sales at all! ... Let him keep his money and wait — he will not have to wait long'.

Immediate relief was not to be had. Two more years passed before the land reformers presented their next serious challenge. The driving force for this second campaign came from two recent arrivals, Wilson Gray and Gavan Duffy. They travelled to Melbourne on the same ship early in 1856 and set about establishing niches for themselves in local affairs. Their method of operation carried on the tradition of Irish land hunger. In 1857 they called together a Land Convention. Duffy's later explanation of his activities doubtless contains many efforts at self-justification, yet it is noteworthy that he saw land reform as a 'counterpoise' to the political power of the diggers 'who when they became unfit for that trying pursuit might become dangerous to the public safety'. Whether or not this containment was Duffy's intention at the time, the total effect of the land issue in the nineteenth century was to divert social protestors into innumerable blind alleys.

Trade union leaders made themselves prominent when the Land Convention met in Melbourne in July 1857. Delegates were elected at public meetings to attend the Convention which was seen as an extra-parliamentary assembly where the demands of the people could be voiced. The particular cause of agitation was a new land Bill which offered perpetuity of tenure to the squatters, in fact if not in law. About 70 000 people signed a petition against the Bill, at the same time demanding

democratic reforms. Rising unemployment gave a cutting edge
to the demands. When the Bill, known as the 'Squatters' Char-
ter', was defeated, holidays and bonfires spread throughout
the goldfields.

The Convention represented the most radical political force
in Victoria, a fact recognised by politicians such as Duffy and
Higinbotham who were annoyed at being outflanked on the
left. Although some speakers called for 'A Vote, A Rifle, and A
Farm', this phrase was sloganeering rather than settled policy.
One ardent reformer is supposed to have set off with a party to
unlock the lands by force, but went only as far as Flemington.
These kilometres were further than revolutionary endeavour
extended.

For two years the Convention met weekly; it organised
hundreds of public meetings and dozens of demonstrations. It
so roused public opinion that all governments were forced to
initiate radical land legislation. The Convention was also
loosely allied to reform associations in country towns and to
the United Australians and the National Reform Association.
While these links gave it support, they accentuated the ten-
sions that existed between country and metropolis, and
between various leaders.

Union spokesmen such as C. J. Don (later MLA) had been
associated with the Convention from its inception. Some un-
ions, such as the carpenters', had linked themselves directly
with the Convention. Early in 1859 they were beginning to
break away in the hope of securing direct representation in
parliament through a Political Labour League. The League's
policy on land and democracy was identical with the Conven-
tion's policy on land and democracy but had added planks on
an eight-hour day and repeal of the Masters and Servants Act.
The League collapsed after the election and always cooperated
with the Convention. The impulse to break free of
middle-class domination was present, but feeble.

Protectionism was breaking up the Convention's domi-

nance of radical politics. Protection, for so long nothing more than an isolated cry from Geelong, had become an important movement by 1859 when manufacturers and workers founded the Tariff League. Within a year, the Convention had been absorbed by the protectionist leagues and a new chapter Í perhaps the most important one Í in the alliance between capitalist and wage-slave began.

The Convention's death was not obvious in the first half of 1859. Its appeal for a new convention was as spirited as ever. When its supporters met in mid-July, the gathering proved a fiasco. The splits and rivalries that had become evident in the preceding year spelt its end as a coherent organisation just when the fight for land was about to enter a more violent phase.

No attempt will be made to trace the tortuous path of the Nicholson–Service Land Bill that was introduced in November 1859 and finally passed — mutilated — in September 1860. Suffice it to say that there were the inevitable games of musical chairs in the Cabinet room as premiers and ministers came and went. All this manoeuvring was without real importance. What mattered was the capitulation of the reformers in the Assembly to the demands of the conservative squatters in the Legislative Council. All through this period, public agitation for reform proceeded. In late August, Nicholson returned as premier but revealed a willingness to give in to the squatters. On the night before parliament was due to resume, three thousand people assembled in the Eastern Market where they were addressed by leading Conventionists, including Graham Berry and Wilson Gray. The assembly decided to meet again the following night to march on Parliament House to rally support for the original Bill.

A large but orderly crowd gathered on 28 August 1860 in a show of 'moral force'. After a few stones were thrown, Nicholson ordered out the troops, who broke up the meeting with a good deal of vigour. One thousand special constables

were sworn in over the next few days and political meetings were banned from the inner city although they were still permitted at the Eastern Market. The disturbance provoked a swing to the right in the Assembly. Nicholson could give way. The tattered Bill passed in mid-September. These manoeuvres did not save the squatters or Nicholson. In the elections of August 1861, a new group of reformers, led by Heales and Brooke, won twenty-two of the twenty-seven goldfields seats and formed a government. Popular sentiment was as firmly behind land reform as ever, but henceforth this plea would be bound to moves for protection and for democratic reform.

The Duffy Land Acts came into little effect in September 1862. Of a million acres that were sold, almost two-thirds were bought by a hundred men. Corruption pervaded all. Duffy's successor, Grant, terrified the squatters. Though he did not succeed in separating them from their land he often threatened to separate their heads from their bodies. He is alleged to have told a meeting at Camperdown in 1865 that 'he carried a Guillotine in his heart — and swore by his maker that he would cut off the heads of the squatters rather than that they should have the land'. Guillotines, lamp-posts and the like figured heavily in his speeches, which were as full of spirit as Grant himself.

Throughout the 1850s in Victoria, the desire for land reform pervaded every aspect of public life. The tens of thousands who signed petitions, the thousands who demonstrated, and the hundreds who organised, showed by their actions that it is impossible to separate land reform from the politics of the time. Even when protection took over, its pre-eminence did not mean that the people had suddenly become reconciled to industry. The earliest demands for protection came from farmers demanding Corn Laws. If every man were to have a farm, it was only natural that he would want to be able to sell its produce. Some land reformers wanted democratic reforms to break the power of the squatter-dominated Legislative Coun-

cil. Others sought land reform so that democracy and property ownership could remain compatible. While the former is the more radical, both indicate the important place that land occupied in the mid-nineteenth-century radical's view of the good society. 'Unlocking the land' lost its privileged place in Victorian radicalism partly because it had become so generally accepted and partly because it was impossible to implement it until further reforms were made to the squatter-dominated Legislative Council. Attention turned towards democratic reform, not for its own sake but so that desired economic and social advances could be effected.

Pressure for land reform in New South Wales was as intense as in Victoria, although the increase in population had not been so great. Radicalism was as firmly established. A few small groups had a purely working-class membership. These associations remained feeble. When the New South Wales Land League was formed in 1857, it showed little independence and supported liberal or even conservative politicians. The desertion of its president to the conservatives to become Minister for Lands sealed its fate, before it collapsed completely in 1860, the very year its proposals became law.

Despite this organisational weakness, there had been no lack of propaganda. The poet Charles Harpur and his brother Joseph were prominent. The latter became a confidant of the sponsor of free selection, John Robertson. Continuing pressure for free selection came from papers such as Parkes's *Empire* and the more radical *People's Advocate*, which, on 1 July 1854, carried a letter from an 'Irish Labourer and Republican' telling the readers that they 'can no more secure an acre of land unless at fifty to one hundred times its value, than you can secure it in the Domain of the Duke of Norfolk, Devonshire or Northumberland'. This impediment was particularly galling since they had 'expected to find a new home in this new land, capable of supporting millions of your fellow men'. The aim 'of all interested in the progress of the country' had been spelt

out editorially in the same paper two years earlier when it called for the establishment of a yeomanry, 'that is to say, small independent farmers who should be the cultivators of their own ground which they should hold immediately from the government'.

The *Report of a Select Committee on the Condition of the Working Classes of the Metropolis* in 1859 revealed that living conditions in Sydney's working-class districts were as appalling as those of the major European cities. These circumstances found one utopian outlet in demand for land.

The absence of independent working-class organisations enabled middle-class politicians to exert their influence. These politicians had an interest of their own to further, which they did by harnessing the working man's discontent. The workers were no less pleased to be led by gentlemen. The occasional outbursts in favour of cheap land as well as for free selection did not impair the relationship between the workers and the middle classes. Even when working-class spokesmen recalled the fate of Charles I, the bourgeoisie had little to fear, since the workers' aim was to abolish monopoly, not capital; monopoly meant the squatters. Further proof of the ideological supremacy of the middle classes is that the workers accepted free selection as the extension of the principle of laissez-faire, that is, as the removal of restrictions on farming. They did not see it as state activity, and still less as a form of agricultural socialism.

D. W. A. Baker, the authority on the 1860 Selection Act in New South Wales, described the situation:

This working-class intransigence was clearly inspired not only by past suffering, but also by the contrast between their present misery and their vision of the well-being they expected as a result of free selection. The working class, with juvenile utopianism, expected heavenly results from a middle class reform. J. G. White, one of the abler radicals, thought that the squatters' runs would give employment to a thousand times as much capital and labour as had formerly been expended on them. The cry went out from the roof tops that 'the good time is coming, boys!' Mr

McCormack saw eight hundred squatters' runs supporting a population of three hundred millions.

By the time it had become apparent that this outcome was not to be, the long boom had commenced. Utopian land schemes were to subside, but not disappear, until the boom began to collapse late in the 1880s. Full employment and high wages meant that the problems of industrial capitalism could once more be evaded, even to the extent of shelving dreams of an Australian arcadia.

The demand for land in Queensland was less because the following vicious circle operated: land had to be sold to pay for railways; railways were needed to reduce transport costs; lower transport costs were needed to make farming profitable; profitable farming had to be possible before anyone would buy land. This situation led to considerable interest in land-grant railways which were rejected by the radicals. The conservative leader McIlwraith initiated a scheme by which land would be given in payment for railway construction. The land would be resold to settlers, with the result that Queensland would have both railways and settlers without any public expenditure. McIlwraith was chairman of the railway construction company. His brave notion came to nought. His bank went broke.

In those areas of Queensland where geographic features were more favourable, as on the Darling Downs, Selection Acts operated with greater force. In addition to references to Locke and Jefferson, the advocates of free selection in Queensland had the example of the Homesteaders Act of 1862 in the United States. Agrarian feelings found voice in the Brisbane *Courier*, 23 March 1872, which believed that farmers 'live nearer God' and that the escape from the 'sickly towns' more than compensated for any lack of financial reward. It quoted the Archbishop of Brisbane who recognised that 'a man with a few acres of land is unlikely to become a socialist'. Outside some favoured areas, closer settlement in Queensland failed as

a result of the combined effects of poor transport, a low population, and a consequently slow demand for agricultural products. On top of these factors came unfavourable climatic conditions and the inevitable machinations of the squatters.

The neo-Wakefieldian principles upon which South Australia had been founded in 1836 were designed, in theory, to extend the limits of settlement in an orderly fashion so that more and more settlers would be placed on the land. Natural conditions enabled moderately sized wheat farms to succeed. Between 1850 and 1884, cultivated land increased from 26 000 to 1 117 000 hectares, which was about three hectares per person. This spread was four times as great as Victoria and ten times greater than the per capita figure for New South Wales. The virtue and value of land were always unstated assumptions in South Australia's political life. If there was no upheaval comparable to that of Victoria, it was because land monopolies had been discouraged from the first and therefore did not require breaking up. Most importantly, all land in South Australia had been purchased outright and no one dreamed of expropriating estates for which the Crown had been paid. Such a demand would have denied the security and independence that were the very basis of the clamour for land, which ignored the original dispossession.

South Australia in the late 1880s experienced a fresh upsurge of the agrarian myth when George Witherage Cotton, MLC, published *Small Holdings, the mainstay of individuals and nations.*Cotton proposed that the government lease blocks of up to eight hectares to working men. Initially these holdings would only supplement income but with the progress of agricultural science they would eventually support an entire family. These 'working men's blocks' would ward off revolutions and form the basis of a new society of independent farmers. A Homestead League campaigned on the issue in the 1890 election with some success. An Act to repurchase land for leasing was passed in 1890, followed by a Blockholders

Loans Act. By 1896, some 4 per cent of the state's population lived on these 'blocks'. Cotton had extensive connections with the SA Trades and Labour Council, presidents and secretaries of which served on the executive of the Homestead League. Cotton was claimed as a 'Labor' representative by the SA parliamentary committee in their 1889 report to the Inter-Colonial Trades Union Congress. The extension of 'working men's blocks' was part of the South Australian party's first electoral platform in 1891. The success of Cotton's ideas was related to the economic depression in the colony, a depression that would soon hit the eastern colonies with greater force.

At times of stress, the belief in land as the source of relief came to the fore. As the long boom of 1860–90 collapsed, the demand for land was once more raised by labouring men. William Lane's settlement in Paraguay was one measure of this demand, both in terms of the success he had in gaining recruits and in its eventual failure.

Before Lane set out on his ill-fated voyage he tried to establish village settlements in Australia. With the assistance of the Brisbane Trades and Labour Council, Lane proposed a scheme by which it would be possible to take up holdings of thirty hectares. The settlers would live in village groups and be assisted by the government. The appeal of this project can be seen from the people who supported it. They included the editor of the *Courier*, the headmaster of the Brisbane Grammar School and the president of the Trades and Labour Council. The Queensland reformers drew inspiration from the 1886 Lands Settlements Bill in New Zealand.

At the height of the 1891–94 shearers' strike, moves were made to avoid further disputes by escaping from the bonds of wage slavery. About one hundred strikers formed a cooperative at Alice River, financed by donations from Barcaldine. The union secretary there made other attempts to settle shearers on the land. A wire to the Minister for Lands at Perth asked if the Western Australian government would be willing to set-

tle five thousand experienced bush workers in cooperative col-
onies. In response to a similar request to the Argentine, the
government in Buenos Aires replied that it was willing to pro-
vide land and some facilities, but could not supply free trans-
port. As union funds were soon exhausted on the strikes,
neither proposal was acted upon. Closer to home, the towns-
men of Narrandera in the Riverina, led by the mayor, sought
to form a land-owning cooperative for working men. The
Shearers' Union secretary, W. G. Spence, in October 1891
supported the Co-operative Irrigation and Mercantile Society.

Throughout 1892 and 1893 individual landowners and
businessmen proposed to give their land and property to the
Australian Labor Federation (ALF) so that they might partici-
pate in cooperative settlements. In March 1893 the general
council of the ALF planned to inaugurate a 'Labor Bank' with
£2 shares from unionists. Money thus raised would be used to
establish cooperative communes having a population of about
one hundred families each.

Later on in New South Wales, Holman reported that the
task of organising trade unions in the pastoral industry was
impeded by the shearer who was also a small farmer:

> To him shearing is not a livelihood but an incident. His hope is to
> establish a homestead to become a small proprietor ... In two or
> three years [he says] he will be out of it — an employer himself. So
> he stays outside the union and scabs.

All along, the unionists-cum-farmers recognised that their
success as small-holders would depend on governmental aid,
which is what most of them understood by socialism.

Emergent Labor parties pressured governments to pass a
variety of cooperative land settlement schemes. Conservative
members of the Queensland Legislative Council supported
the Bill on the grounds that it would 'breed a people who will
take up a useful position in the country, not mixing themselves
up in political matters, or worse still, political disturbances'. In

South Australia, the Trades and Labour Council saw to it that 'village settlement' clauses were added to the 1893 Crown Lands Amendment Act. By 1906 all states had passed closer settlement legislation. Most had established agricultural banks to assist farmers. The two states that did not introduce co-operative land settlements before 1900, Tasmania and Western Australia, were also without Labor parties.

With the discussion of single tax we again come into contact with ideas and activists influential at the birth of the Labor Party. Single-taxers presented a new and seemingly more so-phisticated twist to the call to 'Unlock the lands'. When they spoke of 'rent', they drew upon the vocabulary of classical po-litical economy, and not common usage. None the less, they were the inheritors of those assumptions, indeed were often the very same people who had waged the battles outlined above. On to the earlier notions of land as the source of 'mo-rality', the followers of Henry George welded the idea that land was the source of all wealth. In accepting this element of George's preaching, the labour movement did not reject its previous view of 'land' as a good thing in itself.

Henry George's central work, *Progress and Poverty*, had been published in 1879 in the United States of America. It was reprinted soon afterwards in Australia but it did not capture public interest till the mid-1880s. George had had his precur-sors in Australia. David Syme, editor of the *Age*, advocated a land tax in 1874 and his protégé, C. H. Pearson, influenced by John Stuart Mill, carried the campaign into parliament. Ten years later, a Queensland squatter, Charles Boydell Dutton, as Minister for Lands, sponsored a Georgian Land Act. In 1887 Dutton became president of a Land Nationalisation League. More of these leagues were formed until superseded by sin-gle-tax leagues. The change in name was often all that did change.

So great had George's influence become even by 1885 that the *Bulletin* was reduced to ridicule. Phrenological practitio-

ners, it said, had shown that George was 'the man with the brainpan resembling in altitude and capacity the dome of St Paul's Cathedral'.

In one sense, the variety of ideas that passed for the true Georgian gospel were as confused and confusing as phrenology. Any number of public figures wrapped their pet theories in the fashion of the time. That demand was for a tax on land. This tax could be a sliding one; it could apply to all land or it could exempt cultivated land, and/or estates under a certain value; it could be a revenue measure or a panacea for the world's woes. It was simultaneously the first step to socialism, or socialism's antidote. Men who believed any or almost all these things called themselves single-taxers. Not all the land-reformers recognised Henry George as their prophet when he toured Australia in 1890.

C. L. Garland, MLA and president of the NSW Single-Tax League, sponsored George's visit, which lasted from 6 March to 11 June 1890. The League had numerous branches throughout the colony as well as producing two newspapers, the *Standard* in Sydney and the *Nationaliser* in Lithgow. This latter venture had the support of the South Australian woman reformer Catherine Spence.

George's influence on and acceptance by the labour movement appeared overwhelming when, at the fourth International Trades Union Congress in Adelaide in September 1888, delegates unanimously agreed that

> a simple yet sovereign remedy which will raise wages, increase and give remunerative employment, abolish poverty, extirpate pauperism, lessen crime, elevate moral tastes and intelligence, purify government and carry civilisation to a yet nobler height, is to abolish all taxation save that on land values.

This resolution was almost word for word from *Progress and Poverty*.

By the time George arrived in Sydney, he had declared his opposition to strikes, socialism and protection. As an

out-growth of American populism himself, George had seen in Grover Cleveland and his Free Trade Party the best chance of having his policy adopted. Significantly, it was the question of free trade that cut him off from the official labour movement. In New South Wales, the Trades and Labour Council declined invitations to welcome the prophet or to attend a dinner in his honour; J. C. Watson described the panacea tax as 'Extremely absurd'. Victorian unions agreed to meet George but only in the lists of debate over the relative merits of free trade and protection. Much time was taken up by comparing the price of cigars in Victoria and New South Wales. The unions' champion, W. A. Trenwith, received a gold watch from the Trades Hall in appreciation. George had to content himself with the support of rich landowners and free-trade politicians such as George Reid and B. R. Wise. 'Banjo' Paterson was a convert and his pamphlet *Australia for the Australians* was an argument for land reform — the political equivalent of 'Kiley's Run'.

If the trade unions were hostile, there was a sizeable faction of the political labour movement that was not, largely because it supported free trade. This group included Holman and Hughes. The influence of the free traders and single-taxers for a time dominated the Labor Party in New South Wales.

Universal acceptance by the labour movement of Henry George as the 'Prophet of San Francisco' was prevented by his support for free trade. This distancing did not mean that any section of the labour movement opposed land reform via a land tax. The *Bulletin*'s complaint was that as a result of George's advocacy of free trade, he had held back for a generation the cause of land nationalisation in Australia. William Lane summed up the feelings of the labour movement in the second issue of the *Worker* when he recommended another of George's books, *Social Problems*:

> It lays no particular stress upon the single tax or upon free trade or upon individualism. It does not go out of its way to attack other

reforms as George is generally so fond of doing. It cries 'the land for the people' from the first page to the last and cries it as surely it was ever cried before.

'Land for the People' — here was an issue on which all reformers could unite. Although George himself never gained complete sway, his notion of expropriating the unearned increment was never again separated from the demand to break up the big estates. Long after Holman had broken with the single tax as a social panacea, George's influence continued to be felt in the councils of the Labor Party. This relationship was not dislodged by the fear that if everyone had a right to the land, Chinamen would have as much right to Australian land as the native-born, as one correspondent wrote to the *Sydney Morning Herald*.

