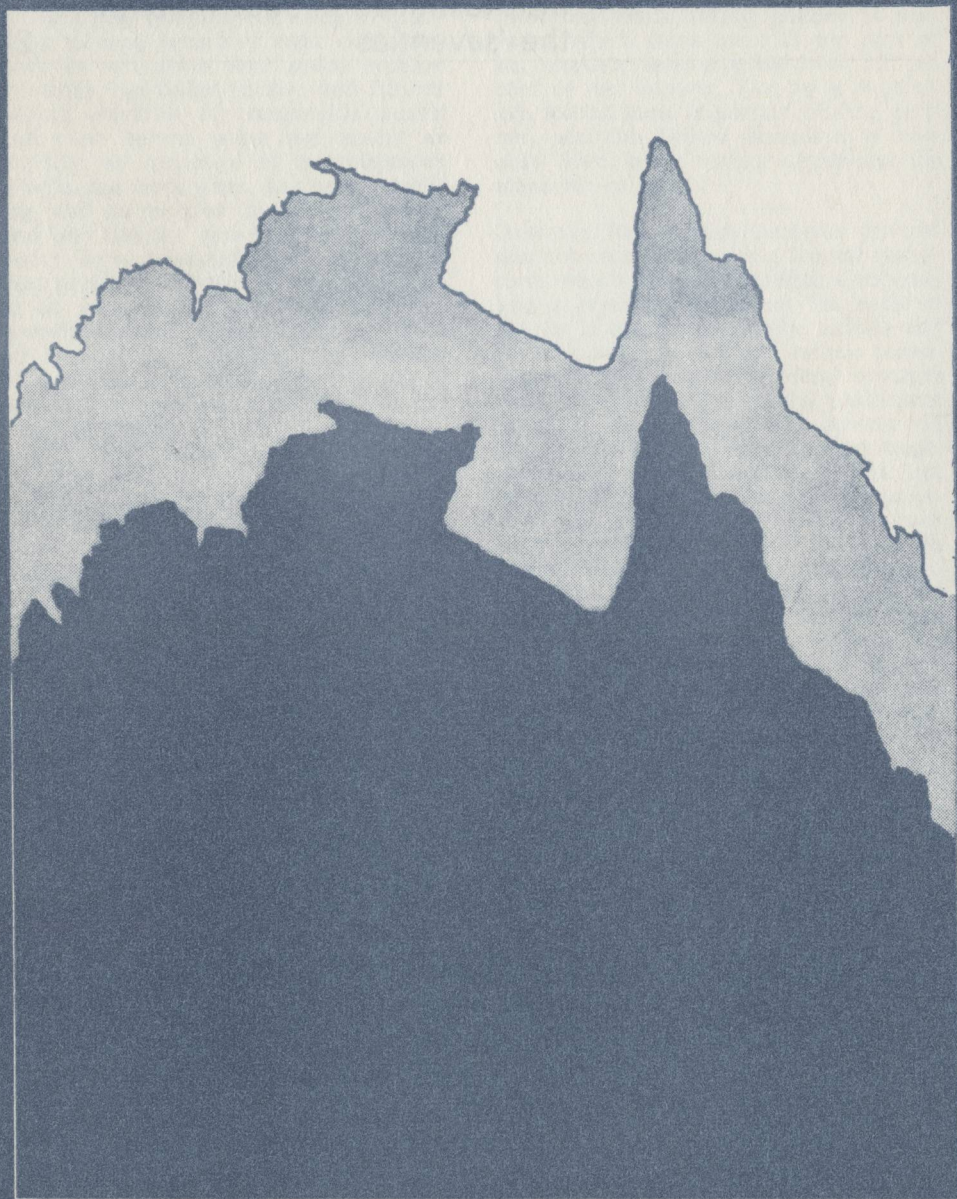


Australian labour: a time of challenge

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1. introduction

Conservative forces have dominated Australian politics from 1949 to the present day. In that time the economy has expanded vigorously, and on a *per capita* basis Australia has become one of the richest countries in the world; yet it enters the 'seventies with some seriously disturbing features, reflecting in many ways its long period of right wing control. In education and social welfare Australia has fallen further and further behind countries of comparable wealth and even behind some not nearly as wealthy; its treatment of its indigenous people, the Aborigines, has been appalling, and its racialist immigration policy and its fiercely pro-American foreign policy have alienated many throughout that part of Asia with whom its future is so inextricably bound. It has frequently rejected opportunities to voice an independent opinion in foreign affairs, when such an opinion might have had at least a marginal influence on the trend of events.

factual background

Australia is a country of about 12.5 million people, having reached that number from its population of 7.5 million in 1947 due to a high level of immigration as well as by natural increase. It is perhaps the most highly urbanised country of its size, in the world, with 83 per cent of its population living in towns. Indeed only 8 per cent of the labour force is employed in rural industries. Yet there are only nine urban centres of more than 100,000 people, while the cities of Sydney and Melbourne account for over 5 million people between them. The country is so vast (2,967,909 square miles) that it has a population density of less than five people to the square mile, indeed more than half of Australia is so arid as to be uninhabitable. In terms of *per capita* gross national product, Australia ranks behind only the US, Sweden, Switzerland, Canada and France, with \$2070 (us) per head. The economy follows the familiar mixed capitalistic model with public ownership of essential service industries, but little else. There is a very high level of con-

centration of control in Australian industry. In 32 industries the four largest firms employ at least 50 per cent of all workers in that industry. In 14 of these 32 industries, one company produces all the output and of the 32, only two are wholly Australian owned. Australia's most important trading partner is now Japan which takes over 25 per cent of her exports and supplies over 12 per cent of her imports. The US is Australia's second most important trading partner, and the United Kingdom is now only third, after having dominated the scene for so long.

Australia has a fairly complex government structure. There is a federal parliament which sits in the capital, Canberra, and a separate parliament for each of the six states, sitting in the capital city of each state. Under the written constitution of 1901, when the federal structure was first adopted, the federal parliament is given certain legislative powers on such matters as defence foreign trade, and immigration and the powers not specifically given to the federal parliament are left to the parliaments in each of the states (Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria, Tasmania, South Australia and Western Australia—the capital territory of Canberra and the Northern Territories are not represented in the Senate, although they each have a member in the House of Representatives. It is interesting that Canberra, the well planned, unindustrialised capital, largely populated by civil servants, is predominantly a pro-Labour city. In many respects it is in a similar position to that occupied in the US by Washington). Where powers are held by the federal parliament and the state parliaments, concurrently, then federal legislation within those powers has priority over any conflicting state legislation. The constitution has been strictly and literally interpreted by the high court of Australia, the supreme judicial body, and this has proved a stumbling block for federal parliaments on several occasions. The constitution can be amended but the procedure requires a majority vote of the electorate in the whole country and a majority in at least four of the six states as well. Only

five proposals to change the constitution have succeeded in 26 attempts since 1901. Nevertheless the federal parliament has been able to extend its powers *vis-a-vis* the state parliaments, indirectly, most notably in the field of income taxation which it took over completely from the states in 1942, the states deriving revenue from federal grants and also from their own indirect taxes.

The federal parliament consists of an upper house, the Senate, which has ten senators from each state for six years and half retiring every three years. It was originally conceived as a states rights house but it in fact divides along party lines and has, for many years, been of little importance except as an occasional nuisance to the government of the day. However, it has been of growing significance since the government lost control of it in 1964 and it could be a serious problem for a Labour government in the 'seventies. The lower house, the House of Representatives, consists of 125 members elected for constituencies with roughly equal electorates. Elections for this house are held every three years or more frequently if the government falls or seeks a larger majority; the preferential voting system is used for the House of Representatives elections, while the proportional system is used for elections to the Senate. (Many political commentators feel that a three year term of office is too short a period now that government is becoming so complicated.)

The Australian parliamentary system and the separation of powers closely follow the British model with the cabinet, made up of the leading members of the governing party or parties who are also members of parliament, wielding the executive power. The most important difference between the British and Australian systems is that Australia has a written constitution and the powers of the federal parliament are thereby limited. The state parliaments are organised along similar lines to the federal parliament with an upper and a lower house in each state except for the unicameral Queensland. Upper houses are conservative strongholds in most states, since

they are all elected on a restricted franchise, except for Victoria where a universal franchise has operated since 1950. These can present problems for Labour governments in the states, but do not usually bring such a government down. Elections for state parliaments are held every three years except for Tasmania where a five year term applies. Thus the Australian voter will usually have to vote at least twice every three years for state and federal elections and, in addition, occasionally in a referendum as well. State and federal politics overlap and the popularity of a state government may affect voting patterns in that state in federal elections, and *vice versa*. Severe strain is put upon this cumbersome federal system by the competition among the states for federal finance. This has caused a large degree of animosity between state and federal politicians of the same party. The desirability of the federal structure has often been questioned and its collapse frequently predicted, but it seems likely to stagger on for some time.

The constitution gives specific legislative powers to the federal government, and also has a very restrictive section (number 92), which requires freedom of trade and commerce between the states, the federal parliament can be and indeed has been in the position of seeing its legislation declared constitutionally invalid by the high court. This happened twice to the ALP government of 1941 to 1949, when its laws nationalising domestic airlines and banking were declared constitutionally invalid because they breached section 92. For constitutional reasons alone, nationalisation is not a practical policy for the ALP, it is very much a dead issue in Australian politics, and an ALP government in the 'seventies would not implement socialist policies in the traditional sense of socialising the means of production, distribution and exchange. However, even within the restrictive constitutional framework, a Labour government still has considerable room to achieve its objectives and the 1 per cent swing needed to bring them to power at the next election.

2. the political climate

There are two major parties, the Australian Labour Party (ALP) and the Liberal Party; and two minor but highly important parties, the Country Party and the Democratic Labour Party (DLP). The ALP, the only left wing party, is the oldest of the parties, dating from the 1890s. Australia's party political history has been one of Labour against non-Labour parties. The Country Party was formed in 1923 and the Liberal Party in 1945 after the disintegration of the previous leading conservative party, the United Australia Party. The Liberal Party and the Country Party have governed Australia in coalition since 1949. The ALP has been in power for only 16 years since 1901, its most recent spell being from 1941 to 1949. It can be broadly compared with the British Labour Party in its inspiration, sources of support and objectives. It has the support largely of the lower income groups but, like all modern parties, it must get a substantial proportion of the middle income vote in order to win power. It was founded and is largely financed by trade unions. Like all Australian parties it is organised basically at a state level, with state delegates attending the biennial federal conference, which is the governing body of the party. Between conferences the federal executive, also primarily composed of state delegates, is the governing body. The history of the ALP is largely one of splits and quarrels, the most important being in 1955, when the party was split and the DLP was formed. The party has never been as well organised as its rivals, indeed until 1963 it even lacked a national headquarters and a permanent professional secretariat, and it still needs adequate research assistance. It has traditionally lacked the intellectual stimulus which the British Labour Party has had from various sources, including the Fabian Society; and has shown a certain resentment and mistrust of intellectuals.

The Liberal Party is, contrary to its name, a *conservative* party. It is the party of anti-socialism, free enterprise, vigorous anti-communism and of the middle and upper income groups. It is dependent on big business for funds and

has been successful in attracting middle income voters. Yet it has never received more than 40 per cent of the vote and has never enjoyed a majority in the House of Representatives in its own right. It has always been dependent on the Country Party in order to form a government.

