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THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF AUSTRALIA 1920-35
POLICY AND ORGANISATION

A. B. DAVIDSON

A Thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Australian National University.

May 1966
This thesis is entirely my own work.

A. B. Davidson.
While this thesis is all my own work it would be churlish to deny that many people have inspired, encouraged and commented on my work. I cannot acknowledge all here but I should like to thank my supervisors, Dr. Eric Fry of the History Department in the School of General Studies at the ANU and Professor J.D.B. Miller, Professor of International Relations in the Institute of Advanced Studies at the same university; I should like to thank Dr. R. Gollan and Professor Manning Clark of the ANU, and Drs. Miriam Roberts and Ian Turner of Monash University as well; others who must be mentioned are Mr. Roger Coates and the late Mr. Norman Jeffrey who provided valuable documents and reminiscence; and finally I should like to thank all the members past and present of the Communist Party and the labour movement who talked to me about the Party, my fellow students Daphne Gollan, C. F. Yong and Simon Proctor of the Laundry Block, Old Hospital Building, ANU, and my wife Joan who made sure that the slough of despond never became too deep.
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Corrigendum

In this thesis the name F. Sergeev, which is the 491
conventional transliteration, has been given as
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Synopsis

The object of this thesis is to determine what was the policy and organisation of the Communist Party of Australia (CPA) between 1920-35 and what effect this policy and organisation had, especially on the CPA's relative failure as a political party.

Naturally, as the Communist International (Comintern) decided both policy and organisation for the CPA in this period, the history of the Comintern and of Comintern relations with the CPA at crucial times in party history is examined as well as the history of the CPA itself, though not in as great detail.

The thesis is divided into five parts. Part I covers first the formation of the Comintern and the formation of the CPA, together with the early years to 1921. It is established that the Comintern demanded the adoption of a world revolutionary programme by all parties belonging to it, and the adoption of the organisational system of democratic centralism. According to the Comintern, all communist parties were to foster what the Comintern claimed was already a violently revolutionary situation with a view to overthrowing capitalism and establishing socialism, independently of and in hostility to, all other labour parties. In 1920 it said that this could only be achieved if the communist parties were centralised in organisation, functioning like a military command.
Finally, the Comintern established its own right to determine both policy and organisation for all communist parties.

When the CPA was formed it did not fully understand these Comintern decisions and contact had not been made with the Comintern. There were already several socialist parties in Australia in 1920. Their policies had been determined by the reality that the Australian Labor Party, which was not strictly socialist, commanded almost all working class support (which did not go to anti-labour parties) in Australia. Broadly the socialist parties had either entered the mass party to try to convert it to socialism from within, or competed with it without success in the elections. Generally, failure in the last policy forced socialists to be content with propagandising. After much bickering, the CPA, still not bound by the Comintern, adopted the policy of working inside the ALP in 1921. The CPA was still informally organised.

Part I of the thesis also covers the period of the united front (1921-28). First contact between the CPA and the Comintern was made in 1921 and resulted in formal affiliation and recognition by the Comintern in 1922. Henceforth the CPA was bound to accept Comintern directions. Comintern directions changed at the Third Congress in 1921. It was then recognised by the Comintern that world revolution was not about to eventuate and communist parties
were encouraged to enter the mass labour parties and affiliate with them to win their supporters away from them and destroy them. Independence, not merger, was wanted.

These instructions were carried back to Australia in 1921 and became quite clear in 1922. They were not the same as the traditional socialist policy of boring from within, which was designed to refurbish the ALP, not to destroy it. The CPA, while following the socialist policy, had met some success in New South Wales before it came under Comintern directions. CPA members participated in forcing the ALP to adopt a socialisation objective and in 1923 three were even elected to the N.S.W. ALP executive and the ALP agreed to allow the CPA to affiliate to it. However, ALP awareness that the CPA was controlled from Moscow and intent on destroying the ALP led to the expulsion of all communists from the mass party after 1923. The CPA started to decline and split over the appropriateness of the united front policy. Some members said communists should hide their political identity to continue work in the ALP. Others said that this would effectively mean merger and demanded that all communists in the ALP declare themselves and challenge the ALP to expel them. One member even suggested that the CPA liquidate itself and that members enter the ALP as individuals. Failure in attempting independent political action in the 1925 NSW elections confirmed the fact that the CPA had little effect as an
independent political machine. Consequently, at least two thirds of the members of the CPA left the party or were expelled. Reduced to a tiny sect in 1926 and led by a new leader, Jack Kavanagh, who favoured the proposition that the workers could be educated to believe in socialism, the CPA limped along until 1929 without any political influence. It was in breach of discipline \textit{vis a vis} the Comintern in not concentrating on further attempts to get into the ALP. In 1929 this inaction was changed.

Part II of the thesis covers 1928-35. In 1928 the Comintern again changed its policy. It declared that there was a renewed wave of revolution and reverted to policies akin to those of before 1921, including attacking the labour parties. Kavanagh refused to follow the independent competitive action in elections demanded by the Comintern, claiming that it was inappropriate in Australia. A power struggle developed in the party between him and his followers and those who demanded that the CPA follow Comintern policies without question. By various machinations the opposition group came to power as the new leaders of the CPA and immediately implemented Comintern directions. The first of these was that the party adopt the system of democratic centralism as its organisation. This had never been done, although there had been lip service paid to the system in the second party constitution of 1927. The 1922 constitution had disregarded Comintern demands for the
introduction of the system. The kernel of the system was
the introduction of factory nuclei as the party basis.
Since Kavanagh had favoured the educatory policy, he had
neglected factory organisation between 1926-29. This is
one reason why the party took so long to introduce this
system of organisation. At first, the opposition to Kavanagh
had centred on his refusal to introduce democratic centralism.

So in 1931 a new constitution was introduced. It was
drawn up by a new Comintern delegate, Herbert Moore. The
first immediate result of this reorganisation was the
expulsion of Kavanagh and his most powerful followers, as
a cardinal rule of democratic centralism was that there
should be no oppositions in communist parties. A further
result was the establishment of 120 factory nuclei by 1935.
This put a third of the party members organised in factories
and industries, above all in mining, waterside, and transport
industries. For the first time since 1921 the CPA came into
direct organised contact with the proletariat in its place
of work.

Yet a further result was a vastly more active party due
to the increased capacity to pinpoint and control members' activity; a party which held its new members better than
before and which worked hard to extend itself.

On the other hand, the policy of attacking the ALP, the
"social-fascists", as the worst enemy of the working class
was totally inappropriate in Australia. The CPA's aim was
to recruit support from the working class which supported
the ALP. It indiscriminately attacked both the rank and file and the leaders of that party, thus greatly deprecating its chances of recruitment. Furthermore, although there was severe depression between 1929-33 in Australia there was no revolutionary "upsurge". The CPA cried from the rooftops that there was an "upsurge" and alienated much sympathy. Depression conditions did, indeed, result in a political radicalisation of the Australian masses, but the CPA deliberately cut itself off from such radical movements, as they were usually led by ALP members. The CPA asserted that it was the only true revolutionary party. It made no attempts to ingratiate itself with the leaders of these radical movements and thus win support. When these movements collapsed few of their members went into the CPA.

When the Comintern again decreed a united front as revolution had once more not eventuated, the ALP attacked the CPA as "insincere" and refused to have anything to do with the proposal. Had not the CPA been reviling the ALP for the past four years?

Yet despite the ruinous nature of this policy during 1929-34, due to the depression the CPA grew in membership, areas of influence, electoral support and in newspaper circulation. It spread into rural areas, among women and youth. It was still small in 1935 but it was a firmly established party which showed no signs of becoming defunct.
as it had in the twenties.

Part III of this thesis deals with CPA activity in the trade unions. Before contact with the Comintern and its trade union wing, the Red International of Labour Unions (RILU), the CPA followed a policy of "white-anting" in unions, that is, establishing communist groups in the unions with a view to alienating the sympathy of the union members from their leaders. It did not have much success and J. Garden, a communist leader, who was already secretary of the NSW Labor Council, followed by nearly all the other members of the Council (they too became communists when he did), decided that the way to win the trade unionists and unions to a communist policy was to gain control of Australia's labour councils. These were the co-ordinating bodies of the Australian trade union movement. As Garden was leader of the CPA at this time, the CPA conducted no further organised work in the unions in 1922-24. Due to the small size of the party Kavanagh, his successor, conducted no work in the unions either. So the party in these years held virtually no positions on union executives. The only formal contact with the proletariat was via the NSW Labor Council. Even this contact disappeared in 1926 when Garden left the party. Despite Garden's claims, which were made in 1922, that the way to power in Anglo-Saxon countries was via control of the Labor Councils, control of these bodies in Australia in no way brought the unions closer to communism.
The new leadership of 1929 turned to a different vehicle to establish contact with unionists after the Labor Council had been condemned as "social-fascist". It utilised the Militant Minority Movement (MMM), which had limped along since 1928 when it was formed under Kavanagh. The MMM was a "non-party" body which unionists were encouraged to join and work in together with communists, who, as has been seen, were organising in the factories at this time. It advocated direct industrial action and control by the rank and file of unions of any strikes which occurred. As union leaders were responsible for failures in several strikes at about this time, the MMM won quite a following. It met initial success in the northern coalminers' lockout of 1929-30 and although it fell on bad days in 1932-33 due, once again, to the inappropriateness of revolutionary policies in a non-revolutionary environment, by 1935 communists had influence in several large trade unions and had laid the foundations for the capture of many more.

Due to limited space only two case studies have been made - communist policy and organisation in the Miners' Federation, where communists worked through the MMM, and communist activity with the Pastoral Workers' Industrial Union, a union which broke away from the Australian Workers' Union and came under communist and militant leadership. It emerges from the case studies that good organisation was responsible for communist success and inappropriate policies responsible for such failures as were met.
Many unionists came into the CPA via membership in the MMM.

Part IV of the thesis covers the CPA policy of establishing "front" organisations. The motives for establishing these "fronts" are covered extensively. Basically, their aim was to bring communists and non-communists together in the same organisation where they both worked for some common ideal (e.g. against war and fascism), and thus to allow communists to perceive potential recruits and win members. They were also intended to bring mass support for communist, and therefore USSR, foreign policy and other principles. Despite allegations to the contrary, they were not usually controlled in an underhand way by communists and frequently communists could not retain control of this or that "front", although they usually held the key official positions.

Two case studies are made: the Movement against War and Fascism; the Friends of the Soviet Union. Both were great successes by 1935, having thousands of adherents. Although in the case of the MAWAF and the FOSU the CPA could not retain full control of their operations, many CPA members appear to have come into the party via activities in the "fronts". They successfully spread communist ideas in journals and newspapers with combined circulations of over 100,000, many of which were circulated free. The "fronts" were the biggest communist success of the thirties.

The final chapter of the thesis, Part V, draws conclusions. The first is that the more the party followed Comintern
directions in policy the more it met failure. Initially when it followed traditional Australian socialist policy it met some success; after that it met failure. The inappropriateness of its policies was certainly a reason why it failed to recruit more followers and indeed why members already in the CPA left it. Organisationally, "bolshevisation" improved party activity and to some extent cancelled out the damage of inappropriate policy. Where, as in the trade unions, and especially the "fronts", Comintern control was less and the CPA went its own way more, and where organisation was more important than policy, the party experienced much greater success.

This thesis concludes, then, that inappropriate policy had a damaging effect on the CPA but that democratic centralism was not responsible for the relative failure to recruit supporters.
INTRODUCTION

The Communist Party of Australia has never been very successful. Between 1920 and 1935 all the party constitutions asserted that the CPA's aim was to overthrow by force the existing capitalist state and establish a dictatorship of the proletariat, pending the introduction of a communist society. The CPA never made any attempt to carry out this policy. There is a simple reason for such inaction: the party had also indicated in the same constitutions that the prerequisite for such an overthrow was workers' support, though it never indicated how much support would be considered sufficient. The required support was presumably never won, although the history of the CPA before 1935 included a continuous attempt to recruit the support necessary for a successful revolution. Naturally, the question in CPA history which has received the most attention is why there was so little popular support for Australian communism, despite all efforts of the party to attract it.

Various answers have been given. They have often been influenced by political or social emotions and not by the spirit of scholarly enquiry. It has been said that Australian communism was "a hothouse flower in Antarctica",¹ and that communism was "repugnant to our national sentiment";

² S.M. Bruce, Bolshevism in Australia, 9/9/25, National Publicity Bureau, (Melbourne).
and that without "... the depression there would have been no communism in Australia".  

Such answers see communist failure in terms of hostility, disinterest or apathy of the Australian people towards communism, from the recipients' point of view rather than that of the proponent.

It does seem highly probable that the greatest obstacle to communist success in recruitment and winning support has been the hostility, disinterest or apathy of the Australian people which the polemicists quoted above fastened on as an explanation. It can be roughly gauged from the lack of electoral support for the CPA. No scholarly surveys of popular attitudes to Australian communism before 1935 have yet been made. The lack of initial popular enthusiasm for communism was perhaps due to the absence of a strong revolutionary tradition in Australia. No conversion en masse to communism was possible as had been the case in some European countries. The importance of a preceding revolutionary tradition in conditioning the amount of support for a new communist party is a possible subject for future research by another student.

Besides the popular hostility explanation, it has been communist practice to blame the party's failure on its own errors and not on popular and, sometimes, not even on

sectional hostilities. The CPA has been forced, for reasons which will emerge in the thesis, to limit its criticism to its personnel and not direct it to party policies or organisation, except after the policies or organisation had led to gross failure which was acknowledge as due to such policies or organisation.

So both these explanations neglect to take into account the positive contribution of the CPA to its own failure through following inappropriate policies or adopting inappropriate organisation.

One object of this thesis is to fill this lacuna in the explanations. It aims to discover whether the policies and organisation of the CPA contributed to its failure to win mass support through their inappropriateness. It also aims to discover what other effects policy and organisation had on the CPA's history. Two lines of enquiry are followed in this thesis: first, what were the policies and organisation between 1920-35, and, secondly, what were the effects provoked by such policies and organisation?

Such enquiry demands an examination of the history of the Communist International at certain times, as well as that of the CPA, as the Comintern decided what CPA policy should be for much of the period 1920-35.
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<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
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<td>MAWAF</td>
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PART I
CHAPTER 1

BEGINNINGS

1. The Formation of the Comintern.

On 24 January 1919 a radio message went out from Moscow. It invited selected revolutionary groups of other countries to attend the inaugural meeting of the Communist International in March. It was sent on the initiative of the communists who held power in Russia. The message was published in only a few Western newspapers and in mutilated form. Among the revolutionary groups invited was the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) of Australia. Lenin, the leader of the Russian party, had expressed his contempt for the Australian Labor Party (ALP) in 1912, although it was the largest political party of labour and the largest party in Australia. The Australian IWW disdainfully refused the invitation and was not present at the inaugural meeting of the Comintern.

Little was said in this invitation about the purpose or aims of the new organisation. Those groups which did

1 P. Dutt, The Two Internationals, (1920), p22.
3 V.I. Lenin, "In Australia" in On Britain, (Moscow), pp168-70.
4 Industrial Solidarity, 26/7/1920; Proletarian, 1/2/1919. The IWW was actually called the International Industrial Workers to avoid an act banning the IWW; Solidarity, 15/11/1919.
attende and launched a manifesto on 6 March 1919 from the congress, indicating why the Comintern had been formed.\(^5\) The document said that the collapse of capitalism which Karl Marx and Frederick Engels had augured 72 years before was occurring in 1919. It described a Europe "covered with debris and smoking ruins" as a result of the First World War, for which the "criminal bourgeoisie" were responsible. It described a conspiracy of the ruling classes of France, England, Italy and the United States of America to cause war to destroy the rival Germany. The motive and cause had been the insatiable greed of the property owning classes, who found themselves rivals for the world's markets. The Manifesto went on that as a result of the war the contradictions of the capitalist system confronted mankind in the shape of the pangs of hunger, exhaustion from cold, epidemics and moral savagery. The one and only question was who would take over the "state-ised" economy created in the war - the proletariat or the imperialists? The workers must be advised not to go back to "bourgeois democracy", to nationalism. Civil war was developing between the classes as the bourgeoisie attempted to resist the progress of the proletariat. These toiling masses had to return blow for blow if they did not wish to sacrifice themselves. The object of the communists was to

\(^5\) Communist International, 1/5/1919, cols. 5-20. All those who attended are also listed here.
assure the masses’ victory in this civil war.

"Our task is to generalise the revolutionary experience of the working class, to purge the movement of the corroding admixture of opportunism and social patriotism, to unify the efforts of all genuinely revolutionary parties of the world proletariat and thereby facilitate and hasten the victory of the Communist revolution throughout the world," said the Comintern. 6

It seems a matter of faith whether there actually was a revolutionary situation, as described by the Comintern, in Europe in 1919. 7 In the case of Australia the description did not hold.

When Australia’s troops sailed back home in their thousands after the First World War they returned to a country totally different from war-ravaged Europe. Australia was entering a new era, an era of unprecedented prosperity. For while up to that time the Australian community had had to work hard to maintain its average standard of living at the old level, from the war until the Great Depression Australians grew more and more prosperous. 8 From 1918 until 1921, when there was a


slight recession, employment was full and wages steady if not improving. The economy as a whole thrived in the twenties.

The prosperity was secured by a new policy of economic development for Australia. There was no longer much land to sell so the new policy had the slogan "men, money, markets". A series of imperial agreements between Great Britain and Australia in 1922, 1925 and 1926 allowed the acquisition of the first two items in the slogan. First, by the Empire Settlement Act of 1922, the British Government promised to lend up to £3,000,000 a year for fifteen years to promote Empire settlement. Secondly, in 1925 there was the "£34,000,000 Agreement" between Great Britain and the Commonwealth of Australia, which allowed this sum to be lent to the States over ten years if they settled an assisted immigrant for every £75 received. A Commission for Development and Migration was set up in 1926. 323,000 migrants arrived between 1921-29. In addition 100,000 people moved out of the country into the towns. Between 1919-20 and 1926-27 the numbers employed in industry increased by about 95,000. The value of industrial capital equipment more than doubled and a system of government preference for Australian manufactures started operating. The pattern of Australian life was starting to change. Though at the end of the twenties Australia was still primarily a producer of wheat and wool, industrial production rose
between 1919-27. Australia was becoming an industrial nation. Skilled labour was short and employment was full when compared with the thirties, although lower than in prewar years.

Australia was prosperous. Over £300 million was easily borrowed between 1920 and 1929, mostly from Britain and the USA. It was spent sometimes with reckless abandon and often shortsightedly. New but uneconomic industries were fostered by means of imperial preference tariffs and by subsidising such industries so that they could compete on the world market. Excessive expansion on the basis of boom conditions and failure to diversify in primary produce because some products were fetching high prices in post war years spelt disaster when the boom stopped. This did not prevent Australia's future from seeming rosy to its inhabitants. There was certainly no economic reason for revolution in the decade after 1917.

Immediate post-war Australia differed from Europe in another way, too. Often the decimated troops of the old world had limped home with promises of land and care, made in wartime by their governments, ringing in their ears. But, once home, they met neglect and promises were forgotten. Millions of disoriented men swelled the discontent prevalent at the time. In Australia, the governments launched soldier settlement schemes, which, though sometimes a failure in the long run, saved Australia from the discontent of disillusioned
"forgotten heroes". Preference in employment was also guaranteed to the returned soldier, who was glorified, and Returned Servicemen's Leagues sprang up to perpetuate the aura of glory. This was balm to the soul of the "digger". So, while in Russia ex-soldiers supported the bolshevik revolution, and while in Italy ex-soldiers carried out the fascist revolution, in Australia the ex-soldier became a defender of the status quo.

Of course, the prosperous Australia of 1918-20 had its militancy; so much so that one writer has called 1919-20 the "Year of Strikes". Indeed, trade unions were militant but it appears that the union strike offensive was dictated by a desire to have a slice of the cake and not by an abject poverty and suffering derived from the collapse of capitalism, which the Comintern said were the causes of the militancy in the world wide revolution it forecast.

In sum, Australia was not experiencing the same social, economic and political chaos as Europe and the Comintern's description of the collapse of world capitalism did not fit the reality of Australian conditions. However, despite the clash between the assertions of the Manifesto and the real conditions in Australia, Leon Trotsky stated that Australia was not outside the world revolution, in one of his earliest articles on the revolution the Comintern predicted.9

9 L. Trotsky, op.cit., p56. For the whole argument see ibid, pp50-63; and Communist International, 1/5/1919, col.44, for similar argument.
The way Trotsky rationalised Australia's inclusion in the of the world wide collapse of capitalism was complicated but not unbelievable. The revolution was an expanding phenomenon, beginning in the east with Russia and spreading towards the west. This, he wrote, developing on Lenin's argument in *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism*, had not been expected but it was so. It was due to the fact that the countries which had industrialised first had had sufficient profits to "bribe" the upper layer of their working classes. The reason why the revolution did not stop at Russia's national borders and could not be contained was that capitalism had developed international organic links. Capitalism was an "economic process which first evolved a typical national form and which then outgrew this national framework and evolved world ties". This was why Australia was part of the process. Its economic base was an organic part of the world capitalist system which was collapsing at the heart, in Europe. Australia was like Russia. He wrote that the railways which cut across Australia were not the natural outgrowth of the living conditions either of the Australian aborigines or of the first generation of malefactors who were, beginning with the epoch of the French revolution, shipped off to Australia by the magnanimous English "metropolises". The capitalist development of Australia was natural only from the standpoint of the historical process taken on a world scale. On a different scale, on a national, provincial scale it
was, generally speaking, impossible to analyse a single one of the major social manifestations of the epoch.

The implication for the apparently prosperous Australia was obvious. As the stricken countries of Europe collapsed before the forces of revolution, Australia's own capitalism would suffer and so would her workers, until they too were reduced to a state where they would revolt.

This theory was at the core of the Comintern thinking for many years and without remembering the notion of an expanding revolution many of the Comintern's decisions are incomprehensible. It explains why the Comintern would make generalisations about existing situations in the world which even the untrained eye could see did not fit the precise situation in this or that country at the time they were made. The Comintern officials knew this but they expected that sooner or later the facts would fit the anomalous examples. Of crucial importance in the history of any communist party was that the whole theory appears to have been wrong, assuming that the non-appearance of world revolution is proof of this. This meant that in many cases inappropriate directions remained inappropriate instead of becoming appropriate as the situation changed to conform with the Comintern's theory. It also meant that the whole communist movement went through stages where it seemed to sit back and wait for something to happen which never did. The history of the Comintern was, therefore, a
history of lost hopes and misguided expectations. Indeed, had the Communist Party of Australia come immediately, and always stayed, under the control of the Comintern, its history might have been considered solely as the history of the inappropriate.

Those groups which attended the first Comintern congress were a motley and unrepresentative crowd, both from the national and the socialist point of view. Of 17 groups only six came from western Europe or elsewhere overseas: Germany, German Austria, Sweden, Switzerland, America and the French Zimmerwald Left. None of the large socialist parties of the West sent representatives. Those who moved the formation of the Comintern said it was necessary:

(1) because the necessity of fighting for the dictatorship of the proletariat required a united, close banded international organisation of all communist elements standing on that platform, (2) to oppose the revival of the Second International at Berne, (3) to avoid suggestions that socialist forces were disunited. The new body stated, on the basis of theses presented to the congress by Lenin, that it considered it the duty of communist parties to enlighten the broad mass on the necessity for the proletariat revolution, to build up councils (soviets) in industry, the army, the navy and among the peasants, and to obtain a

communist majority in the councils. Little attention was paid to organising the new communist parties and, as the Second Congress report said, "the 1st Congress was only a congress of public propaganda..." 12

Indeed, the first year of Comintern activity was devoted mainly to propaganda and sloganising via the new communist parties which belonged to it. The Comintern was sure that the new world revolution had arrived and repeatedly announced that it had. "Communism has come into the streets. The communistic revolution is growing before our eyes." 13 Slogans were the order of the day - "Workman's Councils. In hoc vince" - and assertions "The Great Communist International was born in 1919. The Great International Soviet Republic will be born in 1920." 14

Initially there was some justification for this optimism. The first issue of the official organ of the Comintern, Communist International, pointed out that in May 1919 there were three soviet republics: Russia, Hungary, where a communist party had taken power, and Bavaria, where communists and sympathisers were also in power. The Comintern could also list a further eleven countries where

11 Ibid, col 127.
it saw a revolutionary process going on. For communists this was an era of great expectations. Before the apparent triumph of communism, and the Russian revolution was indeed the first time the proletariat had seemingly taken power, the large socialist parties of Western Europe, who had ignored the original invitation to form the Comintern, began to desert the recreated Second International and make approaches to the new body.

While the Comintern had extended its original invitation to disparate political and socialist groups, from the outset it was hostile to the Second (Amsterdam) International, to which most of the invitees belonged. In 1919 this body was decaying through its ineffectuality. Although it had condemned war before 1914, when war broke out all its parties, except in Italy, Russia, Holland and Bulgaria, had supported the war, explicitly or implicitly. As a result, Lenin's position during and after the war was that the Second International was dead; that it had signed its own death warrant on 4 August 1914 when the French and German "social-patriots" voted the war credits, that is, "cast in their lot with imperialist slaughter". During the war the Second International stopped functioning as socialists

16 B. Lazitch, op. cit, p19.
fought for slogans they had formerly condemned. But, as Lazitch points out in his excellent book on Lenin and the Third International, Lenin's attitudes towards the war received little support either, and he was virtually alone in his advocacy of a new International to replace the Second. Not surprisingly, the socialists moved into opposition to the war as it dragged on with frightful and unforeseen slaughter and after the war attempted to revive the Second International at the Berne conference. The meeting was boycotted by the Swiss, Italians, Serbs, Rumanians and Russians. Hatred dating from the war split those that were left. Ultimately the conference reconfirmed the policy of working through parliament, which the Comintern had condemned from its formation. The socialists thus confirmed the practice of all socialist parties since 1904 as the irrevocable base of all socialist policy. So though the house of European socialism was shaky it still stood.

This was one reason why the foundation congress of the Comintern was so unrepresentative and large countries such as Germany and Austria were represented only by delegates who had no mandate from the mass socialist parties to speak on their behalf. ¹⁸ By the end of 1919 this isolation of the Comintern had changed.

In March 1919 the Italian Socialist Party joined it

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after almost unanimous agreement at its Bologna conference.

The French were at first undecided but in April voted 727 to 270 to remain in the Second International. Then the German Independent Social-Democratic Party (USPD) left the Second International and put out definite feelers towards the Comintern with a proposal for a united International (Leipzig, 30 November 1919). Influenced by this, the French left the Second International with virtual unanimity for the action (4,330 to 337), though they did not immediately join the Comintern.

This attention posed a problem for the Comintern of how to cope with applications for membership from parties which had not from the outset supported it. This, coupled with other problems which had arisen during the year, necessitated more attention to organisation, although the sloganising went on. In this question of organisation the dominance of the Russian Communist Party in the Comintern was very significant. It is therefore important to describe how the Russians obtained such an early paramountcy.

The Russians called the first congress of the organisation. This made them host nation and naturally leading spokesmen in the initial stages of Comintern life, as only they knew what their purpose was in proposing the formation of the Comintern. The others were placed in the negative position.

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in any dispute which would arise. At the first congress the Russians were the largest nation in attendance. Of the signatories of the Manifesto even some of those who signed for other countries were members of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolshevik). These were Skrypnik who signed for the Ukraine, Rakovsky for the Balkans, and Balabanova for the French Zimmerwald Left. The major documents of the first congress were drawn up by Lenin, Trotsky and Bukharin of the Russian party. Then, due to poor contacts with the West, between the First and Second Congresses, the leading body consisted, in general merely of a group of Russians. The first edition of Communist International even said, "For a time - certainly a very short time - the supremacy of the proletarian revolutionary International belongs to the Russians". There is little doubt that they intended to transfer it to the West when the revolution was successful there. This does not invalidate the assertion that the Russians were dominant in 1919 and 1920. They freely admitted it themselves.

Their own experience of how to organise therefore became very important. In the Leninist tradition, for a variety of reasons, the line between organisation and

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22 L. Trotsky, op. cit., p63.
principle or ideology had been very fine. The Bolsheviks had been preoccupied with organisation as they saw in organisation the road to success. The most important factor which had made the Russian communist party thus preoccupied was the Russian revolutionary tradition, which, as a result of Tsarist oppression, had become conspiratorial, limited to small groups, and therefore given to violent solutions to problems. The Russian Marxists who formed the Bolshevik party embodied these traits. They therefore differed from the Western European Marxists in at least one significant way. In Europe, without the equivalent repression, large followings could be, and were, openly won and so all members did not have to be active workers. In Russia, due to small party numbers, every member had to be active and active in the "right" way to galvanize the inert masses. Organisation of party activity became a fetish. One of Lenin's earliest and most important writings was *What is to be Done?* (1902), which laid down the organisational tasks of the Russian Social Democratic Party (later the CPSU(B)). Lenin rejected the theory that the masses would spontaneously reach their own adverse conclusions about the capitalist system and overthrow it. (This was basically the belief of the European Marxists.) He asserted that only a small élite could understand Marxism and that it would bring these Marxist teachings to the masses and thus indicate to them how to overthrow the capitalist system. His pamphlet was written to propagate how this should be done. He also
suggested various organisational forms for the party. Instead of a federal form of party organisation he proposed an extremely centralized party, functioning on the lines of a military command. After a decision was made by the central body of the party it was to be carried out without question right through the chain of command to the lowest organs of the party. Any dispute over a policy had to precede the decision, therefore it was not to be questioned, even verbally. This made the central committee of the party effectively stronger than the rank and file. Lenin also wanted his party members to be professional revolutionaries, that is, full time party workers. These methods made a party function efficiently, he said. Although this organisation, known as democratic centralism, was adopted by the Russian party, this and other tactics split it into two wings, the Mensheviks and Bolsheviks, the latter of which supported Lenin.

The Russian party, alone among the parties of the Second International, adopted this mode of organisation. Leading European socialists such as Rosa Luxemburg condemned these organisational methods. In 1904 Luxemburg wrote in *Neue Zeit* an article now known as "Leninism or Marxism?" She pointed out that the ideas in *What is to be Done?* and another Leninist pamphlet, *One Step Forward and Two Steps Backward*, were a response to the autocratic conditions in

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Russia, but she still condemned the élite doctrine and the so-called democratic centralism, as these would lead to a rigid authoritarianism in the party and possibly a dictatorship of the party over the people if it took power. She wrote that, except for the general principles of the struggle, there did not exist for Social Democracy detailed sets of tactics which a Central Committee could teach the party membership in the same way as troops were instructed in their training camps. 24

While it is not the object of this thesis to elaborate the history of the role of organisation in the Russian party, or the hostility its methods aroused outside Russia, what has been said indicates adequately a pattern which existed in Russian party history; a preoccupation with organisation which was seen as a necessary prerequisite for carrying out the revolution, and was in part due to Russian conditions. (There was temporary neglect of organisation in the first year of the Comintern, and possibly during the war, though this point could not be pressed too far. 25)

When organisational problems arose in the Comintern the Russians referred back to their own political experience


25 This appears so from O. Gorkin and H. Fisher, *The Bolsheviks and the World War,* (California, 1940), p479 ff.
for solutions. First, they had to cope with the collapse of the Hungarian and Bavarian Soviet Republics in the middle of 1919, and establish illegal parties. Presumably, organisation on a Russian model was advised. Certainly, when the Comintern had to cope with the problem of parliamentarians in some of its new parties it referred back to the Russian party's experience of utilising parliament and in a circular letter advised member parties to base their attitude on that of the Bolsheviks. Soon this trickle of problems became a spate as the Comintern grew and started to meet with setbacks. Almost invariably it advised an application of Russian methods. This was quickly noticed by a leading Western Marxist, Karl Kautsky, and condemned by him. Lenin and Trotsky wrote defences of the Russian methods in reply.

In early 1920 a further extension of Russian tactics resulted in the first serious clash with the European parties which now belonged to, or were considering joining, the Comintern. Once more it concerned the role of parliamentarianism in revolutionary parties. In April Lenin wrote *Left-Wing Communism, an Infantile Disorder*.

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26 B. Lazitch, *Lenine, op. cit.*, p81, suggests this was done in 95% of instances.

27 *Communist International*, July 1919, col 420; August 1919, cols 105-6 (? = damaged page).

28 K. Kautsky wrote *Terrorism and Communism* and *The Dictatorship of the Proletariat* in 1918-20.
in which he condemned outright the rejection of parliamentarianism, as advocated by Bordiga of the Italian Socialist Party; advised the various British Comintern affiliates to affiliate with the mass British Labour Party; and told the Germans that a compromise with the left wing of the German socialist party (USPD) was necessary and useful. These suggestions met with considerable opposition. This marked the beginning of a short-lived opposition to Russian dominance in the Comintern. It was concluded at the Second Congress of the Comintern in July-August 1920, and centred on further organisational innovations which the Russians sought to introduce.

In *Left-Wing Communism* Lenin had claimed that the success of the Russian revolution had depended on Russian organisation and especially on the system of democratic centralism. He also said that others should learn from the Russians. As Lazitch says, "While the revolutionary movement was making away with Russia and the rest of Europe, Lenin continued to worry only about practical action." So the Communist International announced in June that

*The Second Congress of the Communist International will show the workers of all the world the shortest way to victory over the bourgeoisie.*


30 V. Lenin, *Left-Wing Communism, an Infantile Disorder*, (Moscow), p17 ff.

31 *Communist International*, June-July 1920, frontispiece.
Given Lenin's belief that the triumph of the Russians was owed to their organisation, this announcement meant the extension of Russian methods to all the parties of the Comintern.

Where the early Comintern had extended its invitation to join to all sorts of revolutionary groups, now the precise organisational limits of the body had to be defined as parties containing "traitors" to the working class, such as K. Crispin, now wished to join on their own terms. Zinoviev said, "We must lock the door and place a trustworthy guard at the gate of the Communist International".32

It was announced that the chief task of the coming congress was to determine clearly and precisely the practical policy of the Communist International, to consolidate the Third International, as an organisation of true partisans having the same programme, the same tactics, and moving along the same road. (My emphasis)

Among the delegates from 41 countries, besides the French and German socialists who had not yet joined the Comintern, there was one other delegate who is of interest for this thesis. This was Paul Freeman, who had been smuggled through Germany by the anarchists, and who claimed, without justification, to represent the Australian IWW.33

32 Ibid, col 214.
33 Report to CE of CP from Earsman, Mitchell Library, Hancock Collection, Mss 772/9, p137.
This marked the first tenuous personal contact between Australian socialism and the Comintern. Freeman had been deported from Australia some years before and had no credentials; he therefore received no voting rights at the conference.34 However, he had been quite prominent in Australian socialist circles and appears to have quickly sought favour with Simon Lozovsky, a prominent Russian trade unionist. But as he had lost contact with Australia, his presence at the Comintern had very little significance at this stage of the history of the communist movement.

To cope with the problem of parties which wished to join but contained anti-communists, and to bolshevise the disparate parties which belonged to the Comintern, the Comintern introduced 21 conditions (originally 19), which had to be fulfilled before membership would be granted. (See Appendix A) These 21 conditions contained two main conditions precedent to joining the Comintern. First, communist parties had to expel all reformists, centrists or moderates from controlling positions. A complete break with previous reformist Marxist traditions had to be made. The new communist parties were to cut themselves off completely from their socialist predecessors; one was either communist or anti-communist. Secondly, it imposed strict centralised control by the Comintern. In demanding

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34 See Appendix B.
this last point, Lenin, who drafted the conditions, was motivated by the apparently sincere belief, shared by others in his party, that the main reason that the revolution had not eventuated in many countries was the absence of communist parties in each country.\textsuperscript{35} The Comintern said that, in order to direct the working class successfully during the long, stubborn civil war, the communist party must establish the strictest military discipline within its own ranks.\textsuperscript{36} The theses introduced at the Congress therefore extended the peculiar Russian organisation to the other parties of the Comintern. Democratic centralism, as proposed by the Comintern, took the form of an extreme centralisation of authority. It said that the chief principles of democratic centralism were: the elective character of the lower groups, the absolute binding character of all directions of a higher body for the subordinate groups, and the existence of a powerful party centre of unquestionable authority for all the leaders of the party life from congress to congress.\textsuperscript{37}

At the apex of this pyramidal organisation was the Executive Committee of the Comintern (ECCI), and naturally

\textsuperscript{35} See \textit{Second Congress Report}, \textit{op. cit.}, pp 24-5.

\textsuperscript{36} \textit{Communist International}, June-July 1920, col 2143.

\textsuperscript{37} \textit{Communist Tactics of Revolution. Theses adopted by the Second Congress of the Communist International, July 1920}, (Sydney), pp11-12.
no autonomy would be allowed to member parties.  

The Comintern also adopted its first statutes. These said that the Comintern was established to organise the proletariat and to overthrow capitalism. All parties belonging to it were to be called "Communist Party of such and such a country (section of the Communist International)". The supreme authority of the Comintern was the world congress which met each year. This congress elected the Executive Committee which conducted the entire work of the Comintern between congresses: published its official organ in four languages and issued instructions which were binding on all parties and organisations belonging to it. The ECCI had the right to demand the expulsion from all member parties of those who offended against international discipline, and to expel the parties themselves for similar contraventions. Appeals could be made to the world congress. The ECCI had the right to co-opt non-Comintern members to its committee. The press of all parties had to publish the decisions of the Comintern. Parties were to prepare for illegality in all countries. All communications were to be made through the ECCI. Trade union, women and youth sections of the Comintern were likewise subordinate to the ECCI and were organised by the central body. Every member of the Comintern who moved from one country to another was to receive the help of the local members of the Comintern.

These statutes applied with slight modifications, until 1928 when new statutes were introduced. The theme of these statutes of 1920 was summed up thus:

The Communist International must, in fact and deed, be a single communist party of the entire world. The parties working in the various countries are but its separate sections. 39

While these theses were the main innovations of the Second Congress, the principles in *Left-Wing Communism* were also endorsed as theses; as a corollary to the demand for Russian-type parties, bodies such as the IWW were described as backward and a decision was taken to set up a trade union section. The congress also demanded that there should be only one communist party in each country. 40

At the congress the opposition to all these measures centred around K. Crispien and W. Dittmann of the German socialists, who were seeking admission to the Comintern. They opposed the centralised control demanded in the 21 conditions. Lenin identified Crispien's attitude with that of Kautsky, and the USPD was refused admission. But G. Serrati of the Italian Socialist Party had supported their entry and was subsequently reproved. The British delegates also showed some opposition to the proposal that they affiliate with the British Labour Party, 41 and Bordiga's

40 *Communist Tactics of Revolution*, *op. cit.*, pp13–14.
41 *Second Congress Report*, *op. cit.*, pp53 and 70.
suggestion that the experience of the Russians was not always applicable to Europe aroused Russian ire. 42 Lenin, perceiving that Bordiga sought to justify his belief that communists should abstain from parliamentary activity, replied crushingly that if the Italians were too weak to conduct parliamentary activity, how did they propose to carry out the dictatorship of the proletariat? One of the suggestions which troubled nearly all of the Europeans was the demand for an immediate expulsion of reformists from their ranks. In many cases these reformists were the grand old men of socialist politics in their own countries. To expel them was to expel the fathers of socialism in France, Italy and Germany.

Still, despite the opposition, the dominance of the Russians and their supporters at the Congress ensured that all their suggestions were adopted. 43 No doubt their stature as the first revolutionary government made others less inclined to oppose them. It should be remembered that on the day the congress concluded the Red Army was outside Warsaw and it appeared that the final onslaught on capitalism was about to begin. 44 In July-August 1920 world revolution could still seem probable.

When the delegates went home they knew the meaning of

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44 *Communist International*, June-July 1920, col 2468 ff.
the Comintern. Trotsky had told them clearly what all these theses and conditions had meant when he wrote

the very essence of the Communist International... is not a simple arithmetical sum of all labor and socialist associations existing in the various countries but represents a unified, independent, international organization, pursuing definite and precisely formulated aims through definite revolutionary means.

So no protests about instructions from outside would be allowed, nor would affiliates be allowed autonomy of action.45 In practice this structure meant that at any time the proletariat in one country might be sacrificed in the interest of the whole world proletariat, or the current policy of the Comintern might be unreal in a particular country as it was based on a concept of expanding revolution, and the country would be bound to accept the inappropriate directions.

The major socialist parties, those of France, Germany and Italy, believed in a theory of evolutionary Marxism and did not look on the class struggle as something transcending national boundaries. When the delegates of these countries went home, rebellion against the bolshevik theory as expressed in the 21 conditions and summed up by Trotsky manifested itself. Basically it centred on a denial that world revolution was at the stage the Bolsheviks claimed it was in the countries of Europe, and on which they based their demands in the 21 points, and on the demand of the

45 L. Trotsky, op. cit., p14 ff.
Comintern that the policy and organisation of communist parties be decided at Moscow. The response on the part of the French and Italians was a refusal to accept that this could be effectively done and claims that policy must be made by the local parties in response to local conditions. 46

The Germans had indicated disagreement with the Russian concepts even before the second congress. 47 They had called a meeting of the French and Swiss in Switzerland to discuss the establishment of a fourth international "allowing the fullest autonomy and freedom of action and liberty of tactics to each party connected with it". 48

So in 1920 one of the most vexatious of the problems of the international communist movement had already appeared: the tug between loyalty to the central authorities and realism in coping with the problems at home. Often the two could not be reconciled.

So, relying on its supporters in the socialist parties, the Comintern, with its 21 conditions, forced splits in the socialist parties. 49 The Italians split at Leghorn in January 1921 and the French at Tours and the Germans at Halle at the end of 1920. Those who agreed with the

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48 P. Dutt, op. cit., p38.
49 P. Borkenau, op. cit., p186.
Comintern theory became communist parties and sections of the International. It cannot be said that the Comintern won, as the socialists continued to exist, in some cases in a majority. But from 1921 the communist parties, including the Communist Party of Australia, were expected to have accepted the proposition that their national proletariat and its problems were subordinate to the needs of the world wide struggle. Other general conclusions, of relevance to the history of Australian communism, can be drawn from the early history of the Comintern.

The most obvious generalisation was that the Comintern had been Russified. Russians formed the majority of its leaders and far outstripped others in personal stature. The Comintern had insisted that all communist parties adopt the policies which flowed from the theory of world revolution. The Comintern had adopted Russian methods of organisation and tactics. It had insisted that all sections of the Comintern also adopt them and made their joining dependent on such an adoption. For this early period there is considerable truth in Borkenau's suggestion that the "history of the International is largely a clash of cultures", that is, Russian versus the European Marxist tradition. The Russian had emerged victorious. However, while Russian, the Russian revolutionaries saw themselves at this stage first and foremost as internationalists, and paid first loyalty to the workers of the world and not only to their own nationals.
Another generalisation is that by the second congress the Comintern had shifted its attention from what to do to how to do it: to slogans had been added organisation. The Comintern was henceforth a vast organisational machine, with ramifications in 41 countries. The history of the whole communist movement was, therefore, in part dependent of the appropriateness of the Comintern's organisational directions. So a history of a communist party must be in part the history of its organisation as well as the appositeness of its policies.

A third and final generalisation is that some member parties resented and opposed the introduction of Russian methods overseas.

This policy and organisation demanded by the Comintern was completely different from anything evolved by the Australian labour movement.

11. The formation of the Communist Party of Australia.

At the time of the Russian revolution of November 1917 there were several small socialist groups in Australia, but nearly all of the Australian working class who did not vote for the conservative political parties voted for and supported the Australian Labor Party.1 This party, due to its lack of any official theoretical assumptions about the

1 L.F. Crisp, The Australian Federal Labour Party, 1901-51, (London, 1955), p326. In 1910 the ALP received 49.6% of votes, in 1913 48.5% and in 1914 50.9% for the House of Representatives.
existence of a class struggle or the inevitability of the proletariat coming to power and establishing a new social order, its reformist tradition and its pragmatic approach to the problems with which it had to cope, was even further removed from the principles of the Comintern than the European labour parties, which were Marxist if not revolutionary.  

The diverse nature of the ALP can be explained, in a generalised fashion, by three factors. First, how it was created, second, the nature and purpose of its organisation, and third, the influence an enormous union, the Australian Workers' Union, had on the ALP. The ALP, known by various names in the different Australian colonies when it was first formed, was formed by trade unionists, together with a few socialists, in the course of two strikes in the nineties of the last century. The labour parties were formed in each state, partly because the trade unions did not seem able to secure various political aims which were expressed vaguely by the strikers. So at their outset the parties were primarily designed to secure workers' demands where trade unions could not do so, but they also had socialist overtones in some states. It will suffice here to say that the socialist aspect of the

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labour parties rapidly diminished and the trade union aspect grew. Trade unionists of the Anglo-Saxon tradition of the last century, to which Australian unionism belonged, were concerned with obtaining piecemeal reforms of the workers' conditions rather than achieving a radical change in the nature of society which would remove differences of interest between employer and employee. So this was one reason why the ALP was reformist and not revolutionary.

It soon became obvious to the unionists that the parliamentary members of the ALP would not always follow the dictates of the unionists or work for the sectional interests of the unions. So they established elaborate organisational machinery to prevent the parliamentarians of the party deserting the principles of the party as the unionists saw them. Every year the party would hold an annual conference at which union delegates were heavily represented. The decisions of this conference were binding on the parliamentarians, who were themselves controlled by a Caucus and bound to vote according to Caucus decisions. The ALP was thus organised to secure the utmost control from the bottom. Even so, the parliamentarians often found that their loyalties were not to the organised movement as such but to their electorate or some other group. So the history of the ALP involved on the one hand a continual attempt to find loopholes in the control, and it

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1 L. F. Crisp, op. cit., Ch 2.
proved to have many loopholes, and on the other hand a continual tightening up of the organisation by the trade unionists to block such loopholes.⁵ On the whole the trade unionists came out of the contest rather worse off. The loss of control was compensated for by the influence of the Australian Workers' Union (AWU).

The AWU was formed in 1894. It had formerly been the Amalgamated Shearers' Union, which was in turn composed of several other unions. It continued to swallow up other unions and was in 1917 the largest union in Australia.⁶ By this time, although its members were still mainly bushworkers, it had extended its influence into various industries. It has been suggested that its formation was inspired partly by the ideas of the American Knights of Labor,⁷ but its adoption of Robert Owen's Grand National Consolidated Trades Union Scheme of 1834 as its basis suggests that the more influential heritage was the British and not the American and that in its organisation it was conservative to the point of being anachronistic. The union proved even more reformist than others. It became committed to the system of arbitration in industrial disputes and consequently

⁶ See partial list in V.G. Childe, op. cit., p87.
opposed strike action by other unions on various occasions. It also became strongly nationalistic in its outlook. Long before 1917 it was recognised as the conservative bastion of the labour movement. Its influence on the ALP was not only due to its size and its consequent large representation at conferences but to the fact that it acquired the habit of "bumping" its officials into parliament - the AWU thus had advocates in the sanctum of the parliamentarians. This was another reason for the ALP's reformist character.

The ALP had almost a complete monopoly of working class support, except for those workers who voted for the non-Labour parties, until the war of 1914-18, but then it lost the support of a small but influential margin of unionists to a syndicalist organisation, the Industrial Workers of the World. The IWW was an American organisation by origin, whose ideas spread to Australia in the first decade of this century. It had two forms. The first, de Leonite IWWism affirmed that there was a class war and that revolutionary action was needed. The organisation it preached to carry out the revolution was the industrial union, but it did not eschew parliamentary action. The second, a splinter group of the first, eschewed parliamentary action, claiming that it could achieve nothing for the workers.