The high point of the Labor Party's enthusiasm for a naturalised single-tax movement came with the federal party's first outright victory in 1910. W. M. Hughes, in an article in the *Daily Telegraph* shortly before these elections, had made it clear that 'The chief plank in the Labor Party's platform is to wipe out land monopoly by making it unprofitable for holders of great estates to hold land out of use'. This stance was the result of a long campaign. Between 1884 and 1907, most of the colonies had passed land-tax Acts in response to popular pressure. Labor's 1910 attitude had its immediate cause in the refusal of New South Wales and Victorian Legislative Councils to renew such taxes. Fisher's minority government in 1909 attempted a Land Tax Bill. When the measure was defeated by the Fusion, the issue became, as Hughes said, the 'chief plank' in Labor policy.

Advocacy of the tax contributed to Labor's victory. Jimmy Scullin (later prime minister) attributed his success in Corangamite to the proposed tax. He also pointed out that Labor held twenty-three of the thirty-six country seats in the House of Representatives.

Following the rejection of earlier protectionist legislation

by the High Court, all references to social reform were omitted from the Bill itself. These were reserved for the supporting speeches, which overflowed with schemes to divide large estates, develop the country and establish honest smallholders. An Act to establish Canberra was passed the same year. In deference to Henry George, all land in the Capital Territory was to be publicly owned so that the 'unearned increment' would accrue to the people.

Labor leaders never lost sight of the fundamental and religious associations of land. In June 1904 Hughes told the House of Representatives that 'Settlement upon the land is the basis of everything, though it is not the end of everything'. Frank Anstey's pamphlet *Monopoly and Democracy* attacked the landed interests. In support of a progressive land tax to break up the big estates, Anstey quoted the Bible: 'The Earth is the Lord's and the Fulness Thereof'.

The relationship of the 'frontier' to the formation of national consciousness, which became central in US historical writing, has received scant attention in Australia. F. J. Turner's original thesis was that the expanding frontier in the United States had acted as a safety valve for social discontent and that American 'individualism' was traceable to the independent small farmers produced by a conjuncture of a favourable climate and Homestead Acts. This treatment provided an afterword to Russel Ward's *Australian Legend*. Ward reversed the claim for Australia, reasoning that because our environment was inimical to the small farmer, and because the Free Selection Acts largely failed, the mythic Australian had been formed around collectivist notions:

> The plain fact is that the typical Australian frontiersman in the last century was a wage-worker who did not, usually, expect to become anything else. The loneliness and hardships of outback life, as on the American Frontier, taught him the virtues of co-operation, but his economic interests, unlike those of the American frontiersman, reinforced this tendency towards a social, collectiv-

ist outlook. By loyal combination with his fellows he might win better conditions from his employer, *but the possibility of becoming his own master by individual enterprise was usually but a remote dream.*(p. 224, emphasis added)

This view of the Australian frontiersman did not tally with the evidence Ward had used some fifty pages earlier in his defence of bush morals. Ward quoted a squatter, Thomas Major, to the effect that the bushman

> with all his faults he not infrequently marries *and settles down to farming* and raising children perhaps a degree less flash than himself. (p. 190, emphasis added)

The godfather to Ward's *Legend*, Francis Adams, explained that the bushman's

> visits to the township are with a view of entering his cheque to his account, or of forwarding it by post office order to his 'old woman' *at the homestead* hundreds of miles away. (p. 191, emphasis added)

Ward failed to realise that it was not necessary for bushmen to have their farms beyond Bourke. They could have one closer in, and go outback for the shearing season.

Evidence of this mobility is not lacking. Henry Lawson's story 'The Drover's Wife' would not have made sense had the husband not spent half the year as an itinerant bush worker and the other half trying to run a farm. In the Riverina in 1891 there was general relief among the striking dray-drivers when they learnt that fines imposed could be taken only from wages and not from property; their concern suggests that, in the heartland of 'Joseph Furphy' and the *Hummer*, the bushman was not as landless as Ward made out.

Far to the north, gold miners opposed Island labourers on the sugar plantations because their indenture made large estates possible and thus limited the miners' prospects of becoming cane farmers. Nor were townsfolk unaffected by this phenomenon. Indicative of the soldier settlement schemes that

awaited the conquering Anzacs is the fate of the 'Sentimental Bloke' and 'Digger Smith', both of whom went farming. The soil became the source of the Bloke's redemption from larrikin-hood.

Was Australia a big man's country? In places, yes, but these zones were not where the bulk of the non-urban population lived and worked. South Australia below the Goyder line was a smallholder's frontier. The same could be said of important pockets in the south-west of Western Australia, northern Tasmania, Gippsland, the Darling Downs and a deal of the Riverina. It was true for coastal patches of Queensland and northern New South Wales. Successful small settlement in New Zealand should be included in the experiences that sustained the belief in the possibility of landed proprietorship in Australia, especially when the high rate of transmigration is remembered. Even in the Western District, where 'a simple system of corruption' kept the selectors at bay, Margaret Kiddle recounted the departure of squatting families forced out by the land hungry.

Leaving aside the question of just how many bushmen were selectors or farmers, there is ample evidence that sufficient of them were so engaged to keep alive the hopes of the remainder. Their expectations did not die in the nineteenth century. Nor was the birth of the Labor Party indicative of a lessening of demands for agricultural independence. If anything, the reverse was true.

LABOR AND LAND

Q. 'Then, if the Labor party should return to power will graduated land taxation take precedence of everything?'
   'I wish it to take precedence of everything except formal measures, and legislation already current.'
   'That isn't socialism, you know — the creation of a large

number of small-landed proprietors?'

'It's my kind of socialism.'

Andrew Fisher (interview), 22 April 1910

Whatever impulses had given birth to the Australian Labor Federation in Queensland in 1889, little evidence of any form of socialism remained by the time of the 1893 elections. The land question had become the focus of Labor's campaign. When Chief Justice Sir Charles Lilley stepped down from the Bench to fight land-grant railways on behalf of the Liberal Party, the Labor party gave him its support. Mat Reid, who was shortly to unseat the conservative Minister for Railways, proclaimed: 'If Sir Charles Lilley came out with a platform in harmony with the workers, he held that *it would be their duty* to put him in as senior member for North Brisbane'. Eventually, Lilley's program was acceptable to the Labor Party. Sir Charles urged that the government 'open the land by village settlements, by homestead areas and some reservations'. In this policy, he reaffirmed an opinion he had expressed in 1867: 'I hold that the State is not a merchant selling land, but a trustee holding it for equitable distributions among the people, so that it may be occupied and cultivated'.

Throughout the colony the question of land disposal occupied Labor speakers, no less in Brisbane than in country districts. On the Darling Downs, the Party attempted to forge an official bond with the Queensland's Farmers' Alliance. Its land policies were identical with that of the ALF, except for the addition of some agricultural matters. The farmers rejected these formal overtures but nonetheless gave Henry Daniels, Labor nominee for Cambooya, their overwhelming support.

New South Wales had experienced similar moves in 1885 when the Land and Industrial Alliance held a political conference in Sydney. Some trade unions gave their support and E. W. O'Sullivan served as secretary of the Alliance as well as of the Trades and Labour Council. By 1891 nothing remained of

this Alliance except the memory, which the secretary of the Wagga Shearers Union tried to revive when he circulated the local farmers' union and urged cooperation with Labor. He cited the cooperation between the US Farmers' Alliance and the Knights of Labour as a model that could be followed in Australia in order to defeat 'monopoly'. Once again it was the farmers who declined the invitation.

Labor continued to woo the farmers and apart from an occasional electoral success, these efforts came at the expense of the emancipation of the working class. The farmers made no secret of their attitude. A meeting in Sydney in 1906 established a Commonwealth Farmers' Organisation with the express purpose of defending 'Acquired rights in land and capital, machinery and money' against the declared objective of the Labor Party, 'the nationalisation of the means of production, distribution and exchange, in order to establish "a co-operative Commonwealth" of industrial workers, directed by bureaucratic officialdom, under the control of an elective Parliament'.

Such 'socialist' impulses as existed among farmers in the United States and Canada were absent in Australia largely because the railways were publicly owned here. Australian farmers were not at the mercy of the railroad 'Octopus' of Frank Norris's eponymous novel. The farmers demanded state action but this request was limited to their sectional interests. They wanted the governments to socialise their losses and inefficiencies.

Labor's attitude to the farmers was brought into open debate at the 1919 Commonwealth Conference in an interchange between two Victorian delegates. E. J. Hogan, later a Labor premier, observed that 'some people had said the cry of the small farmer was a bogey'. He, however, was of the opinion that 'if the Labor Party found it right to fight for the workers in the industrial factories it should also fight for the workers on the land'. D. L. McNamara, later federal secretary of the

Party, disagreed, arguing that 'It would be better if they had some regard for the struggling workers instead of running around to get votes which were theirs one day and not theirs the next'.

Pursuit of the farmers' vote presented the Victorian Labor Party with some peculiar difficulties arising from the singular position of the Victorian Farmers' Union, which had its base among the marginal farmers of the Mallee. Many of its supporters had been Labor Party members before the war. Some were drawn from the labouring class and maintained direct links with it, either through their own seasonal work at timber mills, mines and pastoral stations or through a close relative who filled those occupations. A Jerilderie delegate to the Farmers and Settlers Association conference in 1907 remarked on the presence in his branch of men with 'small holdings, but large families. The sons had to go out into the labour market, and the fathers naturally had sympathy with their children'.

Four Farmers' Union candidates were elected to the Victorian Parliament in 1917. By 1920 their number had grown to thirteen, which, combined with Labor's twenty, provided a bare majority in an Assembly of sixty-five. There were moves for a formal coalition but these seriously divided both parties and their relationship was limited to opposing the government. On 21 July 1921, for example, the government was defeated when it tried to decontrol wheat marketing. The premier called an election for 30 August and denounced the Farmers' Union's proposal for grower control of the wheat pool as 'syndicalism ... an extreme form of French communistic trades unionism, of which an American variant is the notorious IWW movement'. After the elections, which had little effect on the state of the parties, Labor's leader, Prendergast, announced that in 'half-a-dozen constituencies we deliberately drove Labor electors over to vote for Farmers' Union candidates'. In 1924 the compliment was partially returned when the Country Party kept Prendergast in office just long

enough to frighten the Nationalists into agreeing to give the Country Party half of the seats in a coalition cabinet.

One of the first actions of the Scaddan Labor government on coming to power in Western Australia in 1911 was to raise the maximum agricultural bank loan available to farmers by a third to £2000. Electorally, this inducement paid off. After the 1914 poll, the twenty-six-member Labor Party won support from the eight-member Country Party, Australia's first. The West Australian Farmers and Settlers Association (FSA) had grown out of a move to combat the unionisation of agricultural workers before it was captured by the poorer farmers of the state's wheat belt who gained relief from the Labor government.

Proposals for the eight-hour day were adopted by the NSW Labor Party in 1895 but were amended a year later by adding 'where practicable' in order to appease the farmers. Thirty years later, the deputy-leader of the Party, Peter Loughlin, opposed the extension of the forty-four-hour week to agricultural workers. How would it work at harvest time? he asked. In the years 1905–10, a radical section of the NSW Farmers and Settlers Association (FSA) attempted to sustain the small farmers' support for the Labor Party. Organisationally they failed, but the capture of the FSA by conservatives did not greatly alter the voting patterns of the smallholders. The Merriwa delegate told the 1909 FSA conference that two-thirds of the members of his branch belonged to the Political Labor League. Two years later, the *Pastoralists' Review* was forced to admit that agricultural discontent 'is telling in favour of the Labor Party'. Undoubtedly, the Labor Party made every effort to win and maintain this support.

Queensland Labor was obsessed with land settlement and the problems of the smallholder. The *Worker*, 18 January 1902, claimed:

> If there is one class more than another in this State from which the Labor Party has a right to expect support it is the farming class. As

the land is the basis of life so agrarian reform ... is a fundamental principle of the gospel of Labor.

Labor's 1915 policy speech was largely concerned with the needs of the small farmer and the cane-grower, and with land settlement generally.

No individual Labor leader was more taken up with these matters than Queensland Premier E. G. Theodore, who had a genuine belief in the potential of small farming in north Queensland, where he planned hydro-electric schemes and mining projects. His elder brother, Stephen, became a cane-grower at Tully in 1923 and a Labor MLA in 1940. Theodore opposed the ALP's 1921 socialisation objective on the grounds that it would frighten the small farmer away from Labor. A third of his proposed fiduciary issue of £18 million during the 1930s depression was to be directed to wheat farmers in an effort to win back their electoral allegiance.

Labor's support for the farmer was tied to its nation-building as a means of defence. The *Worker*, 12 April 1923, consequently described Theodore's policy as 'one of the finest contributions to the science of state building ... a science entirely neglected by all save Labor ... ever delivered in Queensland'. In this way, Theodore tried to rescue the nationalist plank of Labor's old objective, the dropping of which he had opposed two years before.

Democrats

Democracy influenced the labouring classes in nine-teenth-century Australia in five interdependent ways. First, there was the inheritance from Britain where the bourgeois conquest of society in the seventeenth century occurred with-out (that is, before) the working class. Secondly, the labouring classes *in*Australia were not called upon to vanquish feudal-ism, and certainly not with violence. Thirdly, the open nature of Australia's political system from the mid-1850s to 1890, and in some areas beyond, did not bring the labouring classes into sustained political conflict with the bourgeoisie. Fourthly, middle-class radicals were able to maintain dominance (both organisational and ideological) over the labouring classes well into the twentieth century. Finally, the demand to fulfil the promise of complete democracy remained a major aspect, and sometimes the crux of, Labor's demands.

Perry Anderson has argued that the failure of the British working class to develop a defined socialist policy and strategy was linked to the imperfect nature of the English bourgeois revolution. Although Anderson's argument may be wrong in particulars, there can be no doubt that, compared with France or Russia, the political role of the bourgeoisie and working class in England was different, if only because the victory over feudalism was accomplished largely in the seventeenth cen-

tury, well before the appearance of a working class. Eric Hobsbawm pointed out in *Industry and Empire:*

> Nominally, England was not a 'bourgeois' state. It was an oligarchy of landed aristocrats, headed by a tight, self-perpetuating peerage ... Yet, as the foreigners saw much more clearly than we may do, the grandees of Britain were not a nobility comparable to the feudal and absolutist hierarchies of the continent. They were a post-revolutionary elite, the heirs of the Roundheads.

This circumstance meant that the industrial working class in England was never called into civil battle on behalf of the bourgeoisie, that it never experienced an openly revolutionary period such as occurred in France (1789–94) or Russia (1905 and again in 1917), that it consequently produced no revolutionary tradition or consciousness, and that it did not experience the degree of bourgeois viciousness that marked France with relentless regularity in the nineteenth century.

The point is not whether the English experience was 'normal' or 'peculiar', merely that it happened. Or rather, that it, the bourgeois revolution, did not occur in the lifespan of the working class.

Revolutionary and Napoleonic France coincided with a political counter-revolution in England. Victims of this repression, those fortunate enough to escape the gallows, were transported to New South Wales. But this counter-revolution, devastating as it was, was not nearly as socially divisive as the French experience. English workers fought a valiant but defensive battle, while in France the defensive aspect followed upon an offensive which generated a revolutionary consciousness. To the extent that English workers felt they were outside society, their experience rarely took them beyond a defensive position *vis-à-vis* the existence of that society.

This consciousness was transferred to Australia where it set the limits of political activity within the framework of capitalism. Later, it served as a rod against which it was possible to

measure and marvel at the great advances that had been made in Australia.

If this inheritance cannot be ignored, neither should it be assumed to have been transferred unaltered to Australia. Squatters did not represent a local House of Lords, despite William Charles Wentworth's proposals to make them its imitation in dress and title. Australia was in every sense a new society. Try as our upstart exclusives might, they could not reproduce the English class structure in Australia. For as the Sydney *Atlas* observed early in 1845, 'The Law of the institutions of a new country is not stability, but progress'.

The implications of Keith Hancock's statement that the history of settler Australia occurred almost entirely after the French and industrial revolutions cannot be overestimated. Australia existed without their equivalents. There was not great and prolonged civil strife in nineteenth-century Australia. Convict resistance to vile mistreatment was prolonged but never great, despite the numerical importance of the Castle Hill rebels in 1804. 'Eureka' and 'Barcaldine' were brief and small-scale, and their importance stems from their elevation upon the level plain of class passivity last century. They were the kind of outburst that happened almost every other day in Europe, where they rated no more mention than they deserved as outbreaks of discontent. Instead of being evidence for a revolutionary tradition in Australia, they are in fact the opposite. They are interesting because they are so different.

This evaluation does not say that the diggers and shearers were wrong, or that one would not have taken up arms with them. It simply points out that compared even with English upsurges such as the Chartist march on Newport in 1839, the Australian ones were essentially *defensive manoeuvres*. It was the troops who attacked the diggers in the early hours of that Sunday, 3 December 1854. Those leaders who did ponder revolution in Queensland in 1891 were few, and their ire was directed against 'squatters', not capitalists. The armed shearers

spoke the language of dispossessed smallholders, which many of them were in fact, and most were in spirit.

Gollan's conclusion that the early 1890s saw Australia 'sharply divided in class conflict in which the very basis of the capitalist system had been brought into question' is plainly untrue. Neither was the violence sufficient to justify this belief. Gollan acknowledged this view in his chapter in Greenwood's *Australia*:

> The strike was not seen as part of a mass movement directed towards the violent overthrow of the State but simply as the only available means, under the then conditions, of defending the principle of collective industrial agreements.

Nor were the attitudes of the strikers such that the right to own private productive property *per se* was attacked. Class relations would never be the same again but the labouring classes were reluctant to recognise this change. They persisted in their attempts to restore the pre-strike situation. Economic changes had made this impossible. Under these altered conditions, a proletariat began to be formed.

Arguments in England around the second Reform Bill drew upon Australian experience with democracy; Lowe and Marsh putting the case against, with Pearson coming to the defence. In dispute was the nature of a democratic legislature: was it of necessity corrupt, ignorant and riotous? The contours of the argument need not detain us. All that has to be recognised is that the privileged political position of Australian working men *vis-...-vis* their English counterparts was appeciated in both countries. Emigrants often gave this situation as one of the reasons for their departure. Australians accepted parliamentary democracy as one of the virtues of their new land, despite several limitations. (Tasmania did not receive manhood suffrage until after the establishment of the Commonwealth. Residential and other prerequisites effectively disfranchised almost half of Queensland's adult white males before 1893.

Plural property voting rights were also widespread. An Electoral Reform Bill in Queensland in 1901 offered an extra vote for fathering two children.)

Having the right to vote for lower-house elections in Victoria and New South Wales was not as important for the integration of the labouring classes in the prevailing system as was the method by which the franchise had been extended. There was no revolution, virtually no violence and not even a mass movement comparable with Chartism. Impetus for reform came from the colonial middle classes and from the Colonial Office. The broad mass of people were enfranchised free of charge. Consequently, they did not come into conflict with the bourgeoisie over the nature of the colonial constitutions to the extent that they were forced to develop even defensive ideological or organisational positions. Alliance is too strong a term for this relationship, as it implies near equals in pursuit of a common aim. It was far more a matter of the leaders and the led.

Economic conditions in the colonies added ballast to the stability of this political situation. Gold not only increased the 'respectable' section of society but also gave vast numbers of others a stake, no matter how small, in the country. This prosperity undercut many of the usual objections to the extension of political rights to the masses. As the *Age* noted early in November 1855:

> Where property may be possessed by every industrious man, and when it is actually possessed by a vast majority of the population, there is no fear of anarchy. Democracy here assumes a different aspect, and acquires a different meaning, from what it does in England. Where there are no class distinctions, and no aristocratic monopoly of property, democracy itself becomes conservative.

Victoria's Governor, Sir Henry Barkly, agreed, adding that the attachment to land was a decisive factor in keeping up 'an undercurrent of conservatism'. The conservative *Argus* reasoned that 'Every Australian citizen is interested in defending

the just rights of property, and the smallest freeholder will as earnestly maintain these rights as the large capitalist ... The wealthy classes have nothing to fear from manhood suffrage'.

It was typical of the men who won the eight-hour day in the 1850s that in all their motions and manifestos no mention is made of 'Eureka'. In 1857 the eight-hour-day marchers all wore black as a mark of respect for the Governor's wife, who had recently died. Force was rejected both in practice and as a threat: not only rejected but never considered.

Having established their leadership in the campaigns of the 1850s, the bourgeoisie maintained it in the 'free selection' contests that followed. Their leadership was not so much imposed from above as accepted from below. D. W. A. Baker perceived that, during the reform legislation campaign in 1859–61, 'Working class candidates had an uncomfortable feeling that they really did not belong in public life and should be represented by educated liberal gentlemen'. When a 'labour' candidate, Cameron, was elected in New South Wales in 1874, the *Sydney Morning Herald* (2 January 1875) reminded him that

> The   Constitution,   British   or   Colonial,   abhors
> classes ... the ... tendency ... of popular institutions [is] ... to
> obliterate in legislation all class distinctions — to make men equal
> before the law, and equal partakers of the benefits of the
> law ... [Mr Cameron] legally and constitutionally represents not
> only the working classes, but all classes of both city and country.