The Country Party is also a conservative party and has enjoyed influence out of all proportion to its electoral support, which has not, since 1949, reached 10 per cent of the total vote in any election for the lower house. Nevertheless it has usually had about 16 per cent of the seats in that house and held about a quarter of the portfolios in the government. It has used its minority position in the coalition government to achieve a decisive voice on rural matters and on some other matters as well. Its support is limited to country areas but by virtue of the concentration of its vote it has been able to achieve a higher proportion of seats than votes, while electorates in rural constituencies are usually smaller and this has favoured them still further.

The Country Party has to a large extent based its policies on the protection of the small farmers, although it has attempted to broaden its base in recent years, moreover the Liberal Party, and particularly the ALP, have recently been making more determined attempts to win the farmers' vote. The declining importance of primary products in Australian exports and the continued movement of the population to the cities indicate that the Country Party will dwindle, particularly with the retirement in January 1971, of its forceful leader, Sir John McEwen.

The Democratic Labour Party (DLP) has never been able to win a seat in the House of Representatives but, by giving the Liberal Party its preferences under the preferential voting system, it has been of crucial importance in shaping Australian politics since its formation in 1955. The split with the ALP was over attitudes towards communism inside and outside Australia, but sectarianism was also involved. The Catholic Social Action Movement, or "movement" as it was generally called, largely made up of Roman

Catholics (who now exceed 27 per cent of the population), operated from the 1940s onwards to combat the influence of communists in the trade union movement. The influence of "the movement" in the ALP, particularly in Victoria, grew until, in 1955, the federal executive of the ALP intervened and re-organised the Victorian branch of the party. Those members of the ALP who supported "the movement", including some members of the House of Representatives, left the ALP and ultimately formed the DLP. At that time they wanted to use Australian troops in the Malayan emergency, to strengthen the US alliance and did not want recognition of Communist China, and these policies were the reverse of ALP policy. They were also highly critical of the ALP leadership, which had successfully fought the attempt of the conservative government to ban the Communist Party in Australia. These fundamental differences were sufficient to split the party at that time, but it has been suggested that had the ALP leadership been different, then the split could have been avoided. An extension of this argument is that the ALP and the DLP will eventually effect a reconciliation since the split owes as much to personality clashes as to differences over policy; however, it is interesting to note that the fundamental differences on foreign policy have continued and even grown during the 'sixties, as party attitudes have polarized over the Vietnam war. For as long as the DLP maintains its ferocious anti-communist line on foreign affairs, differences of policy will probably ensure perpetuation of the split between the parties. On domestic issues, the DLP is closer to the ALP than it is to the conservative parties, whereas in foreign affairs it has maintained a position somewhat to the right of the conservative government.

Since its inception the DLP has been effective as a veto party in preventing the ALP winning a general election. The DLP vote at the 1958 election was 9.6 per cent, greater in fact than that of the Country Party, but has since fallen in House of Representatives elections to a

low of 6.0 per cent in 1969. Its vote, however, has been too evenly spread throughout the electorate to enable it to win a seat, although it almost certainly prevented the ALP winning the elections of 1961 and 1969 and it is possible that it was also a factor of some importance in the 1958 and 1963 elections. By incessantly harping on the communist threat, the DLP has helped to build up the extreme right wing McCarthyist climate that has existed throughout the 'sixties in foreign policy discussion in Australia. It has proposed that Australia should drastically increase defence spending and also acquire nuclear weapons. On occasion the DLP has threatened to withdraw its support for the Liberal-Country Party government, unless a more hawkish attitude was adopted on foreign policy. This was most apparent prior to the 1969 election when DLP threats were a factor in producing a government promise to build a naval base in Western Australia and also calculated expressions of fear by the government about Russian naval activity in the Indian Ocean.

The decline in the DLP's share of the vote may be expected to continue in House of Representatives elections in the 'seventies, for there were signs at the 1969 election that the electorate can no longer be intimidated by McCarthyist tactics. Further, the change of leadership in the ALP has been significant, since it is difficult to portray Gough Whitlam who took over the leadership in 1967, as a prisoner of the extreme left. The DLP has been more successful, however, in elections to the Senate because the proportional voting system is used on these occasions. In 1958 it captured one seat, in 1964 it gained a second, in 1967 a third and a fourth, and in 1970 a fifth. As the Senate is very evenly divided between the parties, the DLP has held the balance of power in that body since 1964. It has generally voted with the government, although occasionally it has embarrassed the government without actually bringing it down. Indeed the Senate has been an important source of DLP influence over the policy decisions of the Liberal government in Australia.

The House of Representatives was dissolved after a two year term in 1963 and since then elections to the Senate have been out of step with elections to the House of Representatives, the former having been held in 1964, 1967 and 1970, and the latter in 1963, 1966 and 1969. This has resulted in confusing voting patterns in elections to the Senate, with usually the vote of the major parties declining and the vote of the DLP and independent candidates increasing. This was most startlingly shown in 1970 when the combined Liberal-Country Party vote was only 38 per cent (an all time low), the ALP vote was 43 per cent and the vote for the DLP was 11 per cent (an all time high), with other candidates receiving 18 per cent of the vote.

Two more independent candidates were elected to the Senate to join the solitary independent member already there. These results must, however, be treated with caution, for two reasons. First, in the Senate election of 1970 it was impossible to change the government and therefore, in the short run, the results would have no effect, so temporarily many voters felt free to swing away from the major parties. Secondly, as the proportional voting system is used for the Senate and the preferential system for elections to the House of Representatives, DLP and independent candidates have a much greater chance of being elected to the Senate and so people are more inclined to vote for them, whereas such votes are largely wasted in elections to the House of Representatives, except in constituencies where their second preferences are important.

PERCENTAGE OF FORMAL FIRST PREFERENCE VOTES, ELECTIONS FOR THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, 1955 TO 1969 BY PARTY:

	1955	1958	1961	1963	1966	1969
Liberal	39.7	37.2	33.6	37.1	40.1	34.8
Country	7.9	9.3	8.5	8.9	9.9	8.6
ALP	44.6	42.8	47.9	45.5	40.0	47.0
DLP	5.2	9.6	8.7	7.4	7.3	6.0
Com-						
munist	1.2	0.6	0.5	0.6	0.4	0.1
other	1.4	0.7	0.8	0.5	2.3	2.7

As a general rule, parliament and politicians are held in low esteem by the Australian people and so parties have found difficulty (to some extent because of deficiencies in their own selection mechanisms) in attracting quality candidates. While the leading politicians of left and right in Australia compare very favourably with leading politicians in the British parliament, there is no depth of quality in the parliamentary parties in Australia and there is certainly no comparison between back benchers in the British parliament and back benchers in Australia, although this is to be expected, to some extent, in view of Australia's relatively small population. Second, there is, relative to British politics, little policy discussion within the parties, the parties publish few pamphlets, and there is a complete lack of machinery for party education.

voting systems

The use of the preferential voting system for the House of Representatives has been of prime importance in shaping Australian politics since 1955. The preferential voting system has led to disproportionate influence being wielded by both the DLP and the Country Party. It is often claimed in Britain, with some justification, that the British Liberal Party suffers severe under representation in the House of Commons because of the simple majority system. No doubt to some extent the same would happen to the Country Party if the simple majority system were used in Australia. (The DLP does not achieve representation in the House of Representatives even under the preferential system.) Against this must be weighed the fact that the minor parties in Australia, with never more than 10 per cent of the vote in elections to the House of Representatives, have been able to exert enormous influence on government policy, whilst the biggest party, the ALP, with a vote ranging from 40 per cent in 1966 to almost 48 per cent in 1961, has had no direct influence on government policy at all. A simple majority system would probably have given the ALP comfort-

able majorities in 1961 and 1969, and it is now part of the ALP's policy to change the voting system in House of Representatives elections to that system. This would precipitate a trend towards a two party system made up of the ALP and the Liberal Party, which would be a much more preferable state of affairs for the ALP than the existing system. It is also preferable in principle, as it gives the electorate a clear choice between two parties and eliminates the undesirable practice of deals behind the electorate's back as now takes place with the Liberal and Country Parties arranging coalition governments and the DLP making deals with the Liberal Party for exchange of preferences. As the lesser of two evils it is better to have small parties under represented than to have them over represented at the cost of the largest party. The third choice would be the proportional voting system as used in elections to the Senate but this would mean that it might take three or more parties to form a coalition government, which would only aggravate the present defects.

A related factor, also vital in Australian politics, is the problem of variation in the size of electorates and, a more common problem for the ALP, "vote-weighting" by having concentrations of ALP voters in particular constituencies, which leads to its being under represented. The legislation governing the size of constituencies allows a 20 per cent variation, and this has clearly favoured the Country Party. A constitutional amendment would be necessary to enforce the one man one vote principle and the likelihood of such an amendment being successful is slight. Another distinctive feature of the Australian electoral system is that compulsory voting exists in all parliamentary elections. This results in an average of 95 per cent of the electorate casting valid votes with some spoiling their ballot paper. Compulsory voting probably helps the Labour Party, as indeed it would if it existed in Britain. Although the voting system hinders the ALP, the real reasons for the dominance of conservative parties in Australian politics must be sought after elsewhere.

The reasons include the prosperity of the electorate, the anti-communist feelings in the electorate, the almost unanimously anti-Labour media, the political insensitivity of the ALP and the effective political behaviour of the conservative parties.

However, there is little reason to believe that the Australian electorate is intractably conservative. Indeed, on a great many issues throughout the 'sixties, the ALP, given the right leadership, could have grasped and maintained electoral support for its policies.

reasons for conservative grip

The Liberal-Country Party government has always given high priority to full employment and economic growth. Full employment has been maintained (it was achieved by the Labour government of 1941 to 1949) although the degree to which the government has been directly responsible for this is debatable. Further, Australians have enjoyed a fairly constant rise in their standard of living over the past 20 years and there has been an average annual rate of growth in the Gross National Product of 4.5 per cent in real terms in the years from 1950 to 1970. World Bank figures published in November 1970 gave Australia's annual, rate of growth *per capita* between 1961 and 1968 as 2.4 per cent, compared with 3.4 for the US and 2.0 for the UK, and indicate that over the last ten years Australia's growth rate has slipped although it is still sixth in terms of *per capita* GNP.

Unemployment has usually been less than 1.4 per cent and in Australia, as in most other countries, the electorate is reluctant to turn out a government which has provided both full employment and a reasonably high standard of living. The degree to which economic measures are influential was seen in the near defeat of the government in 1961 after an economic recession. At election time the government has always stood on its economic record and attacked the ALP proposals as dangerously inflationary and a threat to prosperity. This tactic has been generally successful and the ALP

has had to work very hard to make its proposals sufficiently attractive and relevant to the voters, to divert attention away from considerations of security or the standard of living. The ALP did seem to make a very considerable breakthrough in this direction in the 1969 elections, when it achieved a 7 per cent swing, despite record prosperity.