Neither had much influence in Australia before 1914, although they were both espoused by small socialist parties. Some ALP militants used the ideas of the IWW to attack the
conservatives of their party in the first decade of the century, and in the second the idea of industrial unionism found favour in some unions. The reason for this was inefficiency in running large strikes, especially in Broken Hill in 1908-9. In these strikes far too many unions had been involved to allow the strikes to be run efficiently. Some unions turned to the more efficient industrial unionism, but such ideas were really limited to the miners' unions. The IWW was attacked by the ALP and the AWU because of its revolutionary ideas and this is one reason why its influence continued to be limited until the war. Then it started to come into greater contact with the ALP rank and file and with a small but influential section of the unionists. Long term grievances against the ALP may have contributed to this contact but more important was the intense IWW anti-war and anti-conscriptionist propaganda at a time when the ALP federal leader, W. M. Hughes, was advocating conscription and in favour of the war. Hughes was prepared to defy the labour movement to introduce conscription. This split the Labor Party and Hughes formed the Nationalist Party. In this climate the ALP rapidly lost a margin of support to the IWW. In 1916 the unionists who supported the IWW numbered between 2,000 and 4,000. 9

8 Ibid, p275.


10 V.G. Childe, op. cit., p135, says 2,000; N. Jeffrey says 4,000 in L. Churchward, op. cit., p258.
The IWW paper, *Direct Action*, had about 15,000 readers.\(^\text{11}\) In the same year the government took advantage of the fact that twelve IWW leaders had been charged with conspiracy to commit arson to ban the IWW with the Unlawful Associations Act. Several IWW members were deported and others jailed.\(^\text{12}\) Some sections of the IWW survived the outlawry under different names, but the organised movement was broken by 1917.

Although the ALP had almost a monopoly of working class support at the time of the Russian revolution, a small but influential group had broken away in favour of revolutionary ideas. They were disorganised as a result of the government ban, but they were important because they did not owe sole allegiance to the ALP.

On the other hand, until this date the ALP had received almost all organised working class support which did not go to conservative political parties, and this influenced the policies of the Australian socialist parties. As will be shown, the socialist policies influenced those of the Communist Party of Australia.

The labour parties were formed by workers as workers and not as socialists or liberals or as people committed to any

\(^{11}\) This must be the NSW figure, as Jeffrey gives 26,000. The discrepancy can only be explained by different areas of sale.

exclusive belief. They were, therefore, primarily parties whose commitments, if any, were to the Australian workers. From their creation they contained members with all sorts of beliefs and were regarded as sufficiently catholic to incorporate any ideas held by members of the working class. The ALP was only nationalist, reformist and pragmatic in 1920 because the strongest trend in the Australian labour movement was also pragmatic and reformist.

Socialists took part in its formation, especially in Queensland. Here a Brisbane journalist, William Lane, formed a Bellamy Society in 1887. He spread the ideas of Edward Bellamy via the newspapers Boomerang, Evening Observer and Worker. Looking Backward, Bellamy's utopian socialist work, was read by at least a section of the Queensland workers who formed the labour party of that state. Lane himself set up the Australian Labor Federation which was prominent in running the strike during which the first political labour groups were formed. He advocated socialism as a solution for the plight of the workers and won considerable support. The failure of his ideas before the pragmatic ones advanced by other parts of the labour movement can be ascribed in part to his departure from Australia to form a utopian socialist colony in South America, and to the decline in bitterness after the strike. There were many Bellamists in the early Queensland political labour groups.
In NSW there were also Fabians. Here the Australian Socialist League, formed in 1887, played a part in the formation of the labour party and was an active part of it. Several League members were ex-evangelists who came to socialism with the millenarian aspects of both their old and new faiths forming a bridge. The early membership was only 30–40, but it included followers of Marx, H. Hyndman, Annie Besant, P. Kropotkin, the Webbs, L. Gronlund and Bernard Shaw, as well as Bellamy. The League supported the early labour party because it seemed to allow conversion to a socialist party in the atmosphere of class hatred immediately after the strikes of the nineties. Before the Political Labor Conference of 1893 the Australian Socialist League, swollen in numbers by converts made during the strikes, proceeded to try to force the adoption of a socialist programme at the Conference. It thus began the policy later known to socialists as "boring from within." 14

In Victoria the odd leftovers from the semi-Marxist Democratic Association of Victoria of 1872 joined the ALP. 15 So the ALP was quite catholic and quite used to incorporating

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13 V.G. Childe, op. cit., p71, says most of the Australian Socialist League were Bellamists or Fabians.


socialists into its ranks in the early years of its life. This posed a problem for socialists and Australian socialist parties. Should they join the ALP with the aim of converting it to socialism from within, or should they compete with it for the support of the working class? The working class was committed to support of the ALP anyway, and might be difficult to win away from that party. On the other hand, the ALP did not exclude socialists.

The first socialist group really faced by this dilemma was the Australian Socialist League. At first it had chosen to work within the Labor Party, hoping to influence it to adopt policies of socialisation. By the middle of the nineties it had become quite clear that the ALP was not going to do this and in 1898 it even dropped the nationalisation programme which the Australian Socialist League had been instrumental in bringing it to adopt in 1897. So the League left it, leaving behind some members, including the future Labor leaders Billy Hughes and W. Holman. The League now had to establish itself as a fully fledged political party to compete with the ALP for the support of the workers, as a propagandist role was no longer sufficient.

In 1901 it formed itself into the Socialist Labor Party (SLP), still showing some reluctance to give up its propagandist role. In the same year it ran its first candidates in the elections for the new federal parliament. The vote its candidates received indicated the isolation a competitive role engendered. Although the Socialist Labor
Party's programme was like that of the ALP, very moderate, its most prominent candidate, Harry Holland, received only 4,771 votes where the last candidate elected to the Senate received over 70,000. Shortly afterwards in the NSW state elections Holland received only 34 out of 1,316 votes cast in a working class electorate. Obviously the new independent, competitive role did not work any more than the "boring from within" policy had in the nineties.16

Still, despite a decline in the SLP, other socialist parties were formed, some of which built up a liaison with the SLP. The most important of these was the Victorian Socialist Party, which was formed by amalgamation of a Socialist Democratic Party and a Social Questions Committee in 1905.17 The formation of the two amalgamating bodies, as well as the VSP, was owed in great part to the activity of Tom Mann, a former leader of the London dock strike of 1889.

Most of the Victorian socialists had, like the Australian Socialist League, taken part in forming the Labor Party of that state. Unlike the League, they continued to work in the mass party. Mann worked for the ALP and the Trades Hall

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17 A Social Democratic Federation was formed in Victoria by H. H. Champion in 1892. In 1898 a Victorian Socialist League was formed by Ben Tillett. These amalgamated into the Social Democratic Party in 1902, at the behest of Tom Mann; see I.A.H. Turner, "Socialist Political Tactics, 1900-20"; Bulletin of the Australian Society for the Study of Labour History, (May 1962).
of Melbourne as an organizer and at least one socialist was returned to parliament as an endorsed candidate of the Labor Party. It has been claimed that their work was sufficiently effective to persuade the Labor Party to adopt a socialisation objective in 1905.

The VSP continued this policy of working within the ALP. Mann's personal preference for this policy only reinforced previous tradition. It seemed to him that the adoption of the socialisation objective allowed the ALP to be converted into a party of social revolution by people working within. It would, he wrote, be "doctrinaire, exclusive, pedantic, narrow, .... comparatively useless and perhaps mischievous", to establish a party to vie with the ALP for working class support. So the VSP membership, a claimed 2,000 in 1907, entered into the Labor Party to convert it from within.

In 1907 Mann organised an interstate socialist conference to unite the disparate socialist groups and parties of Australia. At this meeting a clash developed over whether the united socialists should adopt the SLP's or the VSP's policies. Although the SLP withdrew from the conference

18 H. Scott-Bennett of Social Democratic Party was elected as ALP candidate for Ballarat in 1904.
20 This membership size was probably highly exaggerated.
21 These were the SLP, the ISC and SDF (Sydney), Barrier Socialist Propaganda Group (Broken Hill), Social Democratic Vanguard (Brisbane), Social Democratic Association (Kalgoorlie), and the VSP (Melbourne), numbering slightly more than 2,000 members in all.
because of a disagreement over other matters, its policy was adopted despite previous experience of failure. The new Socialist Federation of Australia (SFA) decided that socialists should not run as ALP electoral candidates. For several years the VSP was split over the SFA adoption of policies of competing with the ALP for working class support. At first Mann and his followers seemed to be worsted in the dispute, but when the VSP ran candidates in the elections it experienced disaster and the advocates of "boring from within" returned to favour. The Labor Party had been alarmed when the VSP first stated that it would run its own candidates and even proposed amalgamation. However, even the strong VSP could not achieve success when competing with the ALP. Consequently the VSP started attacking the SFA and expelled SFA supporters. In 1912 it in turn was expelled from the SFA, which set up a rival party in Melbourne. The SFA now changed its name to the Australian Socialist Party (ASP), amalgamated with the International Socialist Club and resigned itself to propagandising after the failure of independent political action in the past. The VSP slowly rebuilt its links with the ALP and by 1914 was back in its former pre-1907 position. During the war it had considerable success. The Victorian Labor Party was the first to object to conscription, as a result of VSP pressure.

22 VSP minutes, 2/9/1908, 7/12/1908, 10/12/1908 (ANL).
Two VSP members were elected to the Political Labor Council of Victoria by the 1917 Labor Conference.23 In 1918 the VSP ensured that the Labor Party adopt an anti-war policy. It also claimed to be author of various social services introduced by the ALP in that state.

So at the beginning of the war there were two trends in Australian socialism, represented by the policies of the SLP and the VSP. The VSP had been more successful and new socialist parties tended to adopt its policies. Yet by the war there were additional factors in the dialogue. The ALP was by this time becoming more and more suspect to socialists. It was obvious that even the policy of "boring from within" had not made the ALP socialist and so the policy was becoming increasingly more difficult to justify. Furthermore, faced with the crisis of the war the ALP was showing a tendency to disintegrate, as the catholicity of its components made cohesion difficult, and it finally split over the question of conscription, after which some members turned to the IWW. Others lost went to the SLP, which received a surprising 32,692 votes in the 1917 NSW elections.

Most of the disillusion with the ALP was owed to its support of the war and leaders' support of conscription. This was increased when the ALP neglected to lead strikers in a large general strike in 1917. The ALP left wing profited by the party's shilly-shallying to establish themselves as

leaders in the industrial movement.

The left wing ALP group were supporters of the theories of the IWW. When the IWW was banned under the Unlawful Associations Act this left wing ALP group, led by the N.S.W. Labor Council, decided to form One Big Union (OBU), once more with a revolutionary programme.

Chief advocate of the scheme, J.S. (Jock) Garden, secretary of the Labor Council, together with others drew up the plans for the OBU and after a protracted debate had them accepted at a trade union congress held on 5 August 1918. By that time the Russian revolution was occupying much space in the labour press. It was thought to provide backing for the OBU scheme. At this congress Garden talked about the scheme in such terms. He continued to link up the two ideas, bolshevism and OBU, in 1919, especially in the paper of the Brisbane Russian Association, Knowledge and Unity. The OBU aroused the opposition of the largest union in Australia, the Australian Workers' Union (AWU), because of its revolutionary beliefs, and because of Garden's threats to "white-ant" the AWU in the hope of capturing it for One Big Unionism. Though V.G.Childe says this was "the rock on which the One Big Union went to shipwreck", it is doubtful whether it was ever more than an organisation on paper. In 1919 the OBU advocates, in

24 Loc. cit.

25 Actually the OBU was more an organisational move than a revolutionary one.
face of active AWU and moderate ALP hostility, seceded from the ALP and proposed the formation of a new separate party. They were, of course, expelled from the ALP. The majority formed the Industrial Labor Party. Some formed the Socialist Party of Australia. This minority included Garden and A.C. Willis, who were quite prominent leaders in the union movement in NSW. Garden was secretary of the Labor Council, Willis was president of the Miners' Federation. They had considerable personal followings.

Into this situation of a weakened ALP and after the development of these socialist traditions in policies came the first news of the Russian revolution.

All groups of labour received their first news of the Russian revolution in the conservative press. The initial accounts varied, naturally enough, and due to the pitiful trickle of news which reached Australia both the labour and non-labour press can, perhaps, be accused of writing what they wished was happening rather than what was actually taking place. The conservative press emphasised the horrors of the civil war, the treachery of the separate peace treaty that the Russians had made with the Germans, and such baseless bogeys as the "communisation of women". Both Sydney and Melbourne papers augured failure for the

27 Industrial News, 1/5/1921.
But even before 1918 the Melbourne paper *Argus* was forced to recognise the immense popular support the Bolsheviks had, and as early as 1918 the paper observed with alarm that there was a leaven of bolshevism in Australian industry. It was obvious to the *Argus* that the Russian revolution could not fail to have some impact on the left wing of labour. However, it is significant that the *Bulletin* wrote favourably of Lenin and Trotsky and allowed the Bolshevik consul, Peter Simonoff, to write articles on the revolution for the journal. Taking into account its later attacks on the CPA and OBU, it is a fair inference that at this stage it did not think that the revolution had any relevance to Australia.

Indeed, the November revolution did not immediately interest all the Australian labour groups. The newspaper of the AWU refused to decide whether the Russian revolution was "right or wrong, wise or foolish"; but in January 1918 acclaimed it, in a leading article, as a revolution of vitality and determination never before seen in the world.

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29 SMH, 10/11/1917; *Argus*, 7/11/1917. The *Argus* asserted that Russia was in the hands of "quacks who knew as much about treating her ailments as medieval doctors (with neuts (sic) hearts and lizard legs ... swallowed facing the rising moon)", *Argus*, 18/1/1918.

30 *Argus*, 12/11/1917.


32 *Australian Worker*, 27/12/1917.

33 Ibid, 3/1/1918.
This conservative labour paper set the pattern for ALP reaction. The ASP also showed little initial interest, although news of the revolution filled its newspaper's pages in 1919.\(^3\) On the other hand, the VSP, which had welcomed the March revolution, acclaimed the November revolution as well.\(^3\) It even decided to approach the ALP with a plan to send a delegate to Russia. R.S. Ross wrote that with "the revolution we woke up".\(^3\) By 1919 nearly all the socialist groups had joined the two large socialist groups in their acclamation of the revolutionary events in Russia.\(^3\) Despite their acclamation there seems little reason to doubt Norman Jeffrey's assertion that, with the exception of the small Russian community of Brisbane, none had ever heard of Lenin before.\(^3\)

Some socialists were not content to rest with mere

\(^3\) International Socialist, 12/1/1918, 26/1/1918, 1919 passim.
\(^3\) VSP minutes, 28/3/1917, 23/1/1918.
\(^3\) R.S. Ross, Revolution in Russia and Australia, (1920), p30; Ross's Monthly, 16/2/1918.
\(^3\) N. Jeffrey, A Stormy Period in Australia, the First War to the Russian Revolution, roneod, ML
acclamation for the Russian revolution. As J.B. Miles wrote some years later, it was to inspire some to form a communist party. In the first place, it appeared to provide some common ground for the unity which had often been attempted unsuccessfully - now, many groups, while remaining de Leonites, or anarcho-syndicalists, or whatever it might be, were also supporters of bolshevism, although they knew no Leninist theory. In fact, it precipitated a renewed dialogue over SLP and VSP policies.

One of the first groups to attempt to form a communist party began organising within the VSP in 1918, holding the Collingwood branch as its "operational base". When several other groups and the ALP suggested schemes for unification in 1918, this group proposed that the basis for unity be a revolutionary programme and that parliamentarianism be rejected, for this was how the group understood bolshevism. L. Aarons, spokesman for the group, proposed a conference in either Melbourne or Sydney, with each socialist group invited to send two delegates. As a result letters were sent on 7 October 1919 to E. Turner in Brisbane, F. France (ASP secretary), M. Sawtell of the Social Democratic League in Adelaide, and P. Trainer in Perth (secretary of the Workers' Industrial Union of Australia).

41 VSP minutes, 6/2/1918, 10/6/1918, 6/10/1919.
[There were also three others invited later, but I have not been able to discover their names.] At the end of the same month sheets of suggested rules were distributed and "comrade" Baker moved that "The name of the organization shall be the International Socialist Party of Australia". J. Maruschak's amendment that the name should be the Communist Party of Australia was defeated. This formal failure to establish a party communist in name and spirit was followed by the refusal to attend of five of the eight groups invited to the conference. Discussions about the proposed new party were put in abeyance until after Christmas. However, in the interim the VSP "Collingwood" group published and launched the "New Communist Manifesto" of the Comintern. They also began a struggle with the "old show", led by Ross, to see if the VSP would become the first Australian communist party. Meanwhile, those inspired by the Russian revolution were joining the party in considerable numbers, bringing the Collingwood group support. It is not surprising, then, that Maruschak succeeded in having a motion passed in January 1920 by votes to 26 that the party's name be changed to "Communist Party of Australia", and that it adopt the principles of revolution,

42 Presumably C.W. Baker, a foundation member of the CPA and a member of the VSP at this time.
43 VSP minutes, 27/10/1919.
44 Ibid, 10/11/1919.
45 This was its appeal of 6/3/1919.
direct action and that it affiliate with the Communist International. But a motion by Ross for the retention of the name Victorian Socialist Party was carried two weeks later. Ross followed up with a further counter-motion that "the principles be not changed". The struggle shifted to the mechanics of voting. Over the next month it was decided that a simple majority assent at a special meeting was sufficient to change the VSP policy, but that members of less than three months standing should not be allowed to vote. Thus the new communist supporters were prevented from voting and Maruschak's star began to wane.

Ross's opposition was due to his belief that the methods of bolshevism were inapplicable to Australia. In the Queensland Worker he published a series of letters to that effect, which were later printed as a pamphlet, Revolution in Russia and Australia. In this he asked assent "to the claim that Australia's share in the sensational situation in Europe can be little more than as a spectator". He went on to say

I am claiming that the machinery we have built [sic] and evolved is as natural and wise for us as the Soviets for the Russians.

He believed that a peaceful way to socialism via an extension of democracy was possible in Australia. Such a belief was

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46 VSP minutes, 14/1/1920.
47 See Appendix C.
48 VSP minutes, 10/3/1920, 1/9/1920.
anathema to a Marxist-Leninist, and he brought the wrath of
the Bolshevik consul, Peter Simonoff, down on his head.51
The stand was only natural given the moderate traditions of
the VSP. When Maruschak introduced a further motion
calling for a communist programme based on soviets, Ross put
his views into action by having passed another motion
(61 votes to 41), seconded by Bosch, that such communist
dogmatism would force out of the VSP many who wished to work
on its traditional lines; that the dictatorship of the
proletariat was "anti-democracy"; and that "militarization
of the proletariat meant war". Those who did not like the
VSP policy should leave the party.52 So the VSP was going
to retain its traditional policies and identified the
communists as hostile to their retention.

Like the VSP in Victoria, the ASP had taken steps in
1919 to unite the disparate socialist forces of NSW after
the revolution occurred. The members of the party had
been agitating for this for some time in letters to the
International Socialist. So in August 1919 a unity
conference was held at which the ASP, the Socialist Party
of Australia, the Social Democratic League and the SLP,
the ASP's traditional rival, were present.53 A.C. Willis

51 Ibid, p3.
52 VSP minutes, 29/9/1920.
53 Delegates for the ASP were M.Reardon, C.Jackson, R.Everitt,
O.Jorgensen, L.Leece, P.Drew; for the SPA A.C.Willis,
S.Rosa, J.S.Garden, Stanley Allen, G.M.Burns, A.A.
Rutherford; for the SDL J.Roe, C.Boden, H.L.Denford,
J.Rasmussen, P.Perrin, Vance Marshall; for the SLP
J.Moroney, H.Ostler, R.Corcoran, W.Jeffrey, Mrs.H.MacMaho,
J. Foley, E. Judd.
was chairman. At this meeting Jock Garden said that the time had come to establish a true united party and the ASP demanded the espousal of revolutionary principles. The meeting went no further, though it arranged another meeting for September. This time the SPA attended as the Industrial Socialist Labor Party (ISLP), and promptly destroyed the meeting by refusing to accept the name of the proposed new party, the "Revolutionary Socialist Party of Australia". This failure to establish a united party did not prevent the ASP issuing a manifesto in December called \textit{Australia and the World Revolution}, which was based on the American Minority Manifesto. It stated that "We, the Communists of Australia, affirming our allegiance to the Communist Internationale", bring Marxism-Leninism to the workers.\footnote{\textit{Australia and the World Revolution, Manifesto of the ASP}, ASP, (1919), p5.}

The manifesto emphasised the "educatory" nature of the party, though it affirmed that world revolution was nigh and capitalism collapsing.\footnote{\textit{Ibid}, p15.}

It outlined the proposed organisation and activity of the party. It would run candidates for political office, run a party press and establish communist study classes and propaganda activities. Finally, when it had won a majority, there would be revolutionary action.\footnote{\textit{Ibid}, p19.} A contemporary, H.B. Charlesworth, said that it was a milk and water
manifesto as it did not mention the tactics proposed by the Comintern. But it is from this manifesto that the establishment of a so-called Communist Party of Australia can be dated. Its recognition by the Comintern is another question which will be discussed later. Having declared itself communist, the ASP made another call for unity to the SLP, arranging for a conference to form a united CPA for 30 October 1920. The ASP, too, had retained its old educational policies.

Another CPA was formed in the interim. This was the old ex-OBU, ex-SPA ex-ISLP group. After the September conference the ISLP had joined the SLP, with whom it had something in common.57 (Garden and Judd had worked together on the OBU.) But in November 1920 Garden was expelled from the SLP as he had

conspired with persons outside the organization for the purpose of forming a party with a policy contrary to the interests of the working class and principles of the SLP.58

This party was formed some time in early October 1920.59 The leaders were Garden and W.P. Earsman.60 It secretly launched an anonymous manifesto which the ASP reported rather disdainfully. The party also had supporters in Melbourne.61

57 Revolutionary Socialist, 3/2/1920.
60 See Appendix B.
61 Proletarian, 7/10/1920, p3.
Members of this party, Garden, J. Kilburn and A. Thomas, actually selected the people invited to the unity conference of 30 October, although the letter was from the ASP executive. Evidently the ASP leaders did not realise that Garden and the mysterious other CPA were one and the same.

The SLP was, of course, the main object of the ASP executive's solicitations. But the old enmity of the ASP proved too strong for the SLP and it refused to attend. The SLP gave two reasons for its boycott: first, it said the ASP were splitters and the SLP the only true socialist party in Australia, and secondly, it feared that this party could be "a cloak for spies and governmental control as in the United States". It warned all workers to "keep clear of alleged communist parties" and stimulated further dislike by making statements to the *Sydney Morning Herald* to the same effect, definitely stating its opposition to the party which emerged from the conference. In fact two of its branches attended the conference in defiance of the executive ruling not to attend.

Of the sixty people invited, only twenty six turned up at the ASP hall in Liverpool Street on 30 October. From

64 SMH, 4/11/1920.
this sickly beginning came today's CPA. Among those in attendance were Garden, Earsman, Norman Jeffrey, A.S. Reardon, C.W. Baker, Guido Baracchi, J.B. Miles, T. Glynn, A. Brodney, R. Everitt, Miss Christian Jollie Smith, and Adela Pankhurst and her husband Tom Walsh. 66

Many were strangers to each other. Probably all had read some Marx but none had a clear idea of Leninism. 67 The meeting can be better understood if it is accepted that the common denominator was inspiration with the ideal of the Russian revolution rather than with the ideas of the Russian revolution. The various groups were very suspicious of one another. Many thought that the ASP sought only to reinforce itself. This forced Reardon to state that the ASP had not packed the meeting but had deliberately excluded its rank and file. 68 Indeed, when a provisional CPA executive was elected, only three of the twelve were members of the ASP. These were Everitt, Reardon and Brodney. The others on the executive were Garden, Thomas, T. Glynn, Miss Smith, Barclay, A. Walsh, T. Walsh, C. Hook and Baker, together with Earsman as secretary. 69 So from the outset the Garden group was predominant. It appears, on the

66 See Appendix B.

67 N. Jeffrey, op. cit., says that ideological clarity was only established with the arrival of the State and Revolution in 1920, but it was probably not established until much later as Leninism is not understood by reading only the State and Revolution.


69 CPA minutes, 30/10/1920, Han Coll, ML, Ms 772/8.
evidence of Miles, that they and not the ASP had come with the intention of capturing the new party.\textsuperscript{70} Their motives seem to have been a desire for power and position, but the implications were important for future communist policy. Indeed, on 31 October, Garden managed to get the chair at the CPA's first rally and led the discussion. Though the drafting committee for the rules and constitution of the party contained equal numbers from the ASP and the Garden CPA, the Gardenites continued to entrench themselves.\textsuperscript{71}

On 12 December, Reardon, secretary of the ASP, wrote a letter to the CPA agreeing to transfer ASP property to the CPA after six months and thus confirming a previous letter from Brodney to the effect that the ASP would be merged into the CPA.\textsuperscript{72} The Garden group continued to entrench its position. The third meeting of the CPA was held at the Trades Hall and not the ASP hall.\textsuperscript{73} On 23 December the ASP newspaper had its name changed from International Socialist to International Communist, and Everitt was instructed to print pamphlets in the name of the CPA and not the ASP. Then the two groups started to fall out. Everitt accused Earsman of calling the ASP members of the executive "dangerous individuals who had to be watched".

\textsuperscript{70} International Communist, 24/9/1921.

\textsuperscript{71} CPA minutes, 31/10/1920, ML, Han Coll, Mss 772/8.

\textsuperscript{72} Both letters are in the Hancock collection, ML, Mss 772/9, p197.

\textsuperscript{73} CPA minutes, 6/11/1920, ML, Han Coll, Mss 772/8.
Marsman's denial of such ad hominem attacks was accepted, but relations continued to deteriorate. The central executive constituted itself the central branch of the CPA without consulting the large ASP Sydney branches. This exacerbated the already tense situation. The ASP promptly refused to honour its promise to transfer its property to the new party. Finally there was a split. Marsman had successfully proposed that elections for party positions be postponed until Easter and that the provisional executive remain in power until then. This was too much for Reardon, who on 14 December withdrew the ASP from the CPA, claiming that the Marsman proposal would have put the new party into the hands of men "unknown to the revolutionary movement". He accused the Garden group of subverting the party to their own "personal ends". The ASP claimed that unity under such conditions was impossible. The 30 October conference had been purely organisational.

Had the ASP accepted the proposition as it finally presented itself it would have been tantamount to selling the membership and handing over their assets and the future destiny of the Communist movement to a group of individuals who admitted that they had no standing as Communists and clearly feared the will of the rank and file.

76 International Communist, 1/1/1921; Reardon to Marsman, ML, Han Coll, Mss 772/9, p201.
77 Ibid.
The Garden group denied all of the ASP allegations.78 Evidently each group was afraid of being swamped by the other, whose personal and theoretical honesty it did not trust. Most significant was the fact that there were now two CPAs, both claiming to be official. For purposes of clarity the ASP will still be referred to as the ASP, although it called itself the CPA.

This left two possible roads of policy development for Australian communism. It could become attached to the isolated, doctrinaire ASP or to the rather more influential ex-OBU group, whose leaders held important positions in the central bodies of the industrial labour movement. In the first case it would have no influence beyond the membership of the ASP, but in the second it could wield some influence in the industrial labour movement of NSW. The real problem in the second case, though no one was so pessimistic to think so at the time, was that the influence that the Garden group wielded had been acquired before the CPA was formed and therefore might only belong to the CPA while these men belonged to it.

Shortly after the split in 1920, the Trades Hall (Garden) group held a conference to decide on leaders, having already decided to continue with the party despite the loss of ASP support.79 The 26 March conference adopted the American

78 *Australian Communist*, 24/12/1920.
79 CPA minutes, 22/12/1920, ML, Han Coll, Mss 772/8.
Minority Manifesto and programme, and elected a central executive of H.L. Denford, P. Larkin, C. Baker, J. Garden, W. Earsman, N. Jeffrey, [?] Bowman, A. Thomas, H. Ross, and Miss C. Smith. The trustees were Miller and Stuart.

It is difficult to determine who was dominant among them at this time. It was either Garden or Earsman. Probably Earsman gave the impression of being the leader as he was more cultured than Garden and allowed to do the speaking. Garden was, however, responsible for most early statements of policy and by mid 1921 had emerged clearly as the dominant member of the party. The party was coloured by his personality for some four years thereafter. He did not meet much opposition, as the Central Executive was firmly pro-Garden. As Earsman had favoured an educatory role for Australian socialism and Garden, with the OBU, one of boring from within the ALP, Garden's dominance was important in determining early CPA policy. Unluckily, the party minutes are only available for 1920-21, so it cannot be seen whether he completely dominated proceedings after that time. Certainly, as only six to twelve turned up for each early party meeting, there is evidence that the rank and file was prepared to leave the direction of policy to Earsman and Garden in the early years. Probably the same state of affairs also existed after that time.

80 Conference Report, March 1921, ML, Han Coll, Mss 772/9, p64-65.
81 M. Roberts, "The Labor Movement of NSW, 1919-27", unpublished manuscript, p78, says Baracchi told her it was Earsman.
With the exception of Earsman and Miss Smith, the leaders of this party were not theoreticians. Indeed, they not infrequently said communism was practical action and not philosophy, thus being, as far as Lenin was concerned, both right and wrong. All but three were leaders in the industrial labour movement and were rather lacking in formal education. However, most were concerned with the central problem of humanity, rights and wrongs, whether they were ex-rationalists like Baker, or ex-evangelists like Garden. Besides, the opinion has been ventured that, though unschooled, they were astute and generally more intelligent than the average ALP leader of the time.

Their lack of ideological clarity and understanding of Comintern policy and organisation was not entirely their own fault at first. It was faute de mieux that they chose the American Minority Manifesto as the first statement of principles of the new party. Significantly, the ASP had also based its 1919 manifesto on the same American document. The ideas that the CAP was adopting were thus rather garbled American versions of bolshevism, for other bolshevik documents were not available in Australia. Indeed, the basic Marxist-Leninist works were not read until late 1921 or possibly 1922. Even if a communist had followed the press closely he would have received his documents in this order:

Manifesto of the Communist International (a mere propaganda tour de force) in early 1920, the American Minority Manifesto also in early 1920, together with piecemeal and inaccurate reports on the Comintern, the State and Revolution in April 1920, the 21 points in October 1920, (the decisions of the first and second Comintern congresses were not published until much later), much secondary work by Kollontai, Trotsky and so on in 1921, but, as far as I can ascertain, no further basic Leninist texts except Left Wing Communism, an Infantile Disorder, which appeared in Europe in July 1920 and so was possibly known in Australia in early 1921.  

In 1920 McNamara's bookshop was advertising the following works by Lenin: The Soviets at Work, The State and Revolution, The Collapse of the Second International; by Bukharin: Communist Programme of the World Revolution; and by Trotsky: The History of the Russian Revolution to Brest Litovsk. But there were none of the basic works of Lenin: Two Tactics of Social Democracy, April Theses, and What is to be Done?, which Rosa Luxembourg perceived were the key works of bolshevism.  

Most widely read were books by John Reed, Simonoff, M. Blackburn and Professor Goode.


R. Luxembourg, op. cit., passim.

Ten Days that Shocked the World.

What is Russia?

What the Russian Workers are Doing; In Russia.
which appealed to the emotions more than to the mind. However, by 1922 those who chose to could acquire a considerable degree of ideological clarity. Few of the leaders chose to struggle with the Marxist texts.

At this juncture it is appropriate to mention the role of the Russians in Australia, whom Jeffrey mentioned as the only group to have heard of Lenin in 1917. It is beyond doubt that the Russians already in Australia played a part in fostering the creation of a communist party. The Russian associations of both Brisbane and Melbourne worked closely with those trying to introduce communism. This was quickly spotted by a hostile source, who remarked on the anti-czarist origins of the Brisbane group and on its dissemination of bolshevik propaganda. One of their most prominent early leaders before 1917, F.A. (Artem) Sergayeff, had taken part in the 1905 revolution in Russia. "Secret Service", a pamphleteer, pointed out that their "pernicious" doctrines would appeal to the IWW type of worker.

In 1920 the most prominent of these Russians was the bolshevik consul, Peter Simonoff. He made repeated pleas through the paper of the Russian Association of Brisbane, to which he belonged, that a communist party be formed.

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89 See Appendix B.

90 J.N. Rawling, The Communist Party of Australia to 1930, ANU paper, (1962), p10, says that he provided finance for the new party, but I have no evidence of that.
He frequently attended meetings of the VSP and Ross printed a book for him.\textsuperscript{91} He also attended many meetings of the CPA which was later formed.\textsuperscript{92} His activity was matched by that of A. Stepanoff of the Russian Association of Melbourne. Doubtless both these men conducted much overt and covert propaganda in favour of communism. Simonoff certainly did so in the columns of \textit{Knowledge and Unity}, the newspaper of the Russian Association of Brisbane, which was regarded as bolshevik propaganda by the authorities. On one occasion at least a vendor was arrested for selling the paper. The paper demanded "speed" and "action" and that the "left wing justify itself" in Australia.\textsuperscript{93} It backed the One Big Union scheme heavily, as the way to power.\textsuperscript{94} Jock Garden was naturally a favoured writer in its columns as he was one of the leaders of the OBU movement. In early 1919 the paper was transferred to the Queensland Socialist League, and the Russian Association started to produce \textit{New Life}. Together these newspapers complained of unnecessary disunion and printed accounts of the Comintern and the Russian revolution. After October 1920 they backed the Garden group in word if not in deed, and blamed the ASP for the split.

They probably knew Leninist theory and understood the mechanics of the Comintern earlier than the Australians. Some of their knowledge may have been transmitted to the members of the CPA. Certainly in 1921 they had not much

\textsuperscript{91} VSP minutes, 15/7/1918, 29/7/1918.  
\textsuperscript{92} CPA minutes, 29/11/1920, ML, Han Coll, Mss 772/8.  
\textsuperscript{93} \textit{Knowledge and Unity}, 31/12/1918.  
\textsuperscript{94} \textit{Ibid}, 20/1/1919, 3/2/1919.
influence on the theoretical knowledge of the party, or the
American Manifesto would not have been chosen as a programme.
Nor had they succeeded in creating a unity among socialists
on the basis of bolshevism, which was their aim. On the
contrary, the socialists were as disunified as ever and
they had kept their former socialist policies.

The Garden party was very loosely organised at this time
and appeared to have no good interstate liaison, an important
organisational requirement in a country as big as Australia.
However, branches in other states (see below, p70 ff.)
quickly went out of action and after 1921 the CPA was
centred on Sydney. Here a central Sydney branch existed at
the Communist Hall in Sussex Street.95 H. Denford had
brought over his branch of the SLP at Newtown, and Norman
Jeffrey had started the Balmain branch in November 1920.96
In Newcastle there was a branch with M. [?] Rawstrong as
secretary. Though party headquarters were in Sussex Street,
party life centred around the Trades Hall branch where
Garden was active. Otherwise, the Sydney branch was the
largest and the Balmain branch the most active. Although
the CPA claimed in May 1921 that it had branches in every
state and members in every industry and almost every union,
it also admitted that it was not strong.97 This weakness

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95 *Australian Communist*, 31/12/1920.
96 CPA minutes, 23/11/1920, ML, Han Coll, Mss 772/8;
   *Australian Communist*, 31/12/1920.
97 *Communist*, 20/5/1921.
was blamed on previous Australian prosperity and working class reformism. It expected conditions to get worse.

Although the party was in fact a lot weaker than the May statement indicated, the exact number of party members is not known. Estimates vary widely, but membership was probably creeping up to the 750 Garden mentioned in 1922. (See below, page 117). As the Proletarian pointed out, they were a trifle "raw", presumably meaning that they were without theoretical knowledge. 98

Whatever the numbers, the party was only just viable, as a further CPA conference held in December 1921 revealed, although there were delegates from Melbourne, Newcastle, Brisbane, Cairns and Innisfail, as well as the Sydney branches. 99

The Sydney communists had started to formulate policies of action from the early days of their existence, that is, before the arrival of the strict instructions of the Comintern.

The Sydney Garden CPA policy was compounded of the policies of the OBU and the smattering of bolshevism it had acquired by 1920. Garden made the first statement of policy on behalf of the temporarily united CPA of December 1920. It was called the Road to Power. This document

98 Proletarian, 7/12/1921, p1.

99 Conference report, December 1921, ML, Han Coll, Mss 772/9, p105-6.
stated that capitalism was collapsing; that the proletariat would save civilization by establishing the proletarian state, "an organ of suppression against the despoilers of labour"; and that the Soviet system was the greatest form of democracy; but it concluded with the claim that mass direct action was needed. 100

A few days later the Argus reported the issue of the manifesto from the Sydney Trades Hall, emphasising the demand for work in the trade unions. 101 Essentially what the party was advocating was the "white-anting" of existing trade unions with a view to their eventual takeover. This was almost identical with the methods adopted as OBU policy. This attitude seems to have dominated the early party policy until the first contact with the Comintern. At the Third Congress of the Comintern Earsman described the party work to that time in this fashion:

We set to work among the trade unions, and formed a number of groups, whose main object was the spreading of communist principles, and the "white-anting" of unions. 103

It is probable that the party distributed leaflets in the trade unions describing their policy.

The CPA policy brought attacks from the ASP who condemned Garden's manoeuvres to link the Australian Workers

100 International Socialist, 18/12/1920.
103 Argus, 27/9/1921.
Union with the OBU, stating that communists were communists first and trade unionists second, even when they were trade union secretaries. It was thus implied that Garden was not a communist first. Certainly a reading of the early issues of the *Australian Communist* reveals an excessive interest in industrial unionism and other forms of trade union work. It was asserted that agitation in the Domain was not enough.

The first concrete application of the policy of "whites" or boring from within came at an All Australian Trade Union Conference, called by the ALP and held in Melbourne in June 1921. Garden, Willis, J. Kilburn and A. Rutherford and other ex-OBU communists were there as representatives of various unions. The object of the conference was to let the ALP executive know "the state of mind of the workers". E. Holloway, chairman, said that "the mass was not satisfied with the programme and objective of the Australian Labor Movement". The moderate, reformist, pragmatic platform was considered obsolete in view of the "lightning changes all over the world". What the conference had to decide was whether the ALP should adopt a socialist, revolutionary platform. In the debate on this question the communists and fellow-travelling ALP members played an important part. In order

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104 *International Communist*, 19/2/1921.

to understand why, it is necessary to look again briefly at the reactions of the ALP to the Russian revolution.

The ALP's attitude to the November revolution in Russia and its implications was, on the whole, sympathetic. Even the newspaper of the moderate AWU hailed it. It continued to be sympathetic for the next year or two. Indeed, even the Catholics who were strong in the ALP, spoke in favour of the revolution, taking their lead from the favourable attitude of Archbishop Mannix, the acknowledged leader of progressive Roman Catholic opinion in Australia.

But while the mass labour party applauded the revolution, the struggle between the moderates and the radicals in its ranks did not discontinue. This had gone on for many years, perhaps since the 1908 conference when the various left wingers had espoused the principles of the IWW. The struggle had approached hatred in the war years, when the moderates favoured conscription and opposed a general strike in 1917 and the radicals had taken the opposite point of view. The dispute in the ALP had been very bitter and had resulted in the moderates, at this time the AWU and the parliamentarians, losing control of the industrial labour movement, which began to dabble with such schemes as the OBU. The expulsion of the

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106 *Australian Worker*, 3/1/1918.
107 L. F. Crisp, *op. cit.*, p175.
followers of the OBU in 1919 was a climax to this dispute. The reason the communists were able to take such a prominent part in the 1921 conference was the desire of the moderates to regain the trade union support they had lost during the war. This led them to take a back seat at the conference to humour the industrialists, applying a rein only on rare occasions. 109

M.P. Considine, a member of the House of Representatives and a friend of Simonoff, who had pronounced himself the first communist parliamentarian although he was not a member of the CPA, led off the debate. He moved that

This conference regards the system of Parliamentary Government, theoretically based on the assent of the majority, as being in fact the instrument of domination by the capitalist minority toying with the ignorant and apathetic majority.

Parliament should be used as a temporary propaganda machine, as revolution was the only solution to the vexed social conditions of the day. He urged the trade unions to popularise this attitude, to abandon reformist methods and to vigorously co-operate in every form of industrial action aiming at social revolution. 110 This last proposal was presumably an appeal to support the OBU. Holloway ruled this motion out of order, despite dissent from Garden.


representing the sailmakers. Holloway said that if the communists wanted socialisation of industry "they must use parliamentary action". After the lunch recess E. A. Russell and the communists moved that the ALP adopt an objective of socialisation of the means of production, distribution and exchange. It was left to a committee for examination. This committee produced a compromise objective which was introduced to the conference by J. Scullin. It proposed that the aim of socialisation be attained by parliamentary action. Garden and Considine tried to introduce an amendment to make parliament only a venue for propaganda. The amendment was lost by 123 votes to 41. So was another which tried to introduce the notions of a proletarian dictatorship. The recommended objective remained socialisation without violent revolution. For the communists the big success was the invitation to rejoin the ALP. Kilburn accepted it in these words:

I believe that we can enter at certain times into the Australian Labor Party, or any other party, without losing our identity. If ever we are side tracked by the Australian Labor Party, you can rest assured that it is going to create bitter opposition; but if the Australian Labor Party can agree with us that the overthrow of the capitalist administration will assist us towards the goal of social revolution, even we would be foolish to miss this splendid opportunity.

111 Ibid, p5.
The motion to create a Council of Action to achieve "unity politically of all the working class parties on the basis of affiliation" was passed with one dissenting voice. The council contained three communists and four extreme left ALP men among its twelve members. The conference concluded with the singing of the "Red Flag", and its recommendations were forwarded to the forthcoming Interstate Conference of the ALP.

Although the ASP regarded this entry into the ALP as valueless it was actually of great importance once the united front policy had been introduced in Australia.\(^{114}\) (This will be discussed in the next chapter.) There was, on the other hand, an element of truth in the ASP's suggestion that, stripped of its revolutionary phraseology, the Garden CPA was a trade union party.\(^{115}\)

The Garden CPA initially had some support outside NSW, in Victoria, Queensland, South Australia and Western Australia. In NSW a Newcastle communist group supported it. The ASP had stimulated the formation of a New Zealand communist group, but it soon broke away from the ASP's tutelage. The ASP also failed in its attempt to organise in Queensland. The greater influence of the CPA was misleading, as a year later most of its following in other states had gone out of existence. Some of their leading members shifted to Sydney.

\(^{114}\) International Communist, 16/7/1921.

\(^{115}\) Ibid, 29/10/1921.
Important in the future history of the CPA was the fact that supporters in the other states did not always favour the policies followed by Garden. On the other hand, they did favour the policies which the ASP espoused. In Melbourne this was so. Ross had suggested that those "communists" who did not disagree with the VSP's traditional policies should leave the party. They did not do so immediately. The men who supported the CPA were members of this VSP communist group and others, who were led by Guido Baracchi and Percy Laidler, who were formerly IWW members, which may explain their personal support for Garden.

They actually established the Melbourne branch of the party at the request of the Sydney unity conference of 30 October 1920. That conference resolved that this party advise members of the VSP to form a Communist Party in Victoria but that retain membership in the VSP. Sometime between 23 and 28 November a CPA was formed by Baracchi and Laidler in Parer's Hotel, Melbourne. It was impossible, in view of the attitude that they had taken to VSP policy and Ross' suggestion that they should leave the party, for them to remain members of the VSP. They believed that such tactics were not permissible. C.W. Baker,

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116 *Proletarian*, 7/10/1920, p.3. There were four communist "tendencies" in Melbourne. One supported the ASP and the others the CPA.

117 See Appendix B.

118 CPA minutes, 30/10/1920, ML, Han Coll, Mss 772/8.
a member of the new CPA branch, threatened to "smash" the VSP, as he did not agree with its methods of propaganda.

As a result, the VSP carried this motion:

That owing to their declaration of enmity and their proclaimed disloyalty to the VSP all such members of the Communist Party be ineligible for membership in the VSP. 119

In any case, the Proletarian had already stated that all members of the CPA were to leave the VSP. 120

The policy advised by this Melbourne branch was very similar to that of the ASP and completely different from that of the CPA. It was expressed in the pages of the Proletarian. Once again the editors had very little real knowledge of Leninism, though they were better read than their Sydney counterparts.

The Proletarian stated in its first issue that revolution was inevitable in Australia. It did not expect this to happen soon. So what the revolutionary movement needed more than anything else were study classes. The journal claimed that the function of the CPA was to show the impotence of parliamentary action and to disseminate revolutionary propaganda. 121 It acted as an analyst of the development of the class struggle, trained revolutionary

119 VSP minutes, 2/12/1920.
120 Proletarian, 7/11/1920, p7.
121 Ibid, September 1920, p3.
cadres and put its knowledge at the services of the proletarian. While in September 1920 it had said that the soviet system was applicable in Australia, in March of the following year it wrote, "a propos the establishment of workers' councils in Australia,

.... the situation in Australia at present is not exactly revolutionary, and the most urgent needs of the Australian proletariat is not workers' councils but a strong communist party."

It added that if councils existed they should be supported. The volte face could have been due to the knowledge of the decisions of the Second Congress of the Comintern, but it was more probably based on an analysis of what was feasible in Australia, as the suggestion that there was no revolution here ran counter to the Second Congress decisions. On the other hand the Melbourne communists were certainly more au fait with the developments in the Comintern.

In sum, what the Melbourne supporters of Garden were proposing was an educatory policy like that traditionally followed by the ASP. Party unity perhaps benefited from the fact that the branch soon went out of action. It was immediately weakened by the loss of Baracchi and Baker to Sydney, and later also the Proletarian, where the journal became the official party organ. Its early life was troubled by VSP hostility. It was refused the use of the

122 Ibid, October 1920, p9 ff.
124 CPA minutes, 29/11/1920, ML, Han Coll, Ms 772/8.
VSP hall, and when the CPA declared its complete enmity to the VSP the little group became completely cut off from the other socialists of Melbourne.

The group remained solidly in support of Garden after the ASP split away from the united party, but the Sydney group could provide little help for it in its difficulties. In February Laidler informed the central executive of the Melbourne branch's increasing financial difficulties, but nothing could be done. The Sydney branch showed irresponsibility towards the Melbourne branch. When Garden and Walsh visited Melbourne in early 1921 they did not even bother to attend it, but spoke at a meeting of rival socialists. This could perhaps be due to differences over policy. The branch continued to decline. Delegates from Melbourne attended the First Annual Conference of the CPA in December 1921, when the branch membership was reported as "falling off" and having grievances about lack of local news in the party press. It was reported still in existence in early 1922 and that some members were on the Trades Hall Council, but it went out of existence soon after. Laidler later stated

.... its membership contained too many of the old school and too few new men. Communist philosophy was not widely understood, and the first Melbourne Communist Party died in its early childhood.

125 CPA minutes, 21/2/1921, ML, Han Coll, Mss 772/8.
Some of its leading members became or had become members of the Sydney branch and so there were exponents of an educatory role for the party still in it after the demise of the Melbourne branch.

Had the Adelaide group survived, this policy might have become official policy, as two of its most prominent members were J. Cullen and A. Wilson, formerly of the SLP. The third leader was M. Sawtell of the Social Democratic League, which favoured VSP-type policies. Presumably, though it is not certain, the branch would have advocated SLP policies. The monopoly of socialism in Adelaide by the surviving IWW made communism a dead letter.

The first steps to form a branch there were taken on 26 January 1921 and the CPA endorsed the formation of the branch. In July 1921 it was reported in existence, but already letters were arriving from Adelaide, signed by Wilson, which informed the Sydney CPA that the South Australian branch was becoming defunct. Its disappearance before the end of the year caused no great interest in the party press.