Neither Cameron nor his fellows exhibited any sign of thinking otherwise.

As late as 1891, when the Inter-Colonial Trades Union Congress committee on political reform was claiming that 'class questions require class knowledge to state them, and sympathies to fight for them', it felt obliged to add that it was not their intention

> that a monopoly of any class shall be created in our legislatures,
> but that the best interests of the whole people shall not be sub-

verted by representatives who are amenable to the control of wealth as against population.

It was to take a new century and another, different working class to accept the Wobbly maxim that 'The working class and the employing class have nothing in common'.

Middle-class radicals were accepted as the leaders of the labouring classes. Sir George Grey was an oustanding example, though he was by no means unique. Sir Charles Lilley was similarly placed in Queensland, as evidenced by the poem Henry Lawson addressed to him in 1892:

> O who will bear the battle's brunt
>   And lead the ranks of Labour?
> Our leaders blunder in the front
>   While victory's a neighbour!
> We need a man to guide us through —
>   The march is rough and hilly —
> The army wants to know if you
>   Are coming, Charlie Lilley?

The workers' attachment to Lilley found its parallel in the hatred shown towards him by the conservatives. On succeeding Lilley as Chief Justice of Queensland, Sir Samuel Griffith tore the carpets, curtains, bookshelves and other furnishings out of his chambers to remove the last trace of 'that man'.

When Sir Henry Parkes visited Western Australia in 1893, George Pearce, already a union leader, organised a collection 'to present our hero with a fiddleback jarrah walking stick with a gold plate suitably inscribed'. Melbourne's Trades Hall council room contained four portraits and four busts. Represented were the Chief Justice, George Higinbotham (twice); Sir Charles Darling, the 'People's Governor'; Wilson Gray, a leader of the Land Conventions; Benjamin Douglas, first chairman of the Trades Hall Committee; and Charles Jardine Don, the first working man to sit in Victoria's Parliament. As Gollan comments, 'the political heroes of unionists were the middle-class leaders of Victorian radicalism'.

So strong was this attachment that it impeded the emergence of Labor parties in Victoria and South Australia. In the latter colony, it was generally agreed that the Premier, C. C. Kingston, 'would of his own volition have gone possibly further than Labor'. J. C. Watson would have offered Kingston, who was not a member of the Labor Party, a seat in his first Cabinet in 1904 had not the latter been critically ill. The Victorian non-Labor radical, H. B. Higgins, was included as Attorney-General, indicating Labor's very proper respect for the law.

Middle-class liberals continued to be welcome as Labor leaders. Labor's books did not close in 1891 and it has always been willing to accept even those who have stood against endorsed Labor candidates. T. J. Ryan joined the Party in Queensland in 1904, E. W. O'Sullivan in New South Wales in 1908, L. F. Giblin in Tasmania in 1909, and H. V. Evatt in the 1920s.

Amicable relations in Victoria centred on support for a protective tariff by both unionists and manufacturers. The *Age* editor, David Syme, sponsored W. A. Trenwith as a Lib–Lab candidate in elections and he was the only worker to attend a Federal Convention. Bonds were never this close in New South Wales, although in 1886 the president of the Trades and Labour Council addressed the first meeting of the National Protection Association in company with a manufacturer. In Queensland, as elsewhere, individual merchants gave a Saturday half-holiday and other concessions long before they were obliged to by law. Samuel Griffith revealed radical leanings with a proposed Bill to establish eighteenth-century-style rights for property and labour. This idea, of course, came before the 1891 strikes. Yet, as W. P. Reeves pointed out, 'the project retains interest ... if only for its symbolising of the middle-class spirit in Australia'.

Once the labouring classes were strong enough to form their own organisations, they did not immediately break their

dependence on bourgeois liberal politicians or parties. A variety of coalitions appeared. In New South Wales they took the shape of support for concessions. In Queensland, in 1904, the Labor Party gave electoral immunity to Morganite liberals. A Liberal–Labor Cabinet had been formed there in 1903. A similar situation prevailed in South Australia from 1905 to 1909. Victorian politics were long marked by Country Party–Labor alliances.

Maintenance of the alliance was striven for on both sides. When the first Labor candidates appeared in Victoria, the *Age* (18 April 1892) commented that they were 'nothing more than Liberals under a new name. There is nothing whatever in their programme to distinguish them from the men who made the Liberal Party the power it has been since 1877'. As late as 1901, the paper described Labor as 'the advance guard of liberalism'. For their part, Labor spokesmen were pleased to agree that 'LABORISM IS SIMPLY LIBERALISM UP TO DATE. Laborites are the Liberals of a decade ago who have moved on'.

Achievement of an improvement on the past need not lead to satisfaction. The more progress is made towards an unrealised goal, the more is demanded. So it was with democratic reforms in Australia. Having attained manhood suffrage with little exertion, the labour movement turned its attention to completing the process by making every vote equal in worth. The cry 'One Man, One Vote' became urgent in the 1890s as the Labor parties endeavoured to increase their representation.

'Abolition of plural voting' headed the list of fourteen demands when the parliamentary committee of the NSW Trades and Labour Council reported in April 1890. 'Electoral reform' was the even more succinct first item on the 1891 Labor League platform. When Parkes refused this concession, the Labor members turned him out in favour of Dibbs, who acquiesced. So important was 'One adult, One vote' considered in Queensland that it took precedence over even a 'White Queensland' pledge.

Conservatives saw this demand as an attack on property:

> One-man one-vote meant that one man was as good as another and that he unhesitantly denied ... it was distinctly stated (in Scripture) that there were different orders ... was a man's property to represent nothing?

In a strict sense, the conservatives were correct. Property was not to be represented as such. But neither was it to be confiscated nor its owners disfranchised. Nor were the propertiless to get a second vote to compensate for their poverty. Bourgeois equality before the law prevailed.

In demanding the equalisation of the franchise, the Labor parties had the support of middle-class radicals. Their alliance reappeared in the Federation debates when the labour movement supported H. B. Higgins in his attempts to democratise the proposed Commonwealth constitution. In New South Wales, Labor unsuccessfully offered a 'Democratic Ten' slate for the 1897 Federation conference, their manifesto ending with the following:

> If you want a free country for free men and women, with justice for all and work for all VOTE STRAIGHT for the Labor Ten and A WHITE AUSTRALIA, NO UPPER HOUSE, ADULT SUFFRAGE, THE REFERENDUM.

In the twentieth century, concern shifted to the abolition of Upper Houses, or at least to their democratisation. Only Queensland succeeded in establishing a unicameral system. That reform was possible because the Queensland constitution could be amended by a simple Act of Parliament, and because the Legislative Council was appointed and could be stacked with a suicide squad.

So persistent has concern with electoral changes been that a Canadian political scientist, David Corbett, observed that the Labor Party appeared more interested in constitutional reform than in social reform. In reply, it could be argued that the constitutional reform is necessary before social reform can be im-

plemented. Within the framework of the prevailing system this defence is certainly true. This attitude merely underlines the accuracy of W. Pember Reeves's remark that while there was no social democracy (i.e. Marxism) in Australia there was plenty of democratic socialism. One consequence of this long 'democratic' experience for the working class in Australia has been the ideological limits it has placed on socialist thinking.

Socialists

For we workers are all Socialists nowadays, though some of us are so ignorant that we don't know it. We follow Marx in the contention that Labour's rightful share of Production is *all*.

William Lane, July 1890

MARXISTS

Marxism is mature socialism. Its acceptance depends upon the making of a working class that can see no future within capitalism. In light of what has been shown, it is not surprising that Marx's theories were not understood and barely known in nineteenth-century Australia.

The earliest recorded influences of Marx in Australasia were in the 1870s. From Christchurch, a Working Man's Mutual Protection Society asked the International Working Men's Association to advise British workers against emigration. The quality of the Society's Marxism can be gauged from its pamphlet 'Why the Working Men of New Zealand should become Internationalists', which ended with a tirade against the Chinese. Some Marxian phrases found their way into the manifesto of the proposed boot-makers union in Melbourne. An obituary appeared in the Sydney *Liberal* in 1883:

Karl Marx, the ablest of all the Communistic writers, is dead. His

great work, *On Capital*, is a masterpiece. While, however, agreeing with most of its critical portions, we are not in accord with his remedies. He was a State Socialist, and advocated State control of all industries of all kind whatever.

This view was no more accurate than the claim in 1907 by a member of the New Zealand Parliament, A. R. Barclay, that Marx did not have a solution. This error had not prevented Barclay from publishing *The Origin of Wealth, Being the Theory of Karl Marx in Simple Form* in 1899.

Several prominent bourgeois liberals attempted to acquaint Antipodeans with Marx's ideas. In the Christmas 1888 issue of the *Boomerang*, the sometime Premier of Queensland, Sir Samuel Griffith, presented an account of Marxism for the 'practical consideration of the people'. Across the Tasman another Minister of the Crown, William Pember Reeves, pseudonymously published a series for the *Lyttleton Times* on the 'History of Socialist Thought up to Marx'. When a *Bulletin* reader asked who Marx was he received the reply that Marx was a brilliant German whose works remained untranslated. Francis Adams's correction of this error did not alter the fact that, although *Capital* had been available in English since 1888, Marx's advocacy of the class struggle was not grasped by the bourgeois politicians who were introducing Marx to the populace. By the time extracts of the *Communist Manifesto* were published in Australia, by the *Worker* in 1893, it had already been translated into a score of languages including Danish, Yiddish, Portuguese and Norwegian.

Nor was Marx much read when available. An associate of the New Zealand union leader, Harry Holland, gave this description of how he and Holland became acquainted with *Capital*:

> He had investigated the cover, I had probed further, just turned it over. 'To study Marx', said he, 'one requires a hard seat, a bare table, and a head swathed in wet ... ice-cold towels ...' I agreed with him.

William Lane doubted 'if there are a thousand men who have

Marx at their finger tips'. That Lane was not of this legion was later made clear by his brother, Ernie, who pointed out that William had not read Marx before leaving Australia in 1893. In August 1900 the Melbourne *Tocsin*complained that even Aveling's *Student's Marx* was too difficult.

Towards the end of 1893, the 22-year-old W. A. Holman delivered a lecture on Marx, whose writings he could honestly claim to have studied 'with devotion'. Holman began with a just censure of previous Marxism in Australasia:

> Many erroneous conceptions were current about him. One of these, often found in places where better information might be reasonably looked for, was that Marx was a kind of Bellamy, a man of roseat and airy visions ... these ideas were absolutely false. Marx's book was an examination of things as they were and not as they might be in some golden future. He dealt in his *Kapital* not with the socialism that is to come but with the capitalism of today.

For the first time in Australasia, Marx was given an intelligent and informed exposition, but it was a truncated version nonetheless. Holman persisted in linking Marx with Carlyle, Comte, Mill and Spencer; that is, he presented Marx as just another bourgeois critic of capitalism. Moreover, Holman gave a companion lecture on Bohm-Bawerk, author of *Karl Marx and the Close of His System*, with whom he could find no fault.

By concentrating on *Capital*'s historical sections, Holman avoided coming to grips with Marx's politics. It is one thing to realise that Marx was not another utopian dreamer, and another to accept that socialism can be achieved only by the destruction of the ruling class, more particularly by the replacement of its state by a proletarian dictatorship. Holman was no more a Marxist than were any of his predecessors in the field. He was more intelligent and better informed. By 1905, moreover, Holman was writing that it was 'a mistake to imagine that English or Australian socialism owes much to Karl Marx or the Continental writers'.

Just as the alliance between the liberals and the working class broke down in practice, so too did Marx's notion of class struggle break into the consciousness of some Australasian workers. Discussion groups were formed, with one in Petone, New Zealand, agreeing unanimously to 'meet every Monday night at 8 p.m. right up to the day of the Revolution'. Revolution was accepted, but only theoretically. With the development of the IWW (Industrial Workers of the World) in 1907, a vital element of practice was added. Deriving their Marxism from De Leon in America, the Australasian Wobblies operated with the conviction that even if all history were not the history of class struggle, it should have been. The emergence of the IWW indicated that the old pattern of Australasian life was largely over. For as long as it had seemed possible to build a 'Workingman's Paradise' here, Marxism remained little more than a topic for discussion. Once new problems demanded new solutions, Marxism gained a new relevance and a wide audience, although it shed many of its dilettante disciples.

WILLIAM LANE

D. W. Rawson and W. K. Hancock attempted to picture William Lane as a Marxist. D. P. Crook went further, suggesting that Lane was prepared to use force, and he quotes an article in the *Worker* where Lane advised his readers to 'take all social injustices and industrial inequalities and vested privileges and strangle them one by one in your many millioned muscled hands'. Crook neglected to complete the passage, which proceeded: '... Not all at once, but gradually, patiently, slowly by being thinking men working in harmony with each other for the good of all'. Lane summed up his reaction in the 1890 strike by saying that 'capitalism understands that the real fight with labour is at the ballot box'.

According to legend, Lane was a socialist editor in

Queensland during the shearing strikes of the early 1890s when 'his words were like a flame'. With the collapse of the strikes and the emergence of compromising Labor parties, Lane is supposed to have become disillusioned with Australia and so set sail to establish a utopia in Paraguay.

A somewhat different picture emerges from Grant Hannan's thesis on the Paraguay settlement. Lane was an authoritarian racist who conceived of himself as a latter-day Messiah. Hannan summed up Lane's ideological progress thus:

> From 1885 until late 1889, William Lane may be labelled in Marxist terms as a bourgeois socialist. In the period 1890 to 1892, Lane espoused the cause of the working class more firmly and hoped to improve conditions by gaining Labor representation in Parliament, but this period is a transition from bourgeois to utopian socialism, and from 1892 until at least 1899 Lane was a utopian socialist. For the last seventeen years of his life he was not a socialist of any kind.

Lane ended his career as the ardent pro-war editor of the conservative *New Zealand Herald*.

Lane's socialism was usually expressed in a quasi-religious framework. This demand is significant for Lane's view of violence and class struggle as means to social change. In his novel *Workingman's Paradise*, Lane argued that 'every year the number of men and women who hold socialism as a religion is growing' and when there are sufficient such people 'the Old Order [will] melt away like a dream and the New Order replace it'. Further on, he wrote that 'Neither ballots nor bullets' could produce change, since 'It is in ourselves that the weakness is. It is in ourselves that the real fight must take place between the Old and the New'. While Marxists would not deny that Communism involves a complete change in human relationships — from competition to cooperation — they do not believe that the metamorphosis can occur at a purely spiritual or personal level.

What Lane strove for was class collaboration. This desire was recognised by the vociferous anti-socialist Queensland senator, Anthony St Ledger, who wrote that Lane 'had a strong human sympathy with both labour and capitalism, in as much as he regarded labour as the innocent victim, and capitalism as the unconscious high priest of the human sacrifices they were inflicting on society'. In organising the Australian Labor Federation, Lane was careful not to exclude employers from its activities. One of Lane's favourites was 'Hop Beer' Marchant who provided a meeting room and chaired strike meetings.

Marx might well have had Lane as his model when, in the *Communist Manifesto*, he described utopian socialists as men who

> want to improve the condition of every member of society, even that of the most favoured. Hence, they habitually appeal to society at large, without distinction; nay, by preference, to the ruling class. For how can people, when once they understand their system, fail to see in it the best possible plan of the best possible state of society?
>
> Hence they reject all political, and especially all revolutionary, action; they wish to attain their ends by peaceful means, and endeavour by small experiments, necessarily doomed to failure, and by the force of example, to pave the way for the new social Gospel.

This account gives Lane to a tee: his Messianic delusions, his 'New Australia' experiment in Paraguay, his appeals to businessmen to build the cooperative utopia, and, above all, his rejection of violence. In an article in the *Worker* in March 1891, Lane used his journalistic skill effectively by beginning with a revolutionary statement that 'they who rule by Force and by Force alone, can claim no consideration if by Force, their outrageous claims are questioned'. Having thus established his credentials, he proceeded to the burden of his argument, which was 'tolerate still, not because rebellion, i.e. armed resistance to established authority, is wrong ... but because we

should endure to the utmost for the sake of humanity which shrinks from violence'. Lane's revolutionary phrases were always a prelude to his anti-revolutionary intentions. His political outlook was expressed in the *Worker* for 4 April 1891: 'one seat won in Parliament is worth more than a successful strike'.

SOCIALISTS

The relationship between ideas and the experiences of those who advocate them is far more complex than can be conveyed by formulae such as 'ideas reflect experience'. It may well be true that the majority of people accept ideas because they relate to their experiences. This equation cannot account for the theoretician: few, if any, petit-bourgeois philosophers have been shopkeepers. And Australia did not produce any theoreticians, only popularisers whose relationship to experience is more direct and immediate.

Popular reading matter for the labour movement consisted largely of utopian fiction. The most influential work was Edward Bellamy's *Looking Backward from the Year 2000*, serialised in the *Worker* during 1890. Bellamy's hero awakes after a hundred-year sleep to find himself in the perfect society. The ease of his rebirth parallels the means by which society itself had been transformed.

When the hero suggests to his host that 'Such a stupendous change as you describe did not, of course, take place without great bloodshed and terrible convulsions', the host replies:

> On the contrary there was absolutely no violence. The change had been long foreseen. Public opinion had become fully ripe for it, and the whole mass of the people was behind it. There was no more possibility of opposing it by force than by argument.

Yet another American influence on Australian socialism was Laurence Gronlund's *Co-operative Commonwealth*, which

attempted to present socialism in a form 'digested by a mind, Anglo-Saxon in its dislike of all extravagances, in its freedom from any vindictive feeling against persons, who are from circumstances what they are'. This work was seen as presenting Marx to an English audience. Needless to say, Gronlund defined socialism as the 'extension of the functions of government'.

The absence of a coherent theory meant that 'measures of a socialist character' effected by Labor governments were in no sense an assault on the citadels of capitalism. This anti-intellectualism owed as much to its impoverished English origins as it did to the egalitarian ignorance of the bushman. Most of all, gradualism was part of the pragmatism that accompanied contented progress. Theory is required only when problems cannot be coped with in practice. And the socialist practices of a Labor government needed no theoretical apparatus. Much of what passed for socialist thinking in nineteenth-century Australia was little more than a collection of random remarks from socialist thinkers. This habit of mind is common to the self-educated and showed itself in the stray but curious facts that inhabited the columns of the radical and labour press. A bower-bird curiosity found another expression in Ripley's 'Believe it or not' and in *Cole's Funny Picture Book*. The poor education that capitalism offered was protecting it from the development of the coherent critique which only Marxism could provide.

Socialist ideas in nineteenth-century Australia were part and parcel of the all-pervasive atmosphere of pre-industrial prosperity. This outlook, in turn, was related to permeable class barriers, class collaboration and a high degree of state activity in areas as diverse as restrictive immigration and land settlement. William Lane summed up this confusion by declaring that 'we are all socialists only some of us don't know it' — sentiments repeated in 1908 by Andrew Fisher, soon to be Labor prime minister, when he contended that 'We are all Social-

ists now and the only qualification you hear from anybody is that he is "not an extreme socialist" '. Precisely what the nature of this marvellous socialism was will not require much demonstration since it invariably meant some form of 'state action'. State action was widely accepted because it was essential for development, and thus another link was established between 'socialism' and 'nationalism' in Australia. Later the slogan became 'Develop the North', and racism added its weight to socialism's respectability.

GOVERNMENTALISM

So extensive had governmental activity been before 1890 that more than one writer has used the phrase 'colonial socialism' to describe it. During the 'long boom (c. 1861–90)' Australian governments borrowed heavily on the London market to finance developmental works; almost half the capital inflow went on public expenditures.

'State action' united all manner of divergent views. David Syme, for example, approved of his book *Outlines of an Industrial Science* being described as 'a vindication of Protection; more closely examined it will be seen to be rather in the direction of State Socialism'. In Parliament in 1889, E. W. O'Sullivan, sometime president of the Trades and Labour Council in New South Wales, defended the colony's lending seed-wheat to farmers in these terms:

> I think that when the Government can step in to assist any interest or industry, they should do so. I disagree with the doctrine of my free-trade friends, that we should leave things alone. The greatest states in the world have been built up by the active interference of government, by means of protective tariffs, state subsidies, or the application of the intellect at the command of people in the shape of government to assist the operations and industries of the community. In this way, great interests are built up, especially in young countries ... I say that the Govern-

ment has a perfect right to step in whenever it can benefit any class in the community, because it cannot benefit one class without benefiting the whole.