The influence of anti-communist sentiments can hardly be stressed too much, in considering the forces producing conservative predominance on the Australian political scene. The conservative parties and press have been able to play on anti-communist fears on both domestic and foreign policy fronts. They have always been ready to smear the ALP as susceptible to communist influence, and Dr Evatt, the Labour leader from 1951 to 1960, was the most outstanding and tragic victim of this sort of campaign. Although the Communist Party does exist in Australia, it has no electoral support, its vote dropping from 1.2 per cent in 1955 to 0.1 per cent in 1969. However, it has been important in a negative sense, insofar as communists have been prominent in some unions and, particularly in the 'fifties, some members of the ALP ran on unity tickets with communists in union elections. The matter was further complicated by the attempt of the Liberal-Country Party government to outlaw the Communist Party in 1950, and the appearance, in the resulting high court case, of Dr Evatt as counsel for the Communist Party. This sort of smear has dwindled in effectiveness during the 'sixties, with the avoidance by ALP members of unity tickets, in accordance with party rules, and the accession to the leadership of Gough Whitlam. Moreover, it is unlikely to be of much significance in the coming decade.

The second, and possibly more significant, charge by the conservative parties has been that the ALP's foreign and defence policies have been "soft" on communism, and consequently inadequate for the nation's defence. This claim was frequently made by the conservative parties and by most newspapers during the 'sixties, in response to

Labour policies on Vietnam, Malaysia and Singapore. The ALP has consistently opposed any Australian commitment in Vietnam, and has also opposed the stationing of troops in Malaysia and Singapore; its stand on South East Asia figured largely in the 1966 and 1969 elections and in the former it certainly cost the party votes. In the 1969 election the ALP re-iterated its promise made three years earlier to withdraw *all* Australian troops *promptly* from South Vietnam, and, although the press once again joined the conservative parties in attacking this policy, it is doubtful whether it cost the ALP any votes. Indeed, public opinion polls in 1969 indicated that a majority of the Australian electorate for the first time wanted a withdrawal of troops from Vietnam. So there are signs that the ALP's foreign policy, which has in retrospect been generally correct throughout the 'sixties, may no longer be vulnerable, as it has been, to the conservative technique of arousing electoral fears of communism.

The foreign policies of the ALP would not have cost the party as dearly had the media been less than unanimously non-Labour or anti-Labour. The press is never slow to attack governments on a variety of policies, but it rarely supports Labour policy. Australia has only one national newspaper (and only that since 1964), one national financial newspaper and 14 metropolitan dailies. Australians are among the highest newspaper readers in the world, and yet the industry is dominated by five companies, each of which also has large interests in commercial radio and television. There are two radio stations run by the government and one government television station. The number of commercial radio and television stations varies from state to state, but they considerably outnumber those run by the government.

At election time the press almost always falls into line in supporting the conservative parties, a fact indicated at the 1969 election when a survey of the ten leading daily newspapers revealed express editorial support for the government on polling day, in nine of the ten papers,

while the tenth was uncommitted. This was despite that fact that government electoral support was at its second lowest point for 20 years. Obviously there is no Australian equivalent of the *Daily Mirror* or *The Guardian* and no weekly equivalent of *The New Statesman*. This gives a somewhat stark comparison with British politics, where the circulation ratio of pro-Conservative dailies to pro-Labour dailies is about 8:5. It is impossible to quantify the effect of this bias in terms of votes, but it is difficult for the ALP to get certain policies off the ground at all, and it is extremely difficult for the party at election time.

While the foregoing have all been real and substantial reasons for the continuing conservative control of Australian politics, the extent to which the ALP has contributed towards its own eclipse must also be stressed. From the early 'fifties it was torn by a dissent and factionalism that continued until the end of 1968, with the most spectacular and disastrous symptom being the split in 1955. It has to a very large extent been the struggle between those who have best been described by Louise Overacker as the "traditionalists" and the "modernists". The traditionalists, in their insistence on deep seated policies such as the socialisation of the means of production, distribution and exchange and the abolition of state aid to private schools, and in their opposition to reform of the party's structure, have often ignored what is politically possible and have shown insensitivity to the changing nature of the electorate, which, in its increasing affluence and diversification of nationalities, has posed problems which the ALP, largely because of the predominance of the traditionalists over the modernists, has only recently been able to try to solve. The affluent Australian electorate, including a great many trade unionists, has little sympathy with party policies based on the concept of the class struggle, on tolerance towards communism in union affairs, and on policies denying aid to independent schools. It has been necessary for the ALP to re-define its means of reaching socialist objectives in a continually changing society.

The aims of equality of educational opportunity, abolition of poverty, opportunity for everyone in the nation to share in the nation's wealth, adequate medical treatment for all regardless of means, and so on, remain valid and meaningful for the Australian electorate in the 'seventies, if they are translated into relevant and meaningful policies and if they are applied without such negative aspects, as the abolition of state aid to independent schools being applied as well. What was missing was as much a matter of party image, as of policy or organisation, as has become clear in recent years when, with a new party leader, a reformed federal party structure and carefully planned policies, the party has achieved a more modern image attuned to contemporary needs and is recovering remarkably well from the electoral disaster of 1966, when it received only 40 per cent of the votes and captured only 41 out of the 123 seats in the House of Representatives. Indeed in 1969 it got 47 per cent of the votes and 59 seats out of the new total of 125.

A most important point in this process was reform of the party's federal structure. Until 1967 the federal conference and the federal executive were made up of six and two delegates respectively from each state. There were no requirements that these delegates should include the party leaders or members of the parliamentary parties at either state or federal level. Party policy was therefore made without reference to parliamentarians, except for those delegates who were also members of parliament, who were usually in a minority in any case. This politically naive arrangement led to the charge at the 1963 election by the conservative parties and the press that the ALP was controlled by "faceless men" and a devastating photograph in support of this charge was published showing the leader and deputy leader of the federal parliamentary party anxiously waiting outside the conference room to hear the decision of a special conference on a point of defence policy. In 1967, however, due to the efforts of Gough Whitlam, the structures of the federal conference and the federal executive were

altered to include the parliamentary leaders from the federal and state parliaments, as well as the usual state delegates. The result has been a sharp decrease in the tensions between the parliamentary and extra-parliamentary wings of the party, with the parliamentary leaders and the modernists now in control of party policy. This has eliminated the image of the parliamentary party being controlled by an outside group, and voters for the first time have been able to feel confident that a Labour government would be able to pursue its policies without interference from bodies totally beyond the control of the parliamentary party.

A further feature of the modernisation of the party, and the stronger position of the modernists within the party, was the dismissal, in September 1970, of the Victoria executive of the ALP, by the federal executive. The ALP vote in Victoria has been on average more than 5 per cent lower than the national average over the last 15 years. A major reason for this was the policies and structure of the Victoria executive, which was dominated by traditionalists, and which could not be dismissed by the federal executive until the modernists on that body were in a majority. At the Victoria state election in May 1970 the Victoria executive specifically rejected the policy of state aid put forward on the hustings by the state parliamentary leader, and after the election it suspended the leader of the parliamentary party in the upper house because he had followed the policy of the leader in the lower house rather than the executive.

This farcical and politically suicidal situation precipitated the intervention of the federal executive, as it had become painfully clear that the Victoria executive would have to be re-structured. The increasing strength of the federal executive *vis-à-vis* the states executives of the ALP was also illustrated in 1970 by the re-structuring of the New South Wales executive at the instigation of the federal executive. These moves have given publicity to the tensions within the ALP, but in the long run, and with the 1972 House

of Representatives elections in mind, the results should prove highly beneficial in electoral terms as the party re-organisation has been achieved without any splits in the party.

By way of contrast the Liberal Party has shown a high degree of political sensitivity from the late 'forties onwards, although, unlike the ALP, it has shown less and less sensitivity in recent years and internal disputes have been recurrent since 1968, including the resignation of two senior cabinet ministers, and more recently that of premier Gorton, a most unusual occurrence in the history of the Liberal-Country Party coalition government. Its organisation provides for the complete independence of the parliamentary party and it also has a relatively strong professional secretariat and research staff. Organisationally, it has had greater flexibility than the ALP and the parliamentary party has not been embarrassed by the extra parliamentary wings of the party. It has, as is usual with conservative parties, been supported financially by business interests. In the early years of its government it was able to present itself as being a liberal party, in the sense of freeing the country from wartime controls, maintaining full employment and so on. It has also shown itself to be pragmatic rather than doctrinaire although this has increasingly come to mean that it takes no action at all unless it is really politically necessary to do so.

This was high lighted at the opening of the new parliament after the 1969 elections, when the governor general's speech, which summarises the intended legislative action of the government for its three year term, lasted a mere 70 seconds. The Liberal Party initially proposed some measure of change in order to win power and has since then introduced some politically attractive and well timed policies to retain its electoral support; but for most of its life it has been able to rely on anti-communist smear tactics and the internal tensions within the ALP to hold onto office. Indeed it has for the most part been a government by default.

3. external policies and problems

Public and political discussion of foreign affairs in Australia has been dominated throughout the 'fifties and 'sixties by a phobia about communism, with traces of latent McCarthyism from the right wing, to the extent that, even in November 1970, during the senatorial election campaign the conservative parties were still clinging to their original justifications for Australian involvement in the Vietnam war, and expressing their confidence in a military victory and their determination to persist in the anti-communist crusade in South East Asia. This is a measure of the isolation of the Australian electorate from world opinion, and also an indication of the amount of suspicion, distrust and ignorance in the electorate about foreign affairs. Before the second world war, Australia implicitly relied on Britain for its external security, and largely saw Australia and Britain as one in international affairs. During the first world war, Australia had 332,000 volunteers serving outside Australian territory (from a population of less than five million), and during the second world war it had 550,000 volunteers overseas. 17,000 Australians were involved in the Korean war, but 8,000 is the biggest force Australia has had in Vietnam. The relatively huge numbers involved in the two world wars reflect the close ties with Britain felt by Australians at that time. During the last world war the Australian government (the Curtin ALP government) turned to the US for help, and Australia has based its defence policies on the US alliance since. In 1951 it signed the ANZUS pact with the USA and New Zealand, and in 1954 it helped to establish SEATO which included the USA, the UK and a number of Asian countries.

However, defence was not an important item in Australia during the 'fifties, as is indicated by the fact that between 1953 and 1962 defence spending, as a percentage of GNP, declined from 5.1 to 2.7 per cent. Indonesia's confrontation with Malaysia and the increasing turmoil in Vietnam caused the government to introduce some hasty measures in 1963 and 1964, including the purchase of the unfortunate F-111 aircraft (still undeliv-

ered), and the introduction of a two year period of selective military service for 20 year olds. In the seven years from 1963 to 1969 the defence budget rose from 2.7 to 5 per cent of GNP; nevertheless, the forces are still poorly equipped and the government has persisted in relying on *ad hoc* defence arrangements with the USA and the UK and has tried to minimise defence spending. Moreover, there has been little rational planning of either defence forces or strategy. Profound political consequences have arisen from Australia's involvement in Vietnam, which the government has justified on the tired and familiar grounds of keeping South Vietnam "free", and stopping the downward thrust of "communist aggression," which it is claimed, directly threatens Australia's security. It is also seen as an integral part of the US alliance and as an "insurance policy," on the grounds that "if we help the US now, then they will help us if the need ever arises".