A third branch which also favoured an educatory policy was the tiny Western Australian group formed by K.S. Pritchard, Ben Jones and P. Trainer. It was in existence as late as

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129 Communist, 20/5/1921.
130 ibid, 24/6/1921; N. Jeffrey, _cit._, p5.
1923 and probably survived the twenties, with a short break in 1925, but its size relegated it to a propagandist role.

The Queensland branch was the only branch outside NSW which definitely survived the twenties. It finally favoured the sort of policies which Garden had adopted. At first, as it was formed by members of the ASP branch in Brisbane, led by W.J. Thomas, it also proposed an educatory role for the party. It started publishing a journal, Communist. The ASP central executive refused to endorse Thomas' action in forming the group. It claimed that there was no scope for the journal and that it might embarrass the party. Thomas disagreed and dissolved the Brisbane branch of the ASP, making it the nucleus of the new communist group. Simonoff played a part in its formation, but only a few Russians joined. A prominent member was J.B. Miles, a member of the Queensland Socialist League since 1918 and a founder of Labor Colleges in the northern state. On behalf of the group he attended the 30 October conference in Sydney. At the end of November a list of Brisbane residents willing to form a branch was read to the CPA. After the split he first favoured the ASP because he doubted Garden's integrity. He soon changed his mind and when he returned to Brisbane reformed the local branch, which had gone defunct, as part of the CPA. There were only fifteen

1 Interview with J.B. Miles, January 1965.

1 CPA minutes, 29/11/1920, ML, Han Coll, Mss 772/3.
members, mostly from the Queensland Socialist League, whence they inherited the newspaper *Knowledge and Unity.* Most were industrial workers. At the 1921 conference of the CPA there were delegates representing Cairns and Innisfail as well as Brisbane. They proposed the formation of branches in all these centres. These led indirectly to the formation of the official Brisbane branch in August 1922, with A.G. Rees, J.B. Miles, H. Huggett, C. Wilson, W. Meers and N. Lagutin on the provisional executive. Soon after branches were formed in Cairns and then Townsville. The members, who came predominantly from the waterside, railways and other unions, were content to work according to the Garden policy of "boring from within."

At this juncture, 1921, a clearly discernible trend in policy had developed in the party. Ignorant of the nature of the policies developed by the bolsheviks and demanded by the Comintern, or, at least, only half understanding what they did know, the communists of Australia continued to work as the socialists of this country always had. They had inherited a tradition of dispute over which of two policies was more apt in the ALP-dominated labour movement. Naturally, that communist party which had stemmed from the socialists who had favoured educating the workers and competing with the ALP continued to advocate the same policy

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134 *Communist*, 22/9/1922.
after converting itself into a nominal communist party. The other group which called itself the Communist Party of Australia had adopted the alternative traditional socialist policy, that of working on the ALP with a view to converting it from within to socialism. It had chosen this policy mainly because its leaders had belonged to the industrial wing of the Labor Party anyway, and because they had previously promoted schemes designed to secure a similar conversion of the ALP by socialists. The two parties had, naturally enough, inherited together with the two policies the antagonism which had nearly always existed between their protagonists. Every time there was an attempt at unity it failed, not always because of the antagonism, but often because of it. Far from promoting the unity of the socialists of Australia, the Russian revolution merely provoked a renewed dialogue over which policy was best or more socialist. For this reason the activities of Russians in Australia which were devoted towards unifying the socialists into a communist party were not really so significant as native developments. Unity on a communist platform was not achieved. Disunity on several socialist platforms was.

This trend in policy, taken with the demands of the Comintern that the parties adopt the policy of world revolution, suggested that there would be a clash between Australian communists and the world headquarters as soon as contact was made. The Australian traditions and those of
the Comintern were almost opposite.

The Comintern advised a policy of fostering a world revolution to overthrow capitalism by violent means, independently of and in hostility to other labour parties. The CPA followed a policy of working in the Labor Party with a view to converting it to socialism from within, and even toyed with the idea that socialism could be introduced by parliamentary means.
CHAPTER 2

THE UNITED FRONT

1. The Comintern

In 1921 a CPA delegate first attended a Comintern congress. In 1921 the conflict between the Australian and the Russian traditions of policy began.

The CPA could have avoided such a conflict by avoiding the Comintern, but the need for international unity of the proletariat had for so long been a sine qua non of socialism that there is no record at all of its ever considering that it could be the CPA without belonging to the Comintern.

It would be difficult to list all the reasons why socialists feel the need for international unity, so only some of the more obvious will be given here. M. Bakunin suggested that the First International (1864-76) be formed as international unity was needed in Europe because strike breakers could easily be moved about on that continent. Unity on a national scale only was not sufficient against scabs. Marx said that the First International sought to afford a central medium of communication and co-operation for those organizations aiming at the protection, advancement and complete emancipation of the working classes.

As the concept of the class struggle was adopted by more and more working class organisations in the late 19th century, the feeling that international unity was as important as national unity grew too, as one of the class struggle theory's by-products was a belief that class knew no
boundaries. Many other forceful reasons impelled socialists towards the formation of internationals. It suffices to say that by the time of the Russian revolution all socialist parties, even the isolated Australian parties, believed in the need for international unity.

The ALP, because of its nationalistic and non-class basis did not feel this need for internationalism. It made only a few half-hearted attempts to contact the Second Internationals (1889-1914). The socialists, on the other hand, established contact with both the First and Second International. In 1872 the Democratic Association of Victoria sent W.E. Harcourt as its delegate to the Hague conference of the First International. The other socialist parties maintained tenuous links with the Second International from its creation. Due to the great distance between Europe and Australia liaison was poor, but the socialist parties, whether formally affiliated or not, regarded themselves as part of the International. The ASP and the CPA naturally shared this belief in internationalism. The ASP was quicker to establish links with the new Comintern. It proclaimed its allegiance to the Comintern in its manifesto of December 1919, *Australia and the World Revolution*. Presumably it

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1 L. F. Crisp, *op. cit.*; ch 6. But note that the ALP was listed as an affiliate of the Second International in 1920, P. Dutt, *op. cit.*, p48.

2 H. Mayer, *op. cit.*, p41.

applied for affiliation at the same time. Subsequently it claimed that it had been requested by the Comintern to become the Communist Party of Australia. But at the beginning of 1921 it certainly had no accredited delegates in Russia, though three men formerly associated with it were in that country. They were Artem Sergayeff, [?] Bolden and [?] Cook. Sergayeff had been formerly of the Russian Association of Brisbane and the ASP, and was then commissar for mines in the Bolshevik government and an executive member of the Comintern. Sergayeff was empowered, the ASP claimed, to represent the party but it freely admitted that it had not been able to transmit credentials to him, even though he himself had requested them. There was also a suggestion that a man deported from Australia, Paul Freeman, was representing the ASP at the Comintern. There is no evidence to support this claim. Whoever the friends were that the ASP had at court, they were not official delegates.

There is some evidence which corroborates the ASP claim of being affiliated. In 1919 Boris Souvarine produced a pamphlet, La Troisieme Internationale, the first publication on the Comintern. In this the ASP was listed as affiliated. In 1920 Palme Dutt produced a book, The Two Internationals, which also listed the ASP as affiliated, relying on

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4 International Communist, 1/1/1921.
5 Ibid, 15/1/1921.
6 Printed Paris, 1919.
Souvarine's pamphlet. There are several reasons why this evidence is suspect. Dutt's list carried a proviso saying that it was provisional and subject to correction, as it was based on doubtful and incorrect information. A CPA delegate, Earsman, who visited Moscow in 1921, made a series of confidential reports on the subject, which totally belied the ASP's claim to be already affiliated. His reports are borne out in a report in Communist International that the CPA which adhered to the Comintern was formed in Sydney. The Comintern's information came from the New York Call of 6 January 1921. If the ASP was already affiliated, why did the information have to be obtained from the New York paper? While all conclusions must be that the ASP was not formally affiliated, a tentative explanation of the contradictory evidence is this: the ASP had friends at court in 1919 and since at that time it was not expected that its claim to be affiliated would be challenged, Souvarine listed it as affiliated before it was formally affiliated. Alternatively, it might have been affiliated before the Second Congress, but at that Congress it was decided that there could only be one affiliate in each country and that disputing communist parties should unite before they would be formally accepted by the Comintern. This would in fact have disaffiliated the ASP until such time as the disunited socialists of Australia made some attempt to unify.

7 P. Dutt, op. cit., p62.
Certainly Souvarine's list would have had to have been revised after 1920, as he listed more than one affiliate in several countries.

Though it had no accredited representatives in Russia, the ASP always regarded itself as the affiliate of the central body and the other group certainly had to obtain all its information about developments in the Comintern from the ASP. 9

The CPA lagged behind. It only applied for affiliation on 22 December 1920, playing down the fact that the ASP had withdrawn from the party. 10 The request went by both cable and mail.

It was very important which party was affiliated, as after the second congress the unaffiliated was bound to join the affiliated party in a unified communist group. This implied that there would have to be changes in leadership and policy as one group became subordinate to the other.

The ASP remained ahead of the CPA when it sent its first delegate to the Comintern, which had invited the "Australian Communist Party" to send a delegate to the Third Congress. This delegate was Paul Freeman, who had returned to Australia under the name Miller to popularise the new trade union organ of the Comintern, the Red International of Labour Unions (RILU) (see below, page 290ff). He was

9 International Communist, 16/7/1921.
10 CPA minutes, 22/12/20, ML, Han Coll, Mss 772/8.
appointed ASP delegate with two proxy votes. The other party tried to delay his departure by informing the authorities of his illegal presence in Australia, but he managed to leave before they could despatch their own delegates. Earsman was hurriedly sent off, with J. Howie, who had been appointed Australian Congress of Trade Unions representative to the first conference of the RILU. Howie was not a communist. They both worked their passages, leaving on 2 April. They arrived in Moscow on 13 June to discover themselves there before Freeman. A. Rees of the ASP had already been there two days when they arrived but he had no credentials. Another ASP delegate, Quinton, had been arrested in England as a "suspicious character" while on his way over. Earsman decided to fight for full recognition.\(^{11}\)

The day after their arrival they visited Lomovsky, the head of the newly created RILU, and won his support. They then attended the RILU's inaugural conference where, together with Tom Mann who jointly represented Australia and Great Britain, they were accorded twelve votes. They signed the document and appeal of the RILU.\(^{12}\) There was still no sign of Freeman.

Earsman then visited Skobetsky [sic-Kobetsky], whom he called the secretary of the executive committee of the Comintern, and had himself appointed to various committees. He also curried favour with the powerful German delegation.

\(^{11}\) Report to the Central Executive of the CPA, ML, Han Coll, Mss 772/9, p111.

\(^{12}\) International Communist, 27/8/1921.
Nobody knew anything about Freeman. On 17 June Earsman won Trotsky to his cause. Trotsky told him that if he "struck any difficulties I had to come to him and that he would assist me".  

On 22 June Freeman arrived. He had friends somewhere, Earsman reported, as he received the decisive voting cards for the Third Congress and Earsman was given a consultative vote only. Earsman turned to Trotsky, who obtained a decisive vote for him. When he protested at Freeman's and Rees' receiving decisive votes, there was a "declaration of war" between him and Freeman. Finally he succeeded in engineering equal voting rights for each group. The Comintern officials began treating him as leader of the delegation. All mail passed through his hands. Then a third ASP delegate turned up, Pat Lamb, a close friend of Freeman. All appeared lost for the Garden CPA, despite the fact that:

On July 14th I learned [sic] from Comrade Skobetsky ... that the only party that had been recognised was the CP of A and the only correspondence ever received in Russia from Australia was my own letter asking for affiliation. I also found by an examination of the records of all papers received that the only Australian revolutionary papers received were our own and the Proletariat. In fact they knew nothing of the ASP and its organ. This is absolutely authentic and at no time has the ASP been recognised or communicated with.

On 25 July Freeman, Rees, Lamb and their patron Sergayef!

were involved in a train accident. Sergayeff and Freeman were killed. This left the ASP delegates two to one. On 29 July W. Smith, a delegate from Melbourne to the RILU conference, arrived. Earsman issued credentials to him on discovering he was a CPA member, as "he said he had no time to get them before he left Australia". The move was approved by the Comintern. On the instructions of the Small Bureau Earsman, Smith, Lamb and Rees met and in accordance with the Comintern policy were instructed by Borodean [sic] to unify into one party. The Comintern gave them £220 for the establishment of the RILU in Australia.

On returning home Earsman bore the Small Bureau's instructions for a compulsory unity conference by the two parties. Instead of going to the ASP for all international information, the ASP now had to come to the CPA, as all Comintern correspondence had to go through the Garden CPA.

It may have been with some glee that Earsman communicated the Comintern's instructions to the ASP. That party immediately protested to Moscow, via Earsman, writing

We understand that up to ... the death of ... Paul Freeman we were definitely affiliated to the Comintern and fully recognised as the Australian section ....

If this was true, then the Comintern's instructions should be that Earsman's party affiliate with the ASP.

They then turned to the position of Smith. Who was he and by what right did he vote at the Comintern? Charles

France of the CPA branch in Melbourne, whence Smith came, informed the ASP that he was a delegate to the RILU conference and not the Comintern, since he was not a party member. This seems to be the truth, despite a CPA letter to the Comintern to the contrary and despite Earman's acceptance of Smith at Moscow.

On 4 January Marcia Reardon wrote Earman a further letter saying that Rees, Freeman and Lamb had assured the ASP that it was affiliated to the Comintern and cited Souvarine's list of parties in the pamphlet *The Third International* as backing for her assertion. As far as the ASP was concerned, the CPA was already united.

This non-consiliatory attitude had been maintained by the ASP since January 1921. It had refused proposals for unity made in March of that year by Earman to Reardon, who returned the proposal saying that the ASP, to which it was addressed, no longer existed. The ASP executive's attitude certainly did not have the full support of its members, as further unofficial meetings between Earman and Garden and Brodney and Everitt were held. They collapsed. At the Christmas 1921 conference of the ASP it was not surprising, given their previous attitude, that it was maintained that "the communists of Australia are united" and the other party consisted of "rebels and reactionaries".  

Earman's reply to Marcia Reardon's letter was

15 *International Communist*, 7/1/1922.
threatening. Either come to the meeting or be expelled.

Representation was fair, with three members for each party plus one for every fifty members of the party. The attitude of the ASP was despicable, wrote Earsman, as its own delegates had agreed to the conference being held, in the joint meeting at the Comintern.

The ASP did not attend, however, and the Garden-Earsman party became the official Communist Party of Australia, on receiving a cable to that effect from M. Rakosi for the ECCI in August 1922.

The Third Congress of the Comintern changed the policy of the whole communist movement.

In the years 1919-1920 the Comintern policy had been to foster a world revolution independently of and in hostility to socialist and labour parties, except in a few specific instances. There had been high hopes in the first year that this revolution would occur. Trotsky characterised 1920 in this way:

Those were the days of panic, the days of a truly insane fear of bolshevism which then loomed as an extremely misty and therefore all the more terrifying apparition and which used to be portrayed on Paris posters as a killer clenching a knife in his teeth, etc., etc., etc. 16

While there is dispute as to whether there was a revolutionary situation, there seems little doubt that there was this fear. By 1921 there had been communist defeats in Hungary and Bavaria and large revolts in Germany and Italy which were

16 L. Trotsky, _op. cit._, 1, p176.
fostered by communists had collapsed. In 1920 the failure of world revolution to eventuate was blamed almost completely on poor organisation and on traitors in the ranks of the Comintern. By 1921 such explanations were becoming inadequate. The failure of what was known as the March action in Germany in 1921 was real proof that the world revolution policy would have to be modified. Even so, it took the Comintern, dazzled by the prospects of world revolution, some time to readjust its gaze to such realities.

When Paul Levi, one of the German communist leaders, called the March action a "putsch" and suggested that it marked the extension of the Cheka over the Russian border, he was expelled from the party.\textsuperscript{17} The Comintern by way of reply said that the rising was the correct action and its defeat was due to the "unconscionable treachery" of the German socialist party.\textsuperscript{18} Many Comintern officials did not see the need for a change in policy in early 1921, but gradually the implications of Levi's charges were accepted by the Russian leaders of the Comintern.\textsuperscript{19} There was still considerable talk of the need to improve organisation but eventually attention changed to a need to modify policy. Zinoviev wrote

\textsuperscript{17} J. Degras, \textit{op. cit.}, I, p218.
\textsuperscript{18} \textit{Ibid}, p217.
\textsuperscript{19} \textit{Communist International}, III, 16/17, (1921), pp8 ff.
The Third World Congress is assembling at such a time when the reactionary storm clouds are besetting the whole European horizon. Along the whole front International capitalism is assuming the offensive against the workers.... The general background of the picture is the triumph of world reaction. He went on to say that the Comintern was preparing to enter into collaboration with the best part of the working class parties, the IWW, and that it had been right to work with labour parties. At the Second Congress even the IWW had been condemned as passé.

At the Third World Congress, held in June-July 1921, which Earsman attended, Trotsky pointed out by way of addition to Zinoviev's description that though the bourgeoisie had become stronger this did not mean the end of world revolution. The capitalist stability was only temporary and transient. New struggles would develop. So the Third Congress policies were not regarded as reversing the policy of world revolution but as within that policy. The world revolution had just been postponed.

As a consequence, parties were instructed to win mass support in the interim period before the next revolutionary wave. The Comintern said that in order to win support they should concentrate on espousing the workers' demands even when these were not revolutionary. They should not alienate workers by excessive revolutionary sloganising like

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20 Ibid, pp17 ff.
21 L. Trotsky, op. cit., I, pp176-222.
22 Theses on Tactics Adopted by the Third World Congress, June/July 1921, (Sydney, 1921), p4 ff., p8.
that of 1919-20. It stated that the chief task was to
direct the defensive struggles of the proletariat. Lenin
admitted that the new tactics were a compromise. Essentially
they were based on a recognition that communists were on the
defensive and that the majority of the workers did not
support communism. The basic task in these circumstances
was to win the majority, especially in countries like
Great Britain and USA, and by implication Australia, where
the working class was reformist to the backbone. The
parties were therefore to go where the masses were, into
the unions and into contact with the mass parties of labour,
the former "traitors" of the world revolution period.
Amalgamations with the syndicalist groups were advised,
together with a united front struggle of the workers in
alliance with the other labour parties. But the communist
parties were also to warn the workers of the treachery of
the other parties and were to do their utmost to make the
situation more acute and to push it further, in order to
be able to continue the struggle independently, if necessary,
where there were strikes or other working class struggles.

These directives of the Third Congress were not explicit
and unity was only specifically proposed in relation to
syndicalists. The directives were elaborated in the
"Directives on the United Front" adopted by the ECCI on
18 December 1921. It was established by this time that
communists should work in social democratic and labour
parties. The precise purpose of this policy was still not
spelt out, although Radek wrote that the object of this communist work inside such parties was to win them or split them. This, too, was ambiguous. It was only at the Fourth World Congress in 1922 that it became perfectly clear that the Comintern had adopted the policy not because it wanted to merge into the mass parties but in the knowledge that it could destroy them by so doing.23

This should have been logically deduced by all communists from the fact that the policy did not reverse that of the world revolution period but supplemented it. The attitude towards the other labour parties was still the same. They were treacherous or at best passé. They could not be refurbished. One was either a communist or an anti-communist. On the other hand, they had the support of the mass of the workers and so while believing that they were passé the communists had to moderate their attitudes in order to get into contact with their supporters and win them away. The second policy operated within the framework of the first. It was not merger that was wanted, but complete independence. The aim was logically to accelerate the mass parties' collapse, not to lend them strength by new adherents. This was only made explicit in 1922.

As a consequence of its emphasis on the need to win

working class support by espousing the demands of the workers, even for piecemeal improvements, the Third Congress only laid down a series of elaborate instructions on the minutiae of communist work. Apart from demanding activity from all party members, it recommended that the communist parties consult with members who really knew the state of "the movement" and work out a detailed scheme of action. The nuclei of the party would then receive "concrete, precisely defined tasks presented in such a way as to at once appear to them to be useful, desirable and capable of execution". Members were encouraged to propagandise by participation in the industrial and political labour movement. They would become known by their work through such organs as education boards, study circles, and co-operative societies. The object should be to obtain support on small issues and then extend the issues with a view to inciting revolts.

The policy of the united front guided communist actions until 1928. The tactics advised were published in the Proletarian in November 1921 and Earsman reported on them to the Christmas conference of the party.

Despite the apparent similarity between this policy of the united front and that already adopted by the CPA, they were in fact quite different on several crucial points.

Before Earsman returned with the Third Comintern Congress instructions at the end of 1921, the policy of working with the ALP and influencing it via the unions met partial success. At the ALP Federal Conference held in Brisbane in 1921 the ALP considered the recommendations of the trade union congress held in June, that it adopt a socialisation objective, and that it consider the affiliation of the CPA. The biggest stumbling block was the method by which socialisation was to be achieved. The ALP trade unionists wanted industrial and parliamentary machinery to be used simultaneously. They insisted that unions be organised by industry; that nationalisation or municipalisation of services and principal industries be introduced; that these nationalised industries be administered by boards on which the workers of those industries were represented; and that there be a supreme economic council which would substitute for parliament in the administration of these industries. This series of demands was opposed by the moderates. E. Theodore was representative of the moderate point of view. He said

Mr. Ross quite frankly said socialization might mean nationalization first and then control by some kind of soviet system .... We are asked to vote to discredit the whole methods of the party for twenty years, and adopt something quite revolutionary, .... The Supreme Economic Council would take the place of Parliament .... It is going to be the end of the Labor Movement. Why not call it the Communist Party? .... We do not want a decision on which one section can go out and say the old obsolete methods are discarded and henceforth they are standing as Communists and others go out and say that they have
simply carried out an innocuous term called Socialism. ¹

This he followed with an accusation that the delegates who were backing the adoption of the new objective were enamoured of the Russian proletariat. Though the objective, in modified form, was carried by twenty two votes to ten, the attitude of Theodore was quite significant. First, the parliamentarians were not nearly so compliant to the demands of the left as at the June conference, and secondly, they were accusing the left of the ALP of communism, when the left was demanding only a moderate socialist programme. This sort of allegation could become embarrassing to the left and was difficult to refute while it associated with communists, as it was doing at the time.

A motion by Ross that the CPA be admitted to the ALP as an affiliate lapsed. ² Despite the as yet unorganised hostility of the parliamentary group, which the communists recognised, they began to enter the ALP with the general idea of utilising the ALP's existent machinery in the interests of communism. They were not clear in exactly what way they wished to use their presence in the mass party. The party's tactics were probably still those expressed in April 1921. The object, then stated, of entering the ALP was to detach the revolutionary group from the ALP reformists, so that

when the ALP came to power, as it "inevitably" would, the communists could force it to implement its socialist objective. This is only a hypothesis, as the only clear expression of attitude was the demand of the December 1921 party congress that the ALP alone among the working class parties of Australia should be supported, for tactical reasons.

It was from this congress that the ever tightening Comintern control can be dated, for Earsman, who had just returned from the Third Comintern Congress, held the floor for a long period while he instructed the party on the compulsory unity conference which the Comintern had demanded and the application of the new united front policy. Apparently the CPA obeyed the instructions without question. While this marked the first intervention of the Comintern in CPA affairs, it should be remembered that the central body did not consider the CPA important and did not even discuss Australia between the Third and Fourth Congresses. Therefore, control was much less tight than in the more important European communist parties of this time. Furthermore, Comintern control was hampered by the difficulty on communication. So Earsman's directives did not radically

3 Australian Communist, 1/4/1921; Communist, 15/7/1921.
6 J. Hulse, op. cit., indicates tight control in Europe by 1921.
7 Interview with J. Kavanagh, January 1964.
alter CPA policy.

Still, although hazy about the exact aims of their policy, members of the CPA continued to join or rejoin the ALP. The rules of this organisation in no way specifically excluded them. They were supported in their policy by the Interstate Conference of the ALP in 1921, and also at a trade union congress held in June 1922. A.C. Willis said at the 1922 congress that "The communist's duty is to get into the Movement", an opinion which was endorsed by the ALP trade unionists at the meeting. However, more hostility was met from the moderates.

In July 1922 the first explicit instructions of the Comintern were published. The CPA was instructed to approach the ALP officially with a proposal for a conference to arrange a mutual united front policy. As the terms were that the ALP should have five delegates and the CPA three, a ridiculous ratio, the ALP refused the proposal. The CPA's explanation for this setback was that the ALP feared that a united front in the industrial field would reveal to the workers where their true strength lay, that is, with the methods of the CPA. Having failed with a direct approach, the CPA appealed over the heads of the ALP executive to the rank and file.

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8 q.v. ALP NSW Rules and Platform, 1923, ALP Queensland Constitution and General Rules, 1923.


10 Communist, 8/9/1922.
In early 1923 the CPA delegates to the Fourth Congress of the Comintern brought back the instructions of that Congress. These said, *inter alia*, that the "trade unions provide the best opportunity for communists to show how they are really connected with the masses" and they gave explicit instructions on the relationship with the ALP in the united front period.

The EC of the CI ... deliberately advises the Australian Communist Party to join the State Labor Party as well as the Federal Labor Party, carrying out the resolution of the Australian Trade Union Congress of June 1921 and 1922 on the unity question. 11

Communists were to keep their independence, that is, not merge with the ALP, said the party, and work on the militants within the ALP and against the right wing. But the CPA policy seems to have continued to be in practice, at this juncture, to oust the right wing from the ALP - the same policy it had been following before.

Within the ALP the CPA made skilful use of faction fights to keep itself in. 12 In 1923 this consisted primarily of supporting the AWU members against the parliamentarians in a struggle for leadership. These were only alliances of convenience and outside the industrial movement the communists had few friends in the ALP.

With AWU support and the endorsement of the united front policy by yet another trade union conference, the CPA

stepped up its campaign for affiliation. In June it appealed to the forthcoming ALP conference in NSW to open its doors officially to the CPA and was optimistic about the outcome of the request. The party suggested that changes be made to the ALP constitution to allow affiliation, claiming that history made such an action necessary. 13

At the conference several communists were nominated for positions on the ALP executive: J. Howie and J. Graves were elected to the agenda committee and Garden, Graves and J. Beasley to the executive. 14 Garden and H. Denford introduced a motion to alter the constitution to allow affiliation. A. Blakeley and P. Loughlin, members of the growing opposition, opposed it. The vote was 122 to 122. Willis, the chairman, gave an unconstitutional casting vote in favour. 15 Thus the CPA became in principle a probationary affiliate of the ALP. The socialisation objective was also accepted. 16 The CPA promptly launched an appeal to the ALP rank and file, announcing the affiliation of the CPA and claiming that it was not bestowed by the ALP but won with trade union support and that the ALP would never again be

13 Ibid, 1/6/1923.
14 Worker, 14/6/1923. There was also a strong red minority; see account in Worker.
15 There is some doubt whether this was really unconstitutional. D. Rawson, "Organization of the Australian Labor Party, 1916-41", Ph.D. thesis, (Melbourne, 1954), p96; but the right wing maintained that it was, Executive Manifesto, op. cit., p4.
16 Communist, 15/6/1923.
able to close its eyes to the existence of the CPA. It concluded by asking for the backing of the rank and file as the affiliation would not be complete until the next conference of the ALP had endorsed it by a two thirds majority. Indeed, it was wise to appeal for support, as the Worker stated soon after affiliation that

the Communist Party can only affiliate with the Labor Party by renouncing each and every one of its principles as run counter to those of Labor; in other words, it can only link up with Labor by wiping itself clean off the map as a party. This marked the beginning of a campaign by the AWU to have the decision of the 1923 conference rescinded. The CPA refused to consider such terms, as they were contrary to the instructions not to merge with the major mass parties.

On 29 June it stated its programme for the united front. There should be a Labor government; a united front against all capitalist organisations; trade unions should be linked up into the OBU; the ALP should be reorganised along class lines; propaganda should be conducted everywhere by every worker for the socialisation of industry; and the CPA should be strengthened as the fighting vanguard of the labour movement as a whole. Before this ambitious programme could be put into action the CPA had been expelled from the ALP and the triumph of affiliation was over. In fact, no sooner were the communists into the ALP than all the factions

17 Workers' Weekly, 22/6/1923.
18 Worker, 21/6/1923.
declared a tacit truce while they were ousted again. The campaign was started by J. T. Lang and P. F. Loughlin of the parliamentary group through the Cumberland Times, and they were joined by the AWU faction and later by Willis. Each had his own reasons for opposing the affiliation, but there was one reason which included all.

When the CPA invited the ALP to participate in the Russian revolution anniversary activities in October it met with a flat refusal, and on 20 October it was reported that the ALP executive had reversed the conference decision to allow affiliation by 16 votes to 10.\(^\text{19}\)

The CPA promptly launched another appeal to the rank and file for aid. Various courses of action suggested themselves to the party. It could threaten to withdraw trade union affiliations and thus force a rescission of the executive's decision. Or it could instruct its members within the ALP to continue their membership until such time as they were individually challenged to declare their membership of the CPA. This would force the ALP executive to engage in a heresy hunt, which in itself, owing to its limited knowledge of our membership,

would undoubtedly cause confusion and false charges and thereby gain support on every branch within the state.

Or the CPA could accept the decision and order its members to abide by it, and by means of propaganda leaflets, protest meetings, etc., win the support of the rank and file and challenge the decision through its trade union delegates at the next ALP conference. The party decided to protest, to instruct all its members to stay in the ALP, to organise union protests and to challenge the ALP to debate the question.20

So, while Willis circularized the ALP branches with the decision to exclude the communists, the communist counter-attack built up.21 The NSW Labor Council, firmly under communist control, (see Part III of this thesis) protested. This only had the effect of reuniting the Bailey (AWU) and Lang factions of the ALP in opposition to communism. Since much of the CPA's initial success in the ALP had come from playing one off against the other, this was an inauspicious beginning to their campaign. However, as the Argus reported, the ALP was split over the decision.22 According to the Workers' Weekly of 9 November, 17 trade unions and 20 ALP branches protested immediately over the decision. They were soon joined by many more.23

20 Workers' Weekly, 26/10/1923.
21 Argus, 31/10/1923.
Labor Council demanded a special conference to examine the matter. Meanwhile, the three CPA members of the ALP executive were given the chance of recanting their communist faith or being expelled. They were expelled. They thus lost the chance of selection as ALP endorsed candidates in the forthcoming elections. A general expulsion of CPA members from the ALP had not yet begun.

At the Third CPA congress the situation was considered. It was decided that the attitude to the ALP should be the same as before the expulsion, but that now greater emphasis should be placed on working through trade unions to influence the ALP. 24

Soon after, the CPA published a pamphlet, which was widely circulated, called *The Communist Party and the Labor Party*. The Twelve Reasons why the Labor Party should allow the Affiliation of the Communist Party, to which Loughlin replied with *Ten Reasons why Labor should Continue to Exclude the Communist Party and Members of that Party from the ALP*. Lang also started attacks on communism in the press. Both sides struggled for the support of the rank and file. The CPA began to prepare for the 1924 ALP conference and noted optimistically that the "red" bloc was the largest individual section of the conference. 25 The CPA continued

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to support the ALP at elections. However, at the conference, despite the support of many unions and branches, the executive expulsion was confirmed by 159 votes to 110. 26

In October 1924 the Federal Labor Party conference ended the whole affair in adopting, by 30 votes to 6, a motion by Theodore that "The Conference declares itself against the affiliation of the Communist Party with the Australian Labor Party, and declares ineligible for membership avowed communists." 27

Now the problem was to decide who was a communist, and expel him. For several years after this decision communists were expelled as they were found. It proved a difficult business, in the kaleidoscope of political hues within the ALP, to decide whether some people were actually communists. 2

There were certainly many apologists for communism and those who supported the theories of Marx and Lenin even if they did not belong to the CPA. Occasionally clumsy attempts to "frame" the most prominent were made. The position was further complicated by the fact that at this juncture many CPA members who had joined the ALP let their membership in the former party lapse and remained in the ALP. The ALP

26 Agenda of the Annual Conference of the ALP NSW, 1924, pp. 25-7; see also E. Campbell, Australian Labour Movement, a Marxist Interpretation, (Sydney, 1943), p. 17.


28 E.g., Tom Wright was expelled in 1924, but there were still expulsions for communism in 1927, ML, V. Molesworth Coll.
itself complicated the maze by making the advocacy of communist principles illegal for party members and by introducing a pledge of loyalty to the non-communist principles of the ALP in some states.29 A little lie was sufficient to get around this obstacle, but it embarrassed many honest ALP left wingers who did not wish to eschew their principles.

This confusion allowed opponents of the ALP to suggest that it was controlled by the communists, and for factions in the ALP to suggest that their rivals were attempting to let the communists back into the party. In fact, from then on the CPA knocked at the doors of the ALP in vain. After 1924 it turned its attention back to the trade unions.

Why did the ALP reject the CPA? There is no one most important cause. The reasons of Lang and Loughlin and their parliamentary followers were different from those of their Roman Catholic followers. Those of A.C. Willis and the industrial workers who followed him differed from the reasons of the Victorian industrial workers. But all were ready to unite, even if only temporarily, to keep the communists out. It was on the rock of these combined hostilities that the united front was shipwrecked. If, however, one glib cover-all term is sought, it was hostility to the alien techniques and discipline which united them. It was the change in the CPA and not the change in the conditions in Europe or Australia that was relevant.

29 Queensland introduced what was known as the pledge in 1925.
The change in the CPA was a result of the increasing Comintern control. At first the CPA did not realise that it was bound by the directions of the Comintern. Indeed, even in Europe this would have been a novel idea. Although the 21 points arrived in October 1920, and these set out clearly the relative positions of central body and local party, as late as May 1922 the Proletarian seemed to think that adoption of Comintern directions was a matter of choice. The ASP paper and the Proletarian both wrote that tactics had to be based on Australian conditions. Indeed, final clarity about the relationship between the CPA and the Comintern seems only to have been achieved in late 1922. In that year it was understood.

In attempting to survey the economic problems which will arise in Australia in the future, it is necessary to take into consideration the international situation. It is impossible to divorce Australia, economically or politically, from the rest of the world. Capitalism is international in its operations, and the effects arising from it cannot be national but international. That being so, an analysis of Australian conditions is based upon an international survey”, said the Labor Council report of that year. The subordination of the CPA to the Comintern was made obvious by the publication of Comintern instructions on the compulsory unity conference and the attitude to be adopted toward the

30 *International Socialist*, 30/10/1920; *Proletarian*, 7/12/1921.
31 *Communist*, 15/12/1922.
The Shade of Lenin to the N.S.W. Communist: “Assist the return of the Labor Party to office, and so help create the conditions for unmasking its leaders to the workers. Support Lang and Co. as the rope supports the hanged man.”

THE UNITED FRONT?
ALP. Most prominent ALP men knew of the relationship by 1923. Whereas the CPA's early policy might have been characterized as tempered amity, after the arrival of the Comintern instructions the policy was obviously one of tempered hostility. It became a dictum that communist parties should support the labour parties as the rope supports the hanged man. This attitude was subtly different from that of the VSP and the other groups which had favoured the technique of boring from within. Their object was to enter as a ginger group to refurbish the ALP and swing it in the direction of socialism. The united front policy envisaged unity in order to destroy the ALP and win its supporters away from it. This does not appear to have been really clear to the CPA until 1922 due to several similarities between the Australian policy and the policy of the united front.

To this novelty in Australian political life, of a party owing allegiance to a body situated in the bosom of a foreign power, the CPA soon added others. The novelty of these was not their substance but that they were introduced once again at the instance of the Comintern. They consisted of attacks on central platforms of the ALP - arbitration in industrial disputes, the maintenance of the White Australia policy, and so on. These policies had been attacked before by ALP members, but not at the instruction of a foreign body by a group which was requesting affiliation to the ALP, having agreed to abide loyally by the decisions of the ALP.
if affiliation was granted. Furthermore, the communists' theory demanded that they make startling attacks on people whose support they needed to obtain affiliation. In 1921, for example, the CPA published an open letter to Archbishop Mannix, violently attacking him and the Roman Catholic Church. The Roman Catholics formed an extremely strong section in the ALP. The CPA engaged in the advocacy of incomprehensible tactics.

Lenin has given this advice which we, the Trades Hall Communists, accept. 'It is necessary to be able to withstand all this, and to go to the whole length of sacrifice, it [sic] need be, to resort to strategy and adroitness, illegal proceedings, Reticence and Subterfuge, to anything in order to penetrate into the trade unions. Remain in them and carry out communist work with them at any cost.'

Such honest revelations are no doubt commendable but they did not benefit the CPA.

This thesis does not suggest that this change in the CPA was the sole cause, or the particular cause, of the ALP's hostility, but it is against this change in political climate that the actual direct causes of rejection must be seen.

The campaign to oust the communists was led by J.T. Lang and P. Loughlin, through the Cumberland Times. Unfortunately,

33 The policies had, for example, been attacked before by the exponents of the OBU and the IWW.
34 Workers' Weekly, 12/8/1921.
this paper cannot be found, but their reasons for opposing affiliation can be reconstructed from other press reports. The word reconstructed is used advisedly, as at no time did the ALP give its true reasons for opposing affiliation. Lang, in his autobiography, says, for example, that "I never trusted Garden at any stage".36 Elsewhere he says he opposed affiliation because the communists were dishonourable men.37 How else could they owe loyalty to the ALP and the Comintern at the same time? The real reasons seem to have been two in number: that the CPA had made personal attacks on Lang as a leader of the ALP, and that affiliation jeopardised the ALP's electoral prospects - and Lang and Loughlin were parliamentarians. In the second case he had some basis for his fears, as the red bogey was raised in the next elections with devastating effects for the Federal Labor Party, even though the NSW party itself was not greatly affected. The communists themselves realised that their press attacks were partly responsible for Lang's hostility.38 Alone the parliamentarians' hostility would not have been enough, although it was greatly enhanced by Lang's election as leader in August 1923. But, as Jupp indicates, the Roman Catholics supported him and they had some reason to dislike the

36 J.T. Lang, I Remember, (Sydney), p186.
37 Ibid, p188.
38 Workers' Weekly, 29/6/1923.
communists, as has already been indicated. A.C. Willis was also prepared to support the expulsion of the communists. His reasons were the communist support of the Bailey faction of the ALP in 1923, when this group was allegedly corrupt, and the unwelcome CPA interference in a coal lockout in 1923. At a joint meeting with communist leaders in July 1923, Willis said, in reply to a statement by Garden that the ALP was corrupt, that

> It is strange that the Communist leaders should denounce the Labor Party as corrupt when their recent activities have been devoted to allying themselves with what have been proved the most corrupt elements in it.

He went on to say that he had warned them that such a policy would lose them his support. He concluded by accusing the communists of meddling in something they knew nothing about when they intervened in a coal lockout in 1923. Though each group had its own reasons for hostility, they paid lip service to those of the others. For example, in November 1923 Lang made a statement claiming the communists' anti-Christian teachings were not compatible with the ALP's beliefs.

These hostilities had been growing for some time. In February 1923 Boote, the editor of the *Worker*, had mocked Garden's claims to control the unions made at the Fourth

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40 *Australian Worker*, 18/7/1923.

41 *Argus*, 10/11/1923.
Comintern Congress, but he had concluded
and yet there is a serious aspect of the matter.
Jock has made it plainly evident that the aim of
a Communist Party is to set up a dictatorship in
Australia, under which a mere handful of men would
direct the whole Labour movement, industrial and
political. Because the attainment of this aim is
inconceivable we can afford to treat his lying
boasts as a contribution to the gaiety of nations.
But suppose it were possible ....

The affiliation of the ALP must certainly have made it seem
more possible and aroused Boote's opposition. Loughlin also
made statements that the causes of ALP disunity must be
discovered and destroyed, and the communists were the most
obvious disunifiers. Both statements were made before
affiliation was granted.

Despite the different reasons each group had, they were
all actually different facets of hostility to the Comintern-
dictated policy of the CPA, a policy of destroying the Labor
Party and capturing its support. The parliamentarians took
the most extreme view. For Theodore, at the 1924 Federal
conference, the communists were "paid disruptionists".
For Loughlin they were "a gang of political cut-throats".
For Lang they were "crooks". Why? Because, Lang wrote,
they threatened the traditional way of work of the ALP, its

\[42\] Australian Worker, 14/2/1923.
\[43\] Argus, 18/5/1923.
\[45\] Australian Worker, 7/11/1923.
\[46\] Argus, 10/11/1923.
parliamentary methods.47 Others backed him up.48 For Boote they were the "paid slaves of Moscow". Their methods were not applicable outside Russia. The CPA was bound to Russia and incapable of any genuine loyalty to the ALP.49 Others more moderate took the view of Painter of the Victorian ALP: "Sovietism in Australia was like a hothouse flower in Antarctica".50

Personally I have no squabbles with the communists; they are just as honest as the members of our party. I will close with this, that we should say to the communists that, while we recognise that they have just as much right of expressing their views as we have, we should keep them outside our party.

Significantly, the federal decision to exclude communists from the ALP was a combination of Theodore's and Painter's points of view.51

Generally, then, the opposition centred on two points: that the ALP tradition was completely different from that of the Comintern and communism inappropriate in Australia, and that the CPA was controlled from Moscow, who paid it to disrupt or destroy the ALP. Officially, the reason was that the ALP rules did not allow ALP affiliates to have dual

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47 Australian Worker, 14/11/1923.
48 Alam, delegate to the 1923 NSW ALP conference, said, "He stood solidly for a moderate party.... That party was making a great country by systematic legislation, by constitutional methods, and was creating a paradise for the workers". Argus, 12/6/1923.
49 Australian Worker, 10/10/1923.
51 Ibid, p38.
loyalties. But, as the Labor Council pointed out, the ALP broke its own rules when it suited the party to do so.

The effect of this combined ALP and industrial hostility was the isolation of the CPA from the mass of the workers in Australia. Though the CPA claimed that the Australian trade unionists formed the Communist Party instead of the communists forming the trade unions, and that that made the Communist Party not something outside the trade union movement but an integral part of it, in fact the ALP saw its action as putting the CPA outside the labour movement.

Besides losing its foothold in the ALP as a result of the Comintern theory of the united front, the CPA also lost large sections of its membership who disagreed with the policy because it was too mild and favoured collaboration with the ALP.

The major losses were caused by the defection of T. Glynn and J.B. King and their followers and the entire Sydney branch of the party. Glynn and King had already left the party once to form an Industrial Union Propaganda League (IUPL) to spread the principles of the RILU, which they did not believe the party to be doing. In March 1922 there was an attempt to re-establish unity. The CPA and the IUPL arranged for common propaganda and joint use of the Communist

52 *Australian Worker*, 31/10/1923.
Hall, and the readmission of Glynn and King to the CPA.\textsuperscript{55} However, unity was short-lived, as a month later the IUPL broke with the CPA, again due to disagreement with the united front policy with the ALP. It also condemned the Labor Council, which Garden controlled, for espousing the policy. It thus came onto common ground with Reardon, who was expelled from the Labor Council for his opposition to the policy. The IUPL stated "Any third rate bum Labor politician finds better justification for his mental prostitution than this offered by the intelligentsia of the United Communist Party".\textsuperscript{56} It alleged that personal motives were responsible for the new policy, implying that the CPA leaders wanted sinecures within the ALP machine.

These losses were in part compensated for by the adhesion of the large Sydney branch of the ASP. Unity negotiations at an executive level with the intransigent leaders of the ALP were impossible, as they had gone slowly into opposition to the Comintern and accused the other party of "blindly" following its line. So it was an unofficial move on the part of members of the Sydney branch to meet Garden on a Council of Action for Unity. The branch had already broken with the ASP and shifted to the Garden headquarters with all the goods and chattels of the branch. This was described

\textsuperscript{55} \textit{Direct Action}, March 1922.

\textsuperscript{56} \textit{Ibid}, April 1922.
For myself it seems that I spend my days, in these later years, with criminal corruptionists and most unspeakable blackguards of every description. The eminent Stettler, with a couple of associates, removed everything in the "wee sma' hours" of Saturday morning and took them along to Sussex Street. Everything was taken, piano, forms, platform, partitions, everything.57

S.G. Stettler, L. Leece, T. Payne, and J. [? H.E.] Quaife proposed a unity conference, which was held on 15 July. The largest group in the ASP thus came over to the CPA. A new provisional executive was elected, composed of secretary H. L. Denford, editor C.W. Baker, and an executive of Stettler, Payne, Leece, Whellick, Baker, Jeffrey, Smith and Ross. The new headquarters were to be at the Communist Hall in Sussex Street.

In late 1922 the Sydney branch disobeyed a party order for the expulsion of three of its members, [? J. Healy, O. Griffin and J. Devlin, refusing to allow the General Secretary to place the Central Executive's case before its members. It was expelled in toto. This expulsion formed the main topic of discussion at the party conference of 23 December. It was agreed that those seeking readmission should be readmitted with a six months' probationary period.58 This expulsion must have shaken the party, as shortly afterwards it referred to its "extreme weakness and failure".

58 Communist, 5/1/1923.
These losses, together with the failure in the ALP, left the party in a very sorry state. In late 1922 it resembled a club, with its choir and acrobatic dancers, and in early 1923 was described by a party organ as "weak, inexperienced, loosely organised, badly led, and its policy still exceedingly vague and ill-defined". 59

The first membership figures, compiled in 1922 and delivered in the same year to the Fourth Comintern Congress by delegate Garden, claimed 750 paid up and 900 total members. 60 Actually, after the defection of the IUPL, the Sydney branch and the demise of the Victorian branch, the figures were probably considerably lower. The ouster from the ALP further reduced the membership and greatly isolated the party from working class support.

In Sydney conditions went from bad to worse. After the expulsion from the ALP the membership began to decline alarmingly. Though there were more than the 40 members E.M. Higgins said there were in 1924, 61 the party was down to a total of 280 in 1925. 62 Influence outside the party was shrinking badly, too, as was indicated by the CPA

59 Proletarian, January 1923, p3. It also said, "We must not allow our revolutionary optimism to blind us to the fact that we have yet to build up a Communist Party in Australia".


61 M. Roberts, op. cit., p237.

failure in the 1925 elections.

It had been decided at the fourth conference of the CPA, though not without dissension and a split in the Central Executive,\(^63\) that the CPA should run four candidates in the 1925 state elections and one in the next Senate election.\(^64\) This was regarded as in no way harming the ALP's electoral chances.\(^65\) Nevertheless, Lang made a bitter attack on the CPA for such activity.\(^66\) Ultimately the candidates were six: for Sydney Pat Drew (Sheet Metal Workers) and J. Garden of the Labor Council; for Botany H. Denford (Federated Ironworkers' Association) and Mrs. Nellie Rickie (Theatrical Employees); and for Balmain Lionel Leece (Federated Clothing Trades) and T. Payne (Clerical Workers' Association).

The CPA claimed that it was not running in opposition to, but in conjunction with, the ALP, but it also claimed to be intent on exposing the "Langising" of the ALP. So the party's appeal was "Vote for the Labor candidates, but in these constituencies, vote for the Communists first". The Central Executive promptly split, with three members opposing the policy of running candidates in the elections. Some suggestion was made that Garden intended to leave the CPA. Finally, to prevent treachery, it was decided that all communist parliamentary and municipal candidates be requested

\(^{63}\) SMH, 30/12/1924, reported that some militants resigned.
\(^{64}\) Ibid.
\(^{65}\) Ibid, 27/12/1924.
\(^{66}\) Ibid, 31/12/1924.
to place with the central executive of the party a signed
undated resignation.