There was no 'class' bias in this proposal. Nor was there any in the constant demands for state action in arbitration. When unemployment became widespread in the 1890s, 'socialism' was the stock phrase for the state employing men on relief works. Just how non-class-orientated socialism was at this time in Australasia can be seen from the evidence given by the Socialist League spokesman W. G. Higgs to the NSW Royal Commission on Strikes in 1891. Higgs advised the Commissioners to read Sidney Webb's *Socialism in England* and Dawson's *Bismarck and State Socialism* so that they would have 'a very good account of the progress made by socialism in England and Germany'.

J. B. Condliffe summed up the situation for New Zealand in a manner which applied with equal force to Australia when he noted that

> the widening of state functions is due primarily to colonial opportunism and freedom from theories. It has little to do with socialism. Reeves' phrase, 'colonial govemmentalism', is a truer description of New Zealand practice than 'State Socialism' or Metin's 'socialisme sans doctrines'. It is étatisme rather than socialism.

For as Lane wrote without irony in the *Worker*, 1 April 1890, 'State purchase of an industry is as socialistic as the maintenance of a police force'. This view is supported by the testimony of two nineteenth-century observers. Referring to Labor Party members in Queensland, Sir Timothy Coghlan remarked that 'scarcely a word fell from them that would lead their hearers to suppose that they had ever learned the alphabet of socialism'. V. S. Clark pointed out:

> Australian Labor leaders know little or nothing of Marxism theories. Few of them know by title the principal text books of Continental Socialism ... They are mostly seeking immediate and

concrete results and, so far as directive purpose of their part is concerned, it is merely an accident that the policy thus determined tends towards socialism.

Queensland Labor had a nine-point program in which 'State Ownership, Construction and Maintenance of all Railways' came closest to socialism. In fact, that demand was an attack on the land monopolists. What is to be made of Spence's claim, accepted by Gollan, that Queensland was decidedly socialistic 'from the jump'? True, there was a socialist prolegomena to the Australian Labor Federation's platform but that was very quickly dropped. By September 1890, Lane felt that no harm had been done by 'lifting it up to the light so that all may see the goal of the Labor Movement'.

Queensland also had the reputation of being the most socialistic in regard to the establishment of state enterprises. State butcher shops in that state resulted, according to the premier, from 'the necessity of dealing with extraordinary circumstances which had arisen because of the war, and which exist now to a certain extent, and which may continue to exist for some time in Queensland'. In every case where Labor established a state enterprise the venture was to cope with 'extraordinary circumstances'. Often these were of a chronic kind, for example those dealing with national development. On matters of a developmental nature, there was wide-ranging and long-established support for state activity: protective tariffs, railway construction and immigration, whether restricted or assisted, were but the best-known. On these questions, Labor had common ground with manufacturers and/or farmers. It also had the support of its political opponents. The Liberal Premier of New South Wales, Wade, declared that while he was not 'a servile supporter of State socialism' he recognised that 'in the peculiar circumstances which handicap young unexplored countries, to the credit and resources of the organised State, we must look for developmental work on a large scale'.

During the Great War, state enterprises were set up to curb rising prices. That they were designed to compete with and not replace private enterprises was never in doubt. Other state works were inaugurated to supply the government's own requirements. State bakeries sold bread only to governmental institutions such as hospitals and prisons. State brickworks sold bricks to the government for public works, while state timber mills were the logical ancillary to government railroad construction. Most of these enterprises were profitable and, in terms of their stated objectives, successful, at least in the initial stages. Not all of them employed union labour, even under a Labor government.

R. S. Parker's study, 'Public Enterprise in New South Wales', detailed that state enterprises were not a 'significant Labor Party contribution towards its avowed programme of socialisation', if only because they operated 'in fields which were not vital to the economy as a whole, or if vital, were unprofitable to private enterprise though a necessary condition for its development and continuance'. Socialism for the Labor Party often meant nothing other than state intervention to aid capitalism. In the one instance where the establishment of a governmental enterprise conflicted with the interest of a private company it was the Labor government which gave way. Plank six of the Party's fighting platform for the 1910 election called for a state iron-and-steel works, and legislation to this effect was introduced into the New South Wales parliament. This policy was abandoned when the Labor government subsidised the Broken Hill Proprietary Company instead.

One public enterprise merits further consideration, partly because it was the most successful, and partly because of its contribution to the legend of Chifley's bank nationalisation. In the 1910 debates on the Commonwealth Bank, only one Labor member spoke in favour of nationalisation. Prime Minister Fisher stated that he was 'not making an attack on the banks'. Hughes observed:

The Opposition bitterly regrets that the Bill is a practical measure, gives no hint of a millennium, no suggestion of printing presses working overtime manufacturing paper money throughout the twenty-four hours for the happiness of the people. It is a plain business-like practical measure.

Robin Gollan pointed to a long conservative tradition calling for a 'public bank of note issue'. The functions of the Commonwealth Bank were summed up by John Curtin while he was editor of the *Westralian Worker*. It was, he said, 'a bankers' bank', which fell far short of nationalisation.

THE MONEY POWER

A novel by Ignatius Donnelly, *Caesar's Column*, showed what would happen if the bankers rather than the workers were triumphant. Significantly, the enemies were bankers and not capitalists in general. The bank crashes of the 1890s fed these attitudes, so that in 1893 the Sydney *Worker* attacked Russian Jews, who,

> like their Australian brothers, are principally bankers, loan mongers, peddlars and pawn brokers. They are hated and hunted for their deeds, not for their religion.
>
> In Russia, the government is still strong enough to tax the Jews, in Australia the Jews are powerful enough to tax the Government.
>
> They dress in purple and fine linen, and they fare sumptuously every day — but who knows one of them that could not be spared? Did anyone ever see a Jew work? At manual labour, no. It doesn't pay to work when others are anxious to do it.

Anti-semitism became a persistent theme of the *Bulletin*. As late as 1947, when the Amalgamated Engineering Union was calling for bank nationalisation, it noted that the Rothschilds were 'Jewish' bankers, as if their semitic origins proved something.

Banking and 'funny money' proposals dominated Labor's financial thinking long before anyone had heard of Keynes. In

the middle of the 1893 depression, O'Sullivan advocated a state bank which 'could by the issue of national notes, construct reproductive works, and in due course we could redeem those notes with the money derived from those works'. The most notorious attempt at nationalisation in Australia's history was aimed at the banks. As Rawson explained:

> For twenty-five years after the adoption of the socialisation objective of 1921, the party's attention, to the extent that it paid any attention to socialisation at all, was concentrated on the nationalisation of banking. This was an issue on which party opinion was united. Anstey on the left ... Forgan Smith on the right ... Chifley somewhere in the centre and Lang who can only be regarded as *sui generis* all added something to this emphasis on bank nationalisation. Of all major reforms of a socialist character this was the one which would be least unpalatable to small producers, and particularly to the indebted farmers.

Opposition to 'the money power' is a traditional populist appeal. Because 'the money power' counterpoised a tiny minority of bankers against the people, it avoided class analysis and was compatible with the ALP's self-perception as the community's protector. In *The Commonwealth Bank of Australia*, Robin Gollan showed the extent of this style of thinking. The 'money power' syndrome did not lose any influence as a result of the bank's establishment in 1910. *The Kingdom of Shylock*, which Anstey published during the First World War, was a blast (peppered with anti-semitism) against bankers and bondholders:

> So the nation can levy men — but not Money. Men may die — Money lives. Men come back armless, legless, maimed and shattered — Money comes back fatter than it went, loaded with coupons, buttered with perpetual lien.

Acceptance of the 'money power' thesis did not necessarily involve people in the belief that there was an actual committee which controlled the world. There will often be some concentration on a particular institution or person, but this identifica-

tion will be buttressed by a complex of precepts concerning the proper functioning of the financial system. Talk of balanced budgets, the need for confidence and arguments against repudiation are no less evidence of a 'money power' analysis than are its direct expositions. In 1915, when Fisher dismissed Anstey's attack on the war budget by wagging his finger and repeating 'Finance, finance, finance', both were acknowledging the same 'hidden god'.

Similarly, in coping with the depression of the 1930s, the Scullin government's orthodoxy was the obverse of Lang's repudiation. Moreover, both saw themselves acting on behalf of the *community*: Lang presented himself as the defender of 'the bred and born Australian' from the foreign bondholder. Scullin and his supporters were no less anxious to serve the 'nation'. This approach was in line with Scullin's entire outlook. The *Australian Manufacturer* (26 October 1929) praised Scullin's 1929 election speech as patriotic, containing 'no reference to class warfare', but being 'national in ... outlook and atmosphere'. As prime minister, Scullin frequently pressed for a bipartisan approach to the nation's problems and offered to drop every plank in the ALP's platform if someone would suggest a way to end the depression. Important elements in the Party supported this attitude. The *Westralian Worker* (19 June 1931) advised its readers to remember that 'while Mr Scullin has a duty to the Party he has an important duty to the country and the obligations of the office he holds'.

Scullin's every move was constricted by his subservience to financial orthodoxy. He went to England to restore confidence; he reappointed Sir Robert Gibson as chairman of the Commonwealth Bank board to maintain confidence; and as Warren Denning wrote of him, 'he regarded himself as no longer a Labor prime minister; but as a man to whom the whole nation was looking for sanity, conservation and succour'. Scullin was exceptional by virtue of the position he occupied, but his response was no personal aberration. His methods would

have been followed by any Labor Prime Minister as a consequence of the social analysis on which they operated. Such was the logic of their position. The government that had marked its accession to office, late in 1929, by announcing a Christmas gift of a million pounds to relieve distress among the unemployed, remained to impose over a 20 per cent cut in old-age pensions.

State ALP premiers were equally subservient. In the days when the states' activities were more extensive than those of the Commonwealth, they had far greater responsibility for the direct administration of the Premiers' Plan. In Victoria, E. J. Hogan's government was disowned by the Melbourne Trades Hall Council; despite this unprecedented censure, the premier was unmoved and rejected a request to attend a Trades Hall Council meeting, speaking instead at the annual dinner of the Chamber of Commerce. His approach to the unemployed, whom he forced to work at non-union rates, was summed up when he told the Legislative Assembly, in December 1931, that it was no inconvenience to sleep in the open on nights like these.

Discussing Lionel Hill (the Labor Premier of South Australia), Sir Lloyd Dumas (ex-chairman of Advertiser Newspapers Ltd) relates in his autobiography that, whenever a premiers' conference was held in another capital city, either he or Sir Walter Young (then a director of Elder Smith & Co. Ltd) would try to be there 'in case a new point came up which the Premier would like to discuss'. Dumas continued:

> Apart from Sir Walter Young, I think Lionel Hill consulted me more than anyone else. For months he used to telephone me at least twice a week, and sometimes he would come round to my house for a talk.

Eventually Hogan and Hill were both forced out of the ALP but their policies were not a whit different from those of Scullin, who was saved from a similar fate by being outflanked on

the right by Lyons. There is no reason to believe that Lang or Theodore would have acted differently. Lang invented his plan to outmanoeuvre Theodore in a NSW ALP faction brawl; Theodore supported his own plan for less than eight weeks before returning to the demands of the orthodoxy that he had implemented as Premier of Queensland from 1919 to 1925.

Economic nationalism revived during the depression and the ALP once more placed its hopes in high protectionist tariffs from which both capitalists and workers would benefit. This policy produced the situation that Denning described:

> Canberra became a happy hunting ground for tariff 'touts' ... whose purpose it was to impress on the government and the party the dire importance of Australian-made silk stockings, or razor blades or toilet paper, receiving the whole of the Australian market; and where ever two or three people were gathered together in a quiet place it was an easy wager that one of them was a Labor member, and the others high tariff advocates.

Tariff levels almost doubled between November 1929 and April 1931.

With the adoption of the Premiers' Plan early in 1931, the basis of the protectionist argument gained a new direction to become 'equality of sacrifice'. Just as during the high tariff onrush there was to be a sharing of the benefits, under the Premiers' Plan there was to be a sharing of the burden. In propagating this view, Labor expressed the fundamental principle of its political career, by which it had sought to envelop all divisions in the community. Faith in its national role never faltered for, as *Labor Call* said in September 1934, two days before the ALP's share of the national vote dropped to its lowest point since 1901: 'Each party in politics represents a particular interest, and the Labor Party's particular interest is the welfare of the whole people'.

THE SOCIALIST OBJECTIVE

Labor's approach to socialism has seemed hypocritical to many of its opponents who have difficulty in reconciling stated objectives with the administrative competence shown by Labor in office. One such critic, Senator Anthony St Ledger, went so far as to claim in his book, *Australian Socialism*:

> That the main work of the Labor Party has been to profess this Socialistic gospel on the platform and to suppress it in Parliament, in order to hold the balance of parties in every State House and in the Commonwealth Parliament. In other words, that its parliamentary, as distinguished from its platform and special press campaigns, have been one long deception of the public.

Because of this deceit, 'the Socialist, especially of the extreme type — that is the type which clearly says what he means and means what he says — was generally regarded as an "unsafe" man for the parliamentary platform. His honesty was his danger'.

A conspiracy approach is not necessary to explain the phenomenon that upset St Ledger. The truth of the matter is that the Labor Party is not and never has been a socialist party. Its approach was summed up by an 1895 *Worker* editorial:

> We plead with the people not to be led away by the extravagant interpretation put upon our methods and speeches by the opponents of reform of any and all kinds. We do not ask that all our political programme should be set in operation at once by a single parliament. We know that cannot be, such a thing being contrary to the laws of evolution and that spirit of compromise which is said to be civilisation. Because we range ourselves under the flag of 'Socialism in our Time', we cannot expect to realise a perfect collectivist state in our day any more than the follower of Christ can hope to establish in his time on earth peace, goodwill toward men.

The analogy with Christianity's two thousand years of struggle for the perfect society was popular with Labor speakers who reassured their listeners that if God himself could not

make much progress in two millennia, there was little to fear
from the socialist objectives of the Labor Party. Its gospel was
that the rich would be always with us.

Not all conservatives maintained this high state of alarm: W.
G. Spence observed approvingly that 'the rich anti-socialists
soon discovered that the Socialist Premier (South Australia's
Tom Price) … could be trusted with big business affairs'. Car-
dinal Moran approached the matter from a slightly different
angle but concluded that 'if men in the advancement of their
political interests choose the name Socialists, I say again what's
in a name?'. Moran on more than one occasion defended the
Labor Party from attacks by overzealous fellow Catholics
such as 'Encyclical' Kelly. Labor in Tasmania also received aid
and comfort from the churches in the persons of the Catholic
Bishop, Delany, and the Anglican Bishop, Mercer.

Socialism was defined as state action by the Party's federal
leader in 1904. Another leading figure, Andrew Fisher, ac-
knowledged that 'No party worthy of the name can deny that
its objective is socialist, but no socialist with any parliamen-
tary experience can hope to get anything for many years to
come other than practical legislation of a socialist character'.
An examination of Labor's 'practical' but 'socialist' legislation
reveals that, despite a high level of activity in this field from
1910 to 1920, there was no overall plan and certainly no
attempt to subvert capitalism by stealth.

As a source of social dislocation, the Great War produced a
shift to the left by a sizeable section of the Australian
workforce. Partly as a consequence of this upheaval, the ALP
altered its platform in 1919 to include what was the most radi-
cal demand it has ever made:

> Emancipation of human labour from all forms of exploitation, the
> obtaining for all workers the full reward of their industry by the
> collective ownership and democratic control of the collectively
> used agencies of production, distribution and exchange.

The 1919 conference also held 'a record for the number of successful motions favouring nationalisation of particular industries'.

But Labor's new objective was not primarily an indication of a leftward shift. Rather it was an attempt to contain this movement. For, as E. J. Holloway pointed out at the time:

> discontent in the ranks of Labour is due to the fact that people are looking forward to getting something new, and Conference should make the Objective more up to date ... It will be the fault of those responsible for shaping these things if the active spirits are lost from amongst us.

Holloway was thinking in purely electoral terms, but the effect of his proposal extended far beyond the ALP's parliamentary prospects to constrain the burgeoning socialist movement. Holloway did not have to perceive the full implications of this matter. By concentrating on the demands of parliamentarism, he had the effect of circumscribing new ideas within the prevailing system.

At the 1921 conference, a starker objective was adopted: 'The Socialisation of Industry, Production, Distribution and Exchange'. The 1919 maneouvre had failed to ensnare the socialists. Hence, further verbal acrobatics were demanded. Scullin defended the objective with the claim that 'If there was any Conference in history trying to prevent revolution by force, this Conference is doing it at present'. But the ALP could not compromise itself entirely for the integration of its troublesome left. That 1921 objective was immediately qualified by the addition of the Blackburn interpretation:

> That the party does not seek to abolish private property, even of an instrument of production, where such instrument is utilised by its owner in a socially useful manner without exploitation.

The NSW Branch of the ALP waited ten years before endorsing the new objective; even then the adoption was, in the words of Jack Lang, 'a matter of political expediency'.

The business of explaining away the objective had hardly commenced. Theodore told the *Worker* (13 July 1922) that, although the objective was socialism, the platform and methods were not but were palliatives tending towards socialism. Yet even the methods proved too socialist. The 1927 conference watered down every section of the 1921 proposals and removed the call for an elective Supreme Economic Council.

Not even the depression of the 1930s forced the ALP along the path of socialism. Scullin opposed bank nationalisation on the grounds that the 'time was not ripe' for plunging the economy into further turmoil. His solution was 'to maintain our equilibrium, play the game, meet our obligations, and, when possible, evolve a better system'. Lang remained as hostile to socialism as ever and fought furiously, if sometimes covertly, against the Socialisation Units. Lang's tactician, Harold McCauley, had devised a scheme 'to ride the socialist tiger until it dropped from sheer exhaustion'. At the 1931 NSW ALP conference the Socialisation Units succeeded in having socialism taken from the realm of an ultimate objective and placed at the head of the party's fighting platform. This forced Lang's hand and McCauley decided that they should move for the rescission of the 'socialism in three years plan' by arguing as scientific socialists against the utopianism of the Units. To this end, Donald Grant quoted the *Communist Manifesto* and concluded that 'If Mr McNamara is right, then Karl Marx is wrong'. Cooksey summed up the outcome: 'For less than twenty-four hours the New South Wales Labor Party had been formally committed to "socialism in our time" as policy; never before or since has an Australian Labor Party been so committed'. Six months later Lang told his supporters that

> ... the revolution has come, is being fought now, and will continue a little into the future. (Cheers.)
> It has come without our streets being barricaded, without the accompaniment of fire-arms, but in the way the Labor Movement has always said it would come, by Act of Parliament. (Applause.)

The Chifley executive in New South Wales agreed with Lang about the undesirability of socialism and in 1933 recommended to its state conference that the 1921 objective be replaced by the 1905 one, for racial purity and national sentiment.

SIXTEEN
Unionists

'United to relieve, not combined to injure'

Motto adopted by the Australian Union Benefit Society, 1834

Although the wording of the Union Benefit Society's motto was amended to 'Defence not Defiance', this spirit remained unchanged in its domination of nineteenth-century unionism in Australia. Before 1880, almost all unions in Australia were craft and/or benefit societies. Provision of social services was as much a part of their function as were relations with employers. This relief work demanded that only tradesmen be admitted, because they were less likely to be a drain on unemployment relief funds. Even the possession of a trade was not always sufficient to gain membership: the Amalgamated Society of Engineers protected its welfare reserves by refusing to accept some applicants because they wore spectacles. Similarly, they refused benefits to any member whose illness was 'occasioned by drunkenness or fighting or any disease improperly contracted'. Most importantly, benefit funds could not be allowed to run down as a result of strikes. Union welfare schemes acted as a brake on militancy, though this limit was hardly necessary given the social outlook of the unions.

Although unionism was 'illegal' in Australia for most of the nineteenth century, the relevant provisions of the Master and Servants Acts and the Common Law conspiracy statutes were

rarely applied to prevent union organisation. Indeed, union demands were sometimes supported by government intervention. During the 1856 stonemasons' strike for an eight-hour day, government representatives threatened one of Melbourne's two major builders with prosecution for breach of contract if the strike held up work on the Houses of Parliament. The builder immediately agreed to the union's terms.

Enforcement of a 'White Australia policy' resulted in an even stronger united front of unions and governments. In 1878 Queensland threatened the Union Steamship Co. with the loss of a £10 000 mail contract if it persisted with its plans to replace European seamen with Asians. In their turn, the Seamen's Union offered 'To assist by every legitimate means in their power the police in the execution of their duty, and if necessary to arrest all of their comrades who violate the law'. N. B. Nairn enumerated the 'socially responsible' attitudes of the New South Wales Trades and Labor Council from 1870 to 1890.