A most important argument for many conservative politicians in Australia has been that it is in "Australia's interests" to keep the US involved in South East Asia, and that involvement in the Vietnam war is one way of ensuring this. This argument is of course misconceived, because the Vietnam war will probably result, in the long run, in less US involvement in South East Asia. But the argument is significant as an illustration of the odious cynicism of the Australian right wing on Vietnam. The fact that the enemy are thought to be communists and that they are "yellow people," with a way of life remote from Australia, has meant that consciously for some, and subconsciously for many, the full horror of the Vietnam war has never been realised, because the people involved are not considered to be fully fledged human beings. There can be little doubt that if Vietnam was a more industrialised society, and its citizens were of European origin, then attitudes in Australia would be vastly different. As it is, many Australians are indifferent to the human suffering in Vietnam, because their ideological and racial prejudices prevent them from conceiving of it as truly human

suffering. This emotive aspect is not in itself an argument against Australian involvement in Vietnam, but it exists among many right wing supporters of the war, nonetheless.

A ground force of 1,500 men was committed to South Vietnam in 1965, and increased to a peak of about 8,000 in 1968. The ALP opposed the commitment from the start, and has since then demanded the complete withdrawal of Australian troops. Involvement in Vietnam became a central issue of the 1966 general election, at which the government won a record majority, largely on its foreign policy. The ALP policy of withdrawal from Vietnam was represented as irresponsible, "ratting on our allies", and encouraging the dreaded downward thrust of communism. The Australian electorate seemed to accept this at the time. The debate on Vietnam was fairly quiet, and on the very low level predictable in such a McCarthyist atmosphere. Australian public opinion on Vietnam has lagged about a year behind that in the US, but has generally followed it. Thus while the Australian electorate showed overwhelming support for the war in 1966, no such inference could be drawn from the results of the 1969 election, and public opinion polls since early 1969 have indicated that a slight majority of Australians want to see Australian troops withdrawn from South Vietnam. However, not only has public opinion lagged behind American opinion by a year or so, but the policies of the Australian government have done so too.

In 1967 the ALP adopted some specific proposals in addition to their demands for withdrawal. They demanded a halt to the bombing of North Vietnam, and recognition of the National Liberation Front. The conservative parties denounced these attempts to influence US policy as treacherous, but within a year the US had themselves adopted these policies, which ultimately the Australian government was obliged to accept. It has been persistently more hawkish than the US government, and has advocated indefinite bombing of North Vietnam. It has

been consistently humiliated by the gradual changes in US policy which it, as a government with no independent foreign policy or alternative ideas of its own, has been obliged to accept. However, it is possible that the conservative parties in Australia may escape politically unscathed from their foreign policy blunders, and that the ALP may never fully reap the reward of maintaining the correct policies from the start, in the face of tremendous opposition and electoral defeat. By the 1972 election Vietnam may no longer be a significant issue, and many voters will no doubt regard the Vietnam commitment as water under the bridge, and therefore not swing their votes to Labour on that account alone. The ALP certainly suffered at the 1966 election for its Vietnam policies, and even by 1969 it was apparent that Vietnam was no longer such a live issue, and although most Australians realised then that the government's foreign policy was mistaken, it was not costly for the government in electoral terms.

The experience of the Australian involvement in Vietnam has shown Australia as slavishly aligned with the United States even to the point of military intervention. Firstly, not only has Australia sided with the US, but it has done so without any constructive initiatives of its own, assuming that the price of the US alliance is utter subservience. There must always be very severe limits to the amount of influence that a country of Australia's size can have on the foreign policy of a great power, but there have been times, when any other Australian government, although already committed to supporting the US in Vietnam, could have constructively influenced her policies. The bombing of North Vietnam provides one case, where Australia could have had marginal influence, but lacked the will to attempt making any such initiative.

However, in forfeiting any attempt at independent initiative the conservative parties have made it all the more difficult for future Australian Governments in the 'seventies and 'eighties to build up

a credible rôle, as an independent and perhaps constructive influence in the affairs of the region. Secondly, in encouraging the US actions in Vietnam, it has helped in the long run to drive the US out of South East Asia, and thereby made it difficult for the US to take constructive non-military action in the region in the future. Thirdly, it has enormously hindered Australian national defence planning, for the Vietnam war dominated defence thinking in the 'sixties and little has been done to rationalise Australian defence forces and defence arrangements for the post-Vietnam period. The armed forces are still not equipped to handle a direct threat to the security of the country. One beneficial result, however, has been to make people and politicians alike a little more cautious in their thinking about foreign policy, and it has caused many to be aware, for the first time, of the existence of many of the countries of South East Asia. Indeed, political parties in the 'seventies will be forced to put forward better conceived ideas about Australia's rôle in South East Asia, than they were required to do in the 'fifties and 'sixties. The electorate is now better educated about South East Asia, and is less prone to fear a communist threat, although it is by no means immune to such fears.

While Australia has, since the second world war, looked mainly to the USA for an umbrella of protection, until 1967 she continued to put considerable reliance on the British presence in Malaysia and Singapore. Another illustration of the emptiness of the conservative defence thinking can be seen in the total unpreparedness of the Australian government for the British decision to reduce its forces east of Suez. In fact, the announcement in 1967 of the British government's intention to withdraw its forces from east of Suez came as a complete shock to the Australian government. To many thinking Australians, the only surprising thing about the announcement was that it had not been made years before. Obviously Britain had no direct interest in Malaysia and Singapore and the withdrawal of forces was totally foreseeable. Nonetheless, the Australian

government was unprepared, and ever since then it has been struggling to come up with some convincing ideas as to how to cope with the new situation.

It is highly unlikely that the Americans will step into the "vacuum" in Malaysia and Singapore, and the policy of the of the British Conservative government does not really mean that there will be substantial British presence in Malaysia and Singapore, and hence may not really differ a great deal from the policy of the previous Labour administration. The British withdrawal, or more accurately reduction of forces does not substantially weaken Australia's security position. It probably does weaken Malaysia's position and has clear economic implications for Singapore, and during the next ten years Australia will face more requests for military and economic aid from Malaysia, Singapore and from Indonesia. The proposed five power defence arrangement between Australia New Zealand, Malaysia, Singapore and the United Kingdom will provide a framework for Australian military aid and defence co-operation with Malaysia and Singapore, although it should be remembered that Australia has had a small force in Malaysia as part of the Commonwealth strategic reserve since it was set up in 1955. It is difficult to see Britain ever again becoming heavily involved in this area; thus, from Australia's point of view, the situation has not substantially altered under the new arrangements.

Australia must begin to evolve a new line of thinking in foreign affairs. At the moment her foreign policy is largely based on the assumption that communism represents a constant threat to Australia, and that rather than have to deal with it on Australian territory, it is preferable to meet that threat in an Asian country to the north of Australia with massive American support and possibly some from Britain too. This line of thought won't do. It must be asked which countries threaten Australia in the foreseeable future, and if one cannot foresee such a threat, one must ask what policies should then be adopted by Australia,

China is seen as the most likely threat to Australia. Radio Peking expresses aggressive intentions, but China has taken no extravagant or expansionist international action over the last 20 years and its actions or lack of them certainly give no hint of a desire to annex Australia. Very little is known about China in Australia and an effort should be made by the Australian government to learn more about it. It is known to have troops in North Vietnam and to train Laotian and Thai insurgents. It has affiliations with insurrectionist movements in Cambodia, Malaysia and Burma, but it would appear doubtful as to whether its economic and defence structures would be able to support sustained military operations. While its foreign policy has so far been ineffective, the situation may change when its economy and defence forces are strengthened. It has been significant that China has avoided putting troops into Vietnam, although the US has had over 600,000 troops there, and has conducted bombing raids close to the Chinese border. Not only is China concerned with American actions, she is also pre-occupied with her relations with her Soviet neighbour. In these circumstances it is difficult to argue that China seriously intends to invade Australia in the foreseeable future. Further, trade between China and Australia has grown throughout the 'sixties (about 75 per cent of the wheat grown in Australia is sold to China and Australia now supplies about half of China's wheat and wool requirements) despite the absurdity of Australia not officially recognising the existence of communist China, and opposing her admission to the United Nations. There is little ground for believing that China represents a foreseeable threat to Australia, providing she avoids overtly anti-Chinese alliances and is diplomatically discreet. Withdrawal from South Vietnam, recognition of China and trying to get her seated at the UN would be constructive steps in the right direction in improving Sino-Australian relations.

Another country vaguely mentioned in Australia as a possible threat is the Soviet Union. Indeed, the DLP has

recently attempted to play on electoral fears of Russia by reference to Soviet naval activity in the Indian Ocean. Obviously a Russian invasion would be difficult to accomplish, and there is no motive for any such attempt. Again, the Soviet Union is pre-occupied with China and the USA, and the suggestion that it represents a threat to Australia is, at least for the time being, patently absurd.

Conscription was introduced in Australia in response to Indonesia's confrontation with Malaysia. At that time, Indonesia, with a population about nine times as great as Australia's, did arouse fears in Australia. The present Indonesian government is not aggressively disposed and has enormous internal problems. She is poorly equipped to launch an invasion of Australia, and her capacity must remain doubtful for many years, even if her intentions change. Nevertheless Indonesia does remain significant for Australia, as it borders on New Guinea and Papua, which would have considerable strategic importance for Australia were Indonesia to become hostile. It is very much in Australia's interests for the present Indonesian government to be strengthened, and future Australian governments should be prepared to give considerable economic aid to Indonesia. Bi-lateral defence co-operation with Indonesia should also be considered.

Another very important country for Australia is Japan, which is the only country in Asia capable of containing China, and it is going to increase in power and importance as time goes on. Japan's defence is guaranteed by the US under the security treaty, and with its low population increase and high economic growth rate, it is the most prosperous country in Asia. The importance of Japan in Australia's defence planning will become clear when she finally becomes completely independent of the USA. Clearly an expansionist and heavily armed Japan, at some future time, could pose a threat to Australia but, again, it lacks the motive, particularly as peace has brought such tremendous increases in prosperity for Japan, and will no doubt certainly continue to do so.

Any Pacific regional organisations in the future, which are not dominated by the USA will have to take account of Japan. It is possible that by the mid 'eighties there could emerge a Pacific alliance, led by Japan and including Australia. Such an alliance could attempt to keep out of East West struggles, and increase economic and defence co-operation between countries in South East Asia, although it might be impossible for Australia to be in active alliance with Japan and the USA at the same time, as Japan may demand non-alignment from her partners. This is very much a matter of conjecture at this time, but Japan will certainly increase drastically in importance for Australia's defence planners when she does become independent. Australia's contacts with Japan, already very considerable in the sphere of trade, should be built up in all spheres. Japan, while wishing to avoid military alliances in Asia, wants to become more involved in Asia, and Australia should be ready to co-operate in this. Joint investment by Japan and Australia in South East Asian countries, particularly Indonesia, would be an example of such co-operation.