Further, the salary and perquisites of any member
elected to Parliamentary or Municipal position
shall be the property of the Party, the Central
Executive to remunerate the Member out of same.67

A thousand pounds was to be raised for the election campaign.
The candidates were looked on as a special intensive
propaganda and recruiting effort for 1925. In May it was
reported that the CPA was conducting a "vigorous" election
campaign. However, when the results were published they
revealed a vote of less than a thousand for the CPA.68

Hiding his chagrin, Garden announced that elections did
not interest communists, as their task was to prepare the
people for the revolution. This lack of support indicated
that the party had no real influence, even in the working
class areas of Sydney.

It is not surprising that, with this series of setbacks,
Higgins could describe the party in 1924 to London friends
as

A handful of derelicts marooned away from
everywhere with four-fifths of the Party only
"secret" members as a result of the prohibitions
of the Labor Party constitution and therefore
absolutely unreliable from the point of view of
the Party.... Bluff, intrigue, faction,
indiscipline, hypocrisy, talk, ineptitude - this
is all the poor old Party is able to trade on now. 69

67 Workers' Weekly, 9/1/1925.

68 The votes (first preference) were: Payne 190, Leece 40,
Denford 140, Rickie 107, Garden 317, Drew 16.

69 Higgins to "you blokes", 2/9/1924, in J.N. Rawling,
op. cit., p20.
Probably it was fear that the "secret" members had been lost that prompted the Annual Conference of 1924 to demand that the communist members in the ALP declare themselves and challenge the ALP to expel them. Evidently not many did so, as the party launched the same appeal a year later. It must have come as a shock to discover that only 280 party members remained, despite the revival of the party in Melbourne and Perth. 70

The revival of the Melbourne branch must be mentioned. When the CPA collapsed in Victoria many of its trade union members joined the Labor Discussion Group. Percy Laidler convened the first meeting at Parer's Hotel on 24th March 1923. Twelve members of trade unions were present at this first meeting, from the AWU, Butchers', Bricklayers', Clerks', Confectioners', Enginedivers and Firemen, Storemen and Packers' and Timberworkers' unions. Laidler was made first secretary. He also led a militant faction aiming at control of the Trades Hall which was possibly based on the Labor Discussion group but this Trades Hall faction was ultimately foiled in its aim by Painter, the leader of the moderate trade unionists in the Trades Hall.

The Labor Discussion group was internationalist in attitude and in fact strongly pro-communist. Nell Rickie was a member and Garden addressed it in 1923. It acted as a pressure group and claimed to have influenced the ALP to

70 SPP, 30/10/1925. The Secretary was J. Warren, office 1188 Henry Street, Perth.
adopt motherhood and child endowment. It acquired some influence in the ALP and trade unions and for the first two years of its existence gained many adherents. Ultimately it folded up when Jock Garden visited Melbourne for a second time and collected a motley group of radical seamen's unionists, the leftovers of the IWW and odd unattached militants, and recreated the CPA branch. The majority of the Labor Discussion group did not join the CPA but split into little groups who worked as individuals in the ALP and trade unions or left the labour movement altogether.

The branch which was formed in November 1924 and held meetings almost every night was described as lacking in revolutionary fervour.71 It was also pointed out that though there were "but few active workers in the revolutionary cause" there were many Marxian students in the city. The few active workers, the branch members, were in fact about twenty in number72 but a large number of unionists were sympathetic to the new communist branch. This became evident when a circular from the ALP Interstate conference was sent to all ALP branches prohibiting ALP members from associating with communists. In the Trades Hall a number of unions protested about this despite the current struggle between Painter and Laidler. No figures are available. Prominent ALP members continued to support the CPA attempts to be granted the

72 *Argus*, 25/2/1925.
right to affiliate but, as Rawson says, the communists in Victoria were too weak to have any success. Indeed, immediately after the recreation of the CPA expulsions of communists were reported as the ALP rid itself of ex-Labor Discussion group ALP members. Some ALP members were afraid that the CPA would obtain control of the trade unions but Holloway, president of the Trades Hall Council, claimed this was fantastic, as indeed it was, although the press continued to write

"the Communist group in Victoria so far has a small membership yet it receives strong support from outsiders, who have allied themselves with the Communists without actually becoming members of the group" thus raising false fears.

In fact, ALP hostility towards the CPA was never as great as in NSW, precisely because the Victorian branch was so weak that it could never hope to control or influence the ALP. It was never more than a sect until the depression although it sent members along to the annual CPA conference with regularity. Every week, under the leadership of its Financial secretary, S. Jeffries, the little group held its meeting at room 9, Temperance Hall, while it awaited better days.

The revival of this branch made very little difference to the fortunes of the Party and did not compensate at all.

73 D. Rawson, op. cit., p72.
74 Argus, 16/3/1925.
for the discovery that the Party now had less than three hundred members. This discovery led to a rapid disintegration of the Party in 1925-26; it caused the growth of an opposition to Comintern policies which some members regarded as inappropriate; a change in leadership; the end of Gardenism; and the revival of the "educatory" policy in the Party. Henceforth active life was confined to issuing slogans. By 1927 there was not a single communist party member on the Labor Council and leaders such as Garden, Denford, Payne and Baracchi had been expelled.

In 1925 the party's activity was concerned with trivialities. It initiated some "hands off China" campaigns at the demand of the Comintern but these were not very successful. Nor was the renewed CPA support of the new IWW scheme. The new IWW soon fizzled out. The party demanded the establishment of a Workers' Defence Corps, but this did not eventuate. All failed because of the party's weakness and resultant inability to carry through its slogans into practice. In mid-1925 it complained of "apathy" in carrying out the decisions of the Fourth Conference to win the unions. So weakness was also of the will as well as something numerical.

When the Labor Daily printed a photograph of Garden and Earsman together with Asians, which the Nationalists had used in an effort to discredit him by playing on the race consciousness of the Australian worker, Garden was foolish enough to deny the authenticity of the photograph, referring
to the Asian communists, who included Sen Katayama, as "chimpanzees." It was easy to demonstrate the untruth of his denial and so the year ended on a note of ignominy as well as failure. Garden's star rapidly began to wane.

It was not surprising that the Workers' Weekly announced at the end of the year that the task of the forthcoming party conference was to overcome the weaknesses which were preventing the party from winning mass support.

At the Fifth Conference of the party it was Baracchi and not Garden who started the process of disintegration. One writer says that in 1924 Baracchi thought Higgins was too harsh in his judgement of the party but by 1925 the revelations of the party's weakness had convinced Baracchi that its independent existence was no longer justified.

He was afraid that it might become putschist minded, Blanquist, becoming involved in acts of violence or talk of sedition or incitement thereto and thereby drawing down on the Party the wrath of Governments that might cripple or destroy it.

So he proposed at a meeting of Sydney members that a motion be introduced at the forthcoming conference that the party be liquidated and that members enter the ALP as individuals.

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76 Workers' Weekly, 11/12/1925.
77 Ibid, 8/12/1921.
79 J.N. Rawling, op. cit., p22. Indeed, in January 1925 P. Gibson was accused of a plot to blow up the Newcastle Town Council.
He received no support at all and so resigned, informing Tom Wright, the party secretary, that though the communists were the best men in the labour movement, "the Party itself, as an organization, is such a tragic farce that I cannot bear to be associated with it any longer". Before the conference opened he left Sydney for Germany and Russia, remaining outside the CPA until the thirties.

At the conference he was unjustly accused by the party, which was worried about its future, of leaving because "the inability of the Party to elect, or assist in electing, them to positions in the labour movement dampened the ardour of some with opportunist tendencies". It claimed that increased capitalist repression had led Baracchi to rationalise that the party should "liquidate" itself "in the same manner that a General excuses his retreat on the grounds that he is leading the enemy into a trap". The conference concluded with the significant statement that "It is better to be connected with one comrade who is active, though not a theorist, than with a dozen theorists who are inactive".

As the conference remarked, Baracchi's stand was representative of a whole trend in the party. At the end of 1926 Garden himself joined him, together with several other prominent party leaders. Throughout the year Garden's

80 Ibid, p23.
81 Workers' Weekly, 8/1/1926.
82 Ibid.
actions in the Labor Council and the party had indicated that he was no longer a believer in the policies of the party. He supported the Industrial Labor Party formed in Queensland while the party had opposed it, and he had slowly drifted to the support of Lang. This gradual deviation led to his open denial in December before a meeting at Young that he was a communist. The party asked him to state his membership but he refused and was expelled.

The CPA then entered into a dialogue with Garden, with Jack Kavanagh as its chief spokesman. The fact that Garden's point of view was published in the party press was an indication that opposition would be heard. Garden accused the party of following the wrong policy. "Had the party followed the correct line they would have been inside the ALP but instead they quibbled over a few words", he said, referring to the pledge which the communists had refused to take. Garden thought that the CPA should not have criticized the ALP. He thus indicated his basic disagreement with the united front policy as proposed by the Comintern. It was still the same as in 1924. He felt that if the party had ordered its members to keep quiet about their membership and to discontinue criticism of the ALP they could have continued to work in the way socialists always had in Australia. The Comintern had insisted that communist parties must not merge their identity and so Garden was over-ridden.

83 Labor Daily, 6/12/1926.
Even though those members who disagreed with the "enter and destroy" policy had been expelled the cause of their opposition remained; the decline of the party when it had to work independently of the ALP also influenced those remaining in the party. They too realised that the party was politically ineffectual now that it could no longer bore from within the ALP and so they too turned to a new policy. It is significant that the Socialist Federation of Australia, after failure in an independent role, was forced to a similar policy, that of propagandising.

The party now developed a new policy, the direct antecedents of which can be traced back to 1925. The disintegration of the party was causing considerable concern as early as January 1925. It began to worry about the applicability of Comintern policy and asked members for essays on the "Role of the Communist Party in Australia", offering a prize. An essay by Hector Ross won and was printed in the journal Communist. It is arguable that this showed official endorsement for his proposals. He wrote, inter alia, that in Australia the same developments as those in Europe could not be expected. Here the main fight should be against becoming isolated through dogmatic adherence to revolutionary concepts. He suggested as a future programme that the Central Executive should aim at the policy of decentralization by sending young members away from the main centres to places where, armed with the Party Organ and an abundant supply of cheap literature, the work of recruiting can proceed.
The organization of factory nuclei was just not possible given the size of the party, he went on. Instead of repeating the slogans of the European parties, the CPA programme should be based on Australian needs. These suggestions of Ross' ran directly counter to the cardinal beliefs of the Comintern that all policies should be decided at the centre, on the basis of a world wide and not a national analysis, and that all parties should be highly centralised and based on the factory nucleus.

The policy advocated by Ross was similar to that traditionally proposed by the ASP and based on the recognition that a tiny group could only propagandise. To compete with the ALP in elections brought failure. Three prominent early party members, Baracchi, Earsman and Thomas, had favoured such an educatory policy but had been overridden by Garden, who preferred the policy of "boring from within" the ALP. In the years up to 1924 Baracchi and Earsman had continued to believe in their policy, but it was C.W. Baker whom Higgins noted as leader of the "trend" in 1924. He had left the party before the Ross article was written. So it is difficult to establish which leader favoured the policy in 1925, apart from assuming that it was favoured by those who opposed Garden and his forceful policy of competing in elections and working in the industrial movement, that is, Baracchi and Ross.

84 Communist, January 1925, p13 ff.
85 J.N. Rawling, op. cit., p22.
In 1926 the educatory policy advanced in Ross' article was advocated by Jack Kavanagh, who started writing for the party press in February of that year and soon replaced Baracchi as the Party's leading theoretician. Kavanagh had only arrived from Canada in 1925 but by the beginning of 1927 he was the most powerful man in the party. Consequently, Ross' proposed policy was changed from theory into practice. Of the other two policies then adhered to in the party, that of Garden was completely discredited by his own defection and the disastrous results in the 1925 elections, and that of Lionel Leece, who favoured continued work in the ALP by joining as ordinary members after changing the party into a series of committees of a secret nature, was impossible. To follow Leece's policy would have been "liquidationism", for which Baracchi had already been condemned. In any case the ALP might still not have admitted the members of the proposed "Committees of the Third International".

So Kavanagh adopted the "educatory" policy. He used his editorship of the Workers' Weekly, from late 1926 to 1929, to spread his views. He also used his positions on the Central Executive, which he held from 1927, to secure the adoption of the policy.

The Party took three positive actions. With Kavanagh's backing, Trade Union Educational Leagues were introduced in

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86 See Appendix B.

87 J.N. Rawling, op. cit., p22.
1926 in NSW and Queensland. These bodies were open to an "unlimited membership of sincere fighters for the working class". Their basic aim was to educate the workers to a concept of the class struggle. Structurally they had an Executive Committee of a president, a secretary and three other committee members. Dues were 5/- a year. The leagues met once a month and fifteen members provided a quorum at any gathering, which indicates their size. They could expel members. The Central Branch was in Sydney and J. McFadden was their first secretary. They were never very successful and their growth was hampered by lack of finance. So they were slowly converted into something else. At their First Annual Conference in 1927 it was stated that their fundamental task was to "co-ordinate the left wing of the Labor Movement" and by mid 1927 they were linked up with a new organ, the Minority Movement, being called the Trade Union Educational League (Minority Movement). By 1928 the first part had been dropped from the title and the nature of the MMM had been changed completely.

Kavanagh also introduced what became known in the press as "communist Sunday schools". Their purpose was to indoctrinate the very young the same way that Christians did. These "Sunday schools" were supplemented by the formation of

88 *Workers' Weekly*, 7/1/1927.
90 *Workers' Weekly*, 7/1/1927.
a Young Comrades Club designed to propagandise among their older counterparts.\textsuperscript{91} They caused considerable alarm in the community, but they did not justify the alarm, having less effect than the Educational Leagues.\textsuperscript{92}

Finally, Kavanagh introduced training classes in Marxism for party members. These were quite successful. The classes, held once a week for two hours, functioned mostly in 1928. Attendance was compulsory and evidently most members turned up as there was no complaint about non-attendance in the Workers' Weekly.\textsuperscript{93} The pupils were taught from a quite elaborate Party Training Manual which appeared in 1928. Control of the classes rested with the new Agitprop department of the Central Executive.\textsuperscript{94} Authorship of the manual was not attributed to anyone, but it was definitely produced locally and possibly was Kavanagh's own work, for the ideas and definitions contained in it were not Leninist but the more catholic Marxist ideas of the Second International, in which Kavanagh had served his apprenticeship. The ideas differed markedly from those expressed later by the party. The Manual defined a class as a section of society, the members of which had the same economic status and consequently the

\textsuperscript{91} \textit{Ibid}, 21/10/1927; \textit{SMH}, 4/10/1927.

\textsuperscript{92} \textit{SMH}, 29/3/1928; \textit{Parliamentary Debates NSW}, Vol. 113, p239.

\textsuperscript{93} \textit{Workers' Weekly}, 24/2/1928.

\textsuperscript{94} \textit{q.v. infra}, p188.
same political interests. Later the CPA defined class as the Comintern did, in terms of a relationship to the "means of production". Where the Manual described the ALP as bourgeois from the beginning it was later stated that the ALP was falling more under petty bourgeois control. The Manual stressed that the first task of the CPA was educatory and underemphasised the initial disputes between the ASP and the CPA. The suggested further reading included many non-communists, such as M. Beer.

While the general theoretical level of members rose the preoccupation with education led to the Party taking on a "left" tinge. It became more revolutionary in its utterances, which, given its parlous state, cut it off further from the masses. Any person who attempted to oppose this was rebuked. The policy was reaffirmed at the 1927 congress of the party. It had no contact with even the major industries and consequently limited itself to agitation over cause célèbres like the Sacco Vanzetti case.

As the united front policy was not officially discontinued until 1928, the CPA was also compelled to continue to try to

96 Ibid, p10.
97 Towards a Workers' Government, the Communist Party and the Labor Party, (Sydney, 1929).
99 Workers' Weekly, 30/7/1926.
work with the ALP. With the weakness of the party after 1924 and the hardening of hostility of the ALP, the results of attempts to be readmitted to the mass party were a foregone conclusion. That avenue of work had, in fact, been closed in 1923.

1924 and 1925 were years of red bogeyism. In 1924 the SMH was continually pointing out that the CPA intended to utilise the splits in the ALP and claimed that the ALP's disorganisation gave "a heaven sent opportunity for Garden and Howie to get control of the more pliable unions".100 In 1925 it backed the official Nationalist electoral claim that the "Labor Party is hand in glove with individual communists and groups of communists".101 The conservative party also tried to attach the label of communist to the ALP. As a result, men like Lang, Loughlin and Theodore spared no effort in attacking the CPA in an effort to get rid of the red stigma. Conditions were not auspicious for the communists' efforts to re-enter the ALP, especially as the conservatives used alternately to compliment the ALP leaders on their attitude, and then condemn them, thus goading them to a further anti-communist frenzy.102 The 280 communists who formed the rump of the party in 1925 still made some effort to return to the ALP. They started badly.

100 SMH, 7/5/1924, 13/8/1924.
101 Ibid, 28/10/1925, Leader.
When, at the 1924 Annual Conference, the CPA announced its intention to expose the "Langising" of the NSW ALP, it virtually determined its own failure, as Lang was now firmly in control of the NSW ALP. The CPA then further cut itself off from potential supporters when it condemned the support it had received at the 1924 conference of the ALP from its old and discredited allies, the Baileyites. This breaking of contact with the ALP was marked by ALP accusations that the communists were financed by the Nationalists. 103

It must be noted that occasional allies still existed. For example, the Brisbane branch of the ALP refused to expel communists when instructed to do so in 1925 by the Queensland Executive. Nevertheless, Garden's renewed proposal for a united front, made in a long letter to the ALP in May 1925, was doomed to failure. By the end of 1925 the CPA attitude to the ALP had undergone a subtle change. Now it was declared that the CPA favoured electing the ALP in order to show it up, and more violent attacks on that party appeared in the press. 104

In early 1926 it appeared that the ALP would split, and indeed it did in Queensland, where an Industrial Labor Party was formed by the unions and ALP branches which had resisted the anti-communist pledge introduced by the Queensland State Executive in 1925. They proposed "to endeavour to secure

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103 Willis said this, Labor Daily, 22/5/1925.
104 E.g., H. Ross in Workers' Weekly, 13/11/1925.
the realisation of the aims and planks embodied in the ALP platform.\textsuperscript{105} However, despite Garden's suggestion that the CPA support this group and drive a wedge through the ALP, the CPA 1925 conference decided to oppose the new party.\textsuperscript{106} This decision was due to the false belief that, as the ALP was tending towards the left at the time, conditions were favourable to the CPA policy.\textsuperscript{107} Besides, there was also the complication that the CPA was fostering its own left wing movement and hoped to compete with the disgruntled Queensland splitters.\textsuperscript{108} Indeed, the first article that Jack Kavanagh wrote for the CPA press was a condemnation of the breakaway ALP parties. So, while the CPA was expelled from the Victorian ALP in April 1926 it was simultaneously urging its members to vote Labor in Queensland and against its potential allies, the ILP.

The party was torn between the need for an exceptional policy in relation to the ALP and the universal demands of the united front. The result was inaction. Indeed, conflicting demands in the party meant even worse defeats. In late 1926 the party again told CPA members who had remained in the ALP to declare themselves, presumably to discover its own strength. It discovered \textit{ruefully that}

\textsuperscript{105} E.M. Higgins, "Queensland Labor: Trade Unionists Versus Premiers", \textit{Historical Studies}, IX, p140.
\textsuperscript{106} \textit{Workers' Weekly}, 8/1/1926.
\textsuperscript{107} \textit{Ibid}, 15/1/1926.
\textsuperscript{108} \textit{Ibid}, 24/9/1926.
"they have gone to 'bore from within' and have finished by becoming henchman [sic] of the right wing leaders". 109

In 1926 the CPA had high hopes of being allowed to re-enter the ALP. It was reported that the party had written to the USA, in one of its regular circular letters (sent by Jack Ryan of the Labor Council, correspondence secretary of the CPA, and published in the Daily Worker of 20 November 1926), that

The executive of the ALP has convened a special conference to be held on November 12. This conference is of immense importance to us, as it looks likely to be a step forward for the Communist Party. We hope to achieve the right to represent our unions on the ALP Conference even though we are members of the Communist Party. Every indication points to us winning this fight at the special conference. The AWU is engaged in a fierce campaign to beat us. 110

Apparently even the CPA was deceived by suggestions that the new rules which Lang was intending to introduce at this metropolitan conference would allow them back into the Labor Party. 111 This rather ridiculous belief had been started by Loughlin, who had decided to oppose Lang for the leadership and to fight him on a red bogey issue. The AWU backed him. The Lang-Willis group denied Loughlin's allegations. Willis said

109 Ibid.


111 See D. Rawson, op. cit., p115 ff. for background.
The enemy has been insinuating that the rules are to be altered to admit the Communists. The Communist matter was never suggested in connection with the committee.  

Temporarily the Loughlin faction got the upper hand in the ALP and introduced their own rules, dashing the communist hopes of re-entry. These rules introduced a pledge that no person be admitted to the ALP who subscribed to communist ideals. The next year, 1927, Lang returned to power and although his proposed rules contained no proviso to allow the reaffiliation of the communists, as a sign of his good faith he adopted the Loughlin ruling. The 1926 CPA conference expressed disappointment at the new rules, but immediately prepared to organise the militants in the Labor Leagues and unions so that "they will be in a majority when the Annual Conference assembles at Easter". This too came to nothing, but at the end of 1927 the CPA expected that a unity conference of ALP militants would remove the ban on communists, and although the door to the ALP was still closed to them, the year concluded with an announcement by the Argus that several unions were demanding the readmission of the CPA to the ALP.

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112 SMH, 15/11/1926.

113 NSW ALP Annual Conference Agenda, 1926, p6. Actually, the Wollongong branch of the ALP introduced a motion to readmit the CPA.

114 Proposed Constitution, ALP, NSW, (Sydney), and written, Sydney.

115 SMH, 11/1/1927.

116 Argus, 27/12/1927.
As a consequence of this isolation and the unpreparedness of Kavanagh to concentrate on anything but the educatory policy, an opposition started to grow in the party in 1927 and 1928. It centred around some of the men trained in the training classes, such as L.L. Sharkey and the occasional returned delegate from Moscow and the Comintern like H. Moxon, who were aware how out of step this educatory policy was with Comintern policy, and a few remaining syndicalists such as Norman Jeffrey. They were especially upset that the party had not introduced factory units as its new 1927 constitution had implied it would. 117 Kavanagh claimed that good work had been done but Jeffrey claimed that people were still clinging to the old ways of working.

The old Socialist Party idea of a propaganda organisation is still with us, despite the fact that the need of the day is methodical organisation for definite purposes. 118

Nucleus work in the factories was a dead weight because the party members had an unappreciative attitude towards it. Jeffrey claimed that nucleus work meant contact with industry and activity of a practical political nature which the opposition group felt the party should start to conduct again. They continued to gather strength as an opposition to Kavanagh and his policies. Their position was further strengthened by the arrival of "Comrade Murray", a Comintern

117 *Workers' Weekly*, 7/1/1927.

representative, at the end of 1927. Murray had come out to examine the political and organisational position of the party. He could hardly have been pleased with what he saw and returned to Russia with Moxon, one of the opposition group. This boded ill for the future unity of the party.

The party had achieved little in its first seven years. Instead of uniting the socialists of Australia it had started with less than a quarter of their total in its ranks. Then, when it had adopted the policy of the united front it had started a policy of enmity towards all other socialist parties, which in turn resulted in VSP and SLP hostility which lasted until 1928.\(^{119}\) The ASP was of course hostile both for personal reasons and disagreement over the initial policy of the CPA.\(^{120}\) The loss of its members to the CPA resulted in its decline, and A. Reardon, the secretary, wrote in mid 1922

> I seek retirement, honest men are not wanted in the movement.... Generally our little world has crumbled to dust about our ears.\(^{121}\)

The other socialist parties also declined, although in their cases the decline cannot be ascribed directly to the CPA, which certainly did not inherit their membership. Indirectly, the supplanting of the IWW by the CPA in the Labor Council may have contributed to the decline of the SLP, which tried

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\(^{119}\) Revolutionary Socialist, October 1930.

\(^{120}\) A. Reardon of the ASP was expelled from the Labor Council.

\(^{121}\) Reardon to Brodney, 18/6/1922, cited in J.N. Rawling, op. cit., p4.
unsuccessfully in the twenties to revive the IWW.

So the CPA certainly contributed to the decline of some socialist parties by the adoption of its united front, but it did not benefit itself. It too lost members and did not reach the combined strength of the socialists until the thirties.

The policy of the united front in relation to the ALP had not been fully understood at first, but when it became clear that the object of the CPA in entering the ALP was to destroy it and capture its members, the CPA was quickly ousted. While the ALP was prepared to allow the VSP in as a ginger group on the left, it was not prepared to allow the affiliation of those dedicated to its destruction.

So the united front was inappropriate both in relation to socialists and the ALP. Rather than resulting in an increase in support and effectiveness, it resulted in a reduction of support and isolation. This in turn provoked faction fights in the party between those who wished to work in the ALP on traditional lines and those who saw in the advocacy of such a policy disloyalty to the Comintern. The party dwindled as the first group left. Due to its tiny size it fell back on another traditional Australian policy which also contravened Comintern policy directions, that of acting as an educatory body. This policy lasted three years. Because of its passive nature it did not result in the acquisition of supporters and so the party did not grow. A further opposition grew up in the Party. This time it
demanded adherence to Comintern organisation which the party had not adopted. Signs of further splits were developing in 1927.

From 1922 the failure of the party can be ascribed at least in part to the inappropriateness of the policy of the united front and the successive faction fights which all hinged one way or another on whether Comintern policies were applicable in Australia.
PART II
(1) The Comintern

Two important actions for Comintern history were taken by J. Stalin at the Fifteenth Party Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolshevik) in December 1927. First, what was now the Trotskyite opposition was expelled from the party and, secondly, Stalin stated that the period of capitalist stabilisation was over, a new period of slumps and revolution was beginning. Both these actions took the Russians by surprise, as the expulsion of Trotsky was regarded as excessively severe\(^1\) and the belief of Stalin and his right wing allies within the party had been that a long period of stabilisation and capitalist expansion was setting in.\(^2\) This belief had been formulated in 1925. As the vaguely revolutionary general strike in Great Britain and the Cantonese uprising had failed, further revolution had been far from everybody's minds. Why had Stalin made this \textit{volte face} - was he in some way aware of the great depression which was approaching? Theodore Draper ridicules the idea - even a Marxist could not have had that much foresight.\(^3\) The only and the popularly held alternative is


\(^{3}\) T. Draper, \textit{American Communism}, \textit{op. cit.}, p305.
that Stalin was about to start attacking his right wing allies in a struggle for control of the party and therefore made a completely opportunistic statement. While this motive was very important, it is not realistic to preclude foresight about the depression as a further consideration in his policy innovation. Stalin, as Trotsky pointed out again and again, adopted the Trotskyite opposition programme in his fight against the right wing of the CPSU(B), yet one ingredient which was not in it was an augury of the depression. Stalin added this himself, although he did not obviously need it to defeat the right wing in the struggle for power in the CPSU(B). He could quite easily have attacked the right's "enrichissez vous" policy, a much more effective and apposite method of discrediting it. Could he have foreseen the depression? Some capitalist economists did, though they were in a minority. 4 Without prior warning from Stalin, 5 some European communists had reached similar conclusions about the coming of a depression. 6 It appears, then, that Stalin could have had two reasons for a change in policy in the Russian party, an assessment of the world revolutionary situation and the faction fight at home. In any case, Stalin's augury of a depression was initially correct.

4 Inprecorr, 30/7/1928, p729.
5 T. Draper, American Communism, op. cit., p302.
6 Inprecorr, 23/8/1928, p940.
It took little time for these changes to be adopted by the Comintern. The Comintern expelled all Trotskyites almost immediately, claiming that their theoretical differences were really programmatic differences of real import and stating that Trotsky's programme was menshevik. In fact, this action merely marked an extension of the faction fight between the Russian left and the right into the Comintern, over which the Russian right leader N. Bukharin presided. The Trotskyites had become the opposition in the Russian party in 1924 when Stalin, who soon allied himself with the right, introduced the concept of "socialism in one country". According to this doctrine, Russia could establish socialism without a world revolution taking place. The country was certainly big and potentially rich. The Trotskyites had denied the possibility of doing this, claiming that a prior world revolution was still essential. The dispute was the more bitter because of the rivalry between Stalin and Trotsky for the leadership of the party after Lenin's death. Stalin proved the more adroit politician and slowly established himself as the more powerful man in the Bolshevik party. With the expulsion of the Trotskyites throughout the Comintern new leaders appeared within each section. These


leaders were nearly all "yes men".  

The statement on the economic situation was not explicit adopted and the reason is easily found. (The Fifteenth Congress assessment of the economy was "accepted" by the Comintern but no direct reference was made to what Stalin said.) It was believed that Bukharin would triumph over Stalin in the coming struggle for power in the CPSU(B) and therefore there was silence on this point. Bukharin was at that time the top official in the Comintern. Deutscher writes that Stalin was still underrated by his adversaries, old and new; and that they were still to learn of their error. At the Fifteenth Congress the defeated opposition forecast that after the left had been removed, the leadership would pass from Stalin to Bukharin, Rykov and Tomsky.  

Alex Weissberg wrote, "I had never been a member of the right-wing opposition though I certainly shared its opinions as in fact, most Communists did".  

However, the Comintern was soon to adopt the economic part of the Fifteenth Congress statement by Stalin and to discover that he was right. The "new men" who were then running the sections of the Comintern were bolsheviks and so would prove quite amenable to any policy change, no matter how sudden or contradictory.

9 F. Borkenau, op. cit., p269 ff.

10 I. Deutscher, Stalin, op. cit., p312; see also V. Serge, Mémoires d'un Révolutionnaire, (Paris, 1951), p275.

In July 1928 the Sixth World Congress of the Comintern was held and its programme and policy for the next six years adopted. Bukharin, now very frightened of Stalin, called him an unprincipled intriguer who subordinated everything to his appetite for power.  

Stalin had forced him to adopt the notion of a third period of Comintern history, one of renewed revolution, and so he claimed later to friends at the Congress,

"Stalin has messed up the [Comintern] programme for me in dozens of places. He wanted to read a report on this subject to the Central Committee himself. I had great difficulty in preventing him. He is eaten up with the vain desire to become a well-known theoretician. He feels it is the only thing that he lacks."  

At the Congress Bukharin defined his third period in a different way from Stalin - his compromise was only temporary. The Comintern delegates who heard whispers about the rivalry in the CPSU(B) in the corridors of the Congress building received their first inkling of the new anti-right policy of Stalin. Many decided not to commit themselves until the position was clarified. The rift between the right and Stalin was not the only one coming at the Congress. Already letters from the exiled Trotsky were being surreptitiously circulated and some delegates were to leave the Congress Trotskyites. In this atmosphere of faction fighting the

13 B. Souvarine, Stalin, (New York, 1939), p484.
14 T. Draper, American Communism, op. cit., p302.
"line" for the coming six years was laid down.

Bukharin's opening speech stated that

The second period passed away to give place to the third period, the period of capitalist reconstruction. This reconstruction was expressed in the pre-war limits being exceeded qualitatively and quantitatively. The growth of the productive forces of capitalism is due on the one hand to the rather considerable progress achieved in the technique of industry and on the other hand to the extensive reorganisation of capitalist economic tactics. 15

To him the approaching period was one of increasing capitalist prosperity and stability. He disagreed entirely with the capitalist auguries of a slump. 16

He admitted that there was a reverse side to this coin. There was the growth of the USSR and the revolution in India and China. There was also the menace of war. But on the whole capitalism was not declining. Social democracy was benefiting from this state of affairs and therefore the struggle against it had to be intensified. 17 United front tactics were to be applied from below only, not by official approaches to the leaders of other labour parties. He emphasised the difference between communism and socialism. Bukharin then made a foolish mistake by making this statement. "At present the principal danger comes from the right tendency if we take the Communist International as a whole". 18 Stalin only had to propose a more left assessment

15 Inrecorr, 30/7/1928, p726.
16 Ibid, p729.
17 Ibid, p730 ff.
18 Ibid, p738.
of the third period and Bukharin would be hoist by his own petard.

There are contradictory accounts of how the delegates received Bukharin's assessment of the world situation. Trotsky claims these theses were resisted by the Congress.¹⁹ His source of information seems to have been Andrés Nin, who wrote this letter to him:

Here in the Comintern there is complete disarray. Nothing at all is done. Everybody is awaiting the outcome of the fight between Stalin and the Right. Demoralisation is complete. The majority of the Presidium is of course with Stalin, because it is certain that he will come out on top. Only Tasca and Humbert Droz are unconditionally with Bukharin. Tasca has the support of the CC of his Italian party. Humbert Droz is completely alone.²⁰

This must have been a later development (the letter was written in November), as in August most parties agreed with Bukharin's theses.²¹ Most objections were against the left swing vis à vis the social democrats. Then Stalin's assessment of the economic situation was repeated by a lieutenant. The factions of the CPSU(B) came to grips in the Comintern. Bukharin said that "the stabilisation of capitalism cannot disappear from the world economy in a single day".²² He refused to see growing unemployment in Great Britain as symptomatic of depression and concluded with a

¹⁹ L. Trotsky, Écrits, op. cit., I, p176.
bitter attack on bolshevisation and bureaucracy. The die was cast but Bukharin found himself without allies. Nearly all parties condemned the Russian "right".

The result was that the ECCI recommended that the Stalin theses be accepted as a basis for future policy, and that they be considered for amendment by a commission and then resubmitted to the congress.

The proposed programme started with a reassertion of belief in world revolution\(^\text{23}\) and the correlation of imperialism with the necessity for a single programme for the Comintern.\(^\text{24}\) It was stated that imperialism had reached its extreme contradictions and that a new wave of depression, such as had never before occurred, would develop and lead to a new revolutionary upsurge. In fighting against this revolution the bourgeoisie would use social democracy to dupe the workers and thus social democrats were the worst enemy of the working class in this period of history. They would not advocate revolution or they would sabotage it. The worst enemies were the left wing socialists. So, although social democracy would outlive its purpose and the capitalist would turn to fascism, no compromises or alliances with the bourgeoisie or the social democrats was permitted to communists except in colonial countries. The main tactic of all Comintern sections was to unite the working class from

\(\text{23} \text{ Ibid, 27/8/1923,p983.}\)

\(\text{24} \text{ J. Degras, Communist International, op. cit., II, p474 ff.}\)
below. It was re-emphasised that all sections were to carry out the directions of the Comintern without question.25 The local and particular interests were to be subordinated to the common and enduring interests of the movement. In sum, we can agree with at least the second part of W.Z. Foster's claim that the "..."brilliant Marxist analysis of the Sixth Congress was basically the work of Stalin".26

The programme was adopted and all sections started an immediate attack on socialist and labour parties. All affiliated bodies of the Comintern, such as the Red International of Labour Unions, also commenced similar tactics. The purge of right wing in the Communist movement began everywhere. One day V. Molotov just appeared in Bukharin's place in the Comintern and the Comintern began to be run by his lieutenants, D.Z. Manuilsky, Otto Kuusinen and Ossip Piatnitsky. Trotsky now foresaw a fate like his own for the "right" in Russia, but said the third period of Comintern history was specially made to spread illusions, to push into adventurism and to prepare a new evolution to the "right".27 He sent a letter to the congress claiming that, after the revolutionary failures of the past, social democracy would grow and communism's task was to regain lost

influence. He also sent a very important criticism of the draft programme. Some delegates took heed and went over to Trotsky but on the whole he was ignored.

In his Critique which he wrote from exile at Alma Ata he pointed out that the very fate of the Comintern sections hinged on the correctness of the draft programme. He started from an assessment of the economic base of the imperialist epoch, pointing out that Russia was no exception to this economy. He welcomed the radical nature of Stalin's assessment of the world situation, as he believed it was correct, but went on that the theory of socialism in one country would result in a nullification of the policies which should flow from this analysis. Socialism in one country was not Marxist and was incorrect. He wrote that in the imperialist epoch it was impossible to approach the fate of one country in any other way but by taking as a starting point the tendencies of world development as a whole, in which the individual country with its national peculiarities was excluded and to which it was subordinated. He then pointed out the basic contradiction between the policy in the Soviet Union and that of the Comintern, based supposedly on a policy of world revolution. Socialism in one country proclaimed that

28 Ibid, p265.


socialism could be built on the basis of a nation state only
if there was no intervention and that this naturally meant,
despite affirmations to the contrary, a collaborationist
policy towards the world bourgeoisie with a view of averting
intervention. The task of Comintern sections therefore
assumed an auxiliary function, their mission was to protect
the USSR from intervention and not to fight for the conquest
of power. It was, he wrote, not a question of subjective
intentions but objective logic.\textsuperscript{31}

He, of course, was writing on the assumption that the
Russians controlled the Comintern. Stalin's intentions
might be quite honest but when the question of subordination
arose, the Soviet Union would naturally be paramount and so
world revolution would be betrayed. This, in a nutshell,
sums up the jerky history of the Comintern between 1928-35.
Stalin was torn between a policy of being dependent on those
very people and nations which he sought theoretically to
destroy with the Comintern. They were needed for trade or
military alliances. Inevitably there was vacillation in
the Comintern policy.

This does not mean that Stalin was guilty of secret
arrangements with "imperialist" powers in which the quid pro
quo of a trade agreement was the sacrifice of the revolution-
ary movement of this or that particular country. There is no
evidence of that. It was probably a much more unconscious

\textsuperscript{31} \textit{Ibid}, p50.
process in which Stalin was caught trying to maintain some sort of balance between two contradictory notions.

In 1929 Stalin's augury of depression was dramatically confirmed with the collapse of Wall Street. The greatest depression in history resulted. In many countries the working class returned labour governments. These could not cope with the problems of the depression and in many countries introduced "rationalisation" schemes. These spelt a temporarily worse life for the populace in the name of national wellbeing. This, to communists, looked suspiciously like the betrayal of the worker by social democracy. Even Franz Borkenau admits that the new leftism inaugurated by the Comintern was helped along by the depression. The tenth ECCI plenum of 1929 stated that the Sixth Congress programme had been confirmed. It claimed that there was a rising revolutionary wave and cited the Lodz strike in Poland as an example. A further demand to build mass parties from below and to fight social democracy was made. Meanwhile, reports often false or over-optimistic, of Soviet success in the Five Year plan served to convince the communists of their own righteousness.

The Sixth Congress marked a decisive change for CPA

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32 F. Borkenau, op. cit., p338.
33 The Path to Power, Tenth Plenum ECCI, (Sydney) pp1-4.
policy and organisation. The Australian delegation only reached the Congress at its conclusion. E. Higgins carried the Comintern's instructions back to Australia. Had he arrived earlier he would have heard his party referred to as new and heard references to "Comrade" Garden. This indicated how little the Comintern knew or cared about the CPA. Garden had been expelled some time before. Australia was not totally neglected. The Comintern remarked in passing that the capitalist offensive was under way in Australia and that new laws regarding the trade unions were the most ambitious since the corporative laws of Fascist Italy. Economically Australia was passing under US hegemony and this would cause considerable strain among non-Australian capitalists' interests. But Australia did not matter very much and was ranked with Azerbaydzhan and Georgia with 3 votes at the Congress (the Russians had 50 and the Germans 25). Though insignificant, the Australia the delegates came from was certainly part of the great depression and Stalin's line did not seem inappropriate to some party members.


37 Ibid, 21/11/1928, p1532; see also ibid, 4/10/1928, p1233 for Australia's position in the world revolution.
The Party

At the beginning of 1926 the Communist Party of Australia still suffered from the small numbers which prompted the "liquidationist" tendencies of Guido Baracchi in 1925. If anything, it was a little weaker, having fallen in numbers from 280 to 249. Most of its members lived in or near Sydney. It had no influence in the ALP although its formal policy was then to affiliate with that body. Nor had it control of any unions. The only influence members had outside the party was in the NSW Labor Council, where two leading members held important positions, which, however, they owed to their stature as leaders in the industrial labour movement and not as communists. It appears that Labor Council secretary Gardon's patronage was important in their holding the jobs, as they were immediately lost once his favour was lost. The Trades Hall may have exerted more influence on CPA policies than the CPA did on industrial policies. The composition of the Labor Council was such

1 L. Sharkey, Outline History of the Australian Communist Party, (Sydney, 1944), p19.
5 E.g., account of Kavanagh's defeat by Voigt in SMH, 18/12/1929.
6 E.g., see attitudes of the new CPA Central Executive Committee expressed in Workers' Weekly, 21/3/1930; also
that one writer has maintained that this part of the labour movement was controlled by the communists. This is not so. In appearance the CPA enjoyed more influence than it actually had in this Labor Council, as in the 1929 council communists ex-communists and "fellow-travellers" held at least ten of the fourteen positions. It cannot be stressed too much that this was only apparent and not real influence. In the 1930 Council elections, after the CPA had attacked Garden and the Labor Council as "social-fascist", in accordance with the directions of the Comintern, communists lost all their positions and some "fellow travellers" were ousted by anti-communists. The party obviously had no control of this body.

The leaders of this communist sect were Jack Kavanagh, Esmond M. Higgins, Tom Wright, Jack Ryan and Herbert Moxon. Kavanagh, as has been indicated, was the most important, being simultaneously president of the party, president of the Militant Minority Movement (the communist "front" for working in the unions), editor of the party newspaper, the Workers' Weekly, and member of the NSW Labor Council. Tom Wright was party secretary but he followed Kavanagh's lead very closely. Jack Ryan was in charge of the Labor Research

ibid, 5/10/1929 for Sharkey and Moxon's assertion that the CPA had been ruled from the Trades Hall by "Garden and co."

7 M.H. Ellis, op. cit., passim; M.H. Ellis, The Red Road, (Sydney, n.d.), passim.

8 Labor Council Bulletin, 31/1/1929.

9 Ibid, 6/2/1930.
Bureau at the Labor Council. All three had had long careers in union affairs. Higgins was a physically weak but spiritually dedicated man, an intellectual, formerly at Oxford and formerly a member of the Communist Party of Great Britain. Moxon's history was more obscure. He had been leader of the Brisbane branch of the party in 1925 and in 1927 was on the Central Executive of the party. As a result of the new line policy of the Sixth Comintern Congress all these men had been expelled by 1935, with the exception of Tom Wright and he was in disgrace. A complete changeover in the leadership had been effected in seven years. This new leadership and its policies radically altered the nature of the party and its future history.

In early 1928 Norman Jeffrey and Jack Ryan went to the Fourth conference of the Red International of Labour Unions (RILU) as representatives of the Labor Council and the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) respectively. At this conference, held in Moscow, they became aware of a swing to the left which had been developing in the RILU since 1927 and which after the Sixth Comintern congress was to become a feature of the entire communist world. At the RILU conference they were given a document known as the Queensland resolution, which had been drawn up in October 1927 by the ECCI. This gave instructions on the tactics the CPA should adopt in elections in Queensland, where the McCormack Labor government had been in power for fourteen years. Until the appearance of the Queensland resolution, the CPA had for
some six years followed a policy of supporting the ALP in elections; now it was instructed to break with the Labor Party and "its reactionary Queensland government". The document stated that the communists should have no illusions of supporting an opposition in the ALP; it should lead the masses in all fights against the ALP, neutrality in such fights being a mistake; the CPA should formulate a definite and clear policy upon which "to take a lead in the opposition to the McCormack Government at the forthcoming State election. The party should put forward candidates on a clearly communist programme in three or four carefully selected constituencies and work elsewhere to set up Workers' Electoral Committees around the left wing ALP programme.

This programme was brought back to Australia by two RILU delegates. The reaction was varied and clearly conditioned by the experience of the united front policy with the ALP for the previous five years. The reaction was probably also conditioned by the only other experience the tiny party had had of running its own candidates in an election. Jock Garden was the communist candidate with the highest number of votes, 317, when six communists ran in the elections of 1925.\(^\text{10}\) This suggested that any policy of running independent communist candidates in Australia was inappropriate. In Sydney Kavanagh wrote of the new policy that:

\(^{10}\) L. L. Sharkey, op. cit., p19; see p119 of this thesis.
It is not intended that the Labor Party in Queensland shall be split or that a new reformist party shall be brought into being .... but it is intended that the workers shall have an opportunity of driving McCormack and similar traitors to the working class into the camp in which they belong - the camp of the capitalists - the Nationalist party. 11

He obviously saw the policy as a manoeuvre within the united front policy and not as reversing it. So did Hector Ross, another prominent CPA member, who regarded it as a minor change in tactics. But J.B. Miles, a foundation member of the CPA and leader of the Brisbane branch of the party, claimed that the ALP was to blame for the policy, thus couching the Resolution in anti-ALP terms. The Sydney Morning Herald noted the new policy without comment. 12 It reported McCormack as saying that he would deal with this "nefarious crew". 13 Premier Collier (ALP) of Western Australia also vowed to smite them "hip and thigh".

The attitude adopted by Kavanagh indicated the policy he followed through 1928. While accepting the Queensland Resolution as a tactic in Queensland, he was not prepared to extend the policy generally to all Australia elections. Elsewhere the policy of supporting the ALP in elections still continued. Nor, until the arrival of the decisions of the Sixth World Congress of the Comintern, held in July and August 1928, was he in breach of discipline in so doing. Other more

11 Workers' Weekly, 27/7/1928.
12 SMH, 19/7/1928.
13 Ibid, 18/7/1928.
"left" members of the CPA thought otherwise and a debate began over Kavanagh's decision to support the ALP in the 1928 federal elections. In early August Jack Ryan wrote that the practical example of ALP futility had indicated the need for a change of tactics but his article was written in terms which showed that he considered the policy to be limited to Queensland. Tom Wright, also a Kavanagh supporter, while pointing out that the failure of Labor was a general phenomenon as class contradictions sharpened, still limited his attack on the ALP to those who had gone into Bruce's "camp" - McCormack and Collier.14

Norman Jeffrey and J.B. Miles asserted that the Queensland policy was correct for the whole of Australia.15 Miles was strongly supported by most Queensland militants.16 However, from Sydney came invitations for accounts, favourable or otherwise, of the policy.17 Kavanagh came out openly in favour of supporting the ALP against the Nationalists in the 1928 federal elections with an article entitled "Here is your chance of putting Bruce out - Communist Policy in the Federal Elections". In this article, while recognising the "attack on wages" which was beginning a general attack on the workers as depression conditions worsened, he also instructed party members to vote for the ALP.18

14 Workers' Weekly, 24/8/1928.
17 Ibid, 7/9/1928.
18 Ibid, 19/10/1928.
From a disciplinary point of view, the correctness of Kavanagh's attitude to the ALP depends on whether he knew and understood the implications of the decisions of the Sixth World Congress by 11 October 1928. At no time does a Comintern publication suggest he was aware of the decisions of that congress at that time, although they point out that the receipt of the Queensland Resolution was followed within weeks by the general policy decision of the Comintern that a new wave of depression and revolution was beginning and that under such conditions social democracy would defend the existing order and become the working class's worst enemy. Moxon could not have brought the decisions back with him as he returned to Australia in July after his period as delegate to the Comintern, and the congress did not conclude until the end of August. The next party member to return to Australia was Higgins, a delegate to the congress, in December. It is known that the Australian delegation did not arrive at the conference until the concluding stages, but exactly when it did arrive is not known. It definitely had not arrived by the last week of August. Since the decisions were too complicated to be cabled and letters took almost a month it is probable that in October Kavanagh did not even know of the decisions of the congress. Normally

19 Ibid, 27/7/1928.

20 Ibid, 19/10/1928; Inprecorr, 21/11/1928. The Australian delegation had still to arrive at the time the session commencing 21 August began.
such important documents were brought back by hand, as in the
case of the Queensland Resolution, which would argue that
Higgins brought them back with him. This would explain why
he spoke most on this subject at the Eighth Party Conference
at Christmas 1928. At any rate, the contacts between Moscow
and the party were poor at this date, due to the slow means
of communication. Evidence which supports this last point is
the fact that Kavanagh was proposed, seconded and admitted to
the ECCI as a candidate member at the Sixth World Congress
while following the same policy as the American Lovestone-
Pepper "exceptionalist" group which was being heartily
condemned by the Congress. Obviously the congress was
unaware of Kavanagh's actions in Australia.