Respectability was the keynote of union organisation, especially where union membership was just one more way by which the urban tradesman could ensure that improvement of social standing so dear to his heart. This attitude was pronounced in the printing trade, where the Victorian Typographical Association's journal emphasised 'display of learning, musical accomplishment and abstemious living'. As late as 1902, it declined to participate in politics.

Temperance played an important role in the social fabric of nineteenth-century Australia, and not without results; although the population doubled in the last thirty years of the century, the consumption of spirituous beverages in New South Wales went up by only 25 per cent. Early radicals such as Charles Harpur were lifelong campaigners for total abstinence, gaining the support of both the Protestant and the Catholic clergy. One incentive for building the Melbourne Trades Hall in 1857 was the objection of members to meeting

in hotels. This influence remained strong in the labour movement well into the 1930s. Regular resolutions called for restrictions on the 'grog' trade. In 1916 the *Worker* wrote:

> Nothing short of nationalisation and then total abolition as laid down in the Labor Party's platform will adequately meet the case. Six o'clock closing, however, will doubtless be a step nearer the goal, and because of that let's have it ... but nationalisation's the thing.

Brewing interests reacted shrewdly. Their method of defeating 'prohibition' was to unite with the socialists in a call for the nationalisation of breweries. American experience showed prohibition to be a real threat. Acute understanding of the Labor Party turned 'nationalisation' into an insurance policy for the breweries.

A study of temperance movements in the United States, *Symbolic Crusade*, by Joseph R. Gusfield, observed:

> Abstinence was becoming a symbol of middle-class membership and a necessity for ambitious and aspiring young men. It was one of the ways society could distinguish the industrious from the ne'er-do-well; the steady worker from the unreliable drifter; the good credit risk from the bad gamble ...

Seen in this way, temperance bears a resemblance to the piano; both were outward signs of an inner striving, although the former was a means to that end, and the latter evidence of its attainment.

Although relations between 'masters' and 'men' were rarely harmonious, they were conducted on a direct personal basis. A few unions admitted employers as honorary members. Joint action by manufacturers and their employees to secure a protective tariff was another force binding them together. Most of the overtures for this cooperation came from the employees.

The degree of amicability reached in employer–employee relations was possible in the skilled trades because of a pros-

perous economic environment and the largely pre-industrial nature of production. Metallurgy was one of the few areas with any degree of industrialisation but, as has been shown in the chapter on 'Diggers', various economic and ideological factors undercut the development of working-class consciousness even here.

W. G. Spence's association with the Amalgamated Miners Association (AMA) has led it to be categorised as one of the 'new unions', which broke through and away from the narrower guidelines and membership provisions. Whatever the explanation, the claim is unjustified since all Spence did was to bring together the existing local societies. The bias of the AMA's activities before 1890 can be seen from the allocation of its expenditure: £6600 on strike relief and over £100 000 on accident and funeral benefits.

Typical of the unionists whom Spence united were those who formed the Miners' Protective League at Lambing Flat late in 1861, when they agreed to police the goldfields and to hand over to the authorities any criminal they apprehended. They also planned to promulgate the word of God throughout their district.

Religious influences were particularly strong among Cornish miners in South Australia. A strike meeting there in 1874 began with the Wesleyan hymn 'And are we yet alive', and ended with the doxology and benediction. A thanksgiving service marked the strike's settlement.

Most miners had been self-employed and retained many of their old attitudes and aspirations: union leaders at Mt Lyell (Tasmania) advocated that their members work hard and buy shares. Just as the militant shearers were often frustrated smallholders, some of the mining activists were failed mine-owners. Dick Sleath, union secretary at Broken Hill in 1892, had been a company promoter and provisional director of the defunct Broken Hill Smelting and Refining Company. (Sleath was later sentenced to two years gaol, then became a

Labor MLA, only to lose preselection in 1901 and stand as an independent.)

The achievement of the AMA in unionising Australia's miners was far from conclusive. Only a fifth of the Gympie miners were members in 1890, and Australia-wide the figure was less than half in 1900. Tom Mann reported that, in the period 1905–09, there were no unionists at Gympie, Mt Morgan or Port Pirie, while those at Broken Hill, prior to his visit, were few and fragmented. This picture could be repeated for every sector of the workforce, with the possible exception of the coal-miners.

Coal-mining could be expected to develop 'industrial unionism' before other industries because coal itself is a necessary precondition for industrialisation. Despite the dangerous and onerous nature of the work, and persistently rapacious provocation by the mine-owners, the miners themselves were only marginally less reluctant than the workforce at large to accept the implications of their position under capitalism.

Doubly-damned convicts, including Castle Hill rebels, were Australia's first coal-miners. These men were slaves in every sense of the word. The free labourers who succeeded them benefited from the general labour shortage in the colony. When mine-owners sought to overcome this problem by importing indentured labour from Britain, they found that the new arrivals

> soon broke their engagements, and quitted the coal fields. Similarly, miners often celebrated their arrival by striking for higher wages, despite the fact that the agents in Britain were instructed to ensure that their recruits were of a type unlikely to cause trouble when they arrived in the colony.

Gold discoveries made the miners even more demanding: in 1853 a shipload of migrants struck for an increase of 4s a ton for getting coal. The strike failed because the old hands refused to lend their support.

Strikes in the 1860s did not lead immediately to an im-

provement in union organisation or interest. One secretary claimed that he took office 'because he thought he might as well have the two pounds per quarter as anyone else'. Cooperative ventures were encouraged, but for reasons of profit as much as in solidarity.

James Fletcher, president of the miners' union, started a cooperative mine in 1861. Thirteen years later, he claimed that the interests of capital and labour were identical and hoped that the men would always recognise this fact in their union activities. Fletcher was by no means the typical miner: he later became a proprietor, owner of the *Newcastle Morning Herald* and was a member of the Legislative Assembly for ten years. His proposition concerning the unity of capital and labour was not the yelping of a worker trying to ingratiate himself with his masters. Rather, it articulated what many miners believed to be the facts of their calling.

In his studies of the New South Wales coal-miners, Robin Gollan showed that when the unions agreed to a sliding scale of payments for coal hewed, they accepted the intellectual position of their masters who reasoned that wages were a function of earnings. By accepting the proposition that their wages should rise and fall with company profits, the unions bound themselves in two ways. First, they denied themselves the right to struggle for a higher proportion of those profits. Secondly, the miners needed the price of coal to remain high, so that profits, and hence wages, would also be high. This link meant that the unions had an interest in maintaining their employers' oligopoly and price-fixing arrangements. As Gollan observed:

> When in 1878 the Vend began to show signs of weakening, the union set itself to strengthen it. At first sight it may seem extraordinary that the union should attempt to prop up a monopolistic arrangement of employers, but in the circumstances of the time it was perfectly understandable.

This approach manifested itself in a dozen ways. Settlement of disputes in the 1870s rested with a council of five arbitrators,

two from each side and one mutually acceptable. The costs of this tribunal were shared equally by the union and the proprietors. Company officials were regularly invited to the miners' annual picnic, although it was rare for them to attend. In 1876 the union even authorised the spending of £12 on a retirement presentation to the superintendent of the AA Company. Their overtures were not reciprocated. Twelve months later, the owners declined to contribute to a testimonial for the dying union secretary, John Wood.

Perhaps because of coal's function for the emerging industrialisation of late-nineteenth-century Australia, it was inevitable that it would be the coal-miners who first experienced the more vigorous class relationships that were to mark the twentieth century. In almost every respect, the miners' experiences prefigured those of the rest of the labour movement. They felt the force of state intervention in 1888 when Gatling guns were ranged against them and some of their leaders gaoled in the first 'political' prosecutions since Eureka. They returned their union secretary, James Curley, to parliament in 1889, two years before there was a Labor Party. They spoke up for a kind of socialism by declaring in favour of 'the equal distribution of wealth'. They maintained this vanguard position throughout the ensuing decades to become one of the mainstays of proletarian consciousness in Australia. This precocity moved them outside the range of the present account.

Romantic nostalgia for the internationalism and class solidarity of nineteenth-century unionism reaches its zenith in discussions of the 1889 London dockers' strike, which was victorious, so the legend has it, because of the donation of £30 000 from the Australian unions. Three elements need to be added to this tale. First, the strike had the support of the London merchants, who were anxious 'to get rid of the medieval constitution of the port of London, the main cause of the decline in London's harbour trade'. This bourgeois backing extended to Australia. In Queensland, for instance, the Brisbane

waterside workers gave £150; the none-too-liberal premier, McIlwraith, gave £50 and other politicians a total of £236. The relief committee contained employers and unionists, the Lord Mayor undertaking its organisational responsibilities. Secondly, Engels judged that the Australian unions' donation was designed to 'ward off a sudden mass importation of English workers'. Finally, there is the fact that Australians, being richer, had always given large sums to Imperial collections, such as the relief of soldiers and their families who suffered in the Indian Mutiny and the Sudan campaign.

W. E. Murphy, who had been secretary of the Melbourne Trades Hall, saw the donation as proof that Australia had indeed become 'A New Britannia'. Writing in the *Centennial Magazine* for February 1890, he claimed:

> In future the working classes of Great Britain will have to do little beyond organising their strikes; the funds will be supplied from Australasia ... just as Moses struck the rock and made the water flow, so will any appeal to the industrial democracy of Australia from a deserving class meet with ready response until victory is assured ... until the poor down-trodden industrial serf of Great Britain is enabled to tread the soil of freedom with the elastic step of his Australasian brother.

SOLIDARITY — NEVER?

One feature of the strikes of 1890–94 was the ease with which they were broken by the superabundance of volunteer labour. All the employers' 'plots' in the world to smash unionism and maintain the principle of freedom of contract would have come to nought had there not been at least two volunteers ready to replace every striking unionist.

Spence claimed that 'Unionism came to the bushman as a religion', since 'It had in it that feeling of mateship which he understood already, and which always characterised the action of one "white man" to another'. This passage was used by

both Gollan and Ward. In his *History of the A.W.U.*, Spence offered a number of alternative explanations for the success of bush unions: 'It was the half-crown cut which enabled us to arouse and enrol men and lay the foundations of the organisation ...' (p. 15), and 'The organisers saved the Union from defeat. When they failed to reach a shed, in most cases it was lost' (p. 20).

By 1891 only about 5 per cent of the Australian workforce was unionised and of these more than half had joined in the preceding three years. In Australia in 1891 there were almost twice as many domestic servants as unionists. There was no general strike, only a great strike in comparison with what had gone before. Compared with what followed, the strikes of the 1890s gave little indication of labouring class solidarity.

Cardinal Moran certainly did not believe that the 1890 strikers were unreasonable or excessive in their demands, and he championed their cause to such effect that ten thousand of them responded to a call for 'Three cheers for the Cardinal' when a protest march passed St Mary's.

Respectability and responsibility had been the watchwords of the unions before 1890 and the strikes generally made little difference to their behaviour. Throughout 1890 the Australian Labour Federation (ALF) in Queensland (which according to Gollan was the stronghold of militancy) bent over backwards to reach accommodation with the pastoralists. The *Worker* for June 1890 reported that the Federation had 'offered to admit all non-unionists to bushmen's unions without penalty', that is, to overlook blacklegging. In addition, the general council paid £75 to a shipping company to reimburse it for expenses involved in sending some wool by another boat.

Nor did the situation alter much in 1891. William Lane defended the Federation from accusations of 'anarchistic agitation'. Socialism was purely a political matter. In its industrial activities, the Federation 'has consistently and persistently attempted to replace more violent methods of righting wrongs

by conciliation and arbitration'. Four months after 'the Rockhampton Twelve' had been sentenced to three years gaol for their alleged crimes at Peak Downs, Hinchcliffe, the ALF secretary, still desired 'to let bygones be bygones for errors are common to human nature and particularly of late among all classes in Queensland. The ALF is sorry for foolish utterances and acts which cannot in themselves be defended'. The 'errors' and 'foolish utterances' were not those of Mr Justice Harding, the trial judge who had chastised the police for their failure to suppress the strikers with sufficient vigour.

> Mr Justice Harding: 'Do the police want to see a man's throat cut before they do anything? How do they act in this country? They seem to have no system. It's funny, very funny, indeed it's a nice pleasant country where such a state of things exists.'
> The witness in reply to a question said there were four policemen present at the time.
> The Judge: 'Let me see; they all had six-shooters. Four sixes are twenty-four; that would be twenty-four of them. There would not have been many who "boo-hooed" the second time if I had been one of them.'

Harding carried forward a tradition of British justice. In 1794, when one of the Scottish Martyrs urged that Jesus Christ had himself been a reformer, one of the judges chuckled: 'Muckle he made o' that; he was hanged'. Foster, who tried coal-miners in 1888, and Pring, who sent Peter Bowling (1909) to gaol in leg-irons, are other examples.

Further south, unionist feeling was equally temperate. By the time Arthur Rae had become an MLA, he had forgotten the fourteen-month gaol sentence that the squatters had arranged for him; he sought to assure them that they had nothing to fear from the introduction of the 'Single Tax'. Meanwhile, in Melbourne the Trades Hall Council declared its lack of concern for unemployed workers who were not trade unionists, a position both narrow and ultimately self-defeating since it

meant that the unemployed would have to become 'volunteer labourers' if they were to secure work.

Exceptions emerged to this pattern of passivity. The strikes passed through five phases: the maritime dispute of 1890, the shearers' strike of 1891, the Broken Hill 'lock-out' of 1892, another shearing strike in 1894, and another coal strike in 1896. After the first of these, the trade unions (in the sense in which these have been described above) withdrew into the docile activities from which they had never intended to stray.

The common feature of the post-1890 strikes is that they were not the creatures of the metropolitan-based trade unions. Here the similarity ended and each group — Queensland shearers, Broken Hill miners and New South Wales coal-miners — has to be analysed for its own dynamics. Such an investigation still needs to begin from the 1890 maritime dispute.

Fitzpatrick and others portrayed the strikes as a deliberate attempt by the employers to smash unionism in a period of economic depression. In this version, the bosses appear as the initiators. Undoubtedly, there were some employers who wanted this outcome; and even more of them thought it possible *after* the debacle of the maritime strike. But N. B. Nairn has shown that this explanation for the origins of the maritime strike is not plausible. First, the employers were seriously divided. Secondly, the pastoralists' unions had agreed to employ only union labour as from the 1891 season. Thus, concluded Nairn, it was not the pastoralists who plotted the strike. That responsibility rests upon the secretary of the Shearers' Union, W. G. Spence, who had grown overconfident and overanxious.

In order to terrify the pastoralists into bringing forward by one year (that is, to 1890) the institution of all-union sheds, Spence constructed a paper alliance of as many unions as he could. He did not intend to call a strike; his plan was to scare the pastoralists with his paper tiger. The unexpected happened when one of the unions that Spence had brought on side to bolster up the shearers became involved in a strike of its own.

So the shearers were on strike not to secure all-union sheds but in consequence of an alliance designed to work in the other direction, or rather, *not to work at all.*

Nairn established Spence as the prime mover. But what motivated him? Nairn hinted at pride, but these motives are neither explored nor are they convincing. If William Lane had done these things, one could accept megalomania as the explanation, but not with Spence, who from all accounts was a restrained, almost lenitive, unionist. Of course, personality does not rule out a temporary aberration. An alternative account disagrees with Nairn only on the point of Spence's motivation. Rather than picturing Spence as an adventurist, the alternative explanation shows Spence the moderate, that is, Spence in character.

Throughout 1889 Spence had toured Australia and New Zealand in an effort to contain rank-and-file moves against the pastoralists. In this attempt he was not alone. Similar problems were being confronted by Lane and Hinchcliffe's ALF in their dealings with the Queensland Shearers' Union which, at a mass meeting, rejected the 1890 agreement that the executive had made with the pastoralists. The shearers insisted that all-union sheds be introduced immediately, and in consequence declared wool from Jondaryn station 'black'. Although the ALF was forced to support the shearers in order to preserve the parliamentary edifice it was attempting to build, it also moved towards the establishment of machinery to keep the shearers in their place.

Details of the scheme were adopted by the Brisbane council of the ALF on 7 July 1890:

> [The scheme] 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 ALF and the employers' associations were to police its provisions and proceed by joint action against any infringement.

Most of all, the ALF was anxious to avoid conflict with the

employers. At the ALF general council meeting on 1 August 1890, the following directive to the Shearers' Union was agreed upon:

> That the General Council of the ALF deemed it unwise and impolitic for them [the QSU] 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 rule 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.

This groundswell also threatened Spence's concept of unionism. It was not Spence who would not wait until 1891 for all-union sheds, but the rank-and-file shearers. Spence attempted to bluff the pastoralists so that the pressure from below could be headed off.

Explaining Spence's impatience in this way pushes the question back a stage to ask, 'Why were the shearers militant?' Part of the answer must be the abominable living conditions provided on most of the stations. Also there was an increasing tendency to employ Chinese on the stations: QSU rules were strict on this point and excluded from membership not only the Chinese themselves but also any European who worked for anyone who employed a Chinese, had commercial dealings with a Chinese, or patronised any merchant or storekeeper who dealt with or employed Chinese. Underpinning all these issues was resentment against the peculiarities of the Queensland pastoral industry. Far more so than in New South Wales or Victoria, Queensland's inland properties were owned by a small number of men, many of whom represented British-based finance companies. The militancy of the Queensland shearers fed upon the rancour and enmity of frustrated smallholders towards large landowners.

After the employers realised how weak the unions were, and once the effects of the depression were felt, the bosses no

doubt provoked disputes in order to smash unionism. At Broken Hill in 1892 the companies terminated their agreement with the AMA; the men acted straightaway and a four-month strike resulted. When trade revived around 1896, the northern coal-miners embarked on unsuccessful strike action to restore the 1890 rates. Both strikes ended the same way: they were smashed because there was an oversupply of 'volunteer labour'. Most of those who struck were never re-employed at their old work places. Equally important, both strikes had been consciously undertaken by the workers to challenge their employers. Here were stirrings in the long haul towards the making of an Australian proletariat.

For the unionists, 1891 was the end of the old and not the beginning of the new. For the employers, it was the beginning of a 'get-tough' policy. In that respect it also inaugurated a new phase for some unionists. Most took almost two decades to accept this fact. This delay was partly because the old living standards did not collapse entirely. In 1907 Tom Mann concluded that 'a mechanic in Victoria, was quite seven shillings and sixpence a week better off, for one hour's work per day less, than a mechanic in England; and the unskilled labourer likewise had a higher standard'.

Jurgen Kuczynski highlighted the peculiar environment in which the Australian working class was reformed. Unlike the four other countries that he investigated (Britain, United States, Germany and India), the Australian working class developed in a society where 'the eight-hour day was the rule, modern machines were installed and these were worked principally by men, not primarily by women, and by children scarcely at all'. Moreover, the workers were enfranchised and some elementary defence organisations were at hand.

In spite of the hammering that the unions received from the state and from the employers during the strikes, their response was not to reject class cooperation. They concluded that the state must intervene even more, but that this intervention

should take the form of forcing the employers to sit down at a negotiating table. Compulsory arbitration became the panacea to restore the good old days before 1890.

Acceptance of compulsory arbitration by the labour movement was not achieved until 1895 when it was added to the New South Wales platform, but it had had its proponents long before then. New Zealand provided a working model for such a scheme when compulsory arbitration was introduced there in 1890. J. C. Watson, who spent most of his early life in New Zealand, was a strong advocate of the system, since it conformed with his view that Labor did not 'seek privileges from one section of the community at the expense of another'.

Such homilies were not confined to Watson. They were the stock in trade of 'socialists' who considered governmental action equal to socialism, and who rejected class struggle in both theory and practice. Hughes, for instance, praised the 1903 Commonwealth Conciliation and Arbitration Act as 'a recognition by the people that a blow struck at any component part of the organism of society is a blow struck at society itself and destroys social peace'.

Federal Labor was supported in this outlook by the various state parties. Mention has already been made of the Queensland ALF's readiness to sacrifice the shearers' demands on the altar of arbitration. In New South Wales, Holman stated his party's attitude when he told the House of Assembly that arbitration substituted 'the force of law, which in its ultimate analysis is the regulated brute force of the community, for unregulated brute force'. Victorian Labour was somewhat less enthusiastic only because of that state's attachment to wages boards.

George Pearce in Western Australia claimed to have been inspired to demand compulsory arbitration by the New Zealand example. More likely, his ardour was stimulated by his abhorrence of the violence of the 1898–99 Fremantle waterfront strike. The first WA Trades and Labour Congress in 1899

accepted compulsory arbitration. The following year it re-
solved that 'any member of Parliament who by voting to close
the session, or otherwise tries to block the passing of the In-
dustrial Conciliation and Arbitration bill, will be looked upon
as an enemy of Labor'. Tasmanian Labor voiced its enthusiasm
when it criticised the 1910 Wages Board Act because it had not
made arbitration compulsory. Kingstonian Liberals were re-
sponsible for the introduction of compulsory arbitration in
South Australia, in which endeavour they had the support of
the small Labor Party.