In the absence of foreseeable direct threats to Australia, indirect threats must be considered. An indirect threat would supposedly take the form of a threat to Australia's trade routes. Trade routes are not usually threatened except in times of total war, a war involving the great powers as well as Australia. Further, it is only practicable to block trade routes at certain convenient places; thus it would be extremely difficult to block Australia's trade routes around the Cape of Good Hope. The diversification of trade patterns helps to free Australia from such a threat, and there are usually alternative trade routes in any event. Further, there is always the possibility that if, say, China interfered with Australia's trade then the USA would intervene to protect its own interests and this would be a deterrent to China.

The most rational course for Australia to take in the 'seventies would be to move gradually towards non-alignment (without necessarily becoming specifically non-

aligned) but with increasing involvement in South East Asia, especially in terms of economic aid. Politically, non-alignment would be unacceptable for some years, and as a first step Australia would have to disengage from Vietnam and adopt a more independent rôle within the US alliance. It should also withdraw its token forces from Malaysia and Singapore, as they have little real value, and stationing troops in another country can render Australia liable to involvement in another Vietnam type situation; although of course she could still engage in military co-operation with Malaysia and Singapore. A further gesture would be for Australia to abstain from any five power arrangement, and to quit SEATO and ANZUS, which are of little value. These moves would help to establish Australia's credibility in South East Asia as an independent nation, and not just a syncophant of the USA. In quitting these pacts Australia would not be abandoning anything of substantial importance to its security, and such moves might be necessary if Australia wants to move into non-aligned co-operation with Japan and other countries in the region.

Australia must make a more enlightened commitment in South East Asia and should also increase its aid programme. In building up relationships in South East Asia it should be considering not only its own security, but also the security and living standards of countries immeasurably poorer than itself. Australia's record on overseas aid has compared favourably with other countries, in terms of aid as a percentage of national income (in 1968 it spent 0.71 per cent of its national income on economic aid, ranking behind only Portugal and France on the OECD table). Such comparisons can be misleading, however, for over half of Australia's aid goes to New Guinea and Papua, which is reasonable, but at the same time does not leave much for other Asian countries. Papua became a British protectorate in 1884 and was transferred in 1906 to the authority of Australia, who has been responsible for New Guinea as a trust territory since 1919, first under a League of Nations mandate, and then under a United Nations mandate.

Since 1949, Papua and New Guinea have been administratively united. The total population of the territories is about 2.25 million, including 38,000 Europeans and Asians. Government policy has been to move Papua-New Guinea towards self government and ultimately independence, but the policy has been ineptly administered. Gough Whitlam promised in January 1971 to give Papua-New Guinea self government in the first year of a future Labour government, and to grant independence soon after that. It is vital that Australia builds up good relations with Papua-New Guinea, as it is strategically important. Economic aid to other countries in South East Asia should be increased, with a greater emphasis on social and economic effectiveness. A considerable amount of aid is presently spent, in Thailand for instance, on projects which have greater military than social or economic significance.

Isolationism is not tolerable except insofar as Australia must become independent of the us, whose alliance is of highly doubtful value. For despite what its proponents say, it is most unlikely that the us government at some time in the future would make the massive commitment needed to save Australia in a real emergency, merely because Australia put 8,000 men into Vietnam in the 1960s. It may be that the us would assist Australia in such an emergency in any event, but it is more reasonable to suggest that it would do so because such action would be in its own interests; to protect us investment in Australia. Conversely, it is probable that if such action was not thought to be in America's interests, then the us-Australian alliance would not result in large scale American intervention. While the us alliance lacks any really positive benefits for either side, it does involve Australia in considerable danger. There is an American communications base in Western Australia and it is always possible that Australia could find itself unwillingly, or even at first, unknowingly, involved in an American war. us foreign policy has not shown that clarity of vision which would suggest that it can always be relied on to act prudently in

the future. American and Australian needs will not necessarily always coincide. It is also argued that the us alliance is good for trade and foreign investment, but the overriding factor here is whether a country is politically stable, externally secure, and whether trade and investment are profitable. An Australia outside the us alliance would be just as stable and secure, and may even attract more diversified trade and investment. Certainly it would make it easier to impose limits on the level of American investment in industry, as she need have no inhibitions about damaging the us alliance.

Australia's record at the United Nations reflects its strongly pro-western foreign policy over the last 20 years. Australia sent troops to the Korean war, but could not contribute to the peace keeping force in the Middle East in 1956 as it had supported British and French policy. Again Australian forces were not accepted for the peace keeping force in the Congo, probably because of its inflexible pro-western stance in the cold war. The us alliance has prevented Australia making a constructive contribution at the United Nations, as Canada has done with its contributions to peace keeping forces, while she has consistently voted against the seating of China. Up until 1961 Australia supported the South African argument that apartheid was a domestic matter, and that the UN had no right to intervene, but since 1961 when South Africa left the Commonwealth, it has condemned South Africa for its racial policies. It did not support a move for trade sanctions against South Africa and it has not restricted its trade with South Africa except in relation to arms. Australia supported British policies towards Rhodesia and has observed the trade sanctions, but it did not support a resolution at the UN calling for the use of force.

The Australian government has attempted to remain neutral over the issue of British supplies of arms to South Africa (Australia's position was that the British government should decide on arms for South Africa without external pressure).

At the Commonwealth conference in Singapore in January 1971, Australia refused to support a declaration of faith in racial equality and opposition to racial discrimination. The Australian government showed impatience with the amount of time devoted to racial issues, and indicated a belief that ideological differences between nations are more threatening to peace than differences of race or wealth. The government was clearly worried about its own immigration laws and treatment of Aborigines, and possibly envisaged attacks on Australian racial policies at future Commonwealth conferences. The Australian position indicates the lack of sympathy that the government has for Africa's problems, and also a lack of understanding of those problems. Arms for South Africa is one issue, perhaps one of a very few, where Australia could have some constructive marginal influence on the trend of world events. By supporting the black African countries, as India and Canada have done, it could have substantially increased the pressure on the British government if not to abandon its intention to sell arms to South Africa, then at least to reduce the quantity eventually sold. It will be increasingly difficult for Australia to build up its involvement and influence in Asian affairs, if it continues to display such insensitivity to problems of the developing world. In this context, the Commonwealth is potentially a very useful body for Australia in meeting with and understanding the problems of the underdeveloped countries. It is very much in Australia's interests to foster the continuance of the Commonwealth, and it is regrettable in the extreme that the present Australian government has done nothing to prevent the danger of the Commonwealth breaking up over the arms for South Africa issue.

There is every indication that had Australia been given different leadership throughout the 'sixties, then the electorate would have supported a substantially different foreign policy. Although it is fashionable to be cynical about the degree of difference between political parties, and although some of the same decisions may have been made which-

ever party had been in power at a certain time, it is reasonable to assume that Australian foreign policy would have followed a substantially different line had the ALP been in power since 1961. Such speculation is of doubtful value, but it is helpful in trying to evaluate just what an ALP government could do in the region of foreign policy, if it came to power in the 1970s. Due to its unequivocal position on Vietnam, an ALP government would have avoided involvement in that conflict, and had it survived it might well have reaped substantial political benefit at the end of the decade. If a Labour government comes to power when the Vietnam war has been considerably wound down, it should be able not only to withdraw any token forces remaining in South East Asia, but also to avoid similar disasters in the future. In so doing, it would be able to become more independent in foreign affairs and rationalise and strengthen its defence forces, if necessary by higher progressive taxation, rather than by selective military service. In fact, the ALP is committed to withdrawal from Singapore and Malaysia, as well as from Vietnam, and to the abolition of conscription.

Anti-war feelings are running progressively higher in Australia. There have been, throughout the duration of the Australian involvement in Vietnam, protest marches in the major cities, but these have never reached the proportions of the protest movement in the United States. The biggest protest occurred in 1970 when 70,000 people marched in a Vietnam moratorium march in Melbourne (population 2.25 million) on a normal week day. Demonstrators in Australia are subject to denunciations in the most vile terms by conservative politicians, and they usually inspire government spokesmen to cry "communists". The Vietnam war and conscription, which are strongly linked in Australian politics, have had some polarising effect on Australian politics. The disillusionment that the Vietnam war has caused among so many people in Australia, may, however, prove to be helpful in producing an electorate sympathetic to new ideas on foreign policy.

4. internal problems and policies

The same lack of real initiative that has been present in Australian foreign policy, has also characterised domestic policies. While the conservative government has been largely responsible for the meaningless drift, the ALP has also been culpable on some issues.

“The Australian government, which has a ‘restrictive immigration policy’ will not under its regulations, at present, grant £10 assisted passages to residents of this country (Britain) who are of non-European descent.” (*The Guardian*, 24 November, 1970). When Australian affairs are reported at all in English newspapers, the report very often concerns the white Australia policy, which seems to receive much more attention outside Australia (partly because that is where it is felt most) than it does inside the country. This is another issue, where it is likely that a change of policy would receive considerable electoral support.

The white Australia policy originated in the Australian goldfields in the 1850s, largely as a blatantly racial response to the Chinese, who had come to Australia at that time. At federation in 1901, the major political parties included the “white Australia policy” in their platforms, and the justification of excluding non-European from Australia continued to be blatantly racial until about 1930. Since then the slightly more sophisticated and more plausible arguments of “difficulties of assimilation” and “problems of racial strife” have been used as the main justifications. However, the parties are no longer committed to the phrase, “white Australia” in their party policies. Official government policy stresses the importance of the racial homogeneity of the population, but does allow a small number of non-Europeans to migrate to Australia, and has been doing so since 1966. Official ALP policy is opposed to a multi-racial society, and its immigration policy is similar to government policy.

After the second world war the ALP government, under Chifley, decided to embark for the first time on large scale planned immigration. It was realised that,

both for reasons of external security and economic growth, it was necessary to have a rapid increase of population. Since 1945 assisted immigration passage arrangements have been concluded between Australia and Britain, Malta, the Netherlands, West Germany, Italy, Turkey, Austria, Greece, Spain, Belgium, and for refugees. Between 1947 and 1970 immigration averaged 89,000 people annually, and accounted for a 0.92 per cent annual increase in the population. Out of a total of 2.2 million immigrants since 1947, 950,000 have been British, 570,000 have been northern and eastern Europeans, and 550,000 have been from southern Europe. These settlers and their children have been responsible for over half of Australia’s increase in population, from 7.6 million in 1946 to 12.5 million in 1970. About one Australian in five is now a post war immigrant, or a child of one. Over half of the addition to the work force in that time has been due to immigration. The importance of the policy is readily seen from these figures. Even within this European context, a racial policy has been pursued, insofar as preference has been given to British immigrants and to northern and eastern Europeans over southern Europeans. Not only has this immigration proved indispensable to Australia, but it must be said that generally immigrants from all parts of Europe have been assimilated very well into Australian society, and no serious racial or cultural conflicts have emerged. Immigrants are eligible for Australian “naturalisation” and consequent citizenship after five years’ residence, and between 1945 and 1970 some 635,000 persons were thus naturalised. The cultural influence of European immigrants, particularly southern European immigrants, can readily be seen in Australian cities, with continental food shops and restaurants providing the most obvious example. Australian life has been enriched by immigration, culturally as well as materially, which is significant for such a geographically isolated society.