The theory advanced by the Americans was of extreme
importance for Kavanagh and the CPA. They maintained that
the Comintern line, the "social fascist" line, was
inappropriate in the USA as it did not fit local conditions. Kavanagh
was to follow such a line in 1929 and to be expelled
for advocating it.

First indication that Kavanagh would oppose the "New
Line" came at the Eighth Conference of the CPA at Christmas
1928. Higgins had returned, bringing the decisions of the
Comintern. At the conference he delivered the report. He

21 See the Sixth World Congress of the Communist Internationa
July-August 1928, p1547; J. Degras, Communist Internationa
op. cit., II, passim, but especially p595.

22 T. Draper, American Communism and Soviet Russia, op. cit.,
pp288-300.
pointed out quite clearly that talk of "orders from Moscow" was irrelevant - the Comintern had never paraded as a loose federation of "independent" national organisations but as a real world party using international experience for the purpose of straightening out the problems of the labour movement in various countries. Strangely, Tom Wright, also a Kavanagh follower, came out against "exceptionalism", as well. But then, speaking for the Central Executive Committee he adopted a firmly "exceptionalist" policy. It claimed that the policy to be adopted in each case was determined by the concrete situation in the given case; by the relation of forces between the CPA and the ALP and by organisational strength or CPA weakness, and finally by the prevailing state of ideology of the mass of the workers. So, while accepting the New Line in relation to Queensland and Victoria, where the workers were "disgusted" with the ALP, the CPA would not accept it in NSW where they were not.23 Sharkey and Moxon opposed this analysis, but the "right" kept control of the Central Executive by using proxy votes.24 The new Central Executive was composed mainly of Kavanagh supporters, though L. Sharkey, Moxon, and Jeffrey were also elected to it.

As the *Sydney Morning Herald* reported, those supporting Kavanagh were trade unionists. It wrote:

23 *Workers' Weekly*, 11/1/1929.
24 This had been done before, see *Annals of the ACP*, (Melbourne), p39.
The Communist Party went into secret session to discuss Moxon's order to run their own candidates in the general elections and not to pay a political levy. The trades union leaders recommended defiance of Moscow, on the grounds that they could not attempt to influence the trades unions if they did not pay the levy, though the latter would go to support the Labor Party. 23

So, while the dispute was of great theoretical relevance, the "right" also had practical motives for refusing to accept the New Line. Since one of the cardinal rules of the Comintern was "obedience" no matter what was believed, the Kavanagh group was committing a flagrant political error. It had placed itself in an "opportunist, exceptionalist" position. As far as the Comintern was concerned the minority opposition led by Moxon was maintaining the correct political line. 26

The Moxon group, in which L. L. Sharkey and T. Docker were prominent, rapidly built up support. They were strongly supported by J.B. Miles of the Brisbane branch, who had most of the Queensland communists behind him. The comparative success of the Queensland election campaign further reinforces the opposition claim that communist candidates should stand in the 1929 federal elections.

In Queensland the party had run two candidates, J.B. Miles and E.C. Tripp, in Brisbane and Mindingburra respectively. It also supported three left-wing ALP candidates, one of whom Fred Paterson, was a former CPA member. He rejoined the CPA

25 SMH, 22/1/1929; Argus, 22/1/1929.
26 Moxon was definitely the leader. Interview with Kavanagh, February 1964.
soon after the election. The CPA candidates experienced considerable difficulty in obtaining permission to speak and halls in which to speak. Despite such difficulties the five candidates received some 3000 votes in the elections in April. The Townsville candidate, A.J. Morris, won 1,122 votes. This was a considerable improvement on the previous party electoral attempt in 1925. The Moxon group availed itself of this success to reiterate its demand for an extension of the Queensland policy to the rest of Australia.

Kavanagh continued to refuse to extend the policy. The refusal became practical with the fall of the Bruce government in August 1929 and the resulting federal elections. In August he wrote a long article claiming that the Australian workers were not sufficiently class conscious to proceed to a direct challenge to capitalism. More education was needed first. The minority group could not overcome Kavanagh's CC (this was now also known as the Central Committee) followers constitutionally. The members, therefore, broke a cardinal rule of party discipline by bypassing the majority of the Central Committee (CC) and appealing directly to the membership and to the Comintern. The cable to Moscow resulted in an endorsement of the minority line by the ECCI. The minority

27 *Workers' Weekly*, 14/2/1930.


then demanded that the "right" comply with the ECCI cable by immediately repudiating the policy of support to the ALP; running at least one party candidate in elections in each of the eastern states of the Commonwealth; advocating informal votes against all candidates who did not agree to the main planks of the CPA's federal election policy; printing a special issue of the *Workers' Weekly* embodying the change of policy with reasons for the change; sending circulars immediately to all party groups instructing them to put into operation the new policy, with suggestions as to the means to be adopted to overcome the criticism of the reformists for the change in the party's policy; and finally that a statement be made to the whole of the "capitalist" press indicating the reason for the change, emphasising that the ALP was more concerned with arbitration and industrial peace than with the struggles of the workers. These demands were ignored and the CC replied to the Comintern in these terms:

Rush elections October 12th, organisational difficulties prevent party candidates. Committee considers informal vote inapplicable and advances same policy federal elections 1st November with independent platform.

The Comintern reply was brief and to the point:

Reply your telegram in order to carry out policy class against class reaffirmed by Plenum we insist on policy contained in previous telegram.

No communist candidate was run in the election and the

31 *Workers' Weekly*, 14/3/1930.
return of the Scullin Labor government was hailed as a victory for the working class. On October 21 Sharkey and Moxon were censured and suspended from the CC. Some days later Kavanagh, with remarkable fairness, threw open the columns of the *Workers' Weekly* for an open discussion of the pros and cons of running separate candidates and on the events of the federal elections. The major points to be discussed were whether there was a basis for "social reformism" in the country; whether there was a "right" danger in the party; and whether the CC had failed in the federal elections to give a lead in the party's independent revolutionary fight against capitalism and reformism. Sharkey and Moxon opened with an attack on the CPA policy in the federal elections, claiming that the party had been ruled from the Trades Hall by "Garden and Co."; that nothing had been learnt from the Queensland resolution which indicated the correct election policy; that the excuse of organisational weakness was ridiculous in view of the success achieved in Queensland; and that the CC was acting in disobedience to the Comintern in failing to run candidates in the federal elections. This all pointed to a considerable "right" danger in the CPA and the CC. It was time that the correct Sixth World Congress line, the line of the Queensland resolution, was applied and the reformists "smashed".

32 Ibid, 25/10/1929.
33 Ibid.
Tom Wright replied for the Kavanagh group in the next edition of the paper. He stated that a Federal Labor government was indeed advantageous to the CPA as the actions of such a government would clearly reveal the treacherous nature of the "social reformists". He then repudiated the Comintern line with a statement that there were differences between Australian and European conditions. He wrote that a characteristic of the "third" post war period in Europe was the development of mass offensive strikes while in Australia the party and the workers were in a period of capitalist offensive and of defensive strikes. Obviously, tactics of struggle would be profoundly different. He concluded that it was possible to support and repudiate the ALP simultaneously. Besides, Sharkey and Moxon had suggested no alternative to an "informal" vote in the last elections.

Then on 15 November Kavanagh replied to his critics. They had not considered Australian conditions, on which CPA tactics had to be based, he wrote. With the exception of Queensland, reformist evils had never been experienced in Australia. The workers' illusions had not been broken down. So the Queensland resolution was not extendable. He also alleged practical motives for not running candidates: none could be found, even Sharkey and Moxon had declined. So, while initially prepared to run candidates, the policy had had to be changed. He believed that the party had followed the correct policy in supporting the ALP. Kavanagh concluded that it was unfortunate that it should have to be
said, but that it was nevertheless true that the party in
Australia had to "go back to Marx" before it could assume
the dignity of being a Leninist party. 3

Higgins later came to his support, while Sharkey countered
with the assertion that his group was following the correct
line and the others were out of date. To maintain that the
CPA would have had no success in elections was irrelevant.
"Voting is NEVER the concern of the Communist. We
participate in parliament and in the elections for propagand
purposes only". 35

In December the letter from the Comintern supporting the
minority viewpoint, which had been referred to in the first
cable, arrived (dated 17 October). It stated that Australia
was in the Third Period and characterised by the same
developments as imperialist countries. The decision of the
majority to support the ALP in the federal elections was
"a glaring example of grave right deviation deserving
the severest condemnation". The party should not see itself
as a propaganda body or adjunct to the left wing of the ALP.
Instead, it had to exert every effort to stimulate the growt
of, and organisationally consolidate, the growing radical
opposition among the rank and file of the trade unions.
Factory nuclei should be made the party basis.

The Central Committee adopted this open letter. Two

weeks later, however, Kavanagh characterised his critics as falling into four categories: the ignorant but sincere rank and file; those who were not confident of their own analysis but relied on the world review of the Comintern (Sharkey, Moxon and company); those out of touch with the working class who relied on philosophy (Loughran, Quinn, Spencer); and those "agin the government". It should be noted that he did not question the sincerity of the Sharkey-Moxon group at this time. He also indicated indirectly that they had considerable rank and file support. A week later the sparring changed into a bitter fight. Moxon called the Central Committee bankrupt, anti-Comintern, non-communist and pro-liquidationist. He demanded their removal. Wright replied:

*Have had the privilege of reading Moxon's contribution in the present issue. It is distinguished from all others by its non-Communist, lying and unscrupulously factional character.*

At Christmas the Ninth Party Conference was held. It commenced with the reading of a cable from the ECCI which said that the task of the party convention was to subject the party's policy to the severest criticism, and to denounce the CPA's opportunistic attitude toward the Labor government, as expressed in the party's manifesto in the federal elections. The criticism made by the minority of

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36 *Ibid*, 20/12/1929.
the Central Committee and certain local organisations had been perfectly sound and necessary, it went on. The decisions of the Sixth World Congress of the Comintern had to be applied. Naturally, the Kavanagh group lost nearly all its positions on the Central Committee. Higgins retained his, as he was the mildest offender. The other group came to power. Sharkey, Moxon, Richard Dixon and Ted Docker were elected; Miles could not be as he was a resident of Brisbane. Other party positions were captured by their supporters, Jeffrey, Loughran and J. Thompson.

The new Central Committee sent an official reply to the ECCI which acknowledged the party's failure to follow the correct line, especially in trade union work, though this was partly due to the influence of the New Labor Council on the party. The conference declared:

1. That it is unequivocally in favour of reorganisation on the basis of factory groups (nuclei) in accordance with the decisions of the Comintern, which hitherto have not been applied in Australia;

2. That the incoming central committee instruct the organisation department to immediately prepare agitation material pointing out the urgent necessity for this reorganisation by issuing leaflets, directions, circulars, booklets, etc.;

3. That the Party be reorganised on the factory group basis within twelve months;

4. That the Annual Conference, 1930, shall be composed of no less than 51 per cent representatives direct from the factories (through nucleus, local, district and State committees and/or conferences);

5. This Conference calls upon all Party members

and organs to spare no effort in carrying into effect this resolution as a first step towards the bolshevisation of the Communist Party of Australia.39

The paramountcy of the "right" was over, although the struggle against it was not. The next four years were to see them all disappear from the party and a new leadership, as yet unformed, evolve. The conference had set itself certain goals to achieve, goals which would radically alter the nature, structure, organisation and influence of the party.

39 Workers' Weekly, 10/1/1930; see SMH, 30/12/1929, for further account.
(i) Bolshevisation.

When this new leadership came to power the CPA began to be bolshevised, that is, organised along the lines of the Russian party. Before this date only lip service had been paid to Comintern demands for the complete conformity of party organisation in the communist movement to that of the Russian party. It was unusual for a party to be bolshevised at such a late date. In the case of the British and United States' parties, as well as those of Europe, the process had usually been completed by 1925. So, while the success or failure of these parties can be attributed in part to the appropriateness or otherwise of the Russian organisational methods from 1925, such organisation only became a factor which affected CPA history after 1930.

In theory, bolshevisation meant different things for different parties. The Comintern distinguished three different groups of parties, each requiring its own kind or degree of bolshevisation. First, there were the parties whose main activity was propagandist; then there were the parties which had a considerable mass following but which

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1 H. Pelling, *op. cit.*, T. Draper, *American Communism and Soviet Russia*, *op. cit.*; G. Galli, *op. cit.*; and G. Walter, *op. cit.*, all date the bolshevisation of the communist parties they study at or before 1925.
had not taken power; and there were those which had already taken political power. The Australian party fell into the first category and the Russian party was the only one in the last. As Grigori Zinoviev pointed out, bolshevisation was not synonymous with russification. It was supposed to consist of applying the lessons of the Russian revolution - an ambiguous phrase which in practice meant copying the organisation of the CPSU(3).

The CPA was formed and initially controlled by trade union leaders. They had previously been sponsors of the OBU scheme, which was essentially a scheme of organising the workers at the industrial level. It was impracticable to adopt the OBU form of organisation to a political party such as the CPA. The OBU was also condemned by the Comintern as "backward". So the CPA, though in its earliest stages probably based on groups in the unions which were probably intended to form the organisational nucleus of the OBU, did not adopt OBU organisation. It adopted instead the organisation of the Australian socialist parties. So while the CPA grew politically from the OBU, organisationally it grew out of the socialist movement. As early as 6 November 1920 the new party was beginning to draft rules and a constitution.3

The withdrawal of the ASP left the party with more pressing

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problems to solve. No more real moves to organise the party were made until after the defection of the Sydney branch of the ASP to the Garden CPA. At the conference at which the two groups merged it was stated that unity was to be on the basis of the 21 points of the Comintern. This would mean the adoption of democratic centralism. In fact, at the 1922 conference of the CPA, when the first constitution and rules were adopted, it became apparent that the mode of organisation of the socialist parties of Australia had been adopted by the CPA. There were a few modifications.

The socialist parties were very loosely organised. This was in part due to the nebulousness of their aims and in part due to the diversity of social theory within their ranks. For example, the proposed method of the ASP for overthrowing capitalism as expressed in the earliest rules was "to promote and disseminate a knowledge of the economics, ethics and politics of International Socialism". There was no suggestion that every member should believe only one theory. Of course there was the major division within the socialist movement over collaboration in parliament, and the ASP tended to be more rigid over what its members should and should not do. However, there was nothing approaching the Russian system of democratic centralism in the socialist parties of this country.

The socialist parties were organised on the branch system.

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and on a territorial basis. As has been pointed out, the ASP had a branch in Queensland in 1920. Some of the others, the VSP and the SLP, had branches in various suburbs of the cities where they had their central branches. The early CPA talked of establishing a "central branch". This branch was the basic local unit of the socialist parties. Somebody selected from its members organised the branch activities and the central branch of each party used to meet quite regularly (in the case of the VSP every two weeks). The sum of these branches would meet at the annual conference where the office holders of the party would be elected by the membership. Usually these would be a president, one or two vice presidents, a secretary and some committee members. The body on which they sat was known variously as the Executive Committee or the Central Executive. Quite often the branches would attempt to pressure the central executive into adopting policies that it did not favour. When the annual conference was over the interference of branch with central executive and vice versa would to all intents and purposes come to an end, although periodic liaison was maintained. The branches would co-ordinate their policies and activities on occasion, but or the whole the methods of the socialist parties would enable each to act separately and independently. The central executive was, of course, empowered to expel those who offend against party policy or against the principles of socialism. This power was used on occasion, for example in relation to the VSP "communist group". However, the range of the offence
which were considered to merit expulsion was, it seems, limited. A member's conscience was his own property and mere opposition to party policy was not considered grounds for expulsion. This was in accord with the practice of the Second International. The Australian socialist parties had some contact with this body but were not subordinate to it in discipline or policy as it had never claimed to be more than a loose federation of national parties itself. On the whole, then, the socialist parties seem to have been egalitarian if not very efficient bodies. The juridical relations of the branches approached, in practice if not in theory, that of federalism and on occasion when unity between the various Australian socialist parties was proposed a federal was suggested.

The form of organisation that Lenin rejected in What is to be Done? was federalism. The Russian system of organisation differed almost completely from that of the Australian socialist parties. It was completely centralised and hierarchical. The basic unit of the Russian party was the "cell", usually centred on a factory or place of work, while the socialist branch organised members by district of residence. The activity of cells was co-ordinated by an organiser who maintained regular liaison with a superior party committee, from which he tooks his orders. This might be the region (oblast) committee or one which took its order from the region committee. The region committee was subordinate to the Central Committee of the party. At the
Eighth Congress of the CPSU(S) the Central Committee was divided into a Political Bureau, an Organizational Bureau, and a Secretariat, composed of five Central Committee members in the case of the first two bodies, and a single responsible secretary and five technical secretaries in the Secretariat. These became known as Politburo, Orgburo and Secretariat. The functions of the first two are self-explanatory, and the Secretariat ultimately emerged as responsible for current administrative and executive problems. Still later, under Stalin, it was to become the most de facto powerful body in the party.5

At the 1922 conference of the CPA, despite earlier suggestions by the ASP as well as the former OBu advocates that factory groups be formed, the Russian model of party organization was overlooked. Instead of adhering to the demands of the Second and Third Congresses of the Comintern, the old branch system of organisation was retained despite the adoption of the word "group" in its place. Perhaps the neglect of the Russian model and the adoption of the branch system was due to the fact that the new communist party had taken over various branches of the socialist parties in their entirety. Certainly, the adhesion of the Sydney branch of the ASP seems to have marked the beginning of new plans for organising the party. For while the unity conference did not proceed with the drafting of any rules and constitution,

or programme and policy" the central executive prepared for discussion and adoption at the 1922 conference a scheme of organisation, rules and constitution, programme and policy and organisation of the press.

The constitution said that the party could not be organised on a scheme of mere geographical division. It had to be organised in accordance with the economic and political conditions of the country. The centre of gravity was to be placed within the trade union movement of the main industrial cities and centres. To attain this end the basic organisational unit of the party was to be the group, which would consist of 3-15 members. It was to have a leader whose duties were to collect dues, to organise the group, the circulation of the party newspaper and to act as agent of the group in its liaison with the District Group and the Central Executive.

The constitution went on that the groups would be united in the District Group which would replace the branch. It was therefore not a place for social intercourse but for active implementation of the party's aims. "In organisation it will be based upon the separate working groups coming together monthly in a general meeting to discuss problems of party policy and its function will be to draw all members into party activity". It would have an agenda, keep minutes and report to and from the Central Executive. The District Group, as the highest party organ in the area, would be responsible for the organisation and control of all groups in the district, whose area the Central Executive would
determine. Above these District Groups was a State Council on which the District Groups had one member for every thirty of their own members. The State Council met when the Central Executive or the District Group thought it was necessary. The Central Executive had no vote on the State Councils, though it had a voice. If, on the other hand, the recommendations of the Council were refused by the Central Executive, the Council could appeal to the membership who could override the central body. It was mandatory on the Central Executive to put into action any decision of the Councils.

At first the system seems to mirror the cell and oblast system of the CPSU(B), as the oblast was based on a geographical division. The idealised description of the Russian system given by Lenin in *Left-wing Communism* and the industrial origins of the party leaders may have played a part in this coincidence. However, there the similarity ends. A cardinal feature of the Russian organisation was the system of democratic centralism, which has already been discussed on another context. As the two words suggest, there was supposedly some rank and file control; in fact the centralism aspect was emphasised at the expense of the democratic. The central committee gave the instructions and they were carried on down the line of command. Of course, the central bodies of the party were elected by the rank and file, in theory at least, and the rank and file was supposed to have freedom of discussion and criticism before a policy
was adopted. In fact, key positions in the party machine were sometimes co-opted and the right of criticism was so ambiguously defined that pronouncements of the party command were beyond criticism. 6

In the CPA 1922 constitution the system of hierarchical control was obviously much more lax than that of democratic centralism. First of all, there was considerable rank and file control to override the decisions of the Central Executive by referendum and secondly the chain of command broke at the State Council level where the Central Executive had no vote and where it was obliged to put into action any decision of the inferior body. A hierarchical chain of command was further broken by the fact that the State Council did not meet regularly but at the discretion of either the District Group or the Central Executive.

There were other divergences from the bolshevik model demanded in 1920 by the Comintern. First of all there was no indication that the topmost body in the chain of command was the ECCI and although it was demanded that the members obey the rulings of the Central Executive at all times there was the reservation that this was so only until such decision had been revoked by a vote of the party membership or by the party conference.

Other more obvious legacies of the socialist system of organisation were in the constitution. The system of annual

conferences was retained. (It should be noted that at this time annual conferences were still the rule in Russia.) At this annual conference members "... of the C.E. shall have a vote on Conference business but no vote when its actions are under review or upon the election of Party officers and members to the Central Executive". As lip service to the decisions of the Second Congress of the Comintern it was stated that the CE was the highest authority in the party and its decisions binding between conferences. This was similar to the role of the Russian central committee.

Members of the Central Executive were required to live in Sydney — a harsh demand in a country as big as Australia. Overall it appears that the CPA CE was more hampered than the Central Committee in Russia by restrictions on the plenitude of its power.7

Besides this difference in the theoretical organisation, the crucial divergence of the CPA and the CPSU(B) organisational came in practice. Ideally, as Fainsod points out, the Russian party was democratically controlled. In practice centralism was emphasised. While in the CPA 1922 constitution there were some similarities with the Russian model, they were never really put into practice. In fact the socialist branches became groups or District Groups and, apparently, functioned as before. Certainly, party members referred to other groups as "branches" for some time after the 1922

7 Communist, 5/1/1923, contains the constitution.
constitution was introduced. On the other hand the CPA necessarily found itself centred on the main industrial agglomerations of Australia, Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Newcastle and Townsville (an important railway and shipping centre). So in the wide sense the party was organised along the lines "of economic and political conditions".

This constitution remained in force until 1927 and was printed and circulated together with the Statutes of the Comintern in 1923. Meanwhile the official policy of the Comintern with regard to the organisation of affiliated parties was being elaborated. Developments up to the end of 1921 have been discussed already. In 1922 the Comintern was reorganised with an Executive Committee (ECCI) of 25 members. Zinoviev was chairman. There was a Presidium with 9-11 members and an administrative Secretariat with a general secretary and two assistants. Four executive bodies were set up: an Orgburo; an Agitprop, a department for agitation and propaganda; a statistics and eastern affairs bureau; an International Control Commission to audit finances and administer discipline, and a Technical Information Bureau. This remained the basic organisational structure of the Comintern until 1943. With minor variations, it was the same structure as that of the CPSU(B).

8 Workers' Weekly, 21/11/1924.
9 It is not dated but 1923 seems probable.
10 T. Draper, American Communism etc., op. cit., p156.
The organisational situation in Australia was not discussed once before the Fourth Congress of the Comintern and the defects of its organisation were not commented on in a specific manner. However, most of the parties of Europe retained vestiges of socialist organisation for some years after joining the Comintern and this led to general direction on organisation to the movement at large. At the Fourth Congress of the International it was established that the Comintern was obliged to intervene in the affairs of the various sections. This was regarded as "a considerable advance in the process of converting the Communist International into a single international party based on the principle of democratic centralism". The rules of the Comintern were strengthened to keep the leadership of member parties strictly controlled by the Comintern and responsible to it and not to their own members. It was decided that delegates sent to Comintern congresses with binding mandates would not be accepted. This Fourth Congress also established the system of direct election of ECCI members by congress and thus removed them from control by their own party. They were not even allowed the liberty of resignation. The sections were instructed not to hold conferences before the congresses of the Comintern, to prevent their co-ordinating policy

12 *Communist International, December 1922, p20 ff.*
beforehand. Finally, to improve on the poor liaison between Comintern and party the central body decided to send representatives to the sections. These officials would have the widest possible powers.¹³

It was not until the Orgburo of the Comintern started functioning in early 1924, under Ossip Piatnitsky, that the ambitious plan to "exercise more influence on the organisational form of the various sections" and to assist them with advice and otherwise at the establishment of their organisational bureaux, was put into practice. In the earliest number of the Communist International in 1925 an article appeared on the "Organisational Problems of the Comintern Sections". This claimed that the lack of mass support for communism was due to poor organisational links with the workers, in particular the failure to establish nuclei (cells). It promised a rectification of this state of affairs at the forthcoming Fifth Congress of the Comintern. At this congress it was pointed out that many European communist parties were "still faithful to the old Social Democratic principles of organisational party construction". It demanded the bolshevisation of the communist movement. The need for a centralised party, prohibiting factions, tendencies and groups, was emphasised. Once more the demand was made that

nuclei be built. "There must be no misunderstanding; the decisions of the Third and Fourth congresses and the January resolution demand not superficial changes in the party structure, but an actual fundamental reorganisation on the basis of the Bolshevik Party."

In order to secure this the Comintern proposed to co-opt party workers from the sections and to train them in Moscow. It also proposed that party schools be introduced by the individual sections. A plenum of the ECCI held in early 1925 reconfirmed these instructions and the bolshevisation of the European parties was under way.

But what of the Australian party?

All the other parties were soon bolshevised after receiving a long circular letter on how this was to be done. The Orgburo sent out a model of the new constitution that all the parties were to adopt and, as Draper says, "to make sure there were no slips, it drew up 'model statutes' which left little for the national parties to do but fill in the blanks...." No doubt the CPA received this letter, though it was not published, and, as has been seen, there was a claim at the fifth conference of the party that bolshevisation was the task of the conference. This was only lip service.

No new constitution was introduced for two years. This left the constitution as it had been revised in 1924 when clause 5(b) was altered, the unit of the party becoming a group of

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15 Ibid, No. 10, 1925, p47.
16 T. Draper, American Communism and Soviet Russia, op. cit., p59.
two or more members. Nor were any of the Comintern's directions observed in practice. In 1927 and 1929 Kavanagh threw open the columns of the party newspaper to oppositions represented by Garden and Moxon, thus ignoring the prohibition on fractions, tendencies and groups or recognising the validity of their existence in the party. Despite this the Comintern did not take any action. No Comintern organisation was sent to Australia before 1927 and the first trainee, Hector Ross, did not return to Australia until late 1926. Indeed, at about this time the organisation of the party seemed to be a reality only on paper. The party was reduced to a small number of persons who, if J.N. Rawling is to be believed, played at politics, meeting every week to pass resolutions which had no effect. It appears that, since political parties have constitutions, the CPA adopted one and then disregarded it, working on an ad hoc basis. There was the Annual Conference which functioned adequately but afterwards control over members lapsed and no real attempt was made to direct their activity. After 1925 the party resembled a socialist party more than ever in its activities.

In 1926 and 1927 further organisational measures were introduced by the Comintern Orgburo which was concerned with the smaller parties' failure to recruit members. At the Seventh Enlarged Plenum of the ECCI Piatnitsky said that the

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17 *Workers' Weekly*, 9/1/1925.
18 *Communist International*, 20/1/1927, p2 ff.
principal cause of fluctuations in membership was the poor functioning of local party activity. He also ascribed these inadequacies to the fact that the parties functioned at the lower level as socialist parties had. He blamed party leaders for these failures in organisational work. He demanded an active effort to overcome this.

There was a perceptible reaction to these instructions in the Australian party. At the 1926 conference of the party a new constitution was introduced. The conference claimed to have substituted the "nucleus for the territorial system of organisation"; to have enlarged the Central Executive and to have introduced the politburo, the orgburo and the agitprop departments of the Russian model. It was claimed in April 1927 that this had led to increased efficiency and resulted in considerable improvement in recruiting. The new constitution stated that the centre of gravity of the entire party was to be in the trade unions, as Piatnitsky had demanded. The basic unit was to be the nucleus of two members. The District Groups were to remain but now they were to be based "upon the separate local working nuclei coming together regularly at a general meeting to discuss problems of party policy". Dues were more equitably proportioned than in the earlier constitution where no mention was made of what proportion was to be retained by the districts. In the 1927 constitution 25% was specifically allotted.

to them. The CS was reorganised in the way already but otherwise the new constitution made no further change. A formal attempt to bolshevise had been once more the conformity with the Russian model which now existed on paper was not observed in practice and led to the rise of an opposition in the party which finally supplanted the Kavanagh leadership (see pp 155ff). One of the grievances of this new leadership was that the decisions of the Comintern with regard to organisation had not been applied. So, finally, in 1931 another constitution was introduced which Herbert Moore (H.M. Wicks), a Comintern delegate, helped to draft. This constitution marked the bolshevisation of the party.

Where the earlier constitutions had emphasised the rights of the membership this emphasised their duties. It put great stress on members carrying out the directions of the higher party organs and on democratic centralism. The party structure was also made into a strict hierarchy. The nucleus and nucleus committee were set up for individual factories and streets. They were united in sections which held a regular section conference, which in turn elected a Section Committee. These were reunited in the District Conference which elected a District Committee. Above these was the annual party congress which elected the Central Committee.

20 Constitution, CPA, 1927-28, passim.
21 Workers' Weekly, 30/1/1930.
and above the Central Committee was the ECCI. All lower bodies were bound to carry out the decisions of a superior body and the highest authority in the party was the ECCI. So from this date the control of the party rested officially with the ECCI and Comintern from the CPA as well as the Comintern point of view. The constitution also stated that fractions were to be organised where there were more than two party members. (Here a fraction is a party unit operating in a non-party organisation and does not mean faction.) Once more dues were allotted in the ratio of 25% to district, 10% to section and 15% to nuclei. The remainder went to the Central Committee. What is more, for the first time, the constitution was put into practice. No longer was the press thrown open to the opposition as it had been under Kavanagh. The party was, in theory, monolithic and an uncensored open newspaper would have meant a recognition that there were factions. Henceforth all oppositions to or deviations from the party line, even when not intentional, could and often did lead to expulsion. Shortly after the introduction of the constitution a campaign was started to make the nucleus system a reality. This took time to achieve but it was not totally neglected, as other innovations under previous leaders had been. As a byproduct of this bolshevisation, greater contact with the Comintern began and after 1930 a number of party officials went to

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22 Constitution, CPA 1931, passim
Moscow for training or on business of a political nature.
Among these men were future leaders such as Sharkey, R. Dixon and Jack Blake. Finally there is evidence that this bolshevisation was responsible for the increase in the size and effectiveness of the party, though other factors, such as depression conditions, intervened. All these developments will be traced. First, the numerical and leadership losses to the party as a result of expulsions dependent on the concept of monolithism will be examined.

11. Personnel

The first and negative effect of bolshevisation was the expulsion of all oppositions, as the party now had to contain no factions. This in fact meant only the expulsion of the old "right" leadership at first. Later other splinter groups and oppositions were expelled. Only the significant streams of opposition are dealt with here, but it should be remembered that expulsions now became a part of life and were quite frequent among the rank and file for various breaches of discipline. In later chapters some examples of these will be discussed where they are relevant to other points.

After the "right" had been ousted from the CC at the Ninth Conference, the leaders immediately gave an indication of the strength of their support in Sydney, where the greatest membership was still concentrated, by being elected to the State Party Committee. Kavanagh received the highest number of votes. Wright was also elected to the Committee.
A week later, on 14 January, they were both elected to the District Committee. Kavanagh claimed that this apparently gave rise to fears, on the part of the General Secretary [Moxon], that the old CC was trying to usurp power, and that cabled to that effect to the ECCI in the latter part of January.  

The CC decided to get Kavanagh out of the way by sending him to Adelaide as organizer for the forthcoming state elections. This was to kill two birds with one stone, as it would remove him from his supporters and force him to do what he had opposed, run a communist election campaign.

Kavanagh protested and "declined" the job for various reasons. He would, he wrote, have been too old to find a job and the depression had hit the building trade badly. He also pleaded rather pathetically:

Another factor which weighs heavily with me, although some of you may not understand it, is the fact that the period I have been in Sydney constitutes the longest settled period in the whole of my existence and I am not prepared to again commence running from pillar to post without a much more powerful reason than that on which your decision rests.

As he was regarded as "the Supreme Right Deviator", he was "compelled to doubt the bona fides of your decision" (that he was the best man available for the task of running the South Australian election campaign). He concluded with a frontal attack:

1 Appeal by Kavanagh to National Conference against Expulsion 1931, SS.

2 Ibid.
A matter that I desire to bring before your attention also is that I am still the Candidate of the ECCI in Australia, that it was intended that I go to Russia at the back end of last year. That did not eventuate but I must certainly expect to go this year.  

This spirited attack may have been admirable but it was also foolhardy, as the party then compelled him to go to Adelaide. He went for eight weeks, receiving £2 a week from the party as pay.

During his absence the party expelled his closest lieutenant, Jack Ryan. This man had backed Kavanagh to the hilt in 1928 and 1929 and worked closely with him in the Trades Hall in Sydney. The reasons for his expulsion were very weak. On 6 February the General Secretary sent him a letter on behalf of the Central Executive Committee complaining about two items appearing in the *Pan Pacific Worker*, of which he was editor. (The *Pan Pacific Worker* was the organ of the Pan Pacific Trade Union Secretariat, a communist inspired organisation. (see pp 309ff this thesis)) The first was an appeal for funds for the miners in their fight "against Bavin" (NSW Nationalist Premier) and in the second he had indicated that donations should be sent to J.S. Garden, Secretary of the Labor Council. These items were considered as "perpetuating a reformist illusion", attempting to raise the prestige of the "counter revolutionary" Garden, and as lowering the status of the "front" organisation, the

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3 Kavanagh to Central Executive Committee, 29/1/1930, BS. There is also another letter of the same date to the CEC which indicates that Kavanagh thought some sort of persecution campaign was being stepped up against him.
International Class War Prisoners' Aid, which had been collecting funds for the workers' defence. He was ordered to present himself before the Central Executive Committee to show cause why he should not be censured. He had to do so in writing.\(^4\) He did not appear. On 10 February Moxon wrote to him again, informing him that the Central Executive Committee had decided on the 9th to suspend him from the party. They called on him to attend a meeting on the 16th to show cause why he should not be censured and expelled. He had, once again, to give his reasons in writing.\(^5\) Ryan ignored this letter, too. On the 19th the Central Executive Committee once more invited him to appear before them, on 21st, and warned him that if he did not appear he would be dealt with in his absence.\(^6\) On his failing to appear it was unanimously decided to expel him "for open defiance of Central Executive Committee instructions" to appear before it to answer charges preferred against him. Notice to this effect was circulated to all sections and sent to the ECCI.\(^7\) Notice of his expulsion appeared in the Workers' Weekly, and the Argus on 3 March reported that he had been expelled for "contravening the principles of the party".\(^8\) A day later the paper reported that commenting on this decision,

\(^4\) Central Executive Committee to J. Ryan, 6/2/1930, BS.
\(^5\) Central Executive Committee to J. Ryan, 10/2/1930, BS.
\(^6\) Central Executive Committee to J. Ryan, 19/2/1930, BS.
\(^7\) Circular 30:14, BS.
\(^8\) Argus, 3/3/1930.
Ryan, who was representing the Clerks' Union (NSW) at the Trade Union Congress in Melbourne, said that it was obvious that the Communist Party must be making "remarkable strides" when its executive could afford to expel one of the oldest and most active members because of "personal animosity".9

It is difficult to justify this expulsion. Ryan had certainly let a few "social fascist" lines slip into the Pan Pacific Worker but on the whole its pages were very anti-"social fascist". Garden remembers Ryan as the most trouble-some communist, one who was always accusing the Labor Council of "social fascism", despite his support of Kavanagh when it came to inner party fights.10 Nor did the party give him much time to reply or appear. From the first letter to his expulsion there passed exactly fifteen days. It seemed that it was hurried through deliberately. An opportunity had been created to get him out of the party and the Central Executive had availed itself of it.

The reaction of the "right" was that this was a "severe sentence" and an "unwarranted expulsion",11 and the Workers' Weekly (Sharkey was now editor) claimed that they were crystallising into an opposition to the CEC and the New Line. The CEC warned that:

The holding of the right wing views within the Party is incompatible with Party membership. To fight the

10 Interview with J. Garden, February 1964.
11 Workers' Weekly, 21/3/1930.
CEC is to fight the ECCI and repudiate the New Line. Failure to cease and repudiate their factional activities will finally lead them outside the Communist Party and in the camp of the International renegades, the Lovestones, the Brandlers, the Gitlows, the Gardens, and the Jack Ryans.¹²

There seems no doubt that the CEC was starting and conducting a deliberate campaign to expel Kavanagh. The arrival of Harry M. Wicks, known in Australia as Herbert Moore, the Comintern emissary, was, he wrote, for the deliberate purpose of establishing what was generally referred to as collective leadership freed of rightist influences, which, as elsewhere in Comintern sections, were personified by those older leaders who had begun their political lives in the Socialist parties of the Second International and had broken with them because of "their social patriotism during the First World War".¹³ But it does not seem that Kavanagh was expelled on the illusory charges used against Ryan. He was too important and popular for that to be done. In fact, he conducted himself with flagrant disobedience, arrogance and disruptiveness. Even had he not been Kavanagh he would have given sufficient grounds for expulsion. However, there was also considerable personal animus against him on the part of Sharkey and Jeffrey and perhaps Moore also. This gave the whole campaign the appearance of a personal vendetta.

Jeffrey says Kavanagh regarded Sharkey as a young upstart, and Kavanagh had certainly had both removed from the Central

¹² Ibid.
Executive in 1927. It is difficult to determine where personalities end and politics begin in this campaign to expel Kavanagh. Still, without any doubt at all it was not purely personal. The assertions and rebuttals of dishonesty and treachery hid a very real antagonism of principle.

On his return from Adelaide, where he had built up much support and goodwill for himself, so much indeed that the party feared he would build up opposition to it, Kavanagh was summoned before the CEC (19 April 1930). There he undertook not to criticise the CEC or to lower their prestige in the eyes of the membership. However, he then acted in a very silly manner by marching out of a party meeting when the chairman refused to allow him to ask a question. He himself acknowledged that this was stupid. Then he protested to the CEC over the method of introducing the manifesto for the state elections (NSW) to the state conference of the CPA. He was, obviously, aware of manoeuvres to get him out of the party. The letter claimed that the manifesto was introduced as something to be discussed by the State Party Conference, and thus open for discussion, amendment, or rejection, and it was not until he had criticized it that he was informed that it was a CEC decision and was already in the hands of the printer. He said that the manner of presentation savoured of trickery, and of an attempt to involve members in what

14 Interview with N. Jeffrey, February 1964.

15 Appeal, op. cit., BS.
might be termed an anti-CC movement.\textsuperscript{16} The draft statement on the NSW elections had been drawn up by Herbert Moore. Kavanagh criticised it strongly and claimed, "Moore's part in the vendetta arose from this".\textsuperscript{17} Indeed Moore was to prove to be Kavanagh's nemesis and an almost autocratic maker and breaker of leaders of the CPA. On the same day the Annual Conference of the Militant Minority Movement (MMM), of which Kavanagh had been the first president, was held and he was left off the executive on orders from the CEC.

Little was known about Moore. For Ellis and the police he was "probably a Russian", whose name was "XYZ".\textsuperscript{18} Even the Victorian Royal Commission of some twenty years later claimed his real name was Vakin.\textsuperscript{19} Such cloak and dagger mystery has tended to make him a sinister figure. In fact he was an American whose real name, Harry M. Wicks, was quite unromantic. Little was known about him in Australia, though he had been active in the Socialist movement since 1914 when he became "local secretary, editor, and teacher of economics in the Socialist Party of America.\textsuperscript{20} His experience of the

\textsuperscript{16} Kavanagh to CEC, 20/3/1930, BS.
\textsuperscript{17} \textit{Appeal, op. cit.}, BS.
\textsuperscript{18} M.H. Ellis, \textit{The Garden Path, op. cit.}, p170.
\textsuperscript{20} H.M. Wicks, \textit{op. cit.}, p v.
socialists in the anti-war campaign left him disillusioned with them, but by 1919 he had become sufficiently prominent in that party to be elected "one of the fifteen member National Executive Committee" along with a majority of "leftists". He resigned to become prominent in the formation of the early communist groups in the USA. He became a member of the central executive of the new CPUSA.

Later he was assigned to lead agitation in Paris against the Kellogg-Briand pact, "with particular emphasis" on the role of Coolidge's Secretary of State, Frank B. Kellogg, "as spokesman for Wall Street Finance Capital, in its manoeuvre to secure hegemony over the rest of the world". In 1928 he was made RILU delegate by the current Lovestone direction and attended the Fourth RILU Conference. Lovestone and Pepper were attacked here and at the Sixth World Congress for "exceptionalism". Wicks deserted them but claimed he did not use "Tammany tricks" to oust them from the CPUSA. He opposed both the Right and the Johnstone groups of the CPUSA. Although he claimed to act in good faith, Lovestone and Gitlow said he had become "polluted by rotten elements in the Comintern and Profintern and because of his yielding to them he was accorded the privilege of participation in the hearings of the commission on our appeal".

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21 T. Draper, American Communism etc., op. cit., pp 22, 100 and 530, n.72.
22 H.M. Wicks, op. cit., p213.
23 T. Draper, American Communism etc., op. cit., p406.
24 This is borne out by ibid, p408.
He was apparently aiming at the leadership of the party, which had been held out as bait.\(^{26}\) However, he was passed over and sent to various countries to purge communist parties of their "right wings". He thus came to Australia, where he spent more than a year performing this task.\(^{27}\) On his arrival, Australian Trotskyites suggested that he had been a speaker on behalf of the right wing American Legion in Gary, Indiana in 1920, and previously had been an anti-IWW strike breaker. It is interested to note that he was expelled from the CPUSA in 1937 on similar charges. They appear to be baseless.\(^{29}\)

In Australia, it appears that he dominated the party not only because of his official status as Comintern emissary but also because of his personality.\(^{30}\) On the other hand, he shirked attendance at party meetings - leaving such mundane matters to his wife.\(^{31}\) He was, however, responsible for major changes in the party leadership, programme and constitution. In the course of these changes first Miles and then Sharkey became most important, while Moxon, former leader, was expelled. Moore's first job was to purge the


\(^{28}\) Fred Wells, "Right Strange for Mr. Sharkey", in *Nation*, 2/6/1962.


\(^{30}\) Interview with J. Garden, February 1964. Garden met him and was impressed by his intellect.

\(^{31}\) Letter to writer from Kavanagh, 19/10/1963.
party of "right wing" elements and, therefore, of Kavanagh.

In May 1930 the campaign against Kavanagh was stepped up. He seemed to have partially brought this on himself. On 15 May he wrote to the Secretariat of the CPA commenting on "errors in self criticism" in the 9 May issue of the Workers' Weekly. He also maintained that the ALP represented "little" capital, while the party had already condemned such an attitude. On 17 May he sent a further letter to the CEC attacking leader columns in the Workers' Weekly, claiming they were "exceptionalist" and "reformist". Then he spoke against the principle of "self criticism" at a Sydney local meeting. The party also claimed he had attacked the Comintern policy of the United Front (1921-28) at this meeting. Finally, while aware that the CPA was forming a committee to send delegates to the Fifth RILU Conference, he stood for the "social fascist" Labor Council delegation in direct disobedience to a party order. He was summoned to answer the second charge before the Central Control Commission on 26 May. He defended himself against all charges in a letter written on the same day. He claimed that he did not attack "self criticism" but the application of that political exercise. Some members of the CEC were only applying it from "above" and not from below. He further maintained that the removal from office of the only two members who had contact with industry by the medium of a job was wrong. He alleged bias on the part of the leaders. Then he continued that the ALP was a social democratic party and no justification had
ever existed for members joining that party. The Comintern instructions for a united front were based on incorrect information about Australian conditions. Some members of the CEC and indeed the CPSU(B) were obviously not clear on the tactics necessary in Australia. He concluded that there was a vast difference between making an attack upon the united front policy of the Comintern and attacking the CPA for not applying it properly.

With regard to charges on his activity at the Labor Council he asserted that he had been there by accident as a spectator and this was why he had not given prior notice to the party of his intention to attend. The Engineering Union delegate, Conway, had then asked if he would stand for election to the delegation. As a CPA member would not have been elected in any case, his acceptance did not mean opposition to CPA members. It was, he admitted, a breach of party discipline. But he considered himself fully justified in endeavouring to secure at least one party member in the delegation as the party was not taking the election seriously.32

Now, led by Moore, the party leaders commenced manoeuvres to have Kavanagh finally expelled. In June the Workers' Week said that in spite of a promise to the CEC that he would carry out its decisions before the party membership, Kavanagh

32 Kavanagh to Central Control Commission, 26/5/1930, BS.
had persisted in pursuing a policy of assailing the CC before the membership of the party and openly and flagrantly violating its decisions in such important matters as the support of delegates of the NSW Labor Council to the Fifth Congress of the RILU at Moscow. Some time before Kavanagh had written a letter to the CC protesting against "self criticism" on the grounds that the workers were so backward that they could not understand it. The conduct of Kavanagh before the Sydney meeting had thus forced the CC to instruct the Central Control Commission to investigate his actions.33

The paper demanded that he desist. Three weeks later Kavanagh wrote a public capitulation, thus temporarily extending his party life.34

At the 7 November celebrations held outside the Trades Hall Kavanagh was supposed to have committed anti-party actions, which Herbert Moxon reported. He had actually restrained workers from attacking the police when some party members were arrested. This was considered "cowardice". On 8 November he was summoned before the Central Control Commission on which N. Jeffrey and J. Thompson sat. Later, in his appeal to the CC, he wrote that he had no confidence in the veracity of the members of the Control Commission, and insisted on replying to the charges in writing. He enclosed a copy of the reply, in which he denied all the

33 Workers' Weekly, 6/6/1930.
34 Ibid, 27/6/1930.
allegations made by Moxon, claiming that they were not based on fact and that they constituted part of the "general campaign waged against me by the General Secretary and a section of the General Committee during the course of the year". He also counterattacked with assertions that Moxon and others had done nothing, although also present at the celebrations.

I again submit that the charges and the application for my expulsion arises not from any happenings on Friday night, but because of my criticism of the theoretical knowledge of the Polit Bureau and the Secretariat, and because [sic] of my criticism of the Bureaucracy that has grown up in the Party. 36

His reply had not reached the Central Control Commission before the latter reported to the Politbureau that he was guilty. He was immediately suspended from all party offices and excluded from the District Conference a few days later.

On 10 November Moxon, on behalf of the CC, wrote to Kavanagh informing him of this action. 37

In December, when reports of the first "purge" trials arrived in Australia, Moore wrote an article whipping the party into a frenzy against "rightism", which he claimed had been tolerated too much. 38 Kavanagh, foolishly, utilised the columns of the party newspaper (still open to him) to attack the party once again. While admitting that structural the party had a better basis than in 1929, he claimed it was

35 Appeal, op. cit., BS.
36 In re charges made by Comrade Moxon, BS.
37 Moxon to Kavanagh, 10/11/1930, BS.
38 Workers' Weekly, 5/12/1930.
weaker organisationally - and this was due to the growth of a bureaucracy. 39

So, in the pre-Tenth Conference discussions which began at the end of December, Kavanagh was accused of deliberate slander and the rank and file was warned that his expulsion was being considered. 40 Meanwhile he continued to commit defiant actions. He spoke against party orders. On 9 January his expulsion was reported on the following major charges: he had waged a campaign against the CC; labelled them "nincompoops" before the membership; denounced open self criticism; had tried to disrupt May Day celebrations because his right wing friends had been removed from the No. 1 District Committee; while in Adelaide he had attempted to form an opposition group; had claimed that the ALP represented the small capitalists and liquor interests when in fact it represented the industrial magnates; backed Lang and Garden's point of view on the ALP Wheat Pool Scheme; opposed Sharkey as a candidate for the Fifth RILU Conference; claimed that the masses were in retreat before the depression and not in the least revolutionary; opposed Comintern policy of the united front; failed to criticise himself; prevented workers attacking police at the Trades Hall; and committed seven other offences. 41 Kavanagh then wrote to the CC requesting that his appeal be placed before the Annual Conference.