Labor endorsement of compulsory arbitration dovetailed
with its support for protection and White Australia. The com-
bination of these demands led the Party further and further
into the thicket of state-backed schemes for class cooperation.

Even in the 1850s the case for protection was linked with
calls for an eight-hour day. By the 1880s the *Bulletin* argued
that protection was essential for the maintenance of a White
Australia because it would limit competition from cheaper
Asian labour. Arrangements for the protection of the sugar in-
dustry after the repatriation of island labourers brought these
three forces into practical union.

Other Australian producers learnt from this example and
'some important employer groups were persuaded tempo-
rarily to cease or modify their traditional opposition to com-
pulsory industrial tribunals'. By 1907 a virtual deal had been
made between the employers and the labour movement: the
manufacturers were to be protected by a tariff wall, and the
workers by industrial arbitration Acts. This was the promise
of the 'New Protection'. Only those employers who accepted
certain union demands were to be entitled to protection; the
employers soon repudiated this restriction and the direct con-
nection between tariffs and wages was never effected. 'The
employers got their protection: the union fell back to
industrial tribunals.'

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 freeloaders. 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 'Griffilwraith') 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 underlined 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 fixture 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 mandatories over the mandators, 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 judgement 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 ob-
tained 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 in-
vestor, an auctioneer, a surveyor, a chemist, and two agents —
one estate and one unspecified. Not surprisingly, these Labor-
ites 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 or-
chardists 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 La-
bor 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.

Neither Glory Nor Power: Labour in the Era of Monopolising Capitals

The argument in *A New Britannia* ran thus: from the convicts of the 1780s through to the unionists of the 1890s, settler Australians had pursued individual advancement and nourished racial panics. Those experiences coalesced in the Labor Party, which, therefore, could never be socialist. In short, a hundred years of history had set the nature of the new body before its birth.

This explanation descended from the Italian communist Antonio Gramsci (1891–1937) who had proposed that the history of a political party be conceived within the history of a class, indeed, of an entire society, including its international connections. Gramsci's erstwhile English disciples, Perry Anderson and Tom Nairn, embellished his approach in *Towards Socialism* (1965). Anderson's essay on the 'Origins of the Present Crisis' traced British class structures back to the revolutions of the seventeenth century; Nairn's companion piece, 'The Nature of the Labour Party', carried Anderson's analysis forward from British Labour's roots in turn-of-the-century liberalism. That pair of studies suggested a framework for examining the Australian Labor Party.

Another influence on *A New Britannia* was the Hungarian Marxist Georg Lukacs who had charted a gulf between 'true' and 'false' consciousnesses in *History and Class Consciousness*

(1923). That distinction swivelled on the treatment of class. In *The Making of the English Working Class* (1963), E. P. Thompson rejected defining class as a thing in favour of portraying the collective experiences of its members. The result was a thrilling read but analytically lopsided. Classes are both things and experiences. Every class is a thing, and yet more than that thing. A proletariat is a thing because of its place in the social relations of production. That reification is the outcome of previous conflicts in which the state and a propertied class had deprived smallholders and petty-producers of the wherewithal to be self-sufficient. Thereafter, they had to exchange their capacities (labour-power) for wages. Because those wage-slaves resisted being treated as an inert resource, they made themselves into more than that factor of production. However, that class consciousness would never have been possible had the proletarians not had to sell their capacities as if they were things.

A New Britannia lent on this flow of ideas, arguing that, in nineteenth-century Australia, working-people had produced the false consciousnesses of an escape into landed proprietorship and racial chauvinism. How had the false triumphed over the true? My answer was to deny that there had not been a proletariat in nineteenth-century Australia. If there were no proletariat, there could be no true consciousness. That chain of reasoning may strike you as circular. What remains compelling is the need to identify the class relationships that settler Australians have made.

To write a history of the Labor Party, it was indeed necessary to absorb Gramsci's advice and portray the history of a class and of an entire society, on a global scale. Yet histories do not stretch back, flat and straight. Equally, the writing of history need not take us very far into the past. More telling than any time scale is the understanding of how organisations are transformed around the expansion of capital. It is never enough to know a lot about the past, never sufficient to recog-

nise that '[t]he tradition of all the dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brain of the living'. The present has to be understood as more than an accumulation of previous events, forever tumbling, like lotto numbers, into variations of themselves. New things happen. What is revolutionary about Marxism is its understanding of the ways through which human beings remake ourselves. The task for historical materialists, therefore, is double-headed: how to acknowledge the uncertainties that surround the making of events (experiences), while recognising the structures around which those contingencies are decided (things).

Whatever the theoretical scaffolding of *A New Britannia*, the impetus for its composition came from opposition to the war that the US corporate state was waging against the Indo-Chinese. The book started life in 1967 as a paper on 'Which party for socialists?'. In the aftermath of Labor's 1966 electoral disaster, anti-war activists were asking why the anti-conscription victories of 1916 and 1917 had not been repeated fifty years later. Where was Australia's radical anti-imperialism? *A New Britannia* 's answer would be that nothing had changed. What needed to change was our understanding of that past. The legend of a once radical and independent people misrepresented the substance of those attitudes, which had been individualistic and racist, neither collectivist nor internationalist.

Russel Ward's *The Australian Legend* (1958) offered a sitting target for an attack on the earlier view of our past. Ward not only gloried in much of the social development of nineteenth-century Australia; he also accepted that the new unionism and parliamentary Labor could be explained by following their social and cultural links back to the convicts. Irrespective of the merits of our books, mine remained a mirror image of Ward's. We shared notions about the past determining the present. For both of us, the Labor Party was the ineluctable outcome of a hundred years of settler Australian experience.

When I referred to Australia's labouring people across much of the nineteenth century as a kind of petit-bourgeoisie, this description paired rising expectations with a bountifulness of material circumstance. The aspirations were much as I described them. Conditions of life were harsher, with recessions bearing down on strata of the chronically impoverished. I underpinned the optimism and the living standards with allusions to wool and gold, which allegedly softened the process of accumulation and hence relieved the pressure on the labouring classes. In short, a minor aristocracy of capital had made possible a labour gentry. The closest that this account came to connecting the experiences of working peoples to any expansion of capital was to glance at the triptych of a boom from the 1850s to the 1880s, past an economic trough between the depressions of the 1890s and 1930s, and onto affluence after the 1940s.

In place of the several wrongs in that line of argument, it is necessary to ask: what were the class structures of European Australia between 1788 and 1915? Since a class is always a relationship, the answer to that question cannot be found through attention to labouring people. That bias remains the fallacy in labour history. Instead, the analysis has first to delineate the modes of production that have existed across Australia, starting from the Indigenous.

CLASS RELATIONS

Pre-contact Australia was classless and stateless, which is what British jurists meant by *terra nullius* . Thirty years passed before the invaders expropriated more than a few swathes of traditional land. The Europeans did not cross the Great Dividing Range until 1813, remaining in enclaves along the littoral, looking out to sea for their first frontier. Hence, Aborigines still possessed most of the continent until 1838, although van-

quished in Van Diemen's Land. Dispossession advanced be-
tween 1828 and 1851, with settlements spreading out from
Moreton Bay, Swan River, Port Phillip and Adelaide. Of
course, from January 1788 the invaders had had to expropriate
some resources, water as much as land. They had less success
with the human resource of Indigenous labour.

The British had not arrived with the intention of killing
as many indigenes as possible. They would rather have en-
slaved them. Employment of the 'natives' was not a priority
as long as convict labour was available. As that limited-term
slavery came to an end, the colonial authorities tried harder
to discipline Aborigines into work. In 1840 a West Austra-
lian official hoped to 'wean them from their present erratic
habits' by making them walk in 'Gangs merely to form a
habit' before being taught to bring back fallen timbers for
the kitchen fire. Finally, they would be given an axe to cut
the wood, 'thus gradually bringing them on by steps to a
habit of labour'. In the twentieth century, shortages of la-
bour would lead to the stealing of generations of kids to
train up as station hands and domestics. This recruitment
softened the impact on capital of White Australia's ban on
the importation of coloured labour. To sum up, within the
span of 150 years Aboriginal people had moved from their
pre-contact communalism, through barter arrangements
with the occupiers, towards the wage-labour that typifies
capitalism.

In the closing chapter of volume one of *Das Kapital* (1867),
Marx distilled his concept of capital as a social relationship
into an episode from Australia:

> Mr Peel ... took with him from England to the Swan River district
> of Western Australia [in 1827] means of subsistence and produc-
> tion to the amount of £50 000. This Mr Peel even had the foresight
> to bring besides, 3000 persons of the working class ... Once he ar-
> rived at his destination, 'Mr Peel was left without a servant to
> make his bed or fetch him water from the river'. Unhappy Mr

Peel, who provided for everything except the export of English re-
lations of production to Swan River!

In reaction to Peel's melancholy fate, the felonious Edward
Gibbon Wakefield proposed 'systematic colonisation' for
South Australia. This device would prevent immigrants from
deserting their duty to the expansion of capital. They would be
blocked from buying land for seven years, during which time
they would have to sell their labour power in order to survive.
The price of land had to be kept high enough to stop the work-
ers becoming self-supporting in a trice, but low enough to en-
courage them to work for wages out of which they could save
to purchase their independence. The failure of Wakefield's sys-
tem in practice could not tarnish its validity as a paradigm for
the power relations between capital and labour, watched over
by the state.

Convict labour, as Ken Dallas pointed out, was too valuable
to be dumped at Botany Bay. The British used it to establish a
naval and trading base on the southern route to China. The
class structure of that open-air prison was an exotic, closest to
slavery. From 1788 till after the Napoleonic Wars, New South
Wales was hardly more than a gaol in which profits could be
extracted by swindling the naval and military establishments.
Little labour-power was bought and sold for the production of
a surplus.

In New South Wales and Van Diemen's Land, the
ticket-of-leave men, emancipists and free settlers introduced
capitalist relations of production as a subordinate system. For
as long as most labour remained compulsory, the colony could
not be dominated by the system of wage-labour versus capital.
Yet capitalism was also the dynamic element. Merchants re-
played their role as a fount of exchange relations. Foreign mar-
kets for wool and coal, cedar, seal skins and whale oil added to
the social divisions of labour in the colonies. Meanwhile, the
convict regime could not reproduce itself, let alone self-
expand. Its survival depended on an inflow of limited-term

slave-labourers. From the 1830s, bonded workers from India and China supplemented them. Moreover, the capitalist embryo was nourished through its umbilical chord to the Empire, which was moving towards freer trade.

When was New South Wales made capitalist? At issue is not a bookkeeping query about the quantum of profits, or the proportions of free labour (i.e. wage-slave) against bonded (mostly convict) labour. The decisive factor, as Michael Dunn recognised, is political power: which fraction of the propertied class dominated the state? A divide existed between those masters who had paid the Crown for their land and those who were squatting for free. These tensions were criss-crossed by whether each party relied more on convict labour than on waged labour. Their struggle for pre-eminence manifested itself at the political level with changes to the composition of the Legislative Council, and the introduction of trial by civil juries. Here again, the link to Britain was significant. The shift to freer trade had ended chattel slavery in the Empire by 1838.

The move from slave to capitalist mode in New South Wales was a process. Yet, if a defining moment had to be chosen, it would be the 1840 decision by British authorities to end transportation to New South Wales. The colony then joined South Australia and Western Australia as capitalist. Van Diemen's Land lagged for another thirteen years, purging its old name in favour of Tasmania two years later.

By then, the London authorities had resorted to noncapitalist relations to relieve Western Australia of its Mr Peels. From 1850 to 1868, Britain dispatched almost 10 000 convicts who had to work as directed till the expiry of their sentences. Until the 1890s, the colony's free labour was hemmed in by payment in kind rather than cash (the truck system).

Colonial governments everywhere enforced the Master and Servants Acts, under which to withdraw one's labour was a criminal offence. Impeding the expansion of capital was pun-

ishable by imprisonment, fines and loss of wages. Under the rule of capital, 'free' meant serving its accumulation.

Those historians who can write as if capitalism has never existed find it easy to ignore its permutations. Materialist dialecticians accept the challenge of analysing change at every level. To the extent that capitalism evolves — and it does mostly evolve — the approach that I took over from Gramsci, Anderson, Nairn or Ward retains relevance. Additional concepts are required to deal with qualitative transformations in capital accumulation.

Europeans contacted and settled Australia during four overlapping phases in the geographic extension and expanded reproduction of capitals:

1. brushes with merchant capital, starting from Torres and Jansz in 1606
2. Mercantilism, embodied in the East India Company, from 1788 to the 1830s
3. freer trade between the1830s and the 1870s
4. monopolising capitals from the 1870s.

The fourth stage is called 'monopolising capitals' to indicate a continuing process where competition is intensified between oligopolies. Other writers have referred to 'monopoly capital', which implies that the competitive processes had stopped, leaving a single force permanently in charge. Economists prefer the exacting vocabulary of oligopolies, duopolies and monopsonies. These distinctions are valuable, provided they are not used to sideline monopolising into an exception (as 'imperfect competition') when it has long been the rule in market economies. Lenin designated this era 'Imperialism', a term still confused with colonialism. Although the purposes of colonisation changed as a consequence of monopolising in the metropolitan economies, colonisation, whether direct or indirect, remained of subsidiary, even marginal, importance to the expansion of capital in the era of monopolising.

A New Britannia attempted to explain the appearance of the Labor Party without acknowledging that capitalism was being reshaped by that monopolising. If the Labor Party had emerged around 1860, it would have been permissible to trace its nature back through the social forces prevalent in the preceding thirty or so years. In that hypothetical, both causes and their effects would have occurred within the same stage of capitalist development, namely, that of freer trade. That the Labor parties did not appear until around 1890 was not a matter of chance. The expansion of capitals created a need for new organisations with which working people could meet the challenges that monopolising imposed on them. The option of tracing the parties' origins backwards through an uninterrupted past is, therefore, not available. To explain that new political formation is to inscribe monopolising across its birth certificate. Yet no master narrative could predetermine the variety of forms that Labor activists contrived in each of the seven colonies of Australasia. Neither workers nor capitalists could know in advance which moves would advance their interests. All players had to edge, sometimes back, into the future.

MONOPOLISING CAPITALS

The omission of monopolising capitals from my account of the Labor parties' origins cannot be rectified by blending in a body of information. It is not as if the private diaries of the co-ordinator of the 1890 strike, W. G. Spence, had turned up, or as if a major union had been overlooked. Monopolising capitals reconfigured the circumstances through which all the leaders and every union had to choose how best to operate. Hence, inclusion of monopolising capitals into the argument about the nature of the Labor parties requires a recasting of the premises through which all the data are to be understood. To consider

the Labor parties in this way requires some clearing away of previous treatments. A first move will be to step back from the parties' links to labouring people in order to recognise how their emergence paralleled changes to state and society, technology and labour disciplines.

The monopolising of capitals was tossed on a second industrial revolution of internal combustion engines, metal alloys, petro-chemicals, electricity and rapid communications. The enforcement of labour disciplines to suit these technologies had already reduced the unit cost of production. Competition among several medium-sized suppliers in each sales area set in motion a deflationary spiral. Monopolising offered a way out through price-fixing. The refashioned corporation provided the business structure with which to implement that assault on freer trade.

The single most important invention of the late nineteenth century was not a machine but the corporation. This vehicle for monopolising was an advance on the joint-stock company. In 1867, Marx had recognised why the marshalling of money capital was essential for its expansion: 'The world would still be without railways if it had had to wait until accumulation had got a few individual capitals far enough to be adequate for their construction'. The scale of operations meant that family firms could no longer generate the necessary investment funds out of their profits. The extra resources came from the monies controlled by bankers, rather than from the pockets of stockholders.

Australia's position as a trading nation meant that the patterns of monopolising here can be understood only as responses to their advance elsewhere. The oligopolising tendencies inside each nation-market-state intensified their rivalries abroad. Competition among shippers into the Australian run increased, for instance, with the entry of French and German companies after 1880, as their manufacturers bought into the Australian clip. This global connectedness also created

the broad support for the 1889 London dock strikers. Employers, here and there, needed that waterfront to be modernised so that Australian goods could enter and leave more quickly and cheaply. Traders and manufacturers welcomed the strike as a hammer to demolish physical obstacles to the expansion of capital.

Inside Australia, monopolising capitals prevailed among the export industries of minerals, meat, wheat and wool. In the case of mining, the corporations that developed out of Mt Morgan, Broken Hill, Mt Lyell and Kalgoorlie moved away from the speculators who had gained from previous flotations, and towards longer-term accumulation. These mining firms were among the world's first multinational enterprises. Mt Morgan financed Anglo-Persian Oil, and Mt Lyell joined the Collins House group.

In 1914 an Australian engineer, H. L. Wilkinson, could fill a 260-page book on *The Trust Movement in Australia*, devoting chapters to the combines that had taken charge of Australia's industries:

> the whole of the sea-borne Interstate carrying trade is in the hands of seven shipping companies forming a combine. In sugar refining one company monopolises the refining industry and fixes the selling price of sugar at a maximum, and the price paid for cane at a minimum. Tobacco is in a similar position ... A large part of the coal trade of Australia is controlled by a ring. In a more restricted area, industries such as timber, lime, bricks, flour, chemicals, manures, jams and many other necessities of life have come under the control of a few wealthy and influential companies and individuals ... they regulate prices and prevent others entering into the trade.

Wilkinson also drew attention to the role of the state in supporting monopolisers through tariffs, centralised wage-fixing and the nationalised industries. The year after his book appeared, CSR had its dominance of sugar refining confirmed by agreements with the Commonwealth and Queensland Labor governments. Like many of his fellow Progressivists,

Wilkinson welcomed the efficiencies that combination brought, yet feared their political clout.

That power had two arms. One was the state itself, as will be discussed below. The other was the self-organising by capitalists. Their constant aims were to disorganise their workers and to manage prices. Monopolising stimulated wider associations among businesses. Pastoralists formed their own union in 1891. Employers from several industries organised a federation in 1904. Their trade bodies supported monthly journals, increasingly on an inter-colonial basis.

The strands in monopolising can be drawn together through two examples at the intersection of agriculture and industry: flour mills and agricultural implements. From the 1870s, stone crushers were replaced by the steel rollers that were needed to deal with harder grain types. This new machinery required far larger investments. James Gillespie and Co. Ltd was capitalised at £195 000; the company was vertically integrated backward to farmers and forward to manufacturers. These arrangements combined with the expanding railways to funnel grain away from rural mills into metropolitan ones such as Gillespie's.

Garnering the crop became the business of H. V. McKay who, from 1885, directed the manufacture of stripper-harvesters. His funds came from rural business partners, supplemented by loans and overdrafts on which he was advised by his bank manager brother. Clem Lack stressed that McKay's triumph 'was almost as much financial as one of manufacturing and supply'.

At first, McKay entered into a price-fixing ring with the International Harvester Company of Chicago. When their agreement broke down, McKay protested against monopoly power. Faced by 1906 with competition inside Australia from the North Americans, McKay demanded a higher tariff. Too savvy to attack a fellow Britisher, he beat the drum to repel 'the American Octopus Trust'. This ploy charmed a local

bourgeoisie anxious to protect its own kind, while upholding Empire trade against the Yankees. Deakin responded with the Australian Industries Preservation Act of 1906. Tariffs became another means to ward off price competition. Protectionism was monopolising by other means.

Because monopolising intensifies competition between the survivors, each capital sought to reduce its unit labour costs in order to steal a march on its partners in price-fixing. To evade Wages Board supervision, McKay moved from Ballarat in 1904 to the north-west of Melbourne, an area since named Sunshine in honour of the McKay brand. The scale of his operations would allow him to install continuous flow. He structured his workforce to serve the machino-facture of components that was displacing manufacture by skilled tradesmen.

McKay's farm machines were themselves indicative of a concentration of agricultural proprietorship. In Victoria between 1891 and 1911, the number of rural labourers doubled to almost 40 000, while the proprietors and working family members remained constant at around 60 000.

The effects from purchasing machines and paying for their maintenance ran through the entire economy. The dominance of the capitalist mode of production from around 1840 had not ensured that the exchange of commodities for money permeated rural production. Whereas reaping hooks and scythes could be made or fixed by blacksmiths for barter, McKay's harvesters required cash payments to outsiders. A comparable transformation came with the drift from hand to mechanical shearing. The hand-shears could be made and fixed on the pastoral property. Machine shears had to be bought in, and they needed external help to repair. Much the same happened after the safety bicycle replaced the horse as a means of personal transport for itinerants. A horse could be bred at home or traded for produce. A new bike required money. The more of their needs, both personal and productive, that the small farm-

ers had to buy in, the more they had to sell of their produce for money. Once they had to produce commodities for sale, they had taken the first step towards becoming commodities themselves. Hence, the cash nexus disrupted sociable relationships, calling forth defensive responses. The displacement of tools by machines increased social divisions of labour in the countryside on top of the technical particularisation required for the production of such machines in the cities.