That is one side of the immigration question. The negative aspect is the non-European one. Since the late ‘fifties non-Europeans have been admitted to Aus-

tralia as permanent residents as the spouse, minor children, aged parents, and fiancé or fiancée of an Australian. Since 1966, non-Europeans have also been eligible for entry into Australia as immigrants. Applicants have been carefully screened with a view to their suitability for assimilation into Australian society, and on the basis of their educational qualifications. In the four years to December 1970, 12,000 non-Europeans have been admitted, and this rate of immigration can be expected gradually to increase, if the present policy is not radically altered. In fact, in 1968 there were 39,500 non-Europeans in Australia, of whom 19,000 were Australian citizens, and 12,000 were students. Under the Colombo plan, Australia, as well as providing technical assistance and capital aid to South East Asia, has taken students from this region, largely for tertiary education. The great majority of these students return to their home countries on completion of their courses; indeed, they can only stay in Australia under exceptional circumstances.

Broadly, however, the immigration programme has been administered on a blatantly racial basis and there has been little serious questioning of it in Australia, although public opinion polls throughout the 'sixties have suggested that a majority of Australians would like to see a limited number of non-Europeans emigrate to Australia each year on a quota basis. Few Australians would like to see Australia grouped with South Africa and Rhodesia, in the eyes of the world, as one of the remaining racist strongholds, yet this is increasingly happening. One of the disturbing aspects of the white Australia policy (which, insofar as a limited number of non-Europeans are now being admitted to Australia, is strictly speaking at an end) is that the major parties have broadly endorsed the policy, and it has never been an issue at elections. This is politically understandable, as race is a dangerous issue for a political party to raise, and parties in Australia have preferred to leave it alone. Yet the responsibility for changing the policy must largely be with the opposition because, if the

government is willing to change or modify its policy, it will be much more ready to do so if the opposition is committed as well. If this were so, the government could move without the fear of being left on a limb on such a potentially explosive issue. Until the middle of the 'sixties the ALP took a hard line on immigration, and the phrase "white Australia" was not eliminated from the ALP platform until 1965 (the Liberals had done so before this), indeed at times it supported the white Australia policy with greater fervour than the conservative parties. In recent years, however, ALP spokesmen have moderated their statements on this question, and it could well become an issue in the 'seventies, or better still all parties will gradually modify their policy in this field. The government has made repeated affirmations of its intention to maintain its immigration policy without modification, although it has in fact liberalised the policy more than most electors probably realise.

Clearly Australia is not operating an apartheid policy in its immigration regulations. There is no question of oppressing people internally, but there is racial discrimination exercised in admission of immigrants. Therefore, to suggest a change in policy will not liberate oppressed people, but those who do propose such a change bear an enormous responsibility, because if racial strife does occur, as a result of non-European immigration, then oppression and suffering will certainly arise, where none previously existed. Nevertheless, the white Australia policy should be abolished. The existence of this barrier strengthens bars elsewhere, and conversely the fewer such barriers there are, the easier it will be to isolate and bring pressure to bear on the racial régimes in southern Africa. That Australia is grouped with these régimes, and rightly so, in many people's minds clearly prejudices Australia's standing in the world. As a wealthy and truly lucky country, Australia should be able to take some initiatives in organising a more humane and socially orientated type of society, just as some Scandinavian countries have succeeded in creating.

This policy makes a particularly bad impression in South East Asia and has been an enormous hindrance in building up closer relations with these countries. As it is so essential for Australia to become more involved in Asian affairs it is imperative that the white Australia policy should be abolished, on this account alone. Further, it makes the position of the 12,000 Asian students in Australia somewhat awkward, as they study in Australia in the knowledge that they are not, purely on account of their race, eligible for permanent residence in Australia. Australia's participation in the Colombo plan may be seen as a sop to the national conscience in taking Asian students temporarily, while excluding them for immigration purposes. Perhaps most importantly, the entry of non-Europeans into Australia would mean tremendous benefits for the individuals concerned. The numbers coming to Australia would be insignificant by comparison with the population of the exporting countries, and it cannot really be suggested that abolition of the policy would help to relieve the population strain on Asian countries; but it would mean that the individuals concerned would have the opportunity to enjoy a far higher standard of living than they had had previously. Also, the Australian way of life would benefit from the presence of people from different cultures, just as it has benefited from the influx of Europeans.

The white Australia policy represents a pessimistic view of human relations. It is based on the premise that people of different races cannot co-exist in one country, even in the best conditions. This view must be rejected, and the problems must be faced rather than avoided. Pointing to racial strife in other countries is a common but feeble justification for maintaining an all white Australia. Each has its own peculiar set of circumstances which could not be repeated in Australia, and if they could, they might still be largely avoided by careful planning. Where other countries have failed Australia could succeed, because it has the opportunity to plan for such immigration carefully in advance, and can regulate the numbers concerned just

as it has with European immigrants. The causes of racial tension can to a large extent be forestalled, and can be removed before tensions arise. Thus it should be ensured that potential immigrants will be able to get employment in Australia appropriate to their qualifications. A balance between the various occupational groups would have to be maintained to avoid abnormal numbers of non-Europeans in any particular occupational group, and geographic concentrations would similarly have to be avoided. These and similar measures could help enormously to safeguard against racial tensions, and emphasis must be placed on the suitability of particular immigrants for assimilation into Australian society. Moreover, it must be remembered that at least some of these measures are already being utilised in the present immigration programme.

The most encouraging factor is that for ten years or more, public opinion polls in Australia have shown that a majority of Australians would like to have a limited number of non-Europeans emigrate to Australia. It is not suggested of course that any immigration into Australia should be unlimited in terms of numbers. There is no question of immigrants from any particular country constituting a large percentage of the population. Obviously the numbers must be strictly controlled, and even the present policy on European immigration is being reviewed to ascertain whether the current annual intake should be reduced, in order to provide better for those who do come. Nor is it suggested that Australians are free from racial prejudice, but in view of the public opinion polls and the presence of about 40,000 non-Europeans already living in Australia without racial tension, the public mood is appropriate for a change of policy. Another factor is that the very low level of unemployment and the strong economy mean that Australian workers are unlikely to have any fear that their livelihood is threatened by non-European immigration. After all, they have been used to relatively huge numbers of immigrant workers for over 20 years, and the number of non-Europeans would be small.

The best course would be for the Australian government to announce officially that the white Australia policy has been abolished, and that in future applications for immigration will not be determined by race alone. Insofar as growing numbers of non-Europeans are already being admitted this would be a change of image as much as a change of substance, but the image is important and is presently much worse than deserved. Suitability for immigration should be the sole criterion, and it may well be that a far lower proportion of non-European applicants will be suitable for assimilation into Australian society. Nevertheless, a reasonable number of non-Europeans would be suitable and would indeed wish to come. Possibly a limit should be set on the number of non-European immigrants for a provisional period of, say, five years to test the effects of such a change of policy, for it would be better to err on the side of caution on this potentially explosive issue.

aborigines

While the white Australia policy is not positively oppressive to racial minorities and while it seems that, if given the appropriate leadership, the Australian people could well build a harmonious multi-racial society on a small scale, the Australian treatment of aborigines has been one of constant oppression. White Australians have tended to be racially vicious in their attitudes towards the aborigines, who have lived in Australia for 13,000 years or more. In 1788 they numbered 251,000, and now they number 45,000 plus 80,000 part aboriginals, although their birth rate is now very high. A few still live in the desert regions of central Australia remote from white Australian civilisation, but the majority live on white Australian farms, on government settlements and missions, or in non-institutional urban settings. They suffer from a number of laws which deny them full capacity to handle their own financial affairs, inability to handle liquor, and so on. On many settlements they get specially low aboriginal rates. The

aboriginal male unemployment rate is 7 per cent and only 0.9 per cent of male aborigines are in the professional occupational categories, while 66.6 per cent are labourers or farm workers. These figures compare with 1, 7.9 and 14.6 per cent respectively for white Australian males. Aboriginal infant mortality is far higher than that of white Australians. Clearly, aborigines do not participate in the prosperity to the same extent as white Australians, and for them it is hardly the land of opportunity.

The causes of their suffering include the various legal prohibitions imposed on them, poor education, their acceptance of low status and their geographic isolation in many instances, as well as white Australian prejudices. Because the aboriginal culture is so peculiarly remote from European culture, it is doubtful whether aborigines would be enjoying the same benefits of Australian life as white Australians, even if the governments since 1901 had pursued the most enlightened policies towards them. However, a very large part of the blame for the lack of any real progress, must be attributed to the white Australians and their governments. Aborigines were not given the right to vote in federal elections until 1962, and were not counted in a census until 1967.

In many country towns a blatant colour bar is operated in hotels, theatres and local clubs. The treatment of aborigines in these towns was recently highlighted in the notorious Nancy Young case. This concerned an aboriginal woman, from a town called Cunnamulla in Queensland, who was charged and convicted of the manslaughter of her baby daughter, who died from malnutrition in 1968.

After the showing of a programme on the case on Australian television (the government subsequently prohibited the sale of the colour copy of the film to the BBC) a further appeal was heard and the conviction was quashed. Nancy Young was released from gaol some ten months after her arrest. The case revealed the intolerable conditions under which aborigines live in Cunnamulla on

the aboriginal reserve, which consists of corrugated iron shanties with dirt floors and no amenities. The local bowling club, the theatre and two of the hotels operated colour bars. It also indicated the arbitrary treatment which aboriginals received at the local hospital, where a nurse complained of the "offensive odour" of the child's blanket, and refused to call the doctor out at night; the child died two days later. The trial itself brought out the extent to which aboriginals are at the mercy of the legal process in Australia. The number of aboriginals in Australian prisons, particularly women aboriginals, is out of all proportion to their population. There is a familiar pattern, a high arrest rate, almost invariable "guilty" pleas, lack of legal representation and a general acceptance of the inevitable. Most of these elements were present in the Nancy Young case, where police discretion to prosecute was abused by a three and a half months delay in charging her, a bail of \$1,000(A) was set, although it was realised that her average weekly earnings were \$6, and she spent three months awaiting trial in prison. She was represented by the public defender at the trial and his decision not to put her in the witness box (because of the tendency of aboriginal witnesses to "admit" to anything put to them), was seized upon by the judge in his instruction to the jury as a confirmation of her guilt.

Nancy Young received no compensation for the time during which she was wrongfully imprisoned. In Australian courts aboriginals are almost always defendants, never plaintiffs. It is inconceivable that an aboriginal woman in Nancy Young's position could maintain a suit against the hospital for damages. In Australia there is no body equivalent to the "neighbourhood law offices" of the US, nor is the legal aid programme in Australia comparable even to the much criticised British legal aid system. Certainly a more sophisticated white Australian mother in Nancy Young's position would have instigated an appropriate civil action. Nevertheless, rough justice in the form of a quashed conviction was achieved in

the Nancy Young case, although only after political pressure in the form of considerable publicity was brought to bear. It is also significant that in a constitutional referendum in 1967, 89 per cent of the Australian electorate voted in favour of amending the constitution to give the federal government more legislative powers to assist aboriginals. The public broadly sympathises with the aboriginals, but strong government action is needed; although the electoral support is there, the right kind of government is not. The solution or part solution of the problem is for the federal government to exercise vigorously its recently acquired legislative powers to initiate and develop the political, social and economic growth of the neglected aboriginal society. As on the other issues, time is running out and aboriginal hostility and bitterness is at last beginning to take real dimensions.