39 Loc. cit.
40 Ibid, 19/12/1930.
41 Ibid, 9/1/1931.
This was agreed to, and a copy was sent to the ECCI. In this document he accused the leading members of the Central Control Commission of dishonesty and demanded reinstatement because, he said, he considered that his expulsion was the result of a personal vendetta, and that he realised that conditions were such as to require everyone capable of assisting in the development of the revolutionary movement to be organised. He was a proletarian with more years in the revolutionary movement than a considerable number of the Comintern, not to speak of the Australian section, and putting him outside the movement could not prevent his being a revolutionary. He admitted that he had made mistakes, but never the same mistake twice. The revolutionary movement was too weak in numbers to permit the same procedure being followed as in the more highly developed parties of other countries. There were right and left tendencies in the party in Australia as elsewhere but there was not yet either a right or left danger. He continued that the CPA was not yet in a position to consider the struggle for power as being on the order of the day. The situation confronting the revolutionary workers was that of smashing down the chauvinistic viewpoint of the mass of the workers, a viewpoint that was a suitable basis for Fascism. In fact, they required a "Leninist Party" - a party of realists - and that could not be developed unless there was the fullest freedom of discussion of the political and economic problems of the day. The need for party cleansing arose only when the party
arrived in a position to place its members in positions of authority. At present it was struggling for a foothold, and in that position needed the services of every member of the revolutionary working class. 42

The Appeal failed. Miles, writing for the CC, said the Congress, held 4-8 April, had considered his appeal and come to the conclusion

that he did not take advantage of the Congress for the purpose of making an appeal, but for the purpose of trying to continue his slanders against the Party and many members of the Party.

His expulsion was confirmed. 43

With Kavanagh out of the party the only old "right wing" leaders left were Higgins and Wright. Higgins, who was a member of the CEC until the Fourth Conference, had not toed the party line, while Wright had. So Higgins's turn was next.

In November 1930 the CPA was discussing his "opportunist in defending Kavanagh against its attacks. 44 When, in January 1931, he decided with three others to oppose Kavanagh's expulsion, the party stated that he would be dealt with at the next meeting of the CC. 45 In April he was not re-elected to the CC and, according to J.N. Rawling, a personal friend, he drifted out of the party in 1934.

42 Appeal, BS.
43 Central Committee to Kavanagh, 22/4/1931, BS.
44 Workers' Weekly, 7/11/1930.
The next of the old 1928 CEC to be expelled was, surprisingly, Moxon, former leader of the anti-Kavanagh group. Moore seems to have decided that Miles and Sharkey should be groomed for party leadership, and altered the constitution to allow Miles to become party secretary at the Tenth Congress in April 1931. Sharkey moved into second place. Moxon had been sent to Melbourne to organise the party there and recapture the Unemployed Workers' Movement (UWM), which had fallen into the hands of the A. Monk "right wing" (therefore "social fascists") of the Trades' Hall Council in January 1931. In March the party reported that instead of carrying out the job assigned him, Moxon had taken an active part in enforcing the right "opportunist" policy of the communist fraction in the UWM, of sending its delegates to the "fake outfit" at the Trades Hall.46 He was asked to criticise himself before the District Committee. He did so and it was accepted by the Politbureau. However, his star was sinking and he lost the secretaryship. In October and November he led an unsuccessful campaign for members in the Victorian countryside. He then became involved with a "King-Higgins" (not E.M. Higgins) group in Melbourne. In April 1932 King openly accused the CC of "criminal right opportunism".47 Moxon followed this up a week later with accusations of misleading and politically incorrect articles in the Workers' Weekly.48 The CC counterclaimed that

46 ibid, 27/3/1931.
47 ibid, 15/4/1932.
48 ibid, 22/4/1932.
The criticism of Comrade Moxon arises from his desire to conduct a disruptive campaign and to build up a faction in opposition to the Central Committee of the Communist Party.

and claimed that his recent history was "disastrous"; that he held "ultra left" views; and that he was responsible for the loss of new members won in recruitment campaigns. A month later King and Higgins were expelled for "factionalism and anarchist disruption". Then, in May, the paper remarked that Moxon was no longer attending meetings and obviously drifting out of the party. Soon after he was completely out of the party. There is a rumour that he had misused party funds but there is no conclusive evidence.

Kavanagh had been a valuable leader and was influential in various "fronts" as a personality. For this reason Sharkey let him know obliquely that he would be readmitted to the party if he so wished. Thus Kavanagh recanted, undertaking never to oppose the Comintern or higher party authorities again. His abject capitulation was published in the Workers' Weekly, and he was put on a year's probation.

At first he abided by his agreement, but when he was not reinstated at the end of the year "on the grounds that certain reservations you still maintain towards the leadership of

50 Interview with J. Kavanagh, February 1964.
51 Kavanagh to General Secretary CPA, 23/7/1931, BS
52 Workers' Weekly, 4/8/1931.
this Party" he rebelled once again. He accused the Central Committee of dishonesty in its reasons for not readmitting him. He lasted another year in the party - a quiescent volcano. When in September 1933 he was asked for further pledges of loyalty he refused. Soon after he was accused of holding incorrect opinions on Trotsky and the Fourth International. He refused to admit Trotsky was a counter-revolutionary, and was expelled for the second and last time. With him went E.C. Tripp, another of the old guard. The protagonists of the old line had, at last, been extirpated root and branch.

A year later Sharkey became the most important man in the party by being elected to the ECCI. Miles, while still secretary, fell into second place.

The fundamental nature of this change from old to New Line leadership has been remarked on by many writers. The CPA, emphasising only one side, wrote

This conference [1929].... marked a turning point in the history of the Party. It was here that the Party finally divested itself of its swaddling clothes and began to grow rapidly, strengthening its connections with the Australian masses in the process.54

The other side of the coin was described by J.N. Rawling.

The 1929 Conference
was to mark the beginning of a Stalinist bolshevik

53 CC Secretariat to Kavanagh, 26/9/1932, BS.
party, completely subservient to Moscow and, on the other hand, the beginnings of Trotskyism in Australia.55

While both statements are in their broad lines true, the importance of the change was, above all, that it created the conditions precedent necessary for changing the CPA from a sect into a true party. Kavanagh, who had dominated the party since 1926, had persisted in maintaining the propagandist nature of the party. This was in fact why he was called a "left" at that time.56 The new leadership, which had prefaced its coming to power with the statement,"It is a definite lie to say that we can do nothing because we are only a small propaganda sect, WE ARE A PARTY", prepared to go and win support and influence. They applied the "social fascist" period theory of working alone. But to facilitate the winning of support they had to conduct large scale organisational, structural, administrative and constitutional changes in the party. They also introduced a new Programme. This led to a steady increase in influence, even after the depression had passed its depths.

As has already been indicated, to separate the element of personal animus from theoretical disagreement in the motives for Kavanagh's expulsion is nearly impossible. Animus certainly existed on both sides.57 Other personal factors

57 Interview with N. Jeffrey, February 1964.
were the difference between "right" and "left" temperaments, which made one side moderate and the other intractable. While Kavanagh could not see why he deserved to be so treated, the other side could not see why he should not be harshly treated. On the whole Kavanagh emerged morally better, as "true to himself", but definitely the greater offender politically. He was certainly wrong in refusing to obey the Comintern even if he did not agree with its policy. On the other hand, he himself was not being consistent in posing as a world revolutionary and an "exceptionalist" - mutually exclusive theoretical standpoints.

It is sometimes argued that had Kavanagh's moderation been applied during the depression more success would have been achieved in winning mass support. This, of course, can not be proved, but his previous policies suggest that he would never have led in a forceful policy of winning mass support. Indeed, on the contrary, his attitudes to the Militant Minority Movement (TU "front") were primarily responsible for its early failure.

It must be said that he savoured of anachronism in the party, opposed the faces of change, bolshevisation, the development of a rigid Comintern control, and the acceptance of a Stalinist morality. However, when all is said and done it is obvious that the new leadership resorted to unprincipled

58 M. Ellis, Garden Path, op. cit., p165; see also Fred Well in Nation, 2/6/1952, and News Weekly, 7/4/1954, for a description of Sharkey's temperament.
actions, and deceit, to pinpricking enraged tactics which led to political errors, which in turn looked like crimes when seen in isolation by the rank and file. So they expelled Jack Kavanagh.

**III Nucleus Organisation**

A further positive effect of bolshevisation was the establishment of the factory nucleus system of organisation. This gave the CPA organised party activity within Australian industries by 1935.

As S. Logovsky said in 1924, apropos bolshevisation, communists thought that the most effective way of bringing workers into the class struggle was by establishing factory and workers' committees. He said that these committees could only become a force by creating nuclei (also known as units) in the factories.¹ Naturally the establishment of nuclei was of the greatest importance to the CPA.

The process of creating nuclei in the factories only started in Australia after the first half of 1931 when the new constitution came into force, although their introduction had been promised in early 1930. By late 1931 the party membership had rocketed under depression conditions. So party membership was already quite large when the new system was introduced.

At the Tenth CPA Congress an organisational bureau of si:

¹ *Communist International*, No. 4, (1924), pp49-50.
Excepting where a fraction Executive exists, fractions in local bodies receive instructions through the unit or Committee of the Party to which they are responsible.

(From the Factory Nucleus and its Function)
members was elected. They arranged an organisational conference on the day following the conclusion of the conference. Here all the districts were represented by their delegates to the congress and they "took up the details problems of organisational work in every field, especially the question of strengthening the district leadership throughout the country”.  

When this conference dispersed the nature of the organisational innovations was understood by leaders from every district. The districts were then No. 1 (Sydney, South Coast and Southern Tablelands), No. 2 (Newcastle, and the coalminir areas up to Queensland), No. 3 (Queensland), No. 4 (the southern two thirds of Victoria), No. 5 (South Australia and the rest of Victoria), No. 6 (Western Australia), No. 7 (Northern Territory) and No. 8 (Tasmania).

Each district held its own organisational conference soon after and it appears that the members were given detailed instructions on organisation in some districts. In District 1, which had the highest number of members, a pamphlet was published in July 1931 on The Factory Nucleus and its Function. This claimed that the role of the party as the independent leader of the masses could find expression only through sustained work in the factories. Each factory

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3 No. 1 District Organisational Conference, 26 April 1931, Report, ML.

should have its nucleus and publish a party newspaper. Every member of the party thus knew that it was of paramount importance to build nuclei and had been given detailed instruction on how to do so. Nothing was done until 1932. At the end of 1931 the conference of District 1, where there were 1550 members, complained that its members were not organised.

This particular case of inactivity was confirmed as a general party phenomenon at the Third Plenum of the party in January 1932. The plenum described the situation in District 1 as characterised by "general looseness of organisation and the inactivity of many units". Department organisation was, in many cases, "on paper only". The main tasks in organisational consolidation lay in the improvement of the section organisation, the correct organisation of departments and the activating of units.

Associated with this work was the question of the correct disposition of party forces and the development of new cadre of party functionaries. It was remarked that organisation still centred on place of residence and not in the factories. For example in District 1 there were 70 units of which only 13 were factory units. The factory units contained 108 members of whom 13 were unemployed. District 2 had 7 factory units out of a total of 22. District 3 had only 1 factory unit. District 4 had 4 out of 38, with only 28 members in them. These factory units were confined almost entirely

5 Workers' Weekly, 27/11/1931.
6 Ibid, 15/1/1932.
to mining and transport industries. Significantly, only 730 were organised out of 1550 members, and 70% of this 730 were in street units. So, though it was stated that there had been a general improvement in Districts 1 and 4, in fact by early 1932 the factory nucleus system was hardly established at all. Most members were in street units if they were organised at all.

The reason for the failure lay in the party's inadequate technique for establishing the nuclei. The party had sought to do this with what was known as the "concentration group". These concentration groups were formed of party members working in the factory, around a leader. They acted as a "shock brigade" and were supposedly of select personnel. The task of the concentration group was to establish a factory unit within the given enterprise in the shortest possible time. It was not supposed to limit itself to propaganda meetings at the factory gate but to utilise every possible means to make personal contacts with the workers and discover those who, because of their militancy, could be won for the party. Naturally a knowledge of the industry and the trade unions was essential. This concentration group was sound in theory but it had not been formed in practice of the best men, nor had they been placed in the most important industries or where they would have the most chance of success. Work in these had been neglected and they sometimes remained inoperative.

The same could be said of the factory groups which had
been established, except in District 1. The Third CPA Plenum quoted two examples to show that they too did not function properly. In one case the members were butchers. They were separated from the labourers by craft jealousies. When party members failed to overcome these jealousies they supported the butchers and alienated the labourers. Had there been more party guidance this would have been obviated.

The party gave one reason other than the inadequacy of the "concentration" group for the failure to establish an efficient nucleus system. It claimed that members dissipate their activity by working in too many mass organisations - some belonged to all the "fronts". This is true. They were also required by the constitution to attend many party meetings, sometimes twenty a month. This left little spare time. More important, as has been indicated, were the inadequacies of the "concentration" group, which must be ascribed to deficiencies in direction. This is explicable by the fact that the top leadership's attention was divided as it was concentrating on the eradication of the right opposition. Two further reasons for the failure to establish factory nuclei were the huge increase in party members from 249 in 1928 to 2093 in late 1931 (see p 26 of this thesis), which caused a cadres crisis as there were too few trained men in the party to cope with this influx and with complete reorganisation. Though unemployment gave them more time, they often spent hours looking for work and doing odd jobs.

The second reason was the apathy which had been characteris:
of the party in the second half of the twenties. This had to be overcome - a difficult task. So the failure to establish nuclei was far from inexplicable and definitely not only due to communist extremism and "sectarian" methods of work.7

The party did not comment much on the nucleus system and its introduction over the next year, but in 1933 the Comintern sent out more instructions on organising factory nuclei. These directions insisted that the leadership of the party had to be more methodical in its organisational activity by maintaining maximum mobility, maximum proximity to the nuclei and by reducing the apparatus or machinery of the party. They also demanded that those parties whose district committees had very large areas of action should be broken up to make them smaller. Finally, the leadership of the nuclei themselves should be improved.8

Certainly some of these instructions were carried out: Queensland was split into districts 3 and 9, for example, but otherwise they were ignored. In the first issue of the Communist Review in 1934, R. Dixon, who was the party expert on organisation, complained of intolerably slow organisational work since September 1932. This he blamed on the nuclei and the party committee's underestimation of recruitment.9

While "intolerably slow work" was an accurate description

7 Workers' Weekly, 8/1/1932.
8 Communist International, 15/4/1933 passim.
of the party's organisational work since late 1932, there
were some exceptions. The new District 9, created about a
year before, was congratulated on its organisation and growth
in membership. This was ascribed to the area's concentration
on organisational work.

Only at the end of 1934 did the party give its official
reasons for the lag in the work of organisation over the
previous two years. They seem acceptable reasons. R. Cramm
wrote three articles in the Communist Review. In the first
he said that experience in the CPA over a long period had
proved that more could be achieved by "efficient individual
concentration work under the direct leadership of the local
party committee" than with the concentration groups utilised
since 1931. These, as has been indicated, never really
functioned well. Further reasons for failure to recruit had
been the system of approaching workers at the factory gate,
and insufficient direction of recruiters. The first could
lead to victimisation and the workers therefore avoided the
communists. In future recruitment for factory units was to
be made by identifying the possible recruit, looking up the
electoral roll and approaching him at home. 10

In the next two articles Cramm pointed out further errors
and further advice was given on how to counteract these
errors. Party members were warned that the Australian workers
were very backward in understanding theory and that the

10 Communist Review, October 1934, p. 22 ff.
members should therefore eschew revolutionary phraseology. They should also choose the nucleus secretary from among the new recruits. This was presumably designed to make sure that the recruits did not feel that the party was domineering. On the other hand, the article insisted that the party supply all instructors in theory and that close contact be maintained with the local party committee by a special course service which could locate all nucleus members within a few hours. Further instructions were that factory meetings should be arranged and conducted conspiratorially and that each member should be known by a pseudonym to prevent victimisation. The nucleus (also known as the unit) should meet every two weeks and should elect a factory committee to co-ordinate activity in the factory. 11

In January 1935 a report was made by all districts on the state of their organisation. This gives an idea of what had been achieved despite all the complaints of "intolerable slowness" in organisational work since 1931.

Due to the fall in unemployment, the number of party members in industry had totalled over 50% of the party membership since 1934, whereas only 33% had been in industrial occupations before that date. The following table indicates the number and proportion of members working in industry or organised in factory nuclei in 1935.

11 Ibid, November 1934, p22 ff; December 1934, p22 ff.
The low numbers of nuclei vis-à-vis street units were regarded as an indication of weakness in the factories and blamed on the lack of organisation already discussed and analysed by Cramm. However, once again there had been a rapid increase in some districts. In District 9, for example, the increase in total units since August 1933 had been from 14 to 30 by late 1935. There was also an increase in the total number of CPA units by the middle of 1935 to 120 factory units. These were spread throughout many industries but still centred mainly in the mining, transport and waterside

### Table 1

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industries. So their establishment was only a failure relative to the fantastic goals, usually unstated, set by the communist party itself. There had, in fact, been a large increase in the number of factory units and this resulted in considerable contact between the party and factory workers. This was what the factory nucleus was intended to achieve.

**iv Rank and file activity**

Yet a further positive effect of bolshevisation was that it made the party much more active in its drive for working class support. This contributed to the growth of the CPA between 1931 and 1935. Of course, other factors such as depression conditions and disillusionment with the ALP for failure to cope with these conditions contributed also. (Both these last two factors are considered at length in the next part of this chapter and in chapter 5.)

There are various ways of establishing a case for a causal connection between bolshevisation and the increased numbers of the CPA. First, the maximum numbers who could have joined due to the other two obvious causes can be evaluated. When this is done, the increase in recruits not accounted for can be attributed *prima facie* to the effectiveness of bolshevisation. Often the three factors listed above were all simultaneously motives for joining the CPA, but probably equally often this was not so. Eliminating the first two reasons would not alone be sufficient reason for arguing that the residue did not join for further less obvious and perhaps unascertainable reasons and the
following description of party growth is not intended to preclude such possibilities, but there is cumulative evidence that bolshevisation did lead to an increase in the number of recruits. What is intended is to discover the maximum possible numbers of recruits which could be ascribed to bolshevisation, not an accurate assessment of how many were actually acquired because of bolshevisation.

The post-1931 party undertook recruitment campaigns, where the pre-1931 party had not conducted organised drives for members except in 1926. Then, if the activeness of the pre-1931 party is compared with that of the party after that date, a vastly more active party can be observed under bolshevisation. The activity concentrated mainly on recruitment. There was also greater control and direction of members' activity after 1931, due to democratic centralism. So, when all these factors are examined there is at least a case for the assertion that the bolshevisation of the party was responsible, in part, for its growth. This is not to say that there could not have been a more efficient method of organisation than democratic centralism. Indeed, it will emerge that even the party thought the results of recruitment and the activity of the party were inadequate. Other failings of the democratic centralised party, such as dogmatism, will be discussed in relation to policy.

First, what factors other than bolshevisation could have caused the party to grow? The suffering of the unemployed in the depression was one important reason for party growth.
It is relatively easy to calculate the maximum number of unemployed who could have come into the party. It should be noted that the figures used are consistent with some joining before unemployment. At the time of bolshevisation there were 1,471 members. A further 1,453 had been recruited by 1935. Until 1932 unemployed members numbered between 72% and 90% of the total. This percentage gradually declined after this date, until in mid 1935 there were approximately 50% unemployed. It is not unreasonable to assume an overall average of 80% unemployed in the party in 1932, that is, about 1,100 members. In 1935 there were 1,498 unemployed CPA members. This meant an increase of about 400 unemployed out of 1,453 recruits, leaving a maximum of 1,050 whose recruitment is unaccounted for by their own unemployment. It could be argued that some who had joined as unemployed had subsequently become employed. This is undeniable but there are further figures which bear on that proposition. Though after 1932 unemployment started to fall, and doubtless party members found employment again, in 1935 R. Dixon indicated that 50% of new recruits were employed. In some districts this had been so in 1932 and 1933, the worst depression years. It is not unreasonable to assume that it was so in 1934 as well. It appears, then, that a minimum of 750 cannot be accounted for by unemployment.

1 *Workers' Weekly*, 15/1/1932.

How many of these 750 recruits joined for other reasons? The only other factor, apart from unemployment, that the party itself considered important was disillusionment with the ALP. This will be discussed at length in Chapter 5. It suffices to say here that not many of the 750 were disillusioned former ALP members.

This leaves perhaps 675 recruits who joined neither because they were disillusioned members of the ALP nor because they were unemployed. There is no obvious reason for their joining the party other than more active efforts to attract them.

After the Tenth party congress an allout recruiting campaign commenced.

The party set a target for recruiting in each district. As early as a month later it was reported that the membership of District 1 was rising by 40-50 a month. Periodic articles on the campaign appeared in the Workers' Weekly and from them it emerged that the party considered depression conditions were "forcing these workers into active participation in the class struggle". The party membership rose rapidly, though it appears that many potential recruits were lost through the political error of "sectarianism", that is, the extreme

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3 L.L. Sharkey, The Labor Party Crisis (Sydney, 1952), passim.
4 Workers' Weekly, 5/6/1931.
5 Ibid, 24/7/1931.
political views of the recruiters. In 1932 the party announced an overall 33% increase in members. The campaign had resulted in the recruitment of about 900 members, though many of these were lost again soon after, as the 33% increase indicates.

This initial campaign lost its force by 1932 but the party still showed greater interest and concern with recruiting than before 1931. The Comintern instructions had been that the CPA was to build its mass support as a prerequisite for revolution, and gaining new members remained its primary aim.

In 1933 the problem with recruiting was expressed thus:

The rate of recruiting is low, not because the possibilities are not greater than ever, but because some of us only look for non-existent ready made Communists; and most of us are not consciously seeking to bring into our Party and the MM those workers who show interest and who will become communists and workers for militant unionism inside our organisation with our aid.

Primarily this failure was a political one and not associated with inactivity in the organisation, and it continued to account for a slowing up of recruitment, despite active recruiting efforts, until 1935. The party policy caused "confusion in work, and hesitancy and lack of definiteness of action", according to one member. On the other hand, after 1931 the CPA had definitely made active organised efforts to recruit.

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7 Ibid, 11/1/1929.
8 Ibid, 5/1/1934.
9 Ibid, 19/10/1935.
Bolshevisation and democratic centralism also meant a party which could hold its members slightly better than the pre-1931 party. This was due to closer contact and control of members by the party.

Before bolshevisation the party membership fluctuated alarmingly. Garden reported to the Fourth Congress of the Comintern that there were 900 book members but only 750 paid up. This suggests considerable fluctuation in the years 1921 and 1922, and is reinforced by the report at the 1922 party conference that of 102 new members 23 were members "at large". Assuming that members "at large" were nominal communists only, the figures suggest that even in the earliest years between 17 and 24% of CPA members were inactive or drifting out of the party. Fluctuation became considerably worse after 1922. It was mainly loss and hardly ever gain. Certainly by 1925 there were two ex-communists for every communist. In 1925 membership was down to 260. In 1926 some success in recruiting was reported. The membership of the CPA seems to have grown to 356. According to Ellis, a report on CPA membership was made by C. Rubanoff who visited Australia in 1926. Rubanoff's figures were 110 in Sydney, 200 in Queensland in ten groups, 32 in Victoria and 14 in Lithgow.

10 Communist, 5/1/1923.
11 Workers' Weekly, 18/1/1926.
Of these 356, a maximum of 171 had left the party within a year, as party membership had fallen to 185 by the end of the year 1927 according to the official party report to the conference of that year. In this report full figures for Melbourne and Queensland were not given so perhaps less than 171 had left. There can be no doubt that there was considerable fluctuation in 1926, 1927 and 1928.

After 1928 the picture of fluctuation becomes clearer. Party membership was rising rapidly but a great number of recruits were lost as soon as they were gained. This was openly admitted in the Workers' Weekly in early 1932.

In November 1930 District 1 had 215 members. A year later it had 1,550 on the books, but the losses in the same period amounted to 692, more than half the number recruited. So the active membership increased to only 858. This pattern was characteristic of the whole party. Fluctuation was extremely high before bolshevisation. What happened afterwards?

The next figures available are those for 1934-35 after the worst of the depression was over. Between July and December 1934 there had been an increase from 2,371 to 2,824 members. Once again there had been heavy fluctuation in

15 Workers' Weekly, 15/1/1932.
16 Ibid, 5/7/1935.
membership. In District 1, 347 members had been recruited but 172 had left. In District 2, of the 87 increase only 32 remained. No. 4 District recruited 152 and lost 62. So the pattern ran for the party. Between August 1934 and January 1935 there were 360 recruits of whom 103 were lost. This fluctuation continued until the Seventh World congress of the Comintern in July 1935.

However, although fluctuation continued after bolshevisation, it was not as extreme. Up to 1928 there had been an absolute loss in members, that is, more members were lost than were gained. After 1928 and to 1931 the fluctuation was of the order of 50% of all new members lost. In 1934-35 this pattern continued though it fell after August 1934 to less than a 30% loss. At any rate, after the depression and after bolshevisation the party held its members better than before 1928.

The bolshevised party directed its activity in other directions than those which occupied the party before 1931. This can be shown by comparing the life of the party for 1928-31 with that after that date.

It was stated on the cover of the 1922 and the 1926 party constitutions that members should not miss a meeting, should not be late at a meeting and should not leave a meeting without permission before it closed. Party life centred around these meetings in 1927-31. Before that date

17 Communist Review, April 1935, p50.
members often ignored the directions and attended when they felt inclined to do so. In many communist parties these meetings were taking up an excessive amount of time by 1927, sometimes up to thirty a month, and so there were Comintern instructions to limit them as they interfered with other party work. This was true of the CPA. Party life until 1931 was essentially a round of meetings and training classes; in mid 1928 the activities of one district were listed by the *Workers' Weekly* as follows:

Sunday: 3 pm Yarra Bank; 7 pm open air meeting Russell Street; 8 pm lecture.

Monday: business meeting

Tuesday: training class

Wednesday: trade union class

Thursday: economics class

Friday: speakers class, choir practice

Saturday: *Workers' Weekly* house-to-house canvass; 3 pm Young Comrades Club, class and physical training.

This was an exceptionally heavy week and in smaller districts there were fewer functions each week. However, training classes were compulsory and, until Kavanagh was deposed, since there was no repeated complaint about non-attendance in the press, it is reasonable to assume that they were attended. This meant that in the larger districts, where most of the members lived, there was little time for other activity, as at this time nearly all party members had jobs and only their evenings were free. Party leaders had to
attend all meetings. The pattern was, then, one of activity at meetings and classes but seldom elsewhere. In early 1929 a considerable proportion of the party membership was mustered at a debate with the IWW, indicating that the membership could be activated on certain occasions.\textsuperscript{18} Virtually no activity or contact was maintained with even such key industries and unions as mining, transport and the wharves.\textsuperscript{15}

Much time was spent calling meetings to condemn this or that government action. In 1929 with the increase in party membership and the increased time available due to unemployment CPA members were engaged in more non-meeting activity, especially among their fellow unemployed.\textsuperscript{20} It was spasmodic and unorganised but it spelt training in agitation.

It was in 1930, when the new leadership came to power, that there was a marked step up in party activity. Basically it stemmed from the dynamism of the new leaders themselves, who told the members to work as well as attend meetings.\textsuperscript{21}

The 1929 conference called upon all party members and organs to spare no effort in carrying into effect, as a first step towards the bolshevisation of the CPA, a resolution summed up in the slogan "forward to a mass party". It was pointed out that the party had no appreciable influence in the

\textsuperscript{18} Direct Action, 9/2/1929.

\textsuperscript{19} Workers' Weekly, 11/1/1929.

\textsuperscript{20} See letter from Militant Women's Movement in Kavanagh Coll, ANU Archives.

\textsuperscript{21} M.H. Ellis, The Garden Path, op. cit., p165.
struggles of the working class. Indeed, party failure in an attempt to lead a stop work meeting on December 19 1929 had been abject proof of this.

It took time for translation from inactivity into activities of a practical nature, but by 1932 and 1933 party members regularly attended meetings of "fronts" (see Part IV of this thesis) and formed party steering committees to work in them. They had also, as has been indicated already, started work in factories. In 1934-35 Cecil Sharpley, who was then a very unimportant rank and file member, was engaged in these activities:

- I distributed leaflets in letter boxes;
- I pasted up bills and slogans on factory walls at night;
- I visited the docks early in the mornings before starting work at the office;
- I took every chance to talk to and to organise clerks; and
- I conducted a class on the Communist Manifesto among a group of workers in the industrial areas of North Melbourne. I served my apprenticeship as a Communist with enthusiasm and energy.\(^{22}\)

To confirm that he was not a lone enthusiast there is the fraction minute book of the Newtown-Redfern-Surry Hills area of Sydney. It shows that there was regular and personal contact with superior party committees at least once a week, and that errant members were carefully looked up and attempts made to keep them in the party. Activity was of two sorts. First there was that which paralleled Sharpley's. Secondly, and more importantly, there was factory and "front" work. Factory work concentrated on the

While bolshevisation had succeeded in creating an active CPA by 1935, the policies adopted after the Sixth World Congress in 1928 had a retarding effect on the party's growth and influence.

It was the stated belief of the Comintern Sixth Congress that the coming years would be years of a terrible depression unprecedented in history; that this depression would lead to increased working class militancy and eventually to a renewed phase of revolutionary activity. In these circumstances, social democracy (in Australia the ALP) would support the bourgeoisie in its resistance to the working class and since the ALP had the support of the workers it would "pull the wool over their eyes". The worst enemy of communism and the coming revolution was thus social democracy. The object of the policy of the whole communist movement was to foster the nascent revolution and to take such action independently of and in hostility to the other working class parties. A significant addition to this direction was the further task of defending the Soviet Union and the Chinese and colonial uprisings.¹

¹ *Inprecorr*, 23/11/1928, 28/11/1928, contain "The International Situation and the Tasks of the Communist International" and the "Theses and Resolutions of the Sixth World Congress".
Australia. It did enter the throes of an unprecedented depression and, if we take unemployment figures as a guide, Australia suffered much more than Great Britain.

Australia was already in the grips of a local recession before Wall Street collapsed at the end of 1929. This was probably due to the slowing down of the post war boom in industrial expansion, the low rate of growth of productivity and declining profit expectations at the end of 1927.\(^2\) Certainly the numbers of unemployed rose from 1926, and the percentage continued to rise steadily after 1928.\(^3\) After 1927 there were also reductions of wage awards in the major industries: seamen, watersiders, timberworkers and miners (see Part III of this thesis), which led to long and bitter strikes. However, while troubled with depression conditions before 1929, it was with the collapse of Wall Street that the depression started to affect wide sections of the Australian community. Excessive government borrowing, the still "dependent" economy, and the loss of markets for Australia's staples quickly resulted in a fall of £116 million in national income.

Socially this economic loss meant that many small businesses and farms went bankrupt, that large businesses cut down production and started to lay off labour, and that after the failure of the large strikes of 1928-30 a gloom and apathy


\(^3\) See Appendix E.
fell on the community as each month the unemployed figures rose. They continued to do so until 1933, when a gradual improvement took place. Even in 1935 the figures were still higher than they had ever been before the great depression. Throughout the depression one third of those normally employed in industry were out of work. Many others were part employed only. In South Australia, which was affected most, 34% of the trade union work force was unemployed in 1932. The overall figures for Australia were 29%. The CPA tended to exaggerate and claimed that in 1933 in NSW 57.7% had no income and 72.3% had an income of less than £1 a week (the equivalent of £5 today).

Although Australians did not starve, except perhaps in unrepresentative cases, they suffered hardship. Evictions were an everyday occurrence and food distributed as relief was sometimes rotten. J. T. Lang wrote

In the streets were the shabby panhandlers cadging for pennies, or an occasional threepence. Sydney became a city of beggars.... The hardier spirits took to the tracks. They went rabbit trapping....

People started to double up in houses and 4.2% of dwellings were unoccupied. Although there were occasional cases of men committing suicide, or pregnant women losing their

4 Ibid.
5 Communist Review, December 1935, p34.
7 G. Schedvin, op. cit., p27.
babies through malnutrition, for the populace at large the
depression spelt difficulties such as having the gas or
electricity cut off. The depression struck at all groups.
Furthermore, officialdom was seldom helpful, relief officers
were often rude and callous.

As a result there was a resentful community and initially
there was considerable militancy in the trade unions. There
was also increased political radicalism, as evidenced by the
Lang Labor party, which, though strongest in NSW, won
supporters throughout Australia. Up to this stage the
Comintern's analysis was correct in Australia. However, at
no time was there real widespread revolutionary militancy,
and it was when this point was broached by the CPA that its
policies became inappropriate and spoiled any chance of real
success.

What, then, were its policies? The struggle between
Kavanagh and his opponents centred on whether Australia was
an exception to the Comintern's general belief that social
democracy should be attacked. The new leadership said that
it was no exception and therefore the policy of the CPA was
exactly that of the Comintern. It was first elaborated at
the 1929 conference of the party. One resolution stated
that Australian capitalism reflected in all its main aspects
the general situation of world capitalism of the period,
which was marked by an increasing accentuation of all the
contradictions of imperialism, leading inevitably to new
imperialist wars and intensification of the class struggle, and an upward surge of the revolutionary movements against imperialism in the colonial and semi-colonial countries. Since Australia was neither a "colonial" nor a "semi-colonial" country as far as the Comintern was concerned, this did not mean that there was an immediate revolutionary upsurge in the country. However, the CPA agreed that the Labor Party had "become interlocked with the bourgeois State apparatus" and was intent on repressing the working class and depriving it of the means for its defence by outlawing the strike weapon. The CPA

must adopt clearer and sharper tactics against the Labor Party and trade union leaders in order to rouse the workers against the reformist bureaucracy and to win the leadership of the masses in the struggle against capitalism.

It was emphasised that the CPA must act as independent leader of the masses and encourage the workers' disbelief in Labor. The political line of the party should be based on the fact that it had to fight not one but two camps of enemies -

the openly avowed capitalist parties (Nationalist, Country Party) and the Labor Party, including so-called left wing candidates.

Not even breakaway parties were to be tolerated. The only concession was a preparedness to support trade union disaffiliation movements from the ALP where these unions were

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8 Workers' Weekly, 10/1/1930.
9 Inprecorr, 4/10/1928, p1233.
10 Workers' Weekly, 10/1/1930.
still "reformist".

Since at this time the party was still completely isolated from the workers in industry and largely disorganised, it was stated that the main task was to penetrate these masses and obtain an "independent revolutionary leadership" of them. It was asserted, quite fairly, that there had been a definite radicalisation of the Australian workers during 1929. The strikes of that year were evidence of this. They were also evidence of a "capitalist offensive". The party urged an extension of the economic struggles into mass political movements. The keynote of the whole policy was independent, offensive tactics. The resolutions of the Tenth Plenum of the ECCI were published contemporaneously under the heading "Path to Power" and widely circulated in the party. They emphasised that there was a rising tide of revolution. Coupled with the publication of the programme of the Comintern in late 1929, no party worker was left in doubt that the worst enemies of the working class were the ALP trade union and political leaders and that they and their like were postponing the world revolution.  

The whole policy meant a reconsideration of the relationship with the ALP.

In 1928 the official policy of the CPA towards the ALP was that party members should not hide their membership in

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11 Ibid, 17/1/1930.
the CPA if they were also members of the ALP. Instead, they should openly declare that they were communists. The ALP's official attitude was that expressed at the federal level by a decision made by the Executive of the Federal ALP in 1928, on a motion by a South Australian representative. This prohibited individual members of the ALP from even advocating the policy of the communist party, much less belonging to that party.\footnote{13}

All states accepted this ruling, except NSW, which objected mainly to dictation by the Federal Executive, "a small group of officials". However, Kilburn, speaking for NSW at the 1930 conference, left no doubt that the NSW ALP was more hostile to the CPA than any other part of the ALP, despite its refusal to accept the ruling.\footnote{14}

This 1928 ruling caught those ALP men who were still secretly members of the CPA. There were still some of these even after the CPA demand that all members declare their membership and defy the ALP to expel them. One was Jack Ryan, who in 1928 was a member of the ALP and secretly or semi-secretly a CPA member.

Officials of the All Australian Council of Trade Unions in Melbourne were indignant this afternoon at a suggestion that J. Ryan, who sailed by the Mishima last week to attend the Pan Pacific Conference, was a communist.

They said that he had signed the anti-communist pledge of the

\footnote{13} Report ALP Federal Conference, 1930, p81.\footnote{14} Loc. cit.
ALP in Sydney and was the accredited representative of the 
trade union movement in Australia.\textsuperscript{15} AWU representatives 
ridiculed this reasoning when they heard of it in Sydney.\textsuperscript{16} 
Officially Jack Ryan was not a communist. In fact he was. 
It is difficult to discover to what extent this unofficial 
contact existed, but some CPA members were definitely also 
ALP members in 1928. Jack Blake seems to have been another. 
Such a situation was facilitated by the belief that real 
communists belonged to the ALP, in NSW at least, and that 
men like Sharkey were interlopers. Many prominent ALP member 
were ex-communists and the lines of demarcation were blurred. 
Contacts between the CPA and the ALP existed at all sorts of 
levels, socially and industrially as well as politically. 

With the 1928 ruling political communication became 
impossible, except in NSW, and there the anti-communism of 
the ALP was stronger than in, say, Victoria.\textsuperscript{17} 

So by mid 1928 a certain stiffness was developing between 
the CPA and the ALP on the CPA’s part. This may have been a 
response to the 1928 Federal Executive decision. In any case 
talk of the ALP deceiving the masses became more frequent in 
communist publications.\textsuperscript{18} Following the Easter conference 
of the NSW ALP, when statements were made about the similarity of communist and Labor aims, the CPA claimed that the ALP

\textsuperscript{15} Labor Daily, 7/1/1928. 
\textsuperscript{16} SMH, 10/1/1928. 
\textsuperscript{17} This is an unavoidable conclusion when Labor Call and 
Labor Daily are read together. 
\textsuperscript{18} Communist, May 1928.
had a "class capitalist" nature. The complete control of the NSW party by Lang led to further claims that the ALP was guilty of "continued acts of treachery towards the masses".

This increased verbal coolness was not, however, matched in practice. In 1929 the Labor Council was still sending delegates to CPA functions, although the Labor Council firmly supported the ALP at this time.

With the introduction of the New Line of the Sixth Comintern Congress, the animosity between the two parties, their leaders and their members, grew. The CPA expressed its relationship and attitude to the ALP in a pamphlet. The CPA said that parliament could not improve the workers' position at the expense of capitalism - that the ALP was a parliament party and at the mercy of financiers when money had to be raised for administrative purposes. Therefore, "the history of the Labor Party in Parliament is a record of political degeneration ending in political bankruptcy". While originally it could claim to voice the class interests of the workers, it had progressively become anti-working class. Per contra, the CPA maintained that the centre of gravity of the workers' struggles lay outside parliament, in the industrial field. After this statement of position, dual

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22 *Towards a Workers' Government. The Communist Party and the Labor Party*, (Sydney, 1929), passim.
membership of both parties disappeared and contacts became purely social, if they existed at all. 23

With the return of the ALP to government at the beginning of the depression, the relationship became more complex. In 1929 the ALP was returned as federal government, and by 1931 there were Labor governments in NSW, Victoria and South Australia. Labor was therefore responsible for coping with the depression in these states. Its failure to do so was grist to the mill of the theory of "social fascism". Most important were the measures of the federal government. The had lost the 1928 election by a small margin after a "red bogey" campaign. In 1929 it made various promises of a minor nature to the electorate at large, and two important specific promises to the industrial electorate. These two promises were to bring to a halt the coalminers' lockout then in progress, and to modify the Arbitration Act introduced by Bruce, which was a source of resentment to the working class. 24 When returned, the ALP found itself without control of the Senate and the second of these promises could not be carried out. The High Court also opposed it. The ALP simply failed to honour the first of the promises. So, while it is true that the minor general policies were fulfilled, the major ones of concern to the working class were not.

23 Jock Garden recalls social contacts in 1929.

24 This is based on R. Barrett, Promises and Performances in Australian Politics, 1928-59, (New York, 1959) esp. pp 25-54.
Furthermore, the measures taken to alleviate the suffering caused by the depression were easily characterised as betrayals of the working class. After so many years of prosperity the depression took all and sundry by surprise. Various reasons for its occurrence were given. The moderate ALP men, led by J. Scullin, the Prime Minister, blamed it on excessive government borrowing and a standard of living which was too high. There was an element of truth in this. This belief seems to have guided Scullinites when they were first faced by the concrete solution offered by Sir Otto Niemeyer. Niemeyer had arrived from England in July 1930, together with Professor Gregory. Their task was to advise the Australian government on how to meet its heavy overseas debts. The first problem that the ALP tackled was "the external or transfer problem". This was prompted by the "balance of payments" crisis. The Australian economy had been built in the twenties on the slogan "men, money, markets". The economic prosperity of that decade had been based on easily obtainable loans, which had become a pillar in the Australian economic edifice. Without these loans the Australian economy would collapse and so it was necessary to obtain more loans even in the depression. Yet, unless interest was paid on previous loans more money might not be lent. So outstanding debts had to be paid, even when this was difficult to do. Concern with this economic problem overshadowed all others and it was not until 1931 that a nation-wide system of
unemployment relief started functioning. In a sense the Labor federal government had inherited the economic errors of the past.

After discussions with Scullin and his acting Treasurer, Lyons, and examining the state of the economy, Niemeyer told the government that the standard of living would have to be dropped to pay London debts. "Rationalisation" had come to Australia. The result was the formal Melbourne Agreement.

This caused a furore. It not only split the Labor Party but it outraged much of the public. Lang led the breakaway, claiming that it was "bowing to the overlord". W.M. Hughes wrote a pamphlet condemning the action. The rump of the Labor Party rapidly began to lose support. It further jeopardised its popularity by calling in a group of conservative economists to advise it. For these men, "the problem of the crisis for Australia was one of loss of national income, the impact of that loss, the spreading of the loss and the restoration of the balance among the several groups of producers".25 These men had conservative business connections.26 Their solution was embodied in a memorandum to the acting Treasurer, called "A Plan for Economic Adjustment" (September 1930). The economists demanded a reduction of

salaries throughout the nation, as the loss of national income could not be met from a surplus of income held by a comparatively few people. "By sharing the original loss equitably among all classes and by restoring private industry the loss of national income will be confined to the first loss" (i.e., £70m). 27

It was stated that one heavy wage cut would avoid the "grave industrial trouble" which a series would cause under a gradual deflationary scheme.

The Arbitration Court acted on this first when in January 1931 it lowered the basic wage 10% on the grounds advanced by the economists - a very unpopular move.

For a period it looked as if the economists' plan would be replaced by the semi-inflationist plan of Theodore, now Treasurer. However, the economists won the day and in May 1931 the Copland committee report appeared. It said "the restoration of economic equilibrium is largely a matter of lifting the burden of loss from the export producers". Soon after, the Premiers' Plan was enacted. It decreed a 20% decrease in government expenditure and as a result many more people lost their jobs or had their wages lowered. Further developments along the lines of the economists' recommendations were embodied in the Wallace Bruce Commission into the economic situation in 1932. Generally, the advice was for

a lowering of wages to 10% below those of 1928, and equality of sacrifice.\(^{28}\) It advised the introduction of relief camps for the unemployed. These were first introduced by Hogan, the ALP premier of Victoria.

Despite all these measures, depression conditions continued to get worse and the government was held responsible by many sections of the community other than the communists. Not surprisingly, in 1931 it was defeated by a large margin. Soon after, Labor also fell in NSW, Victoria and South Australia.

The ineptitude and failure of the ALP was fastened on by the CPA. In 1930 it was pointed out that conditions were worse under Labor. This was true. There also appeared to be an element of truth in the statement that Scullin was a "tool of the bankers". Suggestions that the ALP would ban the CPA also served to convince the CPA that the government was "social fascist".\(^{29}\) In fact, the ALP was very evasive when the Nationalists suggested such a ban. Faced with the Premiers' Plan and relief work schemes the CPA pointed out, quite fairly, that in South Australia, where the premier had boasted of a 100% application of the Plan, there was the highest unemployment. It also said,


\(^{29}\) Workers' Weekly, 28/8/1931.
relief work schemes, however, disguised, mean work for a dole standard of life and lead to a general reduction of standards through the sacking of full wage workers and replacing them with relief workers. In 1931 the CPA put forward its own way out of the crisis, revolutionary way and so extreme that it was irrelevant.

In sum, then, although the CPA was making sense in its description of what was happening under Labor, it had no relevant alternative to offer. Talk of revolution was fatuous. Yet because the ALP seemed to communists to be betraying the workers, as well as for reasons of discipline, the "social fascist" theory was continually reconfirmed. At the First CPA Plenum held on 28 and 29 June 1930 Herbert Moore had the adopted which were called "Australia's Part in the World Revolution". This is the most significant document in Australian party policy of the time - it must therefore be given in extenso. It started with the assertion that the working class of Australia was facing the concentrated fire of the alliance of the capitalist class, the Federal Labor Government, the various state governments, and the reactionary officials at the head of the trade union movement. As the communists were the one working class party of the country, their task was that of immediately increasing their party membership so that they would have sufficient forces to cope with the problem before them. Objective conditions were right for this. In Australia the fall of wheat and wool prices had a disastrous effect. While 300,000 were

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31 The Communist Way out of the Crisis, Statement of the Aims of the CPA, (1931), passim.
unemployed, 23.6% was still returned on capital investment. This situation could not be overcome by the capitalists; indeed, their efforts made conditions worse. In several countries similar slump conditions had led to a revolutionary situation. The temporary capitalist solution was to call to power to screen "under the mask of democracy and pacifism" its own solution, renewed imperialist wars and increased exploitation of areas of investment, such as Australia, where the USA and Great Britain vied for markets. The ALP worked for the capitalists, even more so than Bruce had. There had been a 100% increase in unemployment, a decrease in wages and an increase in working hours to 48 a week. The Scullin ALP federal government was a pliable tool of the bankers and industrialists of Australia, and its policy was fascism. All promises of amelioration only hid further attacks on working class conditions. This system was losing Scullin support and so men like J.T. Lang, "left social fascists", were emerging to take his place. They were more demagogic and more to be feared than Scullin himself. The document cited various scab and strike breaking activities of the state governments in support of its thesis. Before these attacks the determination of the workers to resist was growing. Strikes rapidly became political in character. The creation of the Workers' Defence Army on the coalfields was "a political challenge to the armed forces of the State". The success of direct action in other strikes was also evidence. The party should as a whole concentrate
on the developing economic struggles. It should pursue a policy of extended strike action. It should bypass the trade union leadership to achieve this. Intense work must be conducted in the fraternals (fronts - see Part IV) and among the unemployed. Work among neglected sections of society, women, youth, the country dwellers, must be started. Finally, the party must give up its respect for legalism, arbitration, and co-operation with the trade union leaders. Independent action was the keynote.32

Throughout the world this policy in fact led to a fall in communist members, as "right wingers" had to be expelled. It was not strange that the ECCI sent out a political letter in mid 1930 saying that those who left communist parties because they could not tolerate the current policy should be retained as sympathisers, where possible.33 Later in the year, Moxon printed an article stated that there was too much revolutionary phrasemongering.34 This marked the beginning of an official break in the extremism of party activity in 1930.