LABOUR MARKETS

Monopolising capitals could not produce a Labor Party directly. That organisational outcome followed a reformation of labour markets and the extension of state activities.

The forms that capital took in the era of monopolising differed from those in preceding phases. In the 1840s, on the cusp between mercantilism and freer trade, the Sydney iron-master Russell Bros operated as a family firm. In the 1920s the joint-stock company of the iron-steel-coal combine, BHP, epitomised the vertical and horizontal integrations of a monopolising capital. Nonetheless, the feature that these two quite otherwise incompatible business structures had in common was their relationship with their workforces. Both bought labour-power for money. In each case, the surplus value thereby expropriated still had to be realised as profit via the sales effort. Monopolising did nothing to restrict these circuits for exploitation. Rather, it accelerated their turnover.

The four stages of capital expansion given above (p. 257) involved changes to the application of labour-power. When globalisation Mark I had centred on merchants' capital, most labour was still forced, either serf or slave, with manufacturing confined to guilds. Mark II was mercantilism, when free labourers confronted the discipline of clock-time over the rhythms of nature, and with particularisation adding a new

kind of division of labour. Mark III was the free-trade inter-lude when slavery and serfdom were displaced by either 'free labour' or indentured labour, that 'new system of slavery'. Mark IV, monopolising capitals, initiated assembly-line and continuous flows (Fordism) as well as a re-division of labour between nation-market-states.

Our concern is with how, and why, changes to the exploita-tion of labour within Mark IV led working people to regroup into larger unions and around a parliamentary party.

Lenin perceived that monopoly profits had allowed for an aristocracy of labour among certain skilled trades. Beyond in-flating this possibility into an explanation for Laborism, *A New Britannia* traced no connections between the policies or structures of the labour movement and the varying ways by which monopolising capitals increased their controls over the labour-time they had bought. Following Lenin, I gave no at-tention to upheavals in the labour process.

At the base of monopolising capitals are two conflicting aims. The first is the attempt to keep up selling prices. Price-fixing, however, can never be universal or permanent. Firms cheat each other, stealing a march on rivals. If one cor-poration can accumulate more rapidly, it will be able to afford newer technology. With that advantage, it will revert to price cuts for as long as it takes to drive out the competitors. Capi-tal's second need is this accelerating drive to lower unit costs of production. That compulsion brought about the installation of equipment to alter operating arrangements at the workplace. These machines did away with some skills; they also drew on capacities from workers previously considered to be unskilled or semi-skilled. Monopolising capitals, thus, brought on a re-skilling of the entire workforce, some up, some down, others sideways.

Technological advances resulted in contests between equally skilled groups. That was the case with the 1890 strike which grew out of a tussle for status between maritime officers

and ships engineers in the shift from sail to steam. Such repositionings were not a once-only event, but proved continuous; indeed, they proceeded at ever more rapid rates.

Responses from skilled workers were equally multiform. Several Sydney unions formed a Building Trades Council in 1886, separate from the Trades and Labour Council. Other unions sought to exclude competition, whether from less skilled males, from females or immigrants, from Britishers as well as coloureds. Coal lumpers in Sydney, for instance, used their union to ward off immigrant workers by striking a five-guinea admission charge. If competitors could not be locked out, a second tactic was to organise the intruders into a union that would keep them subordinate.

The realignments within the labour market did not sever the emerging industry-wide unions from all the practices of the old trade societies. Militant miners favoured a form of individual proprietorship, 'the darg', under which each man was paid for the volume of coal that he (and his offsider) produced. Before the 1890s, craft unions had excluded poorly paid workers who would have been a drain on the welfare benefits accumulated by trade societies. From the 1880s, some edged away from protecting their relief funds to the preservation of hierarchical divisions of labour.

The Shearers' Union moved to defend its standards in 1891 by creating a General Labourers' Union for shed hands who, left to their own devices, might have disrupted the shearers' award, either by capitulation or hot-headedness. In 1894, the parent body incorporated the General Labourers' Union into the Shearers' Union, but then did not look after these less-skilled members. Faced with the disaster of the 1901–02 drought, the pastoralists assisted in the foundation of the Machine Shearers and Shedhand Employees' Union to shear at lower rates. The employers already had challenged conditions of shearing with two technologies which lowered the socially necessary costs of labour-power. Mechanical shears allowed

for less skilled workers, who could weaken the Shearers' Union. The safety bicycle replaced horses, thereby cutting travel times between stations, and eliminating the costs of agistment.

The Flour Millers secretary denounced an attempt by a few members to maintain what he called an 'aristocracy of labour'. Nonetheless, the Millers' Union stood aside from the 1890 maritime dispute, reserving its funds for its own members. Yet, at the same time, it set about recruiting millers of other grains and organising lorry drivers who could supply information about the movement of non-union flour.

Although Melbourne's Trades Hall Council (THC) sought to preside as a house of lords, its executive could not afford to ignore the cost-savings from new building techniques. In the 1880s, the construction of the Trades Hall relied on cement-workers more than on the stonemasons whose achievement of the eight-hour day in 1856 had laid the foundation for the colony's labour movement.

The positioning of women within the labour market also shifted. Of course, traditional female occupations from domestic service to prostitution remained. The amount of outwork increased, as did the number of women in factories. In the early 1880s, employers used females to depress wages. One response by male unionists was to treat women workers as honorary Chinese and set about excluding them. The NSW Typographical Association refused to admit women and tried to force Louisa Lawson to sack the female operatives whom she employed on her feminist paper, the *Dawn* (1888–1905). Alternatively, the tradesmen organised the women into semi-skilled unions, thereby reinforcing a gender segmentation of the labour market. The Melbourne THC formed the Tailoresses' Union in December 1882 at the instigation of the Tailors' Union. The THC executive acted as office-bearers for the new body, and conducted the negotiations on behalf of the women, despite their own militancy. The outcome was different in Sydney in 1891 when tailors lost their thirteen-week

strike over piece rates. David Jones replaced them with women on sewing-machines.

The Labor Party reproduced these patterns of gender containment. Women did much of the fundraising and routine organising, but were given only a limited voice in policy-making. They were also denied parliamentary berths. In reaction, Vida Goldstein contested federal elections in Victoria between 1903 and 1917 as an independent socialist and feminist.

Monopolising capitals did more than draw unmarried women into the labour market. As investments intensified overproduction, women became the targets of the emerging consumptionist culture. Capitals induced needs to absorb their growing surplus product. These changes gave rise to mass marketeering. The sales effort particularised brand labels, created department stores, commercialised amusements and inaugurated a press paid for largely out of advertising. Because marketing replaced price competition, price-fixing proved as essential to the rise of the New Journalism as it was to monopolising. That connection made it harder for the Labor dailies to survive if they criticised the dominant consumer ethic. (A similar fate awaited Labor radio stations.)

For Robin Gollan, 'the fundamental reason for the new unionism was the fact that the working class was becoming conscious of itself as a class'. This account pictured the reorganisation as the result of thinking. An historical materialist would have asked: what changes in the labour process were making the working class self-conscious? In brief, the answer is that the new unionism and political action around the Labor Party were efforts by wage-labourers and small proprietors to resist their proletarianisation. Farmers battled to remain self-sufficient and to avoid commodity production. In blocking expectations of escape, the newest stage of capitalism fuelled attacks on the wages system in general, contributing to the consciousness of a shared class situation.

LABORISM

The construction of 'new unions' and the Labor parties required dedicated activists to manoeuvre around the expanding machinery of the state. They need never have comprehended the connections between the changes in capitalism and their own endeavours. These Laborites saw themselves as struggling for nobler ends or narrower goals, for universal mateship or municipal suffrage. Unionists, poets and editors might not have conceptualised the conflicts propelling capitalism, yet they could be alert to the troubles that followed. By attending to those complaints, a keener account of working-class defences against monopolising can be construed. The initial burst of parliamentary activism, around 1889–93, was one reaction by smaller interests against a variety of capitalist combinations.

Labour's targets were the twin monopolies over finance and land. The expansion of capital was still tied to the quantity of gold in the world's vaults and in circulation. The gold standard fettered production, and benefited the banks more than any capitalists. These conflicts between the 'money power' and manufacturers were being reshaped as bankers took charge of secondary industries in Germany, Japan and the United States. That integration was much less prevalent in the United Kingdom, where 'The City' made its money by lending to governments across the globe. In September 1890 the threatened collapse of a leading London finance house, Baring Brothers, led to a concentration of banking, and to more watchdog powers for the Bank of England.

Campaigners against the 'money power' need never have articulated the significance of the processes to which they were objecting. Their solutions could be as inept as their analyses. Just as anti-Semitism misdirected the blame, a state bank of note-issue facilitated the interests of the bankers and their major clients. Yet the prominence given to the 'money power' in-

dicates some apprehension of the pivotal place being assumed by financiers in the management of monopolising capitals throughout the world. Working-class opposition to the 'money power' thus had hit on a key element in monopolising capitals as bankers and manufacturers joined together to forge finance capital. The only sugar refiner to stand out against CSR was Millaquin, which was backed by the Queensland National Bank.

The following tirade was premature more than hyperbolic:

> The greatest monopoly on earth is the monopoly of money for it includes all the others ... In New South Wales proprietary Banks ... own our gold, coal and silver mines. They own the lands, the cattle, the sheep, and the farms and the vineyards. They control the steam and sailing fleets. Every Department of Commerce, Trade and Production is systematically exploited by the Joint Stock Shylocks and Exchange.

The failure to specify manufacturing business was typical of the rural bias of the Australian economy, and of its labour movement.

Much of the Labor Party's campaigning against the trusts highlighted rural industries. Manufacturing combines were more likely to be attacked if they processed agricultural produce, such as sugar and meat. Combines involved in the financing, transportation or marketing of rural products were similarly pursued. Because Australia's railways were government-owned, Australian farmers did not denounce the railroad octopus that galvanised agrarian socialists in the grain belts of the United States. Far more significant here were the coastal shipping companies, which launched their first all-embracing agreement, the 'Collins pool', in 1902. Four years later, the Newcastle Coal Vend extended its dominance of the trade by agreeing to sell only through the Associated Shipping Companies. The consequent forcing up of the price of coal deepened the resentment already felt against mine-owners and shippers as ruthless employers. The

Labor MP who denounced the 'Money Power', Frank Anstey, had suffered as a seaman.

In Australia, the attacks on the 'money power' were wound around hostility towards the land monopoly. Despite some concentration of holdings, most pastoral properties remained in the hands of wool growers and cattlemen. Monopolising pressures came through financing and marketing, via mortgages and brokers. Across much of Australia after 1856, land had become more readily tradeable as the Torrens title system replaced the Common Law method. Henceforth, the state kept a register of deeds, which replaced personal responsibility for tracking transfers back to the original Crown grant. Land could join human capacities in the catalogue of commodities.

W. G. Spence demanded that the labour movement never rest until it had 'destroyed usury and land monopoly'. The urban land boom in the 1880s and the bust of the 1890s stiffened this determination. Fifty deposit banks closed within two years. More influential still were the agrarian populists who wanted to settle the urban working classes on small holdings. Those reformers denounced financial houses during the 1890s when they foreclosed on rural borrowers. A 1914 Royal Commissioner reported that the nucleus of a meat monopoly existed here because of the United States beef trust. That revelation, coupled with exposures from Upton Sinclair's 1906 novel *The Jungle*, encouraged the Queensland Labor government to set up state butcher shops after 1915.

MASS-MARKET STATE

Since at least the Council of Ten in Venice, governments have been assisting capitals at every stage of their expansion. They do this in three ways: one, by organising their own capitals; two, by disorganising rival capitals and the states that back them; and three, by disorganising labour. In the first two tasks,

the nation-market-state has had to bridge the gaps, social and geographical, between the points of production and the points of sale. Those distances exist, and have widened, because capital expands through exchange. Although trade had preceded flag, by the era of monopolising the state had come to the forefront in commercial conflicts.

In 1896, the recently retired commander of the New South Wales Defence Forces, (Major-General) Edward Hutton, built on the maxim that 'Imperial Defence is only another name for the protection of Imperial Commerce' to propose that Britain's naval supremacy was more than ever essential to 'retain existing markets for our produce and manufactures' in the face of foreign 'challenges'. Hutton had made the integration of the field artillery of the Australian colonies his priority so that those batteries could serve anywhere in the world. Federation was a way of strengthening the Empire, not of breaking away from it. (London had arranged the federation of Canada in 1867 to keep it out of the clutches of the re-United States of America.)

Federating the Australian colonies also responded to domestic economic difficulties as well as military threats. From 1890, labour unrest, bank failures and political shenanigans had scared off British capitalists, who had never limited their investments to the boundaries of the formal Empire. For Australia to regain its attractiveness, its public finances had to be made more secure. That stabilisation included a consolidating of financial houses. Monopolising pressures thus became matters of public policy in the campaign to create one continent for a market. This aspect of Federation produced a loan guarantee scheme when Section 105 of the Constitution offered to underwrite the public debts of the states.

The Labor parties emerged around the same time as compulsory education, compulsory military training, arbitration, Federation, universal suffrage and tariff protection. These institutions marked the remaking of a state powerful enough to

secure returns to capitals, through waging war if need be. Instead of isolating the Labor parties from such developments, investigators should consider the parties as among the outcomes brought into being so that the state could service monopolising.

Discussion about the origins of the Labor parties, therefore, could be recast to ask whether Federation, and not the 1890 strike, consolidated their formation. Colonial Labor parties did not appear at a twinkling, or arrive fully armed. The initial parliamentary groupings were often hardly more than factions in or around the liberals or the protectionists. In some colonies, parties had almost disappeared by the mid-1890s, to be revived for the first decade of the twentieth century. This precariousness meant that parliamentary labour was not in advance of monopolising capitals. Both encountered reversals and perplexities.

Federation brought the colonial bodies together in a continental organisation, and obliged the more advanced state parties to help the other branches to keep going. Moreover, by 1909 Federation had provided the arena to end the parliamentary alliances between the Liberal and the Labor members, resolving the wrangle over tariff policy in favour of the protectionists.

From the 1880s, labour leaders had perceived that the state was enlarging its sphere of action into civil society. In the 1850s, the nascent labour movement had achieved a measure of democratic rights by positioning itself around the parliamentary façade of the state. Their successes during the era of freer trade encouraged them to overestimate the gains they might make from that new expansion. Expectation of further successes carried over to the monopolising phase, in which it was even less appropriate.

The New South Wales government spelt out those limits when it sent troopers and police against striking miners at the Hunter Valley coal-mines in 1888 and 1908, and to protect

non-union sheds in the early 1890s. The labour leadership saw these interventions as aberrant. The state should confine itself to being a neutral umpire. The alternative of recognising that a state raises class violence to an obligatory norm was outside the regular experience of most Australian working people. When the facts of repression could not be denied, the demands of overturning class rule were too demanding to contemplate a plan of action. Instead, labour leaders sought their piece of the state apparatus through representative government and industrial conciliation or arbitration.

In keeping with this approach, the Labor Party's solution to price-rigging by the trusts and combines was for the state to take over the monopolisers:

> The Labor Party views with equanimity the development of the Trust, regarding it as a necessary stage in social evolution, and preparing the way for a more complete systematisation of production and distribution by socialism for the benefit of the whole people.

Labor's critique of capitalism stressed its inefficiency. Overproduction misallocated resources, physical and human. If industry were run by the state, waste would be eliminated.

Capitalists had pursued monopolising to constrain the chaos of their overproduction, which the state also helped to stabilise. By 1878, Engels could report on the interrelationship between the growth of the joint-stock company and an expansion of economic activity by governments:

> The modern state ... is an essentially capitalist machine ... The more productive forces it takes over as its property, the more it becomes the real collective body of all capitalists ... The capitalist relationship is not abolished; it is rather pushed to an extreme.

Engels scorned 'a certain spurious socialism ... which declares that all taking over by the state ... is in itself socialistic'. If that were true, he continued, Napoleon and Bismarck 'would rank among the founders of socialism'. He could have added the Australian Labor Party to his list.

Section 51 (xx) of the Constitution had given the Common-
wealth the power to make laws to control 'foreign corpora-
tions, and trading or financial corporations formed within the
limits of the Commonwealth'. In this spirit, Alfred Deakin's
1903 policy speech promised legislation to deal with trusts and
rings as the principal measure of his government. By 1909, the
High Court had gutted his 1906 Act. Liberals went on saying
that they hoped to regulate the power of the monopolists long
after Labor had determined to nationalise them rather than
break them up. Labor's federal Attorney-General, Billy
Hughes, failed to win constitutional amendments, in 1911 and
1913, to give the Commonwealth unfettered powers over
trade and commerce. These disagreements disrupted the
politics of Lib–Lab coalition.

By defining socialism as an expansion of state activities, La-
bor governments eased several of the processes of capital ex-
pansion to which they thought they were writing 'finis'. In
1909 Hughes declared that his 'complaint against the [coal]
Vend is not that it regulates prices, nor that it regulates output,
but that it does neither effectively'. Trade union negotiators fa-
voured combinations of employers because they were more
easily policed than agreements with scores of smaller bosses.
In federal parliament, Labor members started to be embar-
rassed by attacks on the shipping and tobacco combines with
which unions had struck deals. In 1907, the Labor member for
the coal-mining electorate of Ipswich (Qld) deplored the lack
of a Vend in his state: 'The greatest curse operating against the
miners was unrestrained competition' among the owners.

A more hostile response to monopolies, whether corporate
or state, came from the anarchists. Their appearance in the
1880s can be read as another reaction against monopolising
and militarised government. Although they were a tiny voice,
they perceived that Labor policies would bind the working
classes to the capitalist state. The dispute between the anar-
chists and the Laborites ran to the heart of the matter: would

socialists rearrange the economy along more efficient lines, or would they allow liberating forms of social organisation?

That controversy was mirrored in two widely read books of the 1890s, Edward Bellamy's *Looking Backwards* (1888) and William Morris's *News from Nowhere* (1890). Bellamy predicted that 'The industry and commerce of the country ... [would be] entrusted to a single syndicate representing the people ... The epoch of trusts ... ended in The Great Trust'. Bellamy's dystopia was a centralised consumer's paradise, a universal provider, complete with credit cards and muzak. Reacting against this 'state socialism', the Marxian Morris depicted his future as a localised system of communes, where production would be for use rather than for exchange. Experience has confirmed the force of the criticisms levelled by the anarchists and Morris, if not all their solutions.

The labour movement divided over whether to be drawn further into the web of the nation-market-state. Liberal–Progressivists promised workers more jobs and better wages in exchange for the higher prices from tariff protection. Labour would get frugal comforts. Manufacturers, such as McKay, were guaranteed local sales. That *quid pro quo* did not eventuate. A so-called 'Australian Settlement' has never been much more than a talking-point. (Its recent deployment as an ideological weapon on behalf of monopolisers masquerading as free traders is concocted out of equal portions of historical ignorance and economic illiteracy.)

Between 1902 and 1909, the visiting British union leader Tom Mann encouraged the labour movement away from governmentalism and chauvinism. Cementing his endeavours came the Industrial Workers of the World, who relied on direct action to defeat production speed-ups, and headed the fight against recruitment after monopolising competition erupted into war in 1914.

The Great War exposed the offer of any trade-off between capital and labour as a sham. The 1921 tariff regime doubled as

a revenue device. The alternative of higher income taxes would have shifted the war debts to the rich. After BHP had locked out its miners for eighteen months, the company got massive tariffs. Its retiring managing-director then launched the Single-Purpose League, supported by H. V. McKay, to abolish compulsory arbitration. In 1924, BHP's new managing-director declared that wage-cuts were preferable to tariffs.

During the 1920s, a miniscule Communist Party attempted to guide unions away from racism, while denouncing Labor's class collaboration, notably around conciliation and arbitration. The state contained these challenges, though not without passing triumphs for the militants. Their battles and victories represented the making of an Australian proletarian consciousness, distinct from the petit-bourgeois mentality of individual rural escape and ethnic exclusiveness.

RACISM

In treating racism as the lynchpin of Australian nationalism, *A New Britannia* sought to distinguish the fear of economic competition from other sources of prejudice, including sexual ones. White Australia was, indeed, more than a matter of wages. Subsequent researchers have enriched this interpretation. Nonetheless, the substance and success of racial politics here are yet to be examined in the context of monopolising capitals.