The ALP has taken a more progressive attitude towards aboriginals, but has not made it a real issue in Australian elections, and hence it would be wrong to attribute the entire blame to the conservative parties; however, there is reason to believe that a Labour government would do more for aboriginals than the present government has done. This is suggested not only by the ALP platform, but also by the achievements of the ALP government in South Australia led by Don Dunstan, who has gained wide respect for his actions on aboriginal matters. Indeed he is one of the most outstanding young Labour politicians ever to emerge in Australia. The federal ALP has said that it would take full responsibility for bringing aboriginals to a position of equality with other Australians, by vigorous exercise of the new constitutional powers, which the Liberal Country Party government had asked for, but not used. Labour has promised special emphasis on the education, health, housing and employment of aboriginals, as well as giving them full land rights on their reserves.

The relatively small aboriginal population and the remoteness of its problems from the lives of most Australians means that little electoral pressure can be

brought to bear on the parties to promote aboriginal welfare, although some hard working pressure groups have achieved limited results. The responsibility lies therefore very much with the parties themselves, in the absence of significant external pressure. The advances made in government treatment of aboriginals in the 'seventies will be an indication, one way or another, of the quality of the government concerned.

the economy

Australia has been free from serious economic problems over the last 20 years, although the world wide problem of inflation became apparent in Australia during 1970. At times, the balance of payments has threatened to pose a serious problem, but a high level of capital inflow has avoided balance of payments, difficulties, but has presented the Australian economy with a problem in itself. Until the financial year 1969-70 Australia usually had substantial annual deficits on its current account. These were offset by a considerable surplus on capital account. During this time Australian secondary industry has expanded and diversified and, more importantly, huge mining operations have been developed. This has greatly strengthened Australia's exports, and for the first time agricultural produce no longer accounts for the majority of Australia's exports; and although the country's economic viability still depends on agriculture, this reliance is decreasing. (Even so, wool alone still accounts for some 20 per cent of exports).

This reliance has had profound political significance, in that it has given the Country Party an importance out of all proportion to its electoral support. However, between 1964 and 1970 the rural industries' share of the labour force fell from 9.9 to 8.0 per cent and this, together with the greatly increasing importance of mineral exports (expected to make up over 30 per cent of Australia's total exports in the financial year 1970-1) indicates a decline in the electoral strength and bargaining power of the

Country Party, whose influence and particularly that of its leader, Sir John McEwen, in the years 1958 to 1971, may be seen in the pattern of economic development. The Country Party during its tenure of power in coalition with the Liberal Party has given considerable subsidies and tax concessions to agricultural industries, and in many cases has maintained inefficient and uneconomic industries by these means. In return, protection in the form of tariffs has been given to secondary industries. Again, this has resulted in the maintenance in some cases of inefficient industries and a distorted allocation of resources. Protection has been given in the past without regard to efficiency. In recent years, however, protection has been reduced and is likely to continue to be reduced, particularly now that McEwen has retired.

Some of the results of these policies can be seen in the likely effects on Australia of British entry into the European Economic Community (EEC). In 1969-70 exports to the United Kingdom made up 11.9 per cent of Australian export revenue, compared with for example, 42.3 per cent in 1948-49. Japan is now by far Australia's biggest customer, taking 24.7 per cent of Australia's exports last year, almost as much as the UK and the US (13.5 per cent) combined. Yet Japan accounts for only 12 per cent of Australia's imports. While Australia can expect to continue to export increasing quantities to Japan, it can also expect Japan to increase pressure on Australia to import significantly larger quantities from Japan. However, exports to the UK are still highly significant in certain areas. For instance, in 1969-70 Britain accounted for 67 per cent of Australian butter exports, 41 per cent of the fresh fruit, 66 per cent of the canned fruit, 39 per cent of the dried fruit, and about 33 per cent of wine exports, and also a substantial percentage of sugar exports.

For most of these products there is no real alternative market, and in the case of sugar, there is already an excess in world production. So clearly if Britain

joins the EEC some rural industries in Australia will be hard hit, and many producers will be forced out of production. In many cases the burden will fall on uneconomic producers who have only stayed in business because of the subsidies and tax concessions sponsored by the Country Party.

The amazing thing about this situation is that the government has done nothing about it, for it has been known that the UK would attempt to join the EEC, for at least the past ten years. In fact, the lack of success and her previous rebuffs have given Australia more time to prepare. In that time the government could have induced a run down in the production of butter, fruit and sugar and encouraged beef production, forestry cultivation or secondary industry in rural areas; but nothing has been done, despite ALP calls for a system of protection based on efficiency and economic viability, rather than on the interests of a political party unable to attract even 10 per cent of the national vote. The overall effect on the Australian economy if Britain joined the EEC would clearly not be disastrous, in view of the declining importance of Britain in the Australian export pattern. Nevertheless, it will cause some considerable personal hardship, for which the short sightedness of the Country Party is largely to blame. In the long run, it will probably mean the decline in the percentage of the work force engaged in rural industries, a decline in the importance of agricultural products in exports and a consequent decline in the Country Party's electoral support, which might help Labour.

A not unconnected economic problem is the question of foreign investment in Australia; since 1949, foreign investment has accounted for almost 12 per cent of the total, taking place mostly in the manufacturing and mining industries. Over 75 per cent of the motor car industry and over 60 per cent of mineral production is under foreign control, while foreign investment is also significant in petroleum refining, pharmaceuticals, soap and matches, radio and television equipment. Control of foreign in-

vestment is a somewhat delicate subject. Clearly Australia would not possibly have enjoyed the same economic growth without it, and it has been a critical factor in helping with the balance of payments. Foreign investment is much lower than it is in Canada, but at the present rate it seems that it will reach 25 per cent of the whole private sector by 1980. Canada, the US and the UK have been the biggest investors; the government has encouraged local participation, but no legal requirements have been imposed.

Unchecked foreign investment can lead to Australia losing control over the private sector of the economy, and it raises questions as to whether Australia can indefinitely continue to earn sufficient foreign exchange to finance the payment of profits and dividends earned on the inflow. Indeed, there have been warnings from Australian economists that the huge increase in mineral production and exports is not all that it appears to be, in terms of the balance of payments. Because so much of the mineral production is controlled by overseas interests the transfer of profits abroad, which will have to be made, and the foreign equipment which will have to be used, will eat up a large proportion of the foreign exchange earnings. Further, where there is a high level of foreign investment it means that foreign investors can undertake projects, that are profitable for them, but of little value economically or socially to Australians. Some adverse features can be seen in the high level of foreign investment in the mineral and oil industries. Here, as elsewhere, there is no real development policy, no order of social priorities and no safeguards regarding the possible threat of the exhaustion of resources. Australia has become in many ways a cheap supplier of raw materials, while many of its own secondary industries are under developed. That Australian consumers are also ignored is dramatically illustrated by the fact that the price of petrol will probably rise, despite Australia herself being an oil producer. Here the large multi-national enterprises are dictating to the Australian consumer, although

using Australian resources. The ALP has consistently called for the government to exercise control over foreign investment, particularly by requiring minimum local participation, and, again, there is evidence of considerable public support for this particular Labour policy. A conservative government, however, is most unlikely to take adequate measures for fear of alienating its big business support.

Although continued foreign investment in Australia is desirable, it is surely possible for Australia to take control of its own resources and priorities without reducing foreign investment to an undesirable level.

industrial relations

Australia is one of the most highly unionised countries in the world with about 60 per cent of all employees belonging to trade unions, compared with figures of under 40 per cent for the UK, and under 30 per cent for the USA and Canada. The most important feature of Australian industrial relations is the legal provision for conciliation and arbitration, and the acceptance of public responsibility for all aspects of industrial relations.

Both the federal and state parliaments have powers to legislate in the field of industrial relations. The federal powers are limited by the Commonwealth constitution to establishing tribunals to settle inter-state disputes. The state parliaments can legislate directly on the terms and conditions of employment, as well as being able to establish tribunals to deal with disputes, within the states. There are considerable numbers of federal and state tribunals, but the most important one is the Commonwealth Conciliation and Arbitration Commission, which has considerable prestige, and whose awards are largely followed by state tribunals.

There is also a Commonwealth Industrial Court which carries out the judicial functions associated with disputes such as the interpretation of awards and rules. The basic function of the Commonwealth

Conciliation and Arbitration Commission and other tribunals is to settle disputes by means of the awards and orders they make, and to prescribe the minimum terms and conditions of work which can be observed.

Only registered associations of employers and employees are recognised by the commission. The system has thereby encouraged unionism, and unions are an integral part of the system, without whose co-operation it could not work. While the system has enhanced their status, it has also provided for close scrutiny of their internal affairs, to which they have sometimes strongly objected.

Registration gives a union the legal status of a corporate body with power to deal with real and personal property, recover fines or subscriptions from its members and obtain awards from the commission. Where there is an industrial dispute, the registrar is notified and the commission then has control of the dispute. Initially conciliation is attempted and many disputes are settled at this stage. The commission has the power to require compulsory arbitration, and there has been a tendency not to make full use of conciliation, but to leave it to arbitration. If the dispute goes to arbitration, then the commission can enquire into all matters affecting the dispute, and it then makes an award, which is a comprehensive document setting out the minimum terms and conditions of employment and operates usually for a period of not more than five years, or until a new award is made. The parties can apply to vary the award in the meantime and can also collectively bargain for "overaward" conditions.

The arbitration awards are legally binding on both sides. Employers and employees may be fined for breaches of awards and it is in the field of legal sanctions that most of the difficulties have occurred. In many cases, clauses banning strikes for the duration of an award, are inserted. The initiative then lies with the employers to invoke sanctions; this has been more freely done in recent years, and one trade union secretary has

been imprisoned for non-payment of fines. An employer can apply to the industrial court under the penal provisions of the Conciliation and Arbitration Act, for an order instructing the unions bound by the award, (if it contains a clause banning strikes) not to strike. If the union then strikes, it can be fined for contempt of court and a separate fine may be imposed of up to \$(A)1,000 per day for as long as the strike continues. The unions and the ALP have called for the repeal of the penal provisions of the Conciliation and Arbitration Act, but otherwise employees and employers generally accept the conciliation and arbitrationary terms, although not without some reservations. The unions have complained of the slowness of the procedure and in recent years the system has been used by employers and government, with employers using the penal provisions at their own discretion. Both sides have criticised the legalism involved. A further criticism is that national wage policy is determined by the arbitration system. The concept of a minimum wage is determined, not so much by social need, but rather by the state of the economy.

The unions have achieved many of their aims through this system, including recognition of union status, a minimum wage, limitation of working hours, abolition of sweating, the provision of paid holidays and annual leave. There has been considerable interest shown in Australia in collective bargaining, but the reluctance of the employers, unions and the public for any fundamental change in the system, make it unlikely that collective bargaining will become widespread in Australia, although it is already in use in some industries, notably in the paper, printing, oil, building and aviation industries. Reform of the present system is more likely.