However, the Tenth Party Congress in April 1931 confirmed the general lines of the policy and even stated that

32 Australia's Part in the World Revolution, Theses of the Central Committee Plenum CPA, 28-29 June 1930, (1930), passim.
33 Workers' Weekly, 16/5/1930.
34 Ibid, 21/11/1930.
conditions were worse for Australian capitalism. The Socialisation Units and the Labor Army, the latest products of the radicalisation in the ALP, were reactionary, the Congress said. This extreme attitude was continued in the Programmatic Declaration of the Party, printed in September.

It stated that, from experience, the ruling class of finance and industrial capitalists and big land owners had learned that Labor governments, because of their influence over the masses, were best fitted to lead the offensive against the masses. The difference between Scullin and the "demagogic Lang" in New South Wales was a difference in method only. The general tenor of the programme was summed up in its first paragraph. "With the support of the majority of the people we will overthrow and smash the power of the capitalists and big land owners". Socialism was the only way out of the depression and the communists were the only party which would provide this.

This continued left policy resulted in a perpetuation of "sectarianism" as the extremism was known, and Miles, the new party leader, was forced to condemn this himself at the end of the year. After discussions in the Orgburo, he demanded that discussions take place at lower levels to discover why the party was not winning support despite the favourable conditions. The reason he gave was

36 *See Appendix G.*
37 *Workers' Weekly*, 20/11/1931.
"sectarianism". And this state of affairs existed at the same time as leaders were saying in the press that the first task was to rally the "toiling masses".38

The 1933 Plenum, held in March, once again condemned sectarianism and measures were introduced to combat it. It was stated that the party had gone too far left in an effort to avoid right wing errors. Major directives on how to work were sent out to avoid erroneous sectarian decisions by lesser party members. More concentration on the immediate struggles and demands of the workers was advised.39

The natural result of such extremism of theory had been an extremism of action. He who was not a party member was a social fascist. In mid 1929, Senator Arthur Rae had stated his sympathies for the CPA in these words:

So far as Communism is concerned, I do not wish ..... to deny my sympathy with the principles of that movement which aims at establishing the very highest form of human society, and the ALP objective, rightly understood, has the same aim in view, although as yet only in the form of a "pious aspiration".40

Shortly afterwards the party members attacked him savagely as a "social fascist", indeed, a "left social fascist", which was worse. Rae was reduced to tears.41 Jock Garden, with whom the party co-operated in the 1929 timber strike, was

38 E.g. Ibid, 15/1/1932.
40 SMH, 21/5/1929.
cast as a traitor to the working class. He remembers the irritation which such allegations caused him when Jack Ryan used them. Ryan was regarded as too "soft" and, as has been described earlier, duly expelled for failure to carry out the party policy. Altogether, the party cut itself off from fellow travellers and sympathisers completely. Furthermore, the party workers tended not to distinguish between the rank and file and the leaders of the ALP. All were social fascists if they defended the Labor Party. This was not official CPA policy. However, no clear dividing line between those "who ought to have known better" and those who were "duped" was laid down. Were all trade union officials "social fascists" or were only the top trade union officials "social fascists"? This was not clear and brawls between the rank and file of the ALP and of the CPA were not a rare occurrence. Indeed, they tended to be lauded as signs of a rising class consciousness.42 The result was the isolation of the CPA from many of those whom they were trying to convert.

It must be remembered that the main task was to win recruits and that the potential recruits were ALP supporters almost to a man. To establish a united front "from below" while such abuse and brawling was going on was virtually impossible. The extremism of the utterances of the CPA member resulted frequently in his victimisation by the "bosses" and the force of law and order. This isolated him still further.

42 *Workers' Weekly*, 31/3/1933.
On the other hand, disillusion with the ALP was extreme and there was a continually developing radicalism in the breakaway Lang party. By opposing the "left social fascists the CPA cut itself off completely from any benefit from this radicalisation. Lang was strongly anti-communist, to the point of conducting a campaign against it.\(^4\) The enmity probably blinded the CPA to the objective radicalism of Lang solution to the depression, as embodied in the Lang Plan. Basically, the Lang Plan advocated repudiation of debts and nationalisation of banks. He won tremendous support for this policy and his rejection of the Melbourne Agreement and the Premiers' Plan in many states. At the time the CPA said that Lang had signed and operated the Premiers' Plan and this was sufficient to put him beyond the pale.\(^5\) They also attacked his proposition that banks should be nationalised. Later they realised the folly of cutting themselves off from such a fruitful source of support.\(^6\) In the thirties, Lang and the Langites were "social fascists".

Even more indicative of the barrenness of the social fascist line was the neglect of the developments of the Socialisation Units, the extreme left of the Lang party. These Socialisation Units had been brought into existence by the 1930 Annual ALP Conference in NSW to devise ways

\(^3\) J. Lang, *Communism is Treason*, (Sydney, 1947), p3.

\(^4\) L.L. Sharkey, *Lang Signed and Operated the Premiers' Plan*, (Sydney, 1931), passim.

\(^5\) E. Campbell, *op. cit.*, p142.
and means to propagate the first and principal platform, the "socialisation of industry". On the Socialisation Committee there were many people who had been close to the CPA before the New Line. The members of the Committee were W. McNamar, J. Kilburn, F. Saidy, D. Grant, E. Barker, Mrs. L. Lynch and E. Cook, and later Garden, T. Payne and others. A strong propaganda campaign was carried out in the ALP. In 1931 a newspaper, Socialisation Call, appeared. At the 1931 Easter conference this extreme left had become so strong that the ALP was forced to adopt a socialisation platform and the pledge was altered to mention specific adherence to the principles of socialism. By mid 1931 the Socialisation Committee was sufficiently strong to obtain its own representatives on the ALP Executive and an office. It planned a three-year transition to socialism with rule by regulation, "as Parliament was collapsing". It became strongly pro-Soviet soon the question of how to carry out this socialisation arose. An article by Rae appeared in Socialisation Call, saying that the dictatorship of the proletariat was the only solution. Backing of communist "fronts" became stronger.

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46 Socialisation Call, 4/4/1931.
47 Circular Letter 14/3/1931 describes this, ANU, Rawling Co.
48 Socialisation Call, 4/4/1931.
49 Ibid, 1/5/1931.
50 Ibid, 1/7/1931.
51 Ibid.
52 Ibid, 1/8/1931.
In late 1931 Tom Payne submitted a report advocating revolution and dictatorship of the proletariat. It was rejected by the Committee as inappropriate. This marked the highest point of leftism. Accusations were made in late 1932 that these units had a secret pact with the communists and Lang later endorsed this theory for reasons of his own. In 1933 the units were becoming so strong that they represented a threat to Lang's position and a red bogey campaign was conducted by the Labor Daily against them. For a moment the Lang movement showed signs of splitting but finally most branches rallied to the "Big Fella". The Socialisation Units ensured their own failure when at the 1933 Metropolita Conference they voted for the "readmission of the Communist auxiliary bodies". After this date the ALP was openly hostile and the Units began to collapse. Some members went into the CPA.

Instead of cultivating this group, the CPA was forced by its policy to condemn its members as "left social fascists". There were some contacts, however. Sharkey spoke before the units and Payne, who was the leader of the most "left" section of the units, was in mid-1932 considering rejoining the CPA. By the end of the year he and his supporters

53 Ibid, 1/10/1931.
54 J. Lang, Communism is Treason, op. cit., p5.
55 Labor Daily, February 1933, passim.
56 Workers' Weekly, 25/8/1933.
57 Kavanagh, Diary 29/6/1932, ES. Note that R. Cooksey, "The Socialisation Units of the NSW Labor Party, 1930-33",
had left to join the CPA. There were eighteen of these men.

Thus the CPA lost a great chance for influencing the ALP, attracting socialists away from it and keeping revolutionary leadership. As it was, the average Australian saw Lang and the Units as revolutionary, if he was that way inclined, and looked no further. The CPA did not bother to court him.

Before the CPA extremism could be tempered there was a change in the Comintern line, a reversion to a united front policy. This was prompted by European developments.

The Comintern had pinned its hopes on a renewal of revolution in Germany. Here, too, the depression had been particularly severe and the German Communist Party had increased in size very rapidly. In accordance with the Comintern line it too had attacked the Social Democrats of the country. But, as elsewhere, it had not distinguished between the leaders and the rank and file of the Social Democrats and all were treated as "little Zorgiebels". (Zorgiebel was a "social fascist" police chief.) Though reprimanded by the Comintern for this sort of lack of discrimination, it led to a neglect of Nazism by German communists.\(^58\) E. Thälmann, the leader of the German communists, said

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\(^{58}\) B.A. Thesis (Sydney, 1962), claims that communist Unemployed Workers' Movement members controlled Glebe, Paddington, Surrey Hills Socialisation Units (p75), as non-ALP members could be Socialisation Unit members. This seems improbable given the CPA hostility towards "left social fascists" and condemnation of association with them.

\(^{58}\) Inprecors, 17/4/1930.
We must rigorously oppose any tendency to represent to the masses in too gloomy colours the success of the Nazis. Whoever does that fails to see the contradictory shaky basis upon which the Nazis have achieved their temporary election success. This remained the attitude of the German Communist Party, that Nazism would inevitably collapse - the attacks on the socialists therefore continued. Sometimes street fights presented the ludicrous and tragic sight of communists and nazis fighting together against socialists. Trotsky's condemnation was, of course, ignored:

... to treat the social democrats as fascists is obviously a stupidity which at each critical moment, embroils us ourselves and stops us finding the way toward the social democratic worker.

A united front against the main danger, fascism, was needed, not an attack on the social democrats, he wrote. The Nazis came to power in 1933 and a reign of terror against the left started. In 1933 the German Communist Party was the strongest communist party outside Russia: a year later it was composed of scattered underground sects. Furthermore, this defeat of communism was not only in Germany - it extended throughout the world. Gone was all hope of revolution. International communism was routed. By 1935 only 22 of 67 Comintern sections were legal.

There seems little reason to doubt that the extreme anti-socialist line should have been modified after 1931, when the depression was past its depth in Europe. However,

59 Ibid. 2/10/1930.
it could not be changed, due to Russian factional problems. Stalin was still opposed to the right in Russia, although purging had begun. In 1931 he nearly fell from power, due to the extremism of his collectivisation. He could hardly swing "right" and prove the correctness of his opponents' point of view. Besides which, Trotsky favoured a united front and so he could not agree with its introduction until it was absolutely imperative. Furthermore, France was considered the main "interventionary power", as the Industrial Party confessions showed. Therefore, German developments, which were characteristic of advanced capitalist countries, were overshadowed by concern with French machinations in the Balkans. France was placed in the "first rank of the revolutionary flight". Germany had maintained treaty relations with Russia since 1922. Lastly, the mammoth centralisation of the Comintern meant that "grass roots" grievances only permeated gradually to the directive level. When Humbert Droz of the Swiss Communist Party recommended a united front, he had to make a public recantation, as this was running against Bolshevik discipline.

So only in 1933 did the collapse of German communism force a reconsideration of the 1928 policy. It was decided that a united front against fascism was necessary. The net conclusion was that the theory of social fascism was

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61 Ibid, p89.

62 Inprecorr, 9/2/1933, passim.
temporarily dropped and attacks on socialists forbidden. An appeal was made to them to form a united front. This appeal was printed in Australia in April 1933. It read, inter alia, that the success of fascism had made a united front necessary, even on socialist terms; that an appeal should be made to the socialist parties; and that attacks on them should stop. R. Shayler, writing for the District committee, sent a letter in these terms to the NSW ALP state executive. The Workers' Weekly leader contained these lines:

In Australia the movement of the working class has not reached the same high stage as in Germany. However, it would be wrong to think that the form of the united front as proposed by the Comintern, does not apply here, that Australia is an exception. In 1929 the right wing in our party, influenced by the ideology of the Labor Party, developed such a theory. History revealed the fallacy of it.

It was also pointed out that attacks on the ALP would cease only "during the common action against the offensive of capital and fascism".

In 1933, then, the CPA suddenly about faced and proposed a united front to the ALP. Not unnaturally, after all the attacks of the past this brought no response. The CPA's assertion that it wanted a united front but that it would not forgo criticism of the ALP was enough to deter the latter. The CPA continued to instruct its members not to

64 Workers' Weekly, 21/4/1933.
65 Ibid.
vote for the ALP. Then in March 1934 there was another about face. This time the Comintern's belief that a world revolution was about to occur was reinforced by a rising in Austria. The theses of the Thirteenth Plenum of the Comintern were called *On the Eve of Revolution and War*. 67 Immediately the social fascist theory was brought into action again.

The attitude of the party was summed up by Dixon.

The "objective prerequisites for a revolutionary crisis" are growing everywhere, but not in a uniform manner. They are much more developed in a number of European countries than in Australia at the moment. 68

The decisions of the Thirteenth Plenum of the ECCI were endorsed at the Fourth Plenum of the Central Committee of the CPA at Easter 1934. Once more there was a change of policy. It was stated that the improvement in the state of the economy was a prelude to a further worsening of the depression, that there was a corresponding rapid increase of fascism, and under these conditions the Labor Party had adapted itself to the requirements of the capitalist class.

This means that the Communists in their propaganda, agitation, and everyday work among the masses, must direct the main blow against the Labor Party, which paralyses the working class in the face of the advance of Fascism and the approach of war.

Most work was to concentrate on the anti-war feelings of the ALP rank and file. 69

69 *Workers' Weekly*, 20/4/1934.
Once more the ALP and the CPA were at daggers drawn. However, now the CPA had learnt from its failure to distinguish between leaders and rank and file. Dixon warned CPA members against such errors.

... it never seems to occur to them that the Labor Party workers may be almost as sincere in relation to their Party and their leaders as we are to our party and our leaders, and that our abuse can arouse their ire.70

Henceforth, CPA members were more tender with the loyalties of ALP members. Little came of it.

Throughout 1934 there had been a spontaneous development of a united front between socialist and communist - foremost in this trend was France.71 There had also been a recognition, albeit grudging, by Stalin, that the depression was over. This the Comintern had accepted. Under the pressure of these two moderating factors, it appealed once again for a united front "from above and below".72 The appeal was duplicated in Australia.73 The ALP took some time to reply, although every state and the Federal Executive had been approached before the end of the year. First to agree to consider the proposals were the South Australians. Soon after, at a lower level, there were conferences between the ALP and the CPA on the NSW coal fields. Though there were contacts with some branches of the ALP (Redfern, Ascot Vale), it soon

70 Communist Review, April-May 1934, p20.
71 Inprecors, 16/2/1935, p192.
72 Ibid, 10/11/1934, p1505 ff.
73 Workers' Weekly, 2/11/1934.
became obvious that the official ALP attitude was going to be one of hostility. Soon the ALP executives in both NSW and Victoria began a strong campaign against the united front. They alleged "insincerity" on the part of the communists. This was a justifiable position. The failure to establish a united front was also partly due to communist neglect to consolidate gains. By the middle of the year negative replies had been made to the CPA proposals and a total "black ban" placed on Communist Party organisations by the ALP. On the whole, the CPA's reaction to this was that the ALP was declining anyway, but this hid the chagrin of rejection. Even in the coalfields left wing Labor Party branches rejected the communists for "insincerity". There is no record of any successful outcome to low level CPA-ALP meetings. There were accusations that the ALP was afraid of growing communist influence and was manoeuvring to combat it. However, in December 1935 the CPA was still hopeful that there was some possibility of affiliation with the ALP. History has shown how mistaken this hope was. Indeed, there can be but one conclusion to the history of CPA-ALP relations in the thirties - the CPA had built up such a store of ill will and distrust that it was for long after isolated from the only large, organised workers' party in Australia.

75 *Communist Review*, March 1935, p26 ff.
CHAPTER 6

THE PARTY GROWS

While the policy of "social fascism" retarded party growth it did not entirely prevent the party from expanding and increasing its membership. Overall it increased more than ten times in size between 1928 and 1935. It establish new districts in South Australia and north Queensland and revivified the Tasmanian and Western Australian districts. It became active in areas hitherto neglected, in country districts and among women and youth. It is this process of expansion which will now be examined. First, the general pattern of growth will be examined and then the peculiarities in the development of each district will be discussed.

In 1928 the party had 249 members. It then increased to 1,116 by April 1931, not including districts 6, 7 and 8. After the introduction of bolshevisation, party membership continued to rise. In December 1931 it was 2,093. In 1932 recruiting started to slow down although this was the depth of the depression. The party only reached 2,500 in early 1934 and 2,824 in December of the same year. Party membership continued to rise until late in the Second World

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2 Workers' Weekly, 15/1/1932.
3 Ibid.
while the congress report did not indicate that the party itself was proletarian in character, other figures and assertions indicated that it was. In 1932 it was stated that "it is well known that our Party is almost 100% proletarian". The figures of members in trade unions still were only 28.6% in District 1, 64% in District 2 and between 55-64% in District 3 but the discrepancy between the assertion and the figures is explained by the vast number of unemployed in the party. After unemployment started to decrease the overall percentage employed in industry was about 50%. In December 1934 the figures for those members employed in industry were District 1, 32%; District 2, ? (probably the highest); District 3, 50%; District 4, 41%; District 5, 39%; District 6, 55%; and District 9, 62%. The percentage in trade unions was lower. As previous figures have indicated, many party members were still unemployed. By October 1935 71% of the membership were members of trade unions. This sudden increase was probably due to communist success in the trade unions in 1934-35.

These proletarian communists were mostly Australians by 1935, although it became customary in certain circles to refer to the CPA as alien and Russian and although some members were deported as aliens in the thirties.

At the 1931 congress the delegates had the following

7 *Communist Review*, April 1935, p46 ff.
nationalities by birth: 29 were Australians; 12 English; 7 Scottish; 4 Irish; 2 New Zealanders; and one each from Wales, Holland, Finland, Patagonia, Poland and New Guinea. All but 9 were Australian citizens. So the leadership was about 50% Australian at this stage if birthplace is regarded as the determining factor.

The fact that soon party leaders were predominantly Australian was confirmed by a report tabled in the NSW parliament in December 1931. Of 49 "central committee" members whose birthplace was known 35 were born in Australia. Of a further 98 prominent communists 59 were Australians. The bulk of the others were Anglo-Saxons. 9

As the party membership grew it became even more Australian and Sharkey claimed at the Seventh Comintern congress in 1931 that over 90% of the membership was Australian. 10 There is no reason to doubt this.

Since the party was predominantly Australian there were foreign language branches as in the United States. However there were Italian, Greek and Yugoslavian front units and the workers' weekly sometimes ran columns in foreign languages. Considerable effort was made on occasion to solicit their support, especially in areas like the cane growing areas of Queensland where there were strong Italian communities. No consistent attempt was made to cater for these people as

9 See Appendix F.
10 Inpress, 10/10/1935, p1303.
separate national groups, however, They constituted tiny minorities in the party and the policy seems to have been that they should assimilate.

The rate of growth of the districts varied. Below is a table showing the growth in membership in each district, except District 9 for which no figures can be discovered. The discrepancy between the total of the figures in the 1934 line of the table and the official 1934 party figure for total active membership, 2,824, probably roughly equals the number of members in District 9.
Table 2

CPA MEMBERS, 1928-1935. These figures are for active, not book, membership.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Dist.1</th>
<th>Dist.2</th>
<th>Dist.3</th>
<th>Dist.4</th>
<th>Dist.5</th>
<th>Dist.6</th>
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<td>88</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>74+</td>
<td>48</td>
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<td>1929</td>
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<td>20</td>
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<tr>
<td>1930</td>
<td>215</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>1931</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>(April)</td>
<td>(April)</td>
<td>74+</td>
<td>48</td>
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<td>(April)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>675</td>
<td>116</td>
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<td>273</td>
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<td>25</td>
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<td></td>
<td>(Nov.)</td>
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<td>(Dec.)</td>
<td>(Dec.)</td>
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<td>1932</td>
<td></td>
<td>200</td>
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<tr>
<td>1933</td>
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<tr>
<td>1934</td>
<td>890</td>
<td>220</td>
<td>(July)</td>
<td>482</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>85</td>
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<td></td>
<td>(April)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>1,011</td>
<td>(June)</td>
<td></td>
<td>580</td>
<td>(Jan)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1,093</td>
<td>(Dec.)</td>
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<td>(Jan)</td>
<td>255</td>
<td>683</td>
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<td></td>
<td>(Dec.)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>(Aug)</td>
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<td>(Mar)</td>
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<tr>
<td>1935</td>
<td>317</td>
<td>200+</td>
<td>(Jan)</td>
<td>(Jan)</td>
<td>580</td>
<td>85+</td>
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<td>(Jan)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>255</td>
<td>683</td>
<td>(Aug)</td>
<td>(Mar)</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

* This was split into District 3 and District 9 late in 1933. The total Queensland membership was probably in excess of 500 in 1935, allowing for the discrepancy between official party membership of 2,824 in December 1934 and the total of the figures here. There were no more than 40 members in Tasmania and the Northern Territory in 1934.

It can be seen immediately that the rate of growth was not uniform. The party grew seven times in Queensland, if we assume a membership of about 250 for District 9, and it grew 21 times in Western Australia. This is partly explained by the low numbers which Western Australia had to start with which allowed for a greater apparent growth rate. It is not explained by the varying severity of the depression, as the party in South Australia, where unemployment was worst, declined in size after 1931. The variation may be better explained by the fact that each district had its own peculiar history and errors in policy had worse effects in one than in another. Certainly, the same factors did not apply in the same way in each area.

Districts 1 and 2, the NSW districts, increased rapidly in size. The first went from a number slightly in excess of 100 to over ten times that number in 1935. The second went from a handful of members to over 300. Party propaganda and newspapers reached anything up to a claimed 60,000 people by 1934, but usually the workers' weekly only reached about 9 non-party workers for every party worker.¹²

In District 1 failures could not have been due to lack of direction as nearly all party leaders lived in this District, but leadership was very poorly distributed and District 2 was without top leaders.¹³ Here failure could be attributed

¹² Communist Review, April-May 1934, p39 ff.
¹³ See Appendix F.
to lack of direction. In fact, the increased direction meant more "sectarianism" in District 1 and less in 2, where members tended to work in an ad hoc fashion. The especial emphasis on trade union work in District 2 did without doubt lead to less extremism. There were poorer organisational links between the units and the leaders in District 2, which allowed a certain amount of latitude in tactics. In District 1 the members were continually receiving directions and counter-directions which the leaders could enforce and thus the twists and turns in the Comintern policy were followed out much more closely. Of course, the leaders gave periodic directions to stop "sectarianism", but the whole policy was confusing and "sectarianism" did not stop.

Even with the introduction of the united front policy "sectarianism" did not cease, nor did rebukes for liberalisation. On the other hand, after 1934 District 2 became increasingly moderate due to the personal attitudes of the communist leaders in this District. This would in part explain the growth in membership in this area during 1934 and 1935.

The fact that the party leadership was in District 1 was very important, as here there was an active semi-fascist

16 Workers' Weekly, 8/6/1934.
organisation, the New Guard, which emerged in the depression.

Elsewhere fascist or neofascist organisations quickly died out or did not become forces of any size. The Comintern and the party had expected the growth of fascism since 1928.

The CPA periodically remarked thereafter on the formation of small fascist-like organisations in Australia. In its programmatic declaration of 1931 it singled out the New Guard, the All for Australia League and the Citizens' League as the most prominent. It then believed that the fate of these organisations was oblivion and it declared that their life depended on the mass's attitude to fascism. The CPA itself assumed the role of the destroyer.

The New Guard emerged in 1932 as the only semi-fascist organisation of any note, though there were several others in existence. Its aim was to defend the principles embodied in the emotive catchwords "King and Country", and to prevent the inroads of communism, socialism and Langism, which it did not separate. At its height it had about 100,000 followers which made it considerably larger than the CPA and its supporters. The New Guard was not armed but it certainly drilled and was established along military lines and led by ex-army officers. The bulk of its supporters came from the middle classes.

17 See Appendix G.

18 Workers' Weekly, 2/10/1931.

The function of the organisation developed in 1931-2, in great part, into breaking up communist activities. This resulted in large brawls between communists and "fascists" and the resultant despatch of "carpacks" to wreak revenge. This development, coupled with the rise of fascism in Europe and a few defeats at "fascist" hands, led to more concern about the New Guard. But the CPA ridiculed the suggestion that the "social fascist" Lang government was penalising the New Guard and refused to join the ALP in combatting it. This was a foolish and unjustifiable attitude, as the ALP of the day was very hostile to such fascist groups. This error prevented the party having any success in its mission to destroy the New Guard. The New Guard papers reveal quite clearly that the organisation collapsed for internal reasons alone. 20

However, its mere presence gave NSW communist activity a peculiar character, like that of some European countries in miniature. Unhappily, the Nationalists stimulated CPA belief in the fascisation of Australia by backing the New Guard, verbally at least. 21 This made the policies of the Third Period appear more apt in NSW than elsewhere in the country, and the CPA was directed from NSW. So unity at the centre was maintained much better than unity between Districts.

20 Liberty, 19/1/1933; E. Campbell, The Rallying Point, (Melbourne, 1965), p178, gives reasons which are not correct, see P. Peter, op. cit., passim.

21 P. Peter, op. cit., p1.
and Central Committee, perhaps for the very reason that conditions were diverse in such a large country as Australia and policies emanating from the centre were not always readily accepted elsewhere where they were more obviously inappropriate.

This was so in District 4 in Victoria, which by 1935 had grown to the second most important sphere of party activity, whereas in 1928 it was totally ineffectual. By 1933 District 4 had its own newspaper and outstripped even NSW in "front" and rural work. It was troubled in this growth by problems additional to those experienced elsewhere for the leadership tended to be rebellious. Whether this was justified does not matter; in the course of the resultant struggles much energy was uselessly expended.

The major rebellion occurred in 1933 when several communist leaders in this district broke away due to a dispute over policy with the Central Committee. In late 1932, after the introduction of a Crimes Act to ban the CPA by the Lyons federal government, the Victorian police became tighter in their restrictions on communist meetings. These were continually closed down on the excuse that they constituted obstructions of public thoroughfares. The District Committee of the Victorian communists became increasingly provocative as a result. This alarmed many Victorian communists and Ernie Thornton attempted to organise his own area, Yarra, against this trend. He was expelled by the District Committee as a result. In December the Victorian leaders carried their
attack to the CC plenum. On 13 January 1933 they delivered a document to the Central Committee which said that the party was deluding the masses with its claim to have taken a prominent part in the workers' struggles. They were forced to repudiate this document. On their return to Melbourne they endeavoured to organise support for their position, but the CC acted quickly and suspended the leaders, T. Le Huray, B. Andrews, D. Jackson, (D. Lovegrove) and [?] Partridge. Thornton was invited to rejoin the party and R. McCrae was brought from Adelaide to act as secretary in the interim. When the district conference met in February it repudiated the Lovegrove leadership and expelled the leaders and their followers. In their place were elected J. Blake, L. Donald, and R. McCrae. The first two were Moscow trained men and Donald held the key post as secretary until 1937.

The party was shaken by the split and persistently attacked by the expellees, who were now Trotskyites organised in the Leninist League. These people led away their share of the "front" members and depleted other hitherto communist spheres of influence. The opposition of this group was due to the ineptitude of the "social fascist" period policy, something so much more obvious in Victoria than in NSW where some parts seemed correct. Their opposition to the organisational methods of the party was trotskyist in inspiration and possibly also due to failure to gain a foothold in industry and the unions. The new leadership worked in harmony with the NSW dominated CC, being out of the same
bureaucratic and Moscow trained mould as the Sydney leaders. This allowed for an easier implementation of policies emanating from the centre. From 1933 this leadership in Victoria conducted a determined campaign to oust the Lovegrove group from any positions it held in the working class movement and attempted to remedy the previous leaders' failure to establish contact with industry. District 4 grew after this date.  

The other Districts deserve brief mention, although all except District 3 seem to have followed the policies introduced by the Sydney communists. Queensland was District 3 in 1928. It was then as large as NSW District 1. It scarcely increased at all by 1935. This was due to the fact that Queensland was split into District 3 and District 9, which covered north Queensland, in August 1932. Both districts combined had about 500 members in 1935 but District 3 seemed to stagnate and indeed declined in 1931 while the northern area went from success to success, outstripping the other in numbers, contact with industry, and being first to produce a newspaper.

The explanation of the failure of the older District could lie first in lack of leadership. The best men, Miles, Docker, and Tripp, had been removed by 1930 to work in the south and as a result the area was slow to change from the

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24 *Workers' Voice*, 15/10/1934; see p269 above.
social democratic ways of the Kavanagh era and slow to introduce the nucleus system. More important was the opposition of Fred Paterson and others to the "social fascist" policy. They claimed that the ALP should be supported by the CPA as it was a lesser evil than the conservatives. This was condemned as heresy by the Comintern, though many parties supported the theory. There was almost a split like that in Victoria but Paterson, although censured, did not leave the party. The opposition shook the District, however, and was possibly responsible for continuing stagnation in 1933 and 1934.

In South Australia the CPA met its worst defeats. The South Australian District, 5, was only formed in 1929. Moves to re-form the old CPA branch began in 1928 when Jim Cullen sent a letter to the CC of the CPA requesting that an organiser be sent to Adelaide to re-establish the party there. Moxon refused the task when it was offered to him, so an oper letter was sent to the South Australian militants instead. This said that they were too disunited and that they should overcome their "sectarianism" and form a CPA in the state.25 They were indeed divided into various IWW and socialist sects. After a short campaign a CPA District, known as District 5, was formed. It covered all of South Australia and a strip of north western Victoria. At first there were only 20 members and meetings were held once a week in the Builders' 

Labourers' Hall, Adelaide. Cullen was first president and the first secretary, Art Stanthorpe, was soon succeeded by Gil Roper.

Deviations from the policy promulgated at the centre rapidly developed. While the CPA had accused the other socialists in Adelaide of "sectarianism" and attacked all other working class parties after 1928, the new group openly admired such leaders of the local IWW such as W.A. Dickenson and made repeated efforts to re-establish unity. In fact the small size of the communist group virtually dictated such a policy in the surviving stronghold of Australian IWWism. It paid off at first, as the other socialist groups and the IWW started to disintegrate and members came over to the CPA. One of these was the prominent socialist J. Zwolsman. Early and active participation in various strikes on the waterside in 1930 also contributed to the increase in party members to 300 at the end of 1931. Then the district started to decline.

The only obvious reason was continued disputes with the centre as unemployment was very bad in South Australia and membership might have been expected to rise. First signs of a difference with the centre emerged when Kavanagh was sent to Adelaide to organise a state election campaign. It was suggested that he was forming an opposition there.


Though the allegations were not substantiated there may have been some truth in them. In 1933 further trouble with the CC developed. First, the District failed to send a delegate to the CC plenum in that year and then it started a newspaper struggle, which it could not afford. On both counts it was reprimanded by the CC. Not surprisingly, the report made in 1934 by the District consisted mostly of self-recrimination. No members were expelled and the differences with the centre seem due to errors of judgement rather than disputes over policy, but the party slowly declined to only 80 members and then even less.

The other areas of activity, W.A., Tasmania and the Northern Territory, appear to have followed the centre's directives without dispute. Western Australia, District 6, grew from 4 members to 85 and its own newspaper, Red Star, reached about 1,000 people in 1935. Despite its tiny membership, spread in eight towns and resulting in extreme decentralisation, the party went through all the motions of running its own candidates, refusing to work with the ALP and establishing factory units to maintain contact with the "workers".

28 Workers' Weekly, 26/1/1934; Communist Review, June 1934, p1.
29 Workers' Weekly, 26/1/1934.
30 Communist Review, June 1934, p15.
32 Workers' Weekly, 8/1/1932; Red Star, 13/1/1934; Communist Review, June 1934, p16.
In Tasmania the same ineffective independent activity was carried on, though here there were only 20-odd members living in Hobart and Launceston. In the Northern Territory there were some communists and one ran in the 1934 federal elections. Organised activity was minimal and on at least one occasion the government claimed to have eradicated communism.33

It was policy to enter hitherto unexploited spheres of activity and recruitment. Three of these areas of activity were among women, youth and rural workers.

The women's group of the party was first established in January 1927 and a series of articles on organising women appeared in the Workers' Weekly soon afterwards.34 In 1928 the Militant Women's Movement of Australia (MWM) started publishing a roneoed newsheet, the Woman Worker. The first number said that the MWM had been formed to fight against the general capitalist offensive.35 The aims and objects of the group were to conduct educational work among the women of the working class in the home, the office and the factory, and to induce them to take an active part in the working class movement; to plan and carry out campaigns in full co-operation with the industrial movement; to take an active part in women's trade unions and to help build them.

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34 Workers' Weekly, 1/4/1927; see also Communist, March 1928, p27.
35 Woman Worker, November 1928; ibid, 7/1/1929.
up by organising unorganised women workers.

Until the establishment of the Moxon leadership the MWM was virtually a nominal body and seldom mentioned in the party press. In 1927 it admitted to having "very few members" and in 1928, although there were groups in Melbourne, Sydney, Cessnock and Brisbane, the total party membership was only 249, so the MWM must have been very weak. It was apparently composed of female party members or the wives of male party members. Activity at this time was confined to propagandising via the newspaper.

The MWM's first activity of a non-propaganda nature came during the timber lockout when it ran relief committees with some success and organised meetings of timberworkers' wives to collect strike funds. But the overall campaign to win Australian women's support by propaganda meetings, distribution of the Woman Worker and participation in relief activities in both the timberworkers' and the miners' lockouts met with failure. This was recognised after the body had been in existence for two years.36

In 1930, when the new leadership came to power, the MWM temporarily took on a new lease of life, though for no discernible reason except more support from the party. The roneoed paper was replaced by a real newspaper in August 1930, the Working Woman. More money must have been supplied.

36 Woman Worker, 7/12/1928; Picket Line, 19/6/1929; Workers' Weekly, 18/10/1929.
Another possible factor in the improvement was that, with the proliferation of "fronts" in 1930, new avenues of work for party women were opened up. Members played a prominent part in the formation of the communist inspired Unemployed Workers' Movement and Mrs. Cook of the MWM was elected to the State Executive of the UWM. Other members were also involved in the watersiders' strike in Adelaide and in agitations against the expulsion from Australia of Mrs. Bell Weiner, a communist. The paper began to sell better.

However, there was no real basic support for the MWM by the mass of working class wives and by 1931 the group was again in financial and other difficulties. Many branches existed on paper only. Further complaints by the members and the Comintern indicated that the CC had neglected the body again and this was resulting in its decline. At the party congress in April 1931 the CC paid considerable attention to women. It was reported that there were many spheres where their work would be important but that only 7.8% of the party were women. Almost half were in District 1. A central women's department of the CC was established. Instruction was given that their work should concentrate on the unemployment centres. Despite the women's department, the MWM continued to decline. Recruiters were mobbed by women.

37 Working Woman, 30/8/1930, 15/9/1930.
38 Ibid, 15/9/1930.
39 Working Woman, 1/6/1931.
factory workers on occasion and organisations such as the Sane Democracy League conducted campaigns against the MWM.40 In 1932 sales of the paper almost ceased when it was put under a postal ban. The MWM almost collapsed in Brisbane and Melbourne and various conferences were failures. A writer to the paper described the eastern goldfields branch of Western Australia in this way: between elections, she wrote, it sinks into its sleep and its only activity is helping a few destitute people with clothes and food. Nothi constructive is done.41

This seems an apt description of the women's group in 1934-5, as its fortunes did not improve after the reintroduction of the united front, due to the unremitting hostility of Australian women. In 1935 women still only constituted 8% of the party. This, on my calculations, meant about 225 women members in the party, an increase of 15 a year since 1931.42 Evidently only CC support kept the body going.

The party also attempted to recruit and organise among Australian youth, although a previous attempt in 1923 had quickly failed. In late 1927 a Young Communist League was organised by J. Lindhop and R. Nelson.43 It was only a nominal body until 1931.44 Then it started to produce a

40 SMH, 15/8/1931.
41 Working Woman, 1/9/1931.
42 Workers' Weekly, 15/1/1932.
44 Workers' Weekly, 27/7/1928; Inprecord, 1/8/1928, p743; Young Worker, 1/10/1931.
newspaper, *Young Worker*. The paper only appeared three times in six months and was in continual financial straits thereafter. So was the YCL, which parodied the party in its functions, expulsions, "front" fractions, establishment of factory nuclei and the "smashing" the "bourgeois paramilitary Boy Scouts. Precisely because of this farcical activity it continued to remain moribund, despite nominal branches in NSW, Victoria and South Australia. In 1934-5 it was very small and sectarian and was in fact limited to NSW, where there were probably no more than 60 members. In District 4 there were 31 and in District 3, 24. There were members in the baking, textile, clothing and electrical trades but most members were not trade unionists. In 1935 it was still isolated from the "broad mass".

Another hitherto unexploited field of recruiting which the party entered was the country, Australia's vast outback, one of the sources of her most radical labour traditions. Until 1930, the CPA, self proclaimed legatee of this tradition was confined exclusively to the towns. Some attempt to overcome this neglect was made in 1929 but the new leadership elected at the end of the year was obliged to criticise itself for "the entire omission of the agrarian problem from the agenda of the conference" held in December of that year.

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45 *Young Worker*, 1/10/1931, 15/12/1932.
47 *Workers' Weekly*, 20/12/1935.
Little seems to have been done until the next year, when the party plenum held in June 1930 noted that in agricultural work the party had to frankly admit that no serious attempt had ever been made "to reach this section of the exploited population". In fact no attempt had even been made to ascertain what problems faced the agricultural worker and the "poor and middle farmers" of Australia. It was decided that a commission should be set up to study the problem. It is from this decision that active communist work in the country can be dated.

The ground was ripe for the sowing of communist principles as far as the party could see. Wool prices were half those of 1928 and there had been a drastic fall in wheat prices. Farmers, and especially small farmers, returned soldier settlers and so on, were badly affected by the depression and forced to mortgage to the hilt to keep going. Foreclosure was frequent. The unemployed rural workers had their number swollen by men from the cities, ragged men humping their blueys in search of a job. Conditions continued to worsen until 1933. Various devices to combat agrarian distress, such as a Wheat Pool, were tried by the federal Labor government. They failed and in any case the CPA was obliged to condemn these measures as "social fascist" delusions.

The party commission spent the year 1930 deciding on a course of action. In 1931 organisers started to go into the

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country and a big recruiting campaign was held in the first six months of that year. No figures are available for recruits, except for Mildura where 45 new members were acquired, but throughout the first six months the party showed continuing awareness of farmers' problems in articles in the paper. In August and September the Agrarian Department introduced by the 1931 constitution began to circulate a letter indicating that certain activity of a reconnoitring nature had taken place. Sympathetic or reputedly sympathetic rural dwellers were requested to inform the party of their grievances so it could draw up an agrarian programme. It certainly appears that this was the culmination of a planned campaign to spy out the land. Soon there appeared a Programme for Farmers, apparently based on replies to the circulars, as it supplemented the earlier Programmatic Declaration. The new programme counterposed conditions in Russia and Australia and proposed a list of immediate demands. The most important of these were: no evictions or forced sales of property; the cancellation of all farm debts and mortgages; cancellation of all debts for government relief; lower rents for middle farmers' holdings and abolition of rent for small farmers; abolition or reduction of all

49 Parliamentary Debates, Victoria, 1931, Vol. 187, p4624 ff
50 Parliamentary Debates, S.A., 1930, p863, suggests this.
51 Workers' Weekly, 9/10/1931; Argus, 23/1/1932.
taxes; and, finally, the formation of Farmers' Leagues for Defence.

Almost immediately the party started a determined organising drive in the western districts of NSW and in South Australia. E.C. Tripp and T. McGillick led the South Australian campaign and that in NSW was led by Herbert Moxon. The recruiters met with disastrous failure, being beaten up and railroaded out of various country centres, Dubbo, Mildura and others. Some success was met in organising "front" organisations in these places. While the ringleader in the anti-communist affrays were probably members of semi-fascist organisations, their followers were farmers and this fact must have daunted the communists. According to their calculations the farmers should have welcomed them and they had not.

In early 1932 a reassessment was made. An improvement in activity and organisation was demanded, in the light of the "liquidation" of party units in Mildura and other centres. A statement of the extent of success in the country was circulated, but unfortunately it cannot be located. Most of the earlier gains had apparently been lost after the organising campaign disaster.

Only in 1934 was there another organised attempt to recruit in the country. A new programme, still along the social-fascist line, was introduced in April. This time some success was met, especially in the establishment of non-party bodies (see Parts III and IV of this thesis), and
in the Mallee country of Victoria where conditions were particularly bad. Though in early 1935 it was stated that despite "... the terrible conditions of life of the rural masses the progress of the revolutionary movement is exceedingly slow", there were 211 country members by April 1935, organised in 38 units. In 1926 there had been no country members so the achievement, though minimal, was an advance.

The only other area of party growth was an increase in electoral support. The party contested municipal, state and federal elections after 1929. At first only tiny votes were received in state elections and deposits were always lost, which was damaging to the poverty stricken party. But in 1931, when the party contested the federal elections, its three Senate representatives, run for NSW, Western Australia and Queensland, received a total of 22,901 votes and one of the House of Representatives candidates, E. Thornton for Yarra, received 1,905 votes.

After this date support for communist candidates increased in both state and federal elections. In 1934, when the party contested all Senate seats and 22 lower house seats for the federal elections, almost 80,000 votes were received for the

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52 Workers' Voice, 19/1/1934, 23/2/1934; Communist Review, April 1935, p90.

53 Interview with Jack Kavanagh, February 1964.

54 All figures are from Statistical Returns of Commonwealth Elections, (Canberra, 1931), but SMH, 21/12/1931, also has figures for the non-final count.
senate candidates and four candidates received over 4,000 votes in the elections for the House of Representatives. So while in 1931 no candidate received more than 1% of the vote, in 1934 in some electorates between 4 and 7% of electors voted for communists. Greatest success was met in Victoria.

These votes were won despite the "social fascist" programme. In each election before 1934 the campaign was a mixture of extreme revolutionary sloganising and anti-Labor propaganda, and gentle assurances that the CPA did not interfere with anybody's religious belief and other vote catching devices. Though in the 1934 federal elections the elaborate campaign was based on the united front it was still stressed that a vote for the CPA was a vote for revolution. The increase in political support continued in 1935. Thus, by 1935 despite "social fascist" policies, the party had grown to more than 2,824 members, with two new districts and nearly 80,000 electoral supporters.

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55 All figures are from Statistical Returns of Commonwealth Elections, op. cit., or compiled therefrom.
56 Workers' Weekly, 4/12/1931.
57 Communist Review, October 1934, p1 ff, esp. p3.
PART III
CHAPTER 7

EARLY TRADE UNION WORK

When the CPA was formed in 1920 a large number of its leaders held or had held official positions in the trade union movement in Australia. Garden, for example, was secretary of the NSW Labor Council and Earsman had been secretary of the Victorian district of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers before he came to Sydney to set up a Labor College in 1919. More than office-holders, many of CPA's first leaders almost embodied one tradition in the Australian trade union movement, the militant tradition. In a loose sense this tradition has probably existed wherever trade unions have existed but in a restricted sense it can only be dated back to the last quarter of the nineteenth century, and more particularly crystallised in the strikes of the nineties. Some of the first CPA executive had virtually grown with the tradition; these were H.L. Denford, P. Larkin and N. Jeffrey. Others like Garden had only joined it in its infancy.¹ The militant tradition to which they belonged really consisted of the belief that the trade union was not merely designed to protect the worker and to work to secure economic advances of a partial nature for him but that it was also there for attack; there to use to usher in a new and better society.

¹ See Appendix B for Denford, Jeffrey and Garden; for Larkin see I.A.H. Turner, Ph.D. Thesis, op. cit.
In the course of the development of this tradition it has borrowed this and that idea from theorists. Until the Russian revolution this meant borrowing first the ideas of the IWW and then those of the OBU scheme. Both the IWW and the OBU were essentially based on the fact of a developed trade union movement and in turn based their theories of the progress workers to socialism on the possibility of a further development of the trade union movement into industrial unions and thence by revolution to control of the means of production and the abolition of private ownership. While the militants did not always reject in practice the utilisation of political parties, they usually saw them as adjuncts to the trade unions, whether the parties were the ALP or the tiny socialist parties. Many militants had indeed belonged to both the socialist parties and the trade unions but for them the working class was the trade union - their first loyalty was to the trade unions. Not only did the theory of socialism in its IWW form shore up this hierarchy of values, but in Australia the unionists had formed the ALP, which suggested a hierarchy of values of the same sort. Furthermore, the number of trade unions and employees in trade unions had increased rapidly in the first decade of this century. In Australia the working class were highly organised by the second decade of the century and it was not irrational to equate trade unions and working class.

Not surprisingly, the early CPA was affected by the experience and predilections of its leaders (see p 66 of this thesis). Garden, as has already been remarked, was a sponsor of the OBU scheme after the ban on the IWW. One of the favoured techniques of both bodies had been to "white-ant" unions which already existed, that is, to organise members or followers with a view to alienating the sympathies of the rank and file of the union from their leaders and capturing the official positions for themselves. The members would then proceed to implement their policies. Though the OBU was only a nominal body it had threatened this sort of tactic against the AWU. No sooner had the CPA been formed than it set to work in the same way. There may even have been so-called "communist" groups at work before 1920. Earsman claimed that there were such groups in 1921. Whether these took orders from the CPA or belonged to the independent "communist" sects led by T. Walsh and J. Johnson is not clear. But beyond all doubt they were not highly organised and had little success in alienating rank and file support from the moderate trade union leaders. As an early report to the Comintern did not mention such bodies they were probably

3 _Sun_, 17/3/1919, cited in V.G. Childe, _op. cit._, p170

4 _Argus_, 27/9/1921. The confusion is partly due to the fact that Walsh, Johnson and other Seamen's Union members were associated with Garden in the SPA. See typed notes Les Barnes collection (ANU Archives).
not considered a success by the CPA either.\footnote{United Communist Party of Australia to ECCI, n.d., ML, Han Coll, Mss 772/9; Communist, 20/5/1921.} This did not mean that there was a loss of concern for the trade unions on the part of the CPA leaders. They were themselves in trade union politics and had to maintain the CPA interest in trade unions. Garden had been secretary of the NSW Labor Council since the retirement of E.J. Kavanagh in 1918.

When he became a communist nearly all his fellow militants on the Council also became communists. So from the outset there was a close connection between the CPA leadership and the trade unions and their associated organisations. This immediately posed the question of which now was to be first in the hierarchy of loyalties, the party or the trade unions. The attitude of the Comintern and the RILU was very relevant to this question.

Unlike the Anglo-Saxon countries where there had been a highly developed trade union movement and where socialist theory had been espoused by the militant wing of the unions, the Russians had nothing like so well developed a trade union movement and socialist theory, usually Marxism, had resulted in the technical subordination of the trade unions to the political party. Indeed, the Russian Bolsheviks held aloof from the trade unions until 1907 because to them trade unions were primarily concerned with attaining economic gains within the framework of the capitalist system and
there was a fear that association with them would result in a withdrawal from revolutionary theories by the party. They had before them the example of the German socialist party, to which German trade unions were subordinate in theory but which in 1904-6 had virtually overridden the political party on the feasibility of a mass strike and had thus established themselves and their values as equal to the political party itself. There was a further reason why the trade unions were not greatly esteemed by the Russians. In Russia it was fatuous to equate the trade unions with the working class. Most of the working class was not organised.