Only from that linkage will we understand how workers came to believe that White Australia could prevent their reduction to a class of slaves or a race of helots. Pursuit of that explanation requires the reinstatement of an economic dimension to White Australia. That component went beyond fear of low-waged coolies. Such particulars were mediated through the clamour for reforms aimed at achieving a just and equal society.

In Queensland, for example, the working class opposed the employment of Pacific Islanders in the sugar industry partly because the terms of indenture prevented bonded labourers from joining trade unions. That impediment threatened the unionists' ideal of a free and equal society. The founding editor of the *Bulletin* , J. F. Archibald, linked his anti-Chinese views to three other political matters that he opposed: the British Empire, the convict system, and capital or corporal punishments. He saw attempts to impose coolie labourers on Australia as a continuation of the Empire's frustration of democracy. The appeal of these non-financial dimensions became clearer because support for White Australia lost none of its intensity after the coloured races had been sent packing.

While Archibald's *Bulletin* championed 'Australia for the White Man', his imperialist opponents shared most of his assumptions about the significance of race for liberty. From the 1890s, the British Empire strove to improve its efficiency, economic and human, in the face of heightened international rivalries. These threats refurbished the ideology of racism. Moreover, the drive to efficiency renovated several arguments that would link the state to racialist thinking. After the exploitation of African labour locally took over from its export as slaves, ethnography moved towards social anthropology. Scientists made cultural differences not only as telling as physical characteristics but as serviceable to profit-making. In the medical realm, the analysis of character and personality in terms of the size and shape of the cranium lost support to eugenics, which, in turn, strengthened a concern with masculine debility, a quack's term for the evils of masturbation. Contraception and abortion were either condemned as race suicide or defended as a rational allocation of resources in planned parenthood, producing fewer but stronger children. The passion to prevent miscegenation and to limit contagious diseases contributed to locking Aborigines on reserves, and then to taking away their mixed-race children. Even as a racial program,

White Australia could not be confined to immigration; it also strove to breed out Indigenous colour.

'White Australia' was the label that liberal elements in the bourgeoisie gave to the range of policies known in the United States as Progressivism and in Britain as National Efficiency. A 1920 basic-wage judgement in South Australia restated the race question as a call for 'an efficient, patriotic and broad-minded Australian manhood'. A year later, the left-leaning novelist Vance Palmer wrote:

> I do not believe that sacrifice of the White Australia ideal would be a good thing. I believe it would be the betrayal of a fine purpose, either through fear, false sentiment, or mere lack of will. The fact that Australia has held to this ideal for over a generation, in spite of economic and even military pressure, shows that there is something more than foolish prejudice at the back of it. It is, in fact, our chief assertion of character, and, if it passes, Australia will be a mere Tom Tiddler's ground.

Palmer's vision elaborated the first clause of the Labor Party's 1905 federal objective calling for 'the cultivation of a national sentiment based on the maintenance of racial purity and the development in Australia of an enlightened and self-reliant community'. Racial purity was seen as a highway to enlightenment, not the path of prejudice.

In 1924, the social philosopher and small-l liberal politician Frederic Eggleston defended White Australia

> as desirable and necessary if the ideals and methods of life which we at present cherish are to be maintained ... The White Australia policy is indeed the formula which the Australian people have framed as the only solution to a number of very complex problems which affect their security and welfare.

As well as dealing with these social questions, White Australia appealed because it expressed a code of civic morality brimming with affirmative values. It offered far more than a rejection of other peoples. In an interaction of the personal with the public, White Australia epitomised ethical aspira-

tions, contributing to its proponents' self-esteem. By exalting the white man, Australian males promoted a desirable social type which every 'white man', that is, a pure soul, should emulate.

That such pronouncements now strike us as repulsive rather than idealistic should not blind us to how they were seen by many Australians as recently as 1960. What remains to be explored is how 'racial purity' became the heart of an ideal that embraced an 'enlightened' and 'self-reliant' community in the era of monopolising.

Racism's appeal came from the answers it offered to enigmas rising from weaknesses in one's own race. The mixing of biology with sociology, known as eugenics, came in two forms, not always mutually exclusive. Before Hitler gave eugenics a bad name, improvements in the genotype had been linked to the promotion of human welfare. Positive eugenicists wanted to improve the breeding stock through social regeneration. They advocated eliminating the ignorance and the physical deprivation that allowed diseases such as tuberculosis to spread. Better diet, improved housing, maternity benefits, town planning, family planning and the elimination of contagious diseases wrapped positive eugenics around state socialism.

By contrast, negative eugenicists demanded compulsory sterilisations and the breeding out of the unfit, a category which could range from habitual criminals to the unemployed. Negative eugenicists fretted over the relative breeding rates of the working class and the middle class. The fecundity of the former had to be contained as one element in the bourgeois revolt against the masses.

Further understanding of Australian racism requires an awareness of the shifts in what people have understood to be a race. Around the turn of the twentieth century, 'race' was used for any cultural-linguistic grouping. (Groups that once were labelled 'races' now self-identify as ethnicities.) Hence, there

could be an Irish race, or the Celtic race, or the Anglo-Celtic race, depending on the politics and location of the speaker. For example, Eggleston wrote of '[t]he two most gifted races in Europe — Anglo-Saxon and Celt'. This definition of race grew out of a belief that food transmitted elements from the soil into the blood which, in turn, inscribed common spiritual characteristics.

The recognition that only physical characteristics can be inherited, and that they are mixed through genes, has not put an end to sanguinary metaphors, which thrive in politics as much as poetry. In 1984, when Geoffrey Blainey worried that too many Asians were coming, he invoked the 'crimson thread' of kinship, beloved of nineteenth-century imperialists. The acknowledgment of genes and DNA is no guarantee against prejudice. The corporatisation of genetics has produced a determinism as phony as phrenology.

Yet we do inhabit a different configuration of science and prejudice. Moreover, prejudices now operate within a different global order of politics and economics. Melbourne's European cabinet-makers of the 1880s feared price competition from Chinese workers in the next lane. Today, that trade has been all but abolished by prefabricated built-ins, the export of capital and the import of furniture. Long before the 2001 elections, both major parties had adopted free-market liberalism on economic and social matters. In the process, the Keating ALP government detached itself from the social liberalism that the Labor Party had embraced in its technocratic phase. A similar fate befell small-l liberals in a big-C conservative Coalition government. In 1988, Phillip Ruddock had crossed the floor to endorse non-discriminatory immigration, voting against John Howard.

Any perception of the present as history will be blurred by dredging up comparable cases from the 1880s or the 1900s. The mistreatment of the *Tampa* asylum seekers was not a re-run of White Australia debates at the moment of Federation.

For a start, in 2001 Australians accepted around 10 000 refugees. None of these settlers would have been allowed to pass the 1902 Dictation Test. In addition, a minimum of 20 per cent of those polled in 2001 opposed the government over excluding the boats and over the compulsory detention of those who arrived. That fraction compared with almost no one's having been against total exclusion in 1901. The composition of the Australian people had been transformed even more. Post-war immigration from across Europe had stripped the boast of being '98 per cent British' of even numerical sense. Non-discriminatory immigration had meant that, by 1999, 5 per cent of settler Australians were of non-European heritage, compared with 1 percent in 1911.

Drawing parallels with the past is pauper's history. Bob Carr's inflaming of ethnic resentments cannot be explained by chronicling manipulations of prejudice by previous Labor premiers such as Jack Lang. The need to be alert to changing circumstances applies to the analysis of every element in Laborism.

FROM LABOR TO ALP

It is one thing to say that the Labor Party has never been socialist, and another to explain why it has not been so at each period in its existence. If *A New Britannia* was wrong to trace the Labor Party from the 1890s back to the convicts, thereby ignoring both the rise and decline of freer trade, and the emergence of monopolising capitals, it is equally misleading to accept an unbroken trajectory from around 1890 up to the present day. Various forms of political life have operated under the brand of 'Labor'. My 1972 essay, 'Glory without Power', on the Australian Labor Party did little more than extend the anecdotalism of the chapter on 'Laborites' past 1920.

Five stages in the Party's long century can be identified: (1).

tactical economism, (2). proletarian challenge, (3). developmentalism with welfare, (4). technocratic, and (5). globalising.

1. *Tactical economism*

Wages, hours and jobs were the earliest priorities, with less regard for welfare programs. The other concerns were defence, restrictive immigration and breaking up the estates. This is the Labor Party pictured in Chapter 17.

2. *Proletarian challenge*

Proletarian challenges erupted around the splits of 1916–17, for which conscription for overseas military service was only the proximate cause. The impetus was the intensification of class conflict, noted above, with fewer jobs and soaring prices. The outcome was muddied by the ascendancy of Irish Catholics over the ALP machine, which drove away the more militant Protestant workers. The Reds versus the Micks would divide the labour movement into the 1970s.

With the Labor Party out of office federally for almost twenty-five years, state-based concerns became uppermost, which emphasised rural issues. Divisions in the labour movement deepened as Labor governments could not realise the competing needs of working people. From its inception in the 1890s, the Party had been a tug-of-war between those who were already propertiless and the self-employed seeking to avoid that condition. Should the Party control food prices for urban workers or pursue higher returns for small farmers? Despite the emergence of Country Parties, Labor's electoral successes still depended on rural labourers and smallholders. The exception was Victoria, where the Labor Party did deals with a radical Country Party.

3. *Welfare developmentalism*

The two-year Scullin interregnum at the onset of the 1930s depression presided over 10–20 per cent wage cuts as it hoped to protect jobs. To that end, the Labor Party raised tariffs, which also managed the balance-of-payments crisis. The 'Glory without Power' essay confined itself to exposing the timidity and betrayals by Labor governments during the crisis. That catalogue of cravenness missed a consequent reconfiguration of the Party's outlook. Although the new depression intensified the calls on Labor politicians to create jobs and on unions to defend real wages, both parliamentarians and officials came to appreciate that a wage-based route to progress would be irrelevant if unemployment again went over 30 per cent. The labour movement henceforth expounded a welfare model of social reforms, such as a national health service, within a program of national development to ensure almost full employment.

Chifley promoted this approach as post-war reconstruction, although the war had wrought no destruction, rather the reverse. Supplying the US military had force-fed industrialisation. Any 'reconstruction' was to capitalism in order to prevent its relapse into depression, as was widely expected until the early 1950s. This 1940s version of *étatisme* is associated with the Snowy Mountains Scheme, mass immigration and General Motors–Holden. These projects required a centralising of power towards Canberra, a trend which Menzies continued while refusing to integrate the planning instruments. Recollections of the Chifley years have been coloured by the banks' provoking him to attempt their nationalisation so that he could ensure the funds for his nation-building.

Arthur Calwell delivered a late hurrah of Labor's vision splendid in 1963 when his *Labor's Role in Modern Society* proposed two new ministries: one to develop Northern Australia and a second to apply science to tropical agriculture. He echoed the 1890s attacks on bankers and monopoly capitalists.

His successor, E. G. Whitlam, took up some of this developmentalism, spectacularly, in the 1975 efforts to borrow $4 billion to fund a continental energy system through a proposed Petroleum and Minerals Authority. He had less to say against capitals of any size.

Meanwhile, the Democratic Labor Party, which had fallen out from the 1955–57 splits, gathered up several of the strands from the old Laborism. Santamaria's mouthpiece, *Newsweekly*, revived the fear of Asian hordes to inflame anti-communism: 'If it is not Japan, it will be China, and if it is not China, it will be somebody else'. His National Catholic Rural Movement pursued the smallholder solution to the evils of urban capitalism. A new generation of Catholics, however, had no intention of becoming priest-ridden peasants. They were joining the white-collar strata — teachers, public servants and accountants — and moving out of their parents' suburbs, if not into the arms of the Protestant Liberal Party. The DLP was one staging post for the broader social advance that underpinned Whitlamism.

4. *Technocratic*

Laborism, also known as Whitlamism, took charge from the later 1960s. In a review of *A New Britannia*, Kelvin Rowley pointed out that the book had dealt with what he called the 'paleo-Laborism' of Calwell's generation. Its strictures against racism, for example, did not apply to the new Labor leaders, Cairns, Dunstan, Hawke and Whitlam. Rowley's criticism initiated the technocratic Laborism project, which explored how, from the 1960s, 'paleo-Laborism' had been replaced by a technocratic version.

The social base of the latter was among the intellectually trained who were needed by the ballooning services sector. These changes were being led by the emergence of transnational corporations and a third industrial revolution, this one

built around computers. Harold Wilson had won the 1964 UK election by campaigning for socialism as the white heat of technology. Hawke's 1969 elevation to the presidency of the ACTU consolidated this redirection, as did his bringing together of the white- and blue-collar unions. The tertiary sector was displacing the manufacturing sector just as manufacturing had replaced agriculture. Many more women remained in the workforce, and for longer. By the early 1970s, the restructuring of labour markets was detaching the Labor Party from of its turn-of-the-century roots among small farmers, rural labourers and even the manufacturing workforce.

From late 1974, the third Whitlam government had to cope with the end of the 'trough in unemployment'. Instead of being able to finance his welfare programs from bracket creep in income taxes, Whitlam careered his mandate into a fiscal crisis of the state, which affected budgets in comparable countries. Early in 1976 Donald Horne announced the death of a country that had been floating on luck when it had needed sound managers. Horne's conversion from radical tory to Whitlamite epitomised how technocrats had replaced Edwardian second-raters such as Menzies.

While the Labor Party flourished by remaking itself to accord with the affluence of the long boom, a more proletarian organisation was losing its sway over trade union struggles. From the late 1930s, the Communist Party had provided the labour movement with what can be called a strategic economism. The approach was less than revolutionary but went beyond Labor's initial tactical economism which had been limited to a search for wage rises, shorter hours and better conditions. By contrast, the Communists took for granted that a fair day's wage could not prevent the expropriation of the surplus value added by the workers. Officials in the metal and building trades planned patterns of industrial conflicts around securing cost-of-living increases to a basic wage, with margins for skills. Over-the-award payments were a bo-

nus for shop-floor militancy. Mechanisation of the labour process rendered these intricacies irrelevant. The Communists' loss of direction had begun from an earlier restructuring of labour markets as coal-mining and the maritime trades were delaboured from the 1950s. Then the building trades were mechanised in the late 1960s. The employers convinced the Conciliation and Arbitration Commission to adopt a Total Wage in late 1967.

The Communist Party itself started to fall apart from 1963 in the first of two splits. Some of its leaders then adopted a technocratic vision of their own, tying socialism to cybernetics in the manner of the pre-1968 Czech Academy of Sciences. Meanwhile, those loyal to Moscow were stuck in a practice of industrial relations which the expansion of capital was rendering redundant, along with many union members.

From the 1970s, oligopolistic corporations again were driven to better their positions in regard both to labour and each other. The consequent changes to the controls over labour-time upended the unions and the ALP. The disintegration of the Communist Party was depriving the labour movement of its sheet anchor.

The US automakers convinced the Fraser government to rewrite the tariff regimes to integrate production around the globe. The World Car would source several parts overseas before assembling them locally, in exchange for export credits. Now, restructuring of the labour market drove into the heart of the metal unions, where the Communist strategists were strongest. The 1982 recession knocked the union and the Party officials for six.

5. *Globalising Labor*

Globalising Labor since the 1980s derived from these assaults on labour processes and hence on the labour movement. Because a global reach has been normal for capital since the fif-

teenth century, the lumping of every kind of transnational business in every era under a single rubric, whether imperialism or globalisation, is a guarantee of confusion. Moreover, the word 'globalisation' has given monopolising capitals (Imperialism) a public relations gloss by portraying it as the outcome of ineluctable market forces rather than as an imposition by corporations backed by their respective nation-market-states. The procedures for the expanding of capital that have become known as 'globalisation' are but the latest stage within monopolising.

Reeling from job losses in the 1982 recession, the Left unions crafted the first Accord with the Labor Party to secure a social wage, notably through Medicare. The strategic economism resurfaced in the remnant Communist Party leadership around Laurie Carmichael from the Metal Workers Union when he sprang *Australia Reconstructed* and Strategic Unionism on the 1987 ACTU Congress. However, policies promoted to secure the power of employees at their workplaces and throughout society became devices for managing redundancies. The missing link was state power. Far from the Accords being class collaboration, they were capitulation by the labour movement. The employers failed to invest in local jobs. The ALP under Hawke knew better than to try to make them do so.

The latest global expansion of capital required agents of influence within the labour movement. The recognition of human agency by historical materialists will sag into a new round of anecdotalism unless the actors are connected to the structured dynamics of capital. From the 1950s, US Labor attachés had arranged scholarships to Harvard for the Labor Right to imbibe managerial prerogatives and Cold War imperatives. The conversion of Australian labour leaders to the rule of the market was a conspiracy only in the sense of being one more victory for the organisation-and-methods taught at US business schools.

R. J. Hawke's 1980s performance on behalf of the US corporate-state grew out of Labor's technocratic phase. He had been weaned from the larrikin contempt for employers as second-raters that he had displayed as ACTU advocate before the Arbitration Commission. In Melbourne's Sundowner Motel in March 1969, Hawke got the nod from the US Labor attaché Emil Lindahl to stand for the ACTU presidency. The State Department feared that the right-wing contender, ACTU secretary Harold Souter, would never be able to manage the militancy that had begun fifteen months earlier around the Total Wage decision, before feeding off the revolutionary year of 1968 across the globe. This upsurge led on to the O'Shea strikes in May, two months before Hawke's election. In 1976, as negotiator for the ACTU, Hawke struck up a special golfing relationship with George Shultz, then General Counsel for the Bechtel, the corporation that 'engineered the world'. Shultz had been US Secretary of Labor and then of Treasury (1969–74), and would serve as Secretary of State from 1982 to 1988, the early years of Hawke's prime ministership.

The case of Keating is simpler because he never comprehended the Treasury scripts that he parroted. The failure of the J-curve to turn upwards led to his on-air gaffe in May 1986 about Australia becoming a Banana Republic. He did glimpse, however, what Hawke already knew when Salomon Brothers phoned on 25 July that year to advise that they could not support the Australian dollar if Keating persisted with a 15 per cent withholding tax. He abandoned the proposal. Keating's endorsement of deregulating the financial sector from 1983 cannot be explained in terms of Labor heritage. On the contrary, his mentor, Jack Lang, had been highly suspicious of the banks, especially of their international behaviour. From the 1983 floating of the dollar to the 1991 partial-sale of the people's bank, Keating broke from Lang's paleo-Laborism, and his racism. (What Keating could never shed was the

head-kicking style of the NSW Labor Right, which fouled his calls for a republic and reconciliation.)

Keating stumbled through lines from the brightest and best among Australian economics graduates whose scholarships to the United States had confirmed a faith in free-trade nostrums as if they were self-evident and universal truths instead of beneficial merely to the more powerful nation-market-states, primarily the United States. These scholars returned to indoctrinate generations of undergraduates, to sell off government agencies, and to downsize corporations. More recently, Mark Latham has served as a glove-puppet for the misnamed Centre for Independent Studies, an ultra-Right Sydney think-tank funded by the likes of Hugh Morgan from Western Mining Corp.

The propagandists for globalisation alleged that the nation-market-states were losing their relevance. If true, their contraction would have been a blow to Laborism as governmentalism. But the claim was partial and partisan. Nation-market-states were as active as ever against each other, and against labour. The state still has to attempt for capital what its managers cannot achieve through their corporations. The disruption of labour now involves re-atomising the working class through enterprise bargaining or, more radically, through individual employment contracts.

The future of labour remains bound to the needs of capital. Hence, to discern the future of the ALP means tracking what oligopolies must do next in order to expand. Their profit rates must be lifted through further restructurings of the labour market. Since the late 1970s, labour-times have been globalised through casualisation, plant relocations, feminisation, flexibility, total quality management and downsizing. Any one of these disciplines may become less prominent. If so, its place will be taken by workplace practices and state policies even more inimical to any civilising of global capital. Opposition to its rule is being regenerated around environmental,

No-Global and anti-war movements, buttressed by a rebuilding of unions towards defiance.

In the 1890s, the Labor Party began as a reaction against monopolising capitals. Since the 1980s, it has been riding shot-gun on their juggernaut. The Australian Labor Party was never more than nominally socialist. The protracted campaigns to dilute and to delete its socialist objective have been symbolic politics. Today, the Party does not merit even the title of 'labor'. It's time for activists and analysts to jettison that term. The organisation should be referred to only by its initials, as no more than 'the ALP'. The title 'labor' has a finer past and deserves a nobler future than to be associated with a machine that has denied it, not thrice, but seven times seven.

Select Bibliography

As a work of re-interpretation, *A New Britannia* relies on secondary sources. Because I have constructed an argument out of them, the works listed should not be seen as corroborating my conclusions; rather they are expressions of my indebtedness.

At times, primary sources were consulted, the principal ones being:

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Index