International comparisons in the field of industrial relations must be treated cautiously, but figures would suggest that Australia is in the middle position among industrialised countries in any comparison of days lost through industrial disputes. The number of days lost

annually through industrial disputes for selected industries for each 1,000 persons employed over the ten years from 1956 to 1965, was 1,020 for the USA, 359 for Australia, 288 for the UK and 7 Sweden. The figures for 1969 were: USA 1,390; Australia 810; UK 510, and Sweden 30. Consequently, if one can judge from Australian experience, one must be dubious of whether the British Industrial Relations Act of 1971 will do all that its Tory sponsors claim in reducing the number of days lost through industrial action.

education

Educational policies highlight some of the fundamental differences between the parties and, as in England, underline to some extent the class base of the parties. In Australia about 20 per cent of primary and secondary school children attend private schools, compared with about a quarter of that figure in the UK, Roman Catholic schools accounting for 80 per cent of the pupils in private schools. Education is primarily the responsibility of state governments and it is organised and controlled by education departments in each state. Nevertheless, the federal government provides assistance in the form of scholarships and also by state aid payments. The conservative parties have adopted the procedure of making state aid payments on a *per capita* basis to schools, regardless of the financial needs of particular schools. Thus a well endowed but populous private school gets more from the federal government in state aid than a poorly endowed state school, with a low pupil enrolment. The ALP favours state aid, as it is realised that most of the independent schools are Roman Catholic schools, many of which have poorer facilities than state schools, and it is politically and probably educationally necessary for the government to give some form of state aid. However, the ALP has proposed to establish a schools commission, which would make grants on a basis of need and not on a *per capita* basis. This difference of policy underlines the elitist approach of the conservative parties.

While Australia has enjoyed substantial increases in real economic growth over the last 20 years, it has fallen further and further behind countries of comparable economic growth and wealth in its educational services. Consequently, throughout the 'sixties, schools were overcrowded, inadequately equipped and under staffed. Insufficient efforts have been made to attract teachers inside Australia, and the enormous amount of advertising for teachers in Britain to teach in Australia is indicative of the shortage of teachers. The tremendous pressure on the educational system has been due to the rapid growth in population, but this of course was foreseeable, particularly as almost half of the population growth has been caused by planned immigration. Yet the proportion of GNP spent on education in Australia has not exceeded 5 per cent in the last 20 years. In 1966 it was only 4.4 per cent as against 6.8 per cent for the UK, 6.4 per cent for the US, 7.9 per cent for Canada, 7.1 per cent for the USSR and 9.2 per cent for Israel. In the early 'sixties, in fact, Australia ranked 52nd in the world in spending on education as a percentage of GNP. Comparative figures are at best only an indication of the situation, without being in any way conclusive. However, a further comparison, of the proportion of 15 to 19 year olds proceeding from secondary to tertiary education, indicates that Australia has fallen well behind, for instance, the USA, Canada and the USSR. University provision is inadequate, and thousands of students who have satisfied university entrance requirements are turned away each year, because quotas have been imposed on most faculties.

While primary and secondary education in government schools is free from tuition fees, the conservative government has insisted on maintaining fees for universities, although the ALP has promised to abolish them. The federal government does provide a limited number of university scholarships awarded on the basis of examination results only, but these only go to a small proportion of students. The inequality of educational opportunity in Australia is reflected by

the fact that only 18 per cent of Australia's university students come from homes with average incomes or less, and only 1.5 per cent of male school leavers from unskilled or semi-skilled backgrounds go to university.

poverty and the social services

Poverty exists in almost every advanced industrial society, yet it is hard to derive much consolation from this thought, when looking at poverty in Australia. There has not been very much research carried out on poverty in Australia, but it does appear that about one million people or about 8 per cent of the population are living in poverty. In a country of high real incomes and very low unemployment, many people inside and outside Australia refuse to believe that poverty exists there at all. It does not of course exist among skilled workers in employment; rather it exists amongst the aged, women with dependent children, families with four or more dependent children, the sick, accident victims and the unemployed.

The first important poverty survey was conducted in Melbourne in 1966, and an arbitrary line of £15 per week was drawn, as the poverty line for a family of a man, wife and two dependent children. It was found that 7 per cent of the families in the survey had an income of less than £15 and 12 per cent earned less than £17 10s. More recent surveys indicate that these figures are fairly typical of the whole country and that at least one million people are living in poverty. Money alone cannot solve the problem of poverty, but this state of affairs does largely reflect on the grossly inadequate child endowment payments, widows' and old age pensions. Substantial increases in these could obviously alleviate the poverty. At present all social service benefits are administered on a means tested basis. The structure of the social services reflects the conservative nature of the government just as does the education system. The ALP has proposed a national plan to end poverty and has promised to give substantial in-

creases in pensions and allowances and, recognising that money alone cannot solve the problem of poverty, it has promised to make special grants to the state governments to set up regional social welfare departments and to build up and expand the social work profession.

The situation is the same with health and welfare services. There is no comprehensive national health insurance scheme in Australia, as there is in the United Kingdom. There are over 100 private health insurance schemes competing against one another for the support of the general public. The federal government contributes to these schemes, but the benefits rarely exceed 80 per cent of the cost of treatment, and dental bills are not included. As contributions are tax deductible and the Australian tax system is progressive, it means that the higher a person's income the less his health insurance costs him after income tax has been taken into account. Only a conservative government could tolerate and, in fact, instigate this regressive and socially unjust scheme. The ALP has proposed a national health insurance commission, financed by a 1.5 per cent levy on taxable income, with a ceiling of £45 per year. This would not only give more benefits to the contributors, but, since it is geared to income levels, it would also be based on the ability to pay.

Without detailed discussion of domestic policies, the pattern of domestic politics under the Liberal Country Party government can be seen, and it should in many ways be a familiar one to British readers. The Australian taxation system, education system, health and welfare services are all geared to the upper income groups, and even for them it does not always provide good value. The lowest income groups in Australian society are largely ignored, and the lower income groups in a broader sense are denied opportunities available to the upper income groups. A further example is that in effect, there is no real tax on capital gains in Australia despite the huge gains that have been made on the stock exchanges, and also in real estate, in the economic booms of the last decade.

Politics in the United Kingdom have been described as "politics at the margin" in terms of policy differences (or lack of them) between the parties, and similar phrases are often applied to Australian politics. It is perhaps misleading to analyse the different potential impacts on Australia of a conservative and a future ALP government by reference only to separate individual policies. While individual carefully planned policies are highly desirable, both in terms of meaningful political debate, and also as a source of sustained dynamism for the party should it achieve office, it is really more helpful to assess the achievements of future governments in more general terms. Under the Liberal Country Party coalition government, the broad pattern established in the years from 1950 to 1970 was of a low level of government interference and of failure to set out a firm order of positive priorities in such fields as urban planning, education, health and social services, treatment of aboriginals, elimination of poverty, and control of overseas investment. To use Harold Wilson's phrase, the Australian people have been very much "out on their own".

Most have prospered economically in this time, because of the strong economy, but there has been little real improvement in equality of opportunity and no general movement towards a more egalitarian society, contrary to the egalitarian myth about Australia. Lack of firm government interference has resulted in inadequate provision of national parks and other conservation measures, congested and polluted cities in one of the least densely populated, advanced industrial countries in the world and an abysmal neglect of aboriginals and of the problem of poverty. The pattern of foreign and defence affairs has been similarly tainted by inactive government. Defence planning has been makeshift, and complete faith has been placed in the American alliance. No attempt at self sufficiency has been made, no thought has been given to the time (unimaginable to conservative politicians in Australia) when neither Britain nor the United States maintains a presence in Asia.

5. the Australian Labour Party in the 'seventies

In both domestic and foreign affairs the longer this Liberal inaction continues, the more difficult it will be to reverse.

In one full term of three years an ALP government could not do much more than halt the process, but in two terms it could make very substantial moves in the opposite direction. Hence, domestically, an ALP government, which greatly increased government spending on primary and secondary public education, which made universities free, which gave the lead to the states in urban planning, which fundamentally reformed the health and social services, which took really positive and progressive steps on the dual racial questions of immigration and aboriginals, could move Australia towards greater educational and social equality of opportunity and would pursue a set of well defined priorities. In foreign affairs it could abrogate the more offensive conservative policies, by withdrawing from Vietnam and by taking a hard line on South Africa and Rhodesia. It could then attempt to adopt a more constructive rôle in South East Asian and world affairs. This would certainly reverse the present trend.

It is not suggested that an ALP government would achieve in absolute terms the traditional socialist goals of complete equality of opportunity and social justice for all, nor is it suggested that the conservative government is wholly responsible for all of the ills in Australia; but it does seem that many undesirable trends can be directly traced to conservative policies, or failures, just as it is reasonable to believe that an ALP government would move Australia in a desirable direction even if it could not achieve its aims in absolute terms. An important factor to bear in mind, in this context, is the strong Australian economy.

Finally, there is the question of Labour prospects in the 'seventies, and the forces likely to shape Australian politics in the future. Nine consecutive general election defeats is a devastating experience for a major political party, and it has been suggested that Labour is destined for permanent minority status in Australia.

However, there are some encouraging signs. Public opinion polls have indicated very large support for Labour policies on education, health, social services, poverty, aboriginals, and foreign policy. The declining government vote in the 1967 and 1970 elections to the Senate, and in that of 1969 to the House of Representatives, and the very strong Labour showing in those elections, are further evidence that the electorate is increasingly interested in "quality of life" issues and perhaps has decided that at last a change of government would be a good thing. The victories of the ALP in state elections in South Australia in 1970, in Western Australia in February 1971 and the near victory in New South Wales in the same month, are also encouraging for ALP prospects in the 1972 federal elections.

While the ALP has suffered electoral misfortune at times for its internal disunity, it has, particularly since 1969, shown far more political sensitivity and has by and large presented a united front. As with policies, the positions are perhaps now in reverse, and tensions have recently begun to appear more frequently in the Liberal Country Party coalition, and the strain will increase after Sir John McEwen's retirement as leader of the Country Party in 1971. In addition, the decline of the Country Party may be expected to continue gradually as the years go by. The cabinet turmoil in March 1971 is also indicative of tensions within the government, and the change of leadership is unlikely in itself substantially to improve the Liberal Party's chances in the next election, probably in late 1972.

The leadership of the ALP has rarely been stronger and Gough Whitlam's achievements in reforming the internal structure of the ALP, indicates that he has the executive ability to push through the ALP policies once he is in government. The success of a similar style Labour politician in the South Australian state parliament, Don Dunstan, who won the state election in 1969, is a further reason for cautious optimism for the ALP in the 1970's.

young fabian group

the author

The Young Fabian Group exists to give socialists not over 30 years of age an opportunity to carry out research, discussion and propaganda. It aims to help its members publish the results of their research, and so make a more effective contribution to the work of the Labour movement. It therefore welcomes all those who have a thoughtful and radical approach to political matters.

The group is autonomous, electing its own committee. It co-operates closely with the Fabian Society which gives financial and clerical help. But the group is responsible for its own policy and activity, subject to the constitutional rule that it can have no declared political policy beyond that implied by its commitment to democratic socialism.

The group publishes pamphlets written by its members, arranges fortnightly meetings in London and in some provincial centres, and holds day and weekend schools.

Enquiries about membership should be sent to the secretary, Young Fabian Group, 11 Dartmouth Street, London, SW1; telephone 01-930 3077.

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