Yet the experience of the politicisation of strikes in the Russian revolution of 1905 had made the bolsheviks realise that the unions were not incapable of political action and after 1907 it became bolshevik policy to work in the unions. The aim was dual. First it was believed that the militants in the trade unions could be channelled off into the revolutionary party if trade unionists were sufficiently propagandised. Secondly, and perhaps more important, if the communists had control of trade unions they could utilise the mass strike to generate political fervour, to jar the "economist" mass into political and perhaps revolutionary action.


7 Mrs. D. Gollan, who is writing a thesis on Russian Social Democracy at the ANU, has kindly informed me of her research into this problem.
The role of the trade unions was still kept subordinate to that of the political party. This attitude had to be slightly modified when the Comintern was formed, as the situation of the German and French socialist (later communist) parties was much different from that of the CPSU(B). They had large trade union movements in their countries and much of their strength would have to come from these trade unions. In France the anarcho-syndicalist movement had been strong, too. The Comintern had to recognise the presence of these large well organised trade union movements, which were usually already affiliated to the International Federation of Trade Unions. It did so by forming the Red International of Labour Unions in June 1920, which was designed to win the large trade union mass to communism to facilitate the world revolution. However, as the Comintern believed that the world revolution would soon begin, this body was instructed to take up a position of enmity to the International Federation of Trade Unions and to encourage its followers to split the trade unions and create new communist trade unions as well as take over the old ones. At the Second Congress of the Comintern it was clearly indicated that this interest in unions indicated by the formation of the RILU did not mean acceptance of the IWW or its beliefs. Both were condemned as passé. Moreover, in 1921 the RILU was

8 Communist International, June/July 1920, col 2122.
9 Ibid, col 2128.
made subordinate to the Comintern and obliged to accept the instructions of the political body. The Comintern had reversed the hierarchy of values traditional to the CPA leaders. For communists the party was more important than the unions.

The first contact between the RILU and Australia came when a letter was received by Pat Lamb which was published in February 1921. It was from Paul Freeman, on behalf of the Comintern, and contained an invitation to send delegates to the first RILU congress. Together with it there was a manifesto to the "Worlds' Workers" which said, inter alia: that organised labour had been misled and betrayed; that Labor had lied, conditions were worse and unemployment was rising; unions were getting bigger. The manifesto attacked the International Federation of Trade Unions and demanded increased militant work in the trade unions to oust the reformist trade union leaders and to establish shop committees. 10 Soon after Paul Freeman made a secret visit to Australia under the name Miller to popularise these attitude and encourage the sending of a delegation. 11 Comintern concern with trade unions was now growing space, as they were seen as one of the main bulwarks against revolution. Great insistence was laid on the need for rank and file permeation of the unions as the Russians themselves had done, on the

10 *Australian Communist*, 4/2/1921.
need for industrial unionism and on the need for factory
cells, which as has been indicated earlier, were seen as a
prerequisite for shop committees.

A delegate was sent to the first RILU conference by the
All Australian Congress of Trade Unions. He was J. Howie
and he was not at this time a communist. He signed the
manifesto issued there and reported back sympathetically to
the Labor Council of NSW. This was now firmly under CPA
control, as when Garden, the secretary, had become a communis
almost all the rest of the executive had, too. There may be
some truth in the assertion that the others did so because
Garden was the power in the organisation, but it probably
errs on the side of cynicism. This was a time of great
expectations and fervour among labour men, the Russian
revolution was sufficiently stirring to bring many to commun-
ism before they knew anything about communism. Besides the
almost completely communist executive, Garden claimed that
30 CPA members were union delegates to the Labor Council;
that the secretaries of the Newcastle and Brisbane labor
councils were members of the CPA and that members of the CPA
were on the equivalent bodies in Victoria and South Australia.
He also claimed that 15% of the 1921 trade union congress

12 J. Howie, *Reds in Congress, First Conference RILU*,
(Sydney, n.d.)

13 J.N. Rawling, *The Communist Party of Australia to 1939*,
*op. cit.*, p10.

14 United Communist Party to ECCI, n.d., ML, Han Coll, Mss
772/9.
delegates were communists. 15 Actually only the control of the NSW Council executive was important, as the CPA collapsed in Victoria and South Australia soon after and the Brisbane and Newcastle labour councils did not long remain even nominally communist. (It should be noted that Percy Laidler led a pro-communist militant group in the Melbourne Trades Hall Council until the CPA was reformed there.)

Control of the NSW Labor Council was very important because of its power within the NSW trade union movement. It was the only permanent organ to co-ordinate the unions in the state. It organised union forces in support of strikers and though it had no funds of its own its appeals were sure of support throughout Australia. The secretary almost always was eventually elected to parliament. He was automatically re-elected to the secretaryship. 16 The labor councils in general had weaknesses in that all unions were not affiliated to them and in that there was no federal co-ordination. They were state bodies and had no power outside their state, except morally.

Being CPA controlled, in 1922 the Labor Council applied for affiliation to the RILU and was accepted. 17 It thus became bound to propagate the principles of the RILU in NSW and to follow that body's instructions. Like the Comintern,

15 The estimate of 15% is supported by I.A.H. Turner, Ph.D. thesis, op. cit., who estimates that 20 out of 140 delegates were communists.
16 V. Childe, op. cit., p92ff.
the RILU had now adopted united front techniques of working with the International Federation of Trade Unions. In the case of the RILU this consisted of giving up any idea of splitting unions, and of being prepared to work in alliance with other revolutionary bodies such as the IWW.\textsuperscript{18} It did not mean giving up attempts to win the unions. In fact, the RILU became of greater importance after 1921 due to the Comintern's emphasis on the need for party members to work in the trade unions to win supporters. Elaborate instructions were issued by the Comintern on how to propagandise among trade unionists, how to secure the election of communists to positions of leadership in the trade unions, and how to organise in the unions.\textsuperscript{19} Base level activity was still demanded.

Despite this demand, the CPA neglected such activity and after 1921 there is no mention of the "white-ant" groups which the party had first set up. Instead, Garden now leader of the party as well as the Labor Council, concentrate more and more on exercising influence in the unions only through the Labor Council. There were reasons for this apart from party control of the Council. First, approaches to the other revolutionary groups such as the OBU, now supported by the AWU and the Miners' Federation, had been rebuffed.\textsuperscript{20}

\textsuperscript{18} \textit{Communist International}, III, No. 16/17, p19
\textsuperscript{19} \textit{Decisions of the Third Congress of the Communist International}, op. cit., p40.
The IUPL also refused to work with the CPA, as has been seen.

The militant trade union rank and file was fragmenting.

Secondly, the CPA was in 1922 already working in the ALP and the membership of that body was possibly regarded as belonging to the CPA by proxy. Thirdly, Garden overestimated the support and duration of support for communism in the unions. The trade union congresses of 1921-23 indicated that there was considerable union support even though there were only a maximum of 900 communists in the unions (see p. 117 of this thesis). Perhaps he felt that the trade unions were already won. Fourthly, the Labor Council was a much more efficient machine for bringing pressure on the ALP itself to secure CPA affiliation to the mass party, and the concern of the CPA in these years was to obtain affiliation. Finally, the first party constitution had not introduced the factory nucleus system despite making the groups based on the trade unions in theory, and the party had no organised contact with the trade unionists at a low level while it did at an official level.

In the unions themselves the party still aimed at building on the "basis of the unions as large a Communist Party as possible consistent with communist principles", but its policy after 1921 was not to capture the leaders' positions but to organise sympathetic cells. It was said that "...in our activities we have found that many Trade Union leaders, who are not members of the Party, are prepared to follow the Party elements in advocacy of a revolutionary policy for the
working class”. In such cases the communists would "virtually control the union through the sympathetic union leader”. Garden, who told the Comintern this in 1922, was thinking of the support he had received from A.C. Willis in 1921. In fact the policy did not continue to work effective. It only resulted in the CPA taking little interest in union affairs before 1924. The only communist to hold an important official position on a union before 1928 and after 1921, when Willis and several others might have been considered "communists", was H. Denford, who was Sydney branch secretary of the Ironworkers’ Association.

Garden concentrated on the Labor Council. He told the Fourth Comintern Congress in 1922 that he had found in it the key to organisation in Anglo-Saxon countries. He also claimed that the CPA had through it the support of 237,000 workers in NSW and 110,000 in Queensland. This claim referred to the numbers of workers in the unions affiliated to the Labor Council. Actually, the Labor Council did not control these workers at all, it was only a co-ordinating body. Garden’s claims were rightly ridiculed by Theodore of Queensland and H. Boote, the editor of the NSW Worker. The communists did indeed have control of the Council until 1926 but this control in no way brought the workers to

21 Comintern, Fourth Congress Abridged Report, op.cit., p230ff; Communist, 16/2/1923.
22 Comintern, Fourth Congress Abridged Report, op.cit., p230ff
23 Ibid.
24 Argus, 14/3/1923; Australian Worker, 14/2/1923.
communism, though there was ready made machinery to do so. The Labor College was reconstituted with communists in control and later the Research Bureau of the Labor Council became communist controlled. Although the Labor Council ran along the lines of government and opposition the communists were in such a majority on the executive that they could not have been prevented doing anything they wished. The Council certainly showed a revolutionary spirit and looked forward to "the day of reckoning". Every year it reiterated this revolutionary belief. Yet in fact it did nothing to implement communist trade union policy. All the phraseology did was alienate the moderate unions and trade union affiliations fell in this fashion: 1920 92; 1921 8; 1922 63; 1923 66. Thereafter they rose. The possible reasons for the rise are discussed below. In 1922 an abortive attempt to set up an industrial union scheme was made. This seems the only attempt of these years to carry into action communist industrial principles and, even so, industrial unions were not an exclusively communist idea. Though the Council made no attempt to put into action communist industrial principles it did work until 1924 to achieve the political aims of the CPA. It tried to pressure the ALP into admitting the CPA as an affiliate and attacked moderate ALP leaders who were hostile to the affiliation.

25 V. Childe, op. cit., p92ff.
27 Ibid, 1921, p3.
It endeavoured to secure real power for the Committee of Action established by the Melbourne trade union congress of 1921 to consider and arrange such affiliation. It called two trade union congresses which backed such affiliation. It also organised the Russian Famine Fund and, incidentally, expelled A.R. Reardon from the Labor Council for suggesting improper use of such funds.

Its real value abruptly ceased after the miners' lockout of 1923 and the expulsion from the ALP of the CPA. These events deprived it of nearly all "fellow-travelling" support from the unions.

The expulsion from the ALP has already been discussed. Lockout was the result of longstanding grievances and poor conditions on the coal fields. These had precipitated stoppages and the owners had used one for a "showdown".

The CPA itself called for a general strike, and picketing to prevent scabs, as well as a list of minor demands for improvement in conditions. The call for a general strike ran directly counter to the Miners' policy of limiting the strike. As many miners who were active unionists were also communists, it caused confusion. It also allowed the owners to claim that the strike was communist organised, thus

32 Communist, 8/5/1923.
raising the red bogey and making the union task more difficult. As the CPA had no responsibility, its demand was rejected by the Miners' officials. They attacked the party, which counterattacked with an accusation of selling out the miners and their paper, Common Cause, which had been amalgamated with the Lang-backed Labor Daily. Although the Central Executive of the CPA, presumably fearful of losing Miners' support in the ALP, made a statement that it refused to be drawn into a controversy which would divide the workers, W.J. Thomas of the CPA33 attacked the Miners' Council in a speech soon after. The CPA did not seem to know whether it was an ally of the Council or its enemy, for it too challenged the Council to a debate on policy after it made the statement refusing to be involved in the controversy. Soon after, N. Freeberg, editor of Common Cause and probably a CPA member, was dismissed from the paper.34

The hostility generated by its policy in the lockout was exacerbated by the CPA's involvement in the Weaver-Thomas case.35 What had happened was this: during the lockout, while relations between the CPA and the union were at their most strained, W.J. Thomas of the CPA had either approached C. McDonald of Northern Collieries and R. Weaver, a

33 There is some doubt whether he was actually a communist party member at this time. J.N. Rawling, The Communist Party of Australia to 1932, op. cit., p18.
34 Workers' Weekly, 12/10/1923.
Nationalist parliamentarian, with an offer to supply them with information that could be used against the ALP and the CPA in the coming session of parliament, or they had approached him offering a bribe of £500 for the same information. Thomas said that the "matter must be of a sensational nature in order to effectively saddle the ALP with secret revolutionary plotting, on account of the recent affiliation with the Communist Party". When the story became known, each side claimed that the other had made the overture. The truth became hopelessly lost in a maze of accusations and counter-accusations. It is not important which side was ly but that the CPA was covered with a smear of dishonesty. At the conclusion of the lockout, the result of CPA activities was the loss of its staunchest supporters at the 1921 trade union congress, The Miners', a loss which facilitated the CPA's ouster from the ALP in 1923. Though it was the CPA which intervened in the lockout, the Labor Council was discredited by association. Since its strength and value for communism depended on whether it could muster union support behind it, and it could no longer do so effectively when working on behalf of the communists, it was no longer of any real value to the CPA. A policy of influencing sympathetic trade union leaders only worked when there were

36 W. Thomas, A Red Revolution for £500, (Sydney, 1923) p3 and passim
37 Parliamentary Debates, NSW, 1923, p403; Workers' Weekly, 10/8/1923.
sympathetic leaders. The loss of Miners' support marked a gradual and growing isolation of the CPA from the new trade unions. In 1924, after failure to reinstate the CPA in the ALP and realising that it could not muster union support so effectively any more, the Labor Council, though still communist controlled, announced that it was too busy to consider the international scene and then became completely pragmatic in its interests, becoming, in fact, "economist" rather than revolutionary. This new stance coincided with a party conference decision made in 1923 to concentrate directly on the unions as a way to influence the ALP now that the CPA was excluded from the mass party. The decision demanded industrial unionism, the development of job committees and agitation for a general strike.\textsuperscript{38} So for the first time RILU policies of base level activity in trade unions were about to be tried in Australia. But now, after the expulsion from the ALP, CPA numbers were dwindling fast. By 1925 they were only 280, which suggests they were small already in 1924. This meant that rank and file activity could be ineffective due to the thinness of the membership. In fact this was so. In 1924 the party concentrated on fostering the rank and file Left Wing Movement. This started with the establishment of a South Coast "Vigilance League" of militant unionists, and was followed by a meeting of western

\textsuperscript{38} Workers' Weekly, 11/1/1924
northern and southern coalfields workers, which decided to establish a *Left Wing Movement* "for unity". Garden was in the chair when the Central *Left Wing Movement* of NSW was formed in the Communist Hall in August. The programme of the group was revolutionary.

"It shall carry on a ceaseless warfare against the bourgeois ideology and organisations. It shall seek to destroy the workers' faith in the capitalist system and to turn their eyes towards a communist society through the dictatorship of the proletariat".

Its immediate demands were: a Federal basic wage of £5.15.0 a week; payment of the full wage in case of sickness, unemployment and accident; a clear eight hour day, travelling time to and from work, and a five day week; absolute preference for unionists and no open shop; and abolition of all scab and non-union labour. The Left Wing movement decided to agitate for shop committees and to establish cells in all trade unions. It would also organise the unemployed. Howie was made first secretary and Garden and other communists committee members. At first it was claimed that the Left Wing Movement was a success but the now tiny communist party had been overambitious and it was finally acknowledged, after failure to work in the current watersiders' dispute, that the Movement had not established "personal contact" with the mass. Given the small size of the party, its disorganisation and state of disintegration at this time, this acknowledgment was not surprising. The Left Wing Movement was henceforth

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40 *Workers' Weekly*, 19/9/1924; 14/11/1924.
limited to a small group in the Miners' Federation.

In NSW in 1924-28 CPA activity in the unions was therefore limited to sloganising, although it now stated that it should work actively along lines recommended by the RILU. In 1924 it verbally supported the British seamen's strike and protested against the proposed deportation of T. Walsh and J. Johnson for incitement to strike. In 1926 it condemned the "scab" Seamen's Union set up by T. Walsh and started to agitate for the establishment of a Minority Movement to prevent the "decay of unionism" under the influence of arbitration.

So, to maintain contact with the trade unions, it was virtually forced to rely on the Labor Council which in 1925-6 was still led by Garden, though he was now growing estranged from the CPA. He still used his position on occasion to implement CPA policies but his position in the Labour movement was increasingly weakened in 1925-6 by ALP demands that the Council be excluded from ALP meetings of any sort while it remained connected with the Comintern.

Hurried but lame instructions from the RILU about how to meet this threat did not prevent a recognition that the Labor Council was losing its strength.

In 1926 Garden did succeed in having two communist supported policies adopted by the Labour movement. These

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\[41\] Ibid, 9/1/1925.

\[42\] See also ALP, NSW Conference Agenda, 1926.

\[43\] United Front, Trade Unions the Backbone of the Labor Party, Letter from the RILU to the Labor Council, 1926.
were the establishment of a Pan Pacific Trade Union Secretariat and the establishment of a militant Australian Council of Trade Unions, which really provided the federal co-ordination of unionism that the Labor councils lacked.

The Comintern had suggested the establishment of some sort of co-ordinating body for trade unions in the Pacific area as early as 1922. The CPA reiterated the suggestion in 1925. At the Interstate Conference of Labor Councils, held in Adelaide in 1925, Garden pressed this policy and that of forming a co-ordinating body for the labor councils themselves. As a result the conference decided to convene a conference of trade unions of countries bordering on the Pacific and also to establish a Commonwealth Disputes Committee. Then at the All Australian Trade Union Congress of August 1926 Garden gave full details of the proposed Pan Pacific conference which was to be held in Sydney. Invitations to attend it were sent out to all Australian trade unions. At this 1926 conference an RILU delegate, C. Rubanoff, was in attendance. He also attended and spoke at a Preliminary Pacific Conference held immediately after the conclusion of the trade union congress. It was decided that the Pan Pacific conference should take place with the All Australian Trade Union Congress on 26 August 1927. The Pan Pacific

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46 What is the PPTUS?, (Sydney, 1928) p31-32.
conference was held in 1927 but it was a failure due to the non-attendance of overseas representatives. A further conference was planned for 1928.\textsuperscript{47} Garden did, however, suggest that an Australian Council of Trade Unions be set up to take over from the Commonwealth Disputes Committee. His suggestion was adopted and the ACTU was formed with a socialisation objective.\textsuperscript{48} Soon after it affiliated with the Pan Pacific Trade Union Secretariat, for although Garden's efforts to start the PPTUS in Australia had met failure other communists had managed to get it functioning at a conference held in Hangkow on 1 May 1927. Earl Browder, a prominent member of the Communist Party of the USA, was elected first secretary. The PPTUS said it was formed because its members believed that the next war would be in the Pacific and because of fear of imperialist intervention in China. It was designed to counteract these possibilities and encourage wars of liberation as well as develop socialist unity.\textsuperscript{49} The organisational task of the PPTUS was the co-ordination of the Pacific trade union movement and the dissemination of propaganda. It was definitely communist inspired although the first headquarters were in Shanghai. The executive was heavily weighted in favour of the Russian and Chinese trade union bodies. The highest organ of the

\textsuperscript{47} Workers' Weekly, 13/5/1927.

\textsuperscript{48} Official Report of All Australian Trade Union Congress, Melbourne, May 3-9, 1927, p7.

\textsuperscript{49} What is the PPTUS?, op. cit., p18ff.
Australian labour movement, the new ACTU, had therefore beco
affiliated to a communist controlled body. Yet this apparen
communist triumph was in fact an empty victory. It was
empty because, though it had been achieved by Garden, he was
no longer a communist, nor in 1927 were any of the Labor
Council executive. They all left the party with Garden in
1926. The CPA could not therefore compel Garden to use the
ACTU in its interests. The only organisational link between
Garden and the party in 1927 was through the PPTUS. If this
should disappear the CPA would be completely without
organisational contact with the trade union movement of
NSW. In 1928 Garden was made nominal editor of the Pan
Pacific Worker, the journal of the PPTUS, and an RILU
executive member. The journal was in fact edited by CPA
member Jack Ryan and thus contact was maintained with Garden.
The fact that he had been honoured with an official position
on the RILU after he had left the CPA suggested, however,
that the Labor Council might be more important than the party
itself to the RILU.

The PPTUS was a weak link with Garden, anyhow. It
aroused AWU opposition.\textsuperscript{50} It also aroused government opposit
ion. Between them they were to destroy the organisation in
Australia by 1930, although the journal continued to come
out until 1933.

Australian delegates had intended to attend the Hangkow

\textsuperscript{50} \textit{What is the PPTUS?}, \textit{op. cit.}, p6.
conference of 1927 but had been refused passports by the Government on the grounds that China was a dangerous place to be in at the time.\textsuperscript{51} In 1928 Jack Ryan attended the Shanghai conference of the PPTUS as ACTU delegate.\textsuperscript{52} He was elected an executive member. It was also decided at Ryan's request that the next PPTUS conference be held in Australia in 1929 in conjunction with the ACTU congress.\textsuperscript{53} The government forbade the holding of the conference, which was held instead in Vladivostok, as China was by then too troubled by civil war for it to be held there. Three Australian delegates, S. Roels, F. Walsh and P. Hannett, were sent to it and managed to reach Vladivostok after a period of detention in Japan. None were communists but all were followers of Garden. They endorsed the revolutionary platform adopted by the PPTUS at this meeting. This marked the high water mark of contact between Australia and the PPTUS.

The body now started to decline. It suffered from the enmity between Chiang Kai Shek and the Chinese communists which developed after 1927. It limped along in 1929 only by holding its conference in Russia. In 1930 it was forced to give up plans for a conference for want of a venue. Then in late 1931 Paul Ruegg (Hilaire Noulens), the PPTUS secretariat of 1927 and 1928.

\textsuperscript{51} \textit{Workers' Weekly}, 8/4/1927.

\textsuperscript{52} \textit{SMH}, 6/1/1928.

\textsuperscript{53} \textit{What is the PPTUS?}, op. cit., p48.
and other members of the PPTUS executive were arrested in
Shanghai and by late 1932 the organisation was completely
moribund. It went out of existence soon after. 54

In 1930, despite Garden's opposition, the ACTU disaffil-
liated from the PPTUS after a strong campaign for disaffiliat-
by the AWU.

In Queensland, where the greatest proportion of party
members resided in the second half of the twenties (see
p 227 of this thesis), there was greater party contact with
the rank and file of the unions but even here communists had
little influence by 1928.

In the second part of 1925 a strike movement broke out
in Queensland. This strike movement was the result of
increasing union distrust of the political wing of the ALP,
which had been in power since 1915 and had become more
moderate each year. 55 The government had the support of the
AWU and the militants were led by the Queensland Railways
Union (later the Australian Railways Union (ARU)) which had
espoused OBU principles. The CPA from 1922 had some influ-
ence in the northern state, especially among the railwaymen,
watersiders and the unemployed. It also exerted some
influence over militant intellectuals in Brisbane. It was

54 *Annals of the ACP*, op. cit., p42 gives the date of the
demise of the PPTUS in Australia as 1930. Its formal
demise came much later, probably 1932.

55 E.M. Higgins, "Queensland Labor: Trade Unionists Versus
Premiers", *Historical Studies of Australia and New
Zealand*, IX, No. 34, p140ff.
looked on as "cantankerous and irresponsible" by the unions, even the ARU. Union leaders were in turn looked on by the communists as "careerists". But from 1924 the AWU started to accuse the ARU leaders of communism. Indeed, prominent railway leaders such as J. Rymer and T. Moroney, the state president and secretary of the union respectively, had early connections with the CPA. The *Argus* pointed out that the delegates to the 1922 Comintern conference were Rymer, E.A. Chapman (ARU), Garden, Howie and W. Smith of the Victorian Transport Workers. Accordingly in September 1925, when a railway strike broke out in Queensland, the party urged Queensland members to "utilise" the situation. Possibly the communists expected to play some part in directing the strike, as Rymer and Moroney both refused to sign the anti-communist pledge that the ALP executive had introduced soon after the strike started and were excluded from the Central Executive of the ALP. Signs of a developing rapprochement between communists and ARU were there.

The party launched a manifesto denouncing arbitration and advising direct action but this appears to be all it did in this strike which had apparently promised some success. Indeed the CPA branch was expelled, on a motion

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57 *Argus*, 7/9/1927.
59 *Workers' Weekly*, 9/10/1925, 16/10/1925.
from the Carters' Union, from the Brisbane Trades Hall, for boastful exaggeration of its influence in the strike. Eventually the ARU won the strike.  

The CE of the CPA reproved the Queensland members for acting without instructions but it does not appear that instructions from the centre would have made any difference as the party's political attitudes were inappropriate.

After the ARU leaders were excluded from the ALP executive there were threats by ten Brisbane ALP branches to form a new party, and although the two leaders finally signed the pledge the ARU and the Australian Meat Industries Employees' Union disaffiliated from the ALP. Ultimately a breakaway Industrial Labor Party was formed, with considerable unofficial support from the ARU. The CPA refused to have anything to do with this party and condemned it, as previous chapters of this thesis have shown. It therefore cut itself off from the radicalisation of the ARU.

In 1927 there was still some contact in Queensland. A strike started at South Johnstone in May 1927 and the ARU joined the strikers. The Queensland communists made another attempt at active participation in the strike. They were successful enough to bring an attack from Premier McCormack who claimed that sixty southern communists had

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60 A. Morrison, *op. cit.*, p227.

assisted the strikers. In Townsville, where the communists were strongest, and where E.C. Tripp was an ARU official, the CPA branch was in continual session with at least five members at the party rooms at all times, ready to take "any action that the changing situation demanded." It started to publish a broadsheet called Solidarity, which urged direct action and hostility to McCormack and the ALP. (J.B. Miles divided the government into "rats", "squibs", "hurdlers" and four "heroes".) The communists in Townsville were quite obvious but, although they attracted big public meetings it is hard to say whether they made much difference to the situation.

So in the years before 1928 CPA policies designed to win trade unionists and trade unions failed. In 1927 the CPA was totally isolated organisationally from the trade unionists of New South Wales. In the only other state where there were more than a handful of communists, Queensland, communists were certainly not influential in the unions. The rebuffs they had met between 1925-28 probably indicate that they were less influential in 1928 than before 1925. Yet the CPA had failed to win unions and unionists not only because it had rigidly followed RILU policies but because its own policies, decided in Australia without reference to

63 Workers' Weekly, 7/10/1927.
64 E. Higgins, op. cit., p154.
RILU directions, had been inappropriate or at least inadequate. The CPA had concentrated exclusively on working through the Labor Councils before 1924. The dominance of Garden in the party and the fact that he already controlled the NSW Labor Council, was responsible for this one-sidedness of party activity in the union movement and for the failure to conduct organised rank and file activity as the RILU directed. When Garden left the party it was therefore without organised contact with the union movement, because the CPA and its following were too small for adequate rank and file activity. The fact that organised rank and file activity had been neglected did not mean that there had been no party members in the trade unions. Nearly all the tiny membership of the party was in the unions, to use if organised properly. Failure in the first eight years of party history did not necessarily mean that there would be failure in the future though the ineffectiveness of the Left Wing Movement suggested that even rank and file activity offered only gloomy prospects while the party was so small.
CHAPTER 8

THE MILITANT MINORITY MOVEMENT

In 1928 the only formal CPA contact with and influence over the unions was maintained through the Labor Council of Sydney. Certain communists again held posts on this body. The officers for the year 1929 included Kavanagh, who was organiser, and Sharkey, who was on the Trades Hall Committee. Many of the other officials were ex-communists or left wing ALP men. J. Ryan, a communist, was running the Labor Research Bureau as well, and publishing the Labor Monthly. The Labor Council still paid lip service to the RILU and each week the Labor Council Bulletin published RILU directions and rules. It still advocated the introduction of shop committees and organised Domain protests about this and that.² The AWU still regarded it with hostility. However, despite the presence of communists and the leftist composition of the Labor Council, that body was much less militant than it had been five years before. As emerged in following years, it was no longer a revolutionary body.

Before 1928 the CPA had also established the Trade Union Educational League (TUEL) and supported the left wing movement in the mining industry. It lent support to the Plebs League as well. These organisations were intended to serve

¹ Labor Council Bulletin, 31/1/1929.
² Ibid, e.g. 20/9/1928.
mainly an educatory function for trade unions. The TUEL was akin to the Workers' Educational Association. None of them were particularly effectual and the TUEL was almost defunct, a "paper body", in 1928.³

Due to early influence in the Labor Council and to Garden's claim that control of the Labor Council was the way to power in Anglo-Saxon countries, there had been no attempt before 1928 to set up a Militant Minority Movement like that specially created in Great Britain to win unionists.⁴ (In 1927 the TUEL was renamed the TUEL (Minority Movement)).

So in fact CPA contact with trade unions was poor in 1928. Even some years later the party was still complaining that it had no contact with several major industries.⁵

This state of isolation from the class which was most important in communist theory, coupled with the repeated directions by Comintern and RILU to rectify this, led to pressure within the party for a new means to establish contact. The result was the establishment of the Militant Minority Movement (MMM) in March 1928.⁶

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³ Reported in Workers' Weekly, 17/1/1930.
⁴ H. Pelling, op. cit., p37.
⁵ Workers' Weekly, 17/1/1930.
The actual formation had been preceded by a campaign in the *Workers' Weekly* to popularize the idea. The Militant Minority Movement was to be substituted for the TUEL. Owing to the timing of its introduction, it cannot be said that it was only a response to the RILU Fourth Congress which introduced independent aggressive policies like those of the Sixth Comintern Congress, as the campaign preceded the Fourth Congress. The objects, aims and composition of the MMM were as follows:

The Militant Minority Movement shall consist of an unlimited number of members who are trade unionists and who are prepared to accept and work for the attainment of the objects of the organization.

(1) To increase the power and efficiency of organized labor by promoting class consciousness and a correct knowledge of the principles of the working class movement and by stimulating activity in the unions on all matters affecting their interests.

(2) To endeavour to bring about the closer organization of the workers by urging the adoption of the principles of the OBU, and, as a means to that end, favouring the amalgamation of the crafts on the basis of one union in each industry.

(3) In times of industrial crisis to act as a vanguard in the workers' struggle and to expose those who attempt to betray the workers.

(4) To develop amongst the workers a dependence upon their own collective strength as a means of forcing concessions from capital and as a means of defence against its attacks.

(5) To work for the abolition of contract, piece work and bonus systems.

(6) To organize for a shorter working day.

(7) To bring into being a centralized industrial movement linked up with the Red International of Labour Unions.
To assist in the development of the working class movement for the overthrow of capitalism and the socialization of industry.

Kavanagh was elected President. 7

While the MMM was later portrayed by the Party as created to substitute for the old trade union leadership, 8 and as part of the policy against "social fascism" and organizational innovations following the Fourth RILU and Sixth World Congresses, in 1928 it still contained vestiges of the educative nature of the old TUEL and was not regarded as marking a rejection of the Labor Council, which was by definition "social fascist". In fact, Garden was elected to the RILU executive at the Fourth RILU Congress and the Labor Council was encouraged to strengthen its links with the RILU. 9 Jeffrey, delegate to this Congress, brought home no censure for Garden. 10 Nor, until the installation of the new leadership, did the Party break with the Labor Council, although that body had infringed RILU rules by 1930. The Labor Council remained the main link between the CPA and the trade unions. Kavanagh himself gave a very limited interpretation to the MMM. He forbade members to hold trade union office for more than two years, fearful that they would become tainted with

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7 *Workers' Weekly*, 30/3/1928.

8 *What is the Minority Movement?*, Minority Movement, (June 1931) pp 3-6.


"economism". As a result, no party experts in trade union affairs developed and neither did the MMM. The advent of the depression altered this state of affairs. It is this change which is described in this chapter.

It began when Norm Jeffrey returned in April from the Fourth RILU conference, to which he had been sent as Labor Council delegate, and when he brought that body's instructions that Australia had to prepare for a new capitalist offensive on workers' conditions. In fact, in 1928-30 there was a lowering of arbitration awards in Australia in various industries. The Labor Council and the communist right wing leader Kavanagh were closely involved in the leadership of the strikes and lockouts which resulted. Under their mismanagement, in one case personally confessed, these strikes failed. That they might have done so anyway is irrelevant. The failure discredited both the Labor Council, and the Kavanagh-Ryan group which was associated with it, in the eyes of the Sharkey-Moxon group which in 1930 was to oust the Kavanagh group from leadership of the party. The coincidence of this failure with the New Line of the Sixth Comintern Congress convinced the new CPA leadership that the Labor Council was "social fascist" and as a result the link with the Labor Council was broken. Kavanagh had neglected

11 E. Campbell, op. cit., p124
12 SMH, 11/7/1928; Labor Monthly, 1/8/1928.
13 Kavanagh to Higgins 27/1/1936, Kavanagh Collection, A.N.U. Archives.
to utilise the MMM after it was not an initial success in the watersiders' strike in 1928. The new leaders adopted it in 1930 as the main "transmission belt" to the workers.

The history of CPA union activity in 1928-30 is first the history of the failure of one way of making contact with and influencing the workers, the Labor Council, and the neglect by Kavanagh of the other, the MMM, after it was not completely successful.

The history of 1928-30 is also the history of the great strikes. These strikes are of the greatest significance in reaching some understanding of why the communists first won influence in the unions after 1930. Before these strikes the workers were not militant. Their experiences during those two years were enough to make some both ready to believe the industrial theories which the communists proffered them and, more important, to totally discredit the existing trade union leadership and the theories which this leadership advanced. It must be clearly understood that thousands of workers went on strike or were locked out during these years because their wages were drastically reduced by the Arbitration Court. This reduction was regarded, rather irrationally as a betrayal of the unionists. Then their leaders advised them to accept these conditions, although this was economically disastrous. The Labor government, which had promised to rectify many grievances, and was duly returned to office, failed to carry out its promises. Finally, the workers learnt that it was not only in Europe that the police would
"bash" or even shoot strikers on the orders of a government. That near starvation conditions could exist even in Australia and that in a depression the workers would shoulder the heaviest burden. This aroused the sort of militancy which the TUEL and the Plebs League and the Labor Council with its bulletin could not. This "objective" situation was of tremendous help to the communists in subsequently winning the unions.

These strikes were part and parcel of the effects of the depression. The causes of this depression have already been described elsewhere. One result was a fall in profits in many industries, which in turn led to the laying off of many workers. The CPA maintained that the employers' aim would be to reduce Australian wages to the level of European wages to compensate for this fall in profits. It saw the offensive the RILU had warned about in various government measures, such as a ban on left wing literature and Crimes Act amendments introduced by the Bruce Government in 1926 and 1927. The Bruce Nationalist government itself was accused of having done nothing for the working class in six years.

It was with these preconceptions or this foresight that the CPA prepared to face the problems arising in unionism as a result of the depression.

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The Beeby Waterside Workers' Federation (WWF) award marked the first of the expected reductions of workers' conditions to combat the fall in prosperity. In September 1927, the watersiders demanded the abolition of the irksome second "pickup" and referred their request to the Arbitration Court. Judge Beeby's award destroyed their hopes. Instead of agreeing to their request he drastically reduced their wages and established uniform conditions for the industry where there had formerly been allowances for difficult climatic conditions and so on. The justification for this move was the "squeeze" that the shipowners were feeling. From the outset the union leaders had condemned any recourse to strike. J. Scullin, leader of the ALP, urged the men to abide by the award. 16

The CPA had no contact with the industry at all. 17 However, it described the lockout which ensued on failure to achieve satisfaction of these demands before the Arbitration Court as "but part of the general attempt of the British Imperialists to stay the decline of the Empire". It advocated a policy of setting up strike committees as the workers' organisation was "pitifully weak", 19 and it opposed the rebuff of the ACTU by the union officials who wished to limit the dispute to the one industry. These were ineffectue

17 Workers' Weekly, 11/1/1929.
18 SMH, 10/1/1928.
19 Workers' Weekly, 9/12/1927.
attitudes as it remained outside real participation in the strike in the early stages of the dispute. 20

With the establishment of the MMM in March 1928 the CPA began more effective contact with the strikers. The programme apparently appealed to some of the militants in the WWF, as membership started to grow in that union from April onwards. The militants were becoming more active in the dispute and thus opening a door to the left. They were helped by the bungling of the trade union officials. When the Triennial Conference was held at the end of 1928 the WWF leaders "repudiated" the award. This, however, was a vain gesture, as the men were aware. Proposals to discuss the matter with the Steamship-Owners Association were rejected and the conference developed into a duel between the militants, who were in a large majority, and the minorit centre. At the conclusion, the strike was still on and the union was divided between militants and moderates.

Meanwhile, the branch officials in Sydney advised the men to return to work. These instructions were obeyed in Sydney and Melbourne only. In Queensland the militants were stronger and in August three ports in that state went on

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20 With most of the workers in the industry idle, the Prime Minister Bruce introduced the Amended Arbitration Act and Transport Workers Act, thus taking "whatever steps" the government considered necessary. This last bill allowed the employment of "scab" labour in the industry. In January and February 1928 the only CPA participation was in meetings to protest about this Act. C.P.D., Vol. 117, pp 1844, 2062, 2274 ff.
strike in defiance of the officials. This resistance rapidly spread through Australia. In Sydney the attempts of MMM members G. Marks and W. Coghlan, who had been delegates to the Triennial Conference, to bring the Sydney WWF into the strike also failed due to loyalty of the men to their leaders. The extent of support for Marks can be evinced from the fact that he was defeated by only a small margin when he contested the branch presidency in July 1928.

In Queensland the MMM members began to play a prominent part once the strike was in rank and file hands. Here the party had started to encourage a MMM from April 1928. It had become quite strong by August. Its central policy was embodied in the slogan "back to the union and on the offensive". The MMM began to produce its first bulletin, The Militant Worker, which was designed to combat the Daily Worker which opposed the strike. This bulletin and the communist press immediately called for an extension of the strike to other industries and the introduction of mass picketing. It relied on the ACTU to achieve this extension.

Meanwhile the militants called for a Queensland all ports conference in September. This conference demanded the entire repudiation of the Beeby award; repudiation of the "Dog Collar Act" (Transport Workers Act) and a call to all

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22 Militant Worker, 7/10/1928.
unionists to refuse to apply for licences which the government required every wharfie to have; withdrawal of WWF labour from all Queensland ports; the setting up of committees of action in every port to control all foodstuffs and all local phases of the dispute; and the organisation of pickets. As a result the Brisbane Trades Hall decided to stop all work on the waterside.

However, while the militants, spearheaded by MMM members, now had control, the strike could not go on without support, especially financial support, from other industries. Appeals were circulated throughout other unions for financial support, and the ARU was asked to strike in sympathy. The other unions, starting with the Storemen and Packers, while recognising the justification for the watersiders' claim that conditions would be made worse for all industries if they were defeated, refused support. The ACTU remained the only hope, but Garden, who gave the lead to the ACTU and the Labor Council, favoured the moderate line and started a move to the right in the Labor Council, because he thought the Australian workers' militancy was weakened because they had experienced arbitration so long that they were not prepared for strike action. An ACTU emergency conference had been

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23 Ibid, 28/9/1928.
24 Original in Mitchell Library, 29/9/1928.
25 Militant Worker, 2/10/1928
26 Ibid, 7/10/1928.
held in Melbourne on 16-21 July and the CPA and MMM had pinned their hopes on this as it had been quite militant, though the Labor Council had intervened in favour of the moderates. In December ACTU and Labor Council representatives attended a peace-in-industry conference in Melbourne where they met employers. Though the MMM railed at this,27 they clearly recognised that the strike was defeated. Other unions, such as the ARU, also regarded this Labor Council participation in the Industrial Peace Conference as a "betrayal".

In South Australia and Victoria the strike had been very bitter. Semi-fascist organisations such as the Essential Services Maintenance Volunteers under Captain Blackburn, VC, in Victoria, and another similar body in Adelaide, took up arms to "maintain the peace".28 There were several nasty brawls between police guarding scabs and the strikers, and in one case in Melbourne the strikers were fired upon. Four strikers were wounded and one, Allan Whittaker, died.29 But the MMM did not get established in South Australia, where there was no CPA district until 1929, and in Melbourne it was weak before 1930.

Facing with isolation the WWF strike slowly collapsed by the end of 1928. This badly shook and weakened the MMM.

27 Militant Worker, 21/11/1928.
28 Labor Daily, 1/10/1928.
On the other hand the old trade union leaders, arbitrationists, were discredited, and this meant openings for new men. The Labor Council itself blamed the old leaders and their lack of co-ordination for the failure of the strike, and the failure to extend to other industries due to craft jealousies. Industrial unionism, which the MMM also demanded, was essential, said the Labor Council.

The ACTU and the Labor Council had taken an ineffectual and defeatist attitude in this strike. They continued to be ineffectual in another which followed in the timber industry. The result was a complete break with the Labor Council by the CPA and concentration on the MMM as a "transmission belt" to the workers.

The prelude to this development was a CPA conference held Christmas 1928 which concentrated on "the workers' urgent problems", and on how to build a militant trade union movement. The party said that, due to the arbitration system, the trade union movement had not gone through "the experience of any serious struggles". It was "a movement which had been devitalised by its utter dependence on the grace and sense

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30 *Pan Pacific Worker*, 1/11/1928, p2 ff.
31 Ibid.
32 The history of communism on the wharves will not be dealt with after this date due to lack of space. However, briefly, in 1933 MMM member Findlay became Sydney president of the WWF and in 1937 Jim Healy of the CPA won the key General Secretary position. In 1937 communists held a sufficient number of executive posts and received sufficient support to permit the assertion that communists controlled the union.
of justice of the arbitration court judges". With modification this was essentially true, as will be indicated. The resolution continued by saying that communist trade union policy was of "first class importance". "The trade unions are the main reservoir from which we are to recruit the masses for our movement." Constant activity should be conducted in trade unions to stimulate militancy. How? Starting from the proposition that the trade union movement was divided into the AWU and the ACTU, the first reactionary and the second ideologically vacillating, the party should create a strong left wing in the ACTU, as the left wing was at the time "very weak, haphazard, loose and inconsistent". To do this the CPA had to wield rank and file influence in the trade unions. "The Militant Minority Movement is the organisational medium through which we are to organise and develop a militant Left Wing in the trade unions." (my emphasis) The MMM was still only fragmentary and would have to be launched in major industries (transport, metal and mining) and stress immediate problems and organise the unorganised. Regular directions would be made by the Trade Union Department of the party. More emphasis would be given to trade union problems in the party press. The most important general problems were those of establishing industrial unions, relentless struggle against AWU officialdom, establishing a policy of relentless class struggle against industrial peace conferences, arbitration, and establishing the defence of the right to strike. The NSW Labor Council,
which occupied a unique position in the trade union movement for the two reasons that it was the strongest section of the ACTU and was affiliated with the RILU, should give real and not just formal affiliation as it had to date. Popularisation of the RILU should be made by the Labor Council. In conclusion, "The affiliation of NSW to the RILU must be made the basis for the penetration of RILU ideas to the other section of the Australian trade union movement and for the eventual winning over of other State Labor Councils and of the ACTU to the RILU". 33

Before this could be done the Labor Council discredited itself in the lockout of the timber workers. The CPA Kavanagh leadership supported the Labor Council and neglected the MMM in this lockout.

In the timber industry the 1920 Higgins award was the ruling award until Judge Lukin reversed it, amending hours, as from January 1929, from 44 to 48 each week and reducing pay to combat the fall in profits. 34 The men refused to work the 48 hour week and the owners locked them out, expecting an early victory. J. Culbert, the timber workers' secretary, then handed the dispute over to the ACTU and the Disputes Committee of NSW and Victoria for their direction. (In South Australia the strike collapsed quickly.) The direction

33 *Workers' Weekly*, 11/1/1929.

thus came into the hands of Garden, E. Voigt and CPA president Kavanagh, who was made chairman of the Disputes Committee. The bulk of the rest of the leaders were supporters of Lang. The CPA reaction to Kavanagh's position was one of glee. Its attitude was that the timber workers' fight was a class fight and party members and Militant Women's Group members were rapidly moved into the main lockout areas to agitate. The Labor Council itself described the timber lockout as part of a general capitalist offensive, and claimed that defeat here meant defeat for the whole of industry. The Labor Council formed a sub-committee to organise mass picketing and requested financial support from other unions. Both these moves had party backing. However, in matters of general policy the Labor Council/Kavanagh leadership and the Sharkey/Moxon group parted company. General lockout policy was laid down by the ACTU Central Committee. Essentially it consisted of limitation of the lockout. In Victoria 15,000 men were brought out on strike, but only 2,600 in N.S.W., and wharves and yards were divided into "black" and "white", as the Disputes Committee considered that the continuance of work in some yards would ensure continued strike funds. Although the nature of "black" and "white" yards was explained:

36 Workers' Weekly, 22/3/1929.
38 Ibid.
in the Labor Council Bulletin, the workers found the idea confusing. In this limitation lay the germs of failure. Kavanagh later acknowledged this limited policy as stupidity, and it was widely disputed at the time, for while the Victorians rapidly reached a compromise settlement, the NSW workers were beaten soundly and most lost their jobs to "scab" labour after the conclusion of the lock-out.

The CPA policy according to the Sharkey/Moxon group should have been that of extension of the lockout if current RILU directives and the MMM programme had been observed. Despite this departure from that programme communists took much greater part in this lockout than in the one on the waterfront.

First of all, the Militant Women's Group of the CPA moved in to direct relief committees and to agitate. It circulated broadsheets among timber workers' wives, which pointed out the effects of the award - e.g. "It means less food for us and the children ..." There is no way of judging the effectiveness of these. However, the relief committees were a success, as the Disputes Committee official paper revealed.

In Victoria the CPA took an active part. G. Bodsworth, 39


Kavanagh to Higgins, 27/1/36, Kavanagh Collection, ANU Archives.

a CPA member, was vice president of the Timber Workers' Victorian Branch and thus was in a position to organise large mass meetings at which communists spoke on the same platform as prominent Timber Workers' Union officials.\textsuperscript{42}

The conditions of the strike favoured the growth of militancy. Mass picketing had been introduced. On the other hand, O'Brien had organised a "scab" union for the employers and had introduced "scab" labour which had police protection. Brawls and "bashings" were frequent.\textsuperscript{43} The owners' representative also took up an intransigent attitude and refused to meet the strikers.\textsuperscript{44} Judge Lukin directed a mandatory ballot to see if the men would agree to accept the award. This was a provocative action towards the strike leadership. Thus both leaders and men were well and truly antagonised, and militancy grew rapidly.\textsuperscript{45} One reaction to Lukin was a mass meeting at which his effigy and the ballot papers were publicly burnt. Tough tactics and intransigency increased on both sides. In July the strike leaders, Garden, J. Culbert, W. Terry, C. Reeve, M.P. Ryan, and Kavanagh, were arrested on conspiracy charges together, the indictment said, with "evil persons as yet unknown".\textsuperscript{46} They were fined.

\textsuperscript{42} \textit{Workers' Weekly}, 15/2/1929.
\textsuperscript{43} E. Voigt and J. Garden, \textit{op. cit.}, p27.
\textsuperscript{44} \textit{Ibid}, p16.
\textsuperscript{45} \textit{Ibid}, p17.
\textsuperscript{46} \textit{Picket Line}, 24/7/1929.
Mass meetings (2,500-3,000) of timber workers were held in protest. Then Garden and Kavanagh were re-arrested; Garden says in order to jail the leaders and thus disrupt finances and break the strike. The CPA made the most of this for agitation to win sympathy. One result was the establishment of the Labor Defence Army, an unofficial workers' militia, during the trial.

However, although the men were released, this arrest marked the end of the lockout, as the AWU, which was violently anti-Labor Council and non-militant, used it as an excuse to cut off financial support. This was a heavy blow, for although funds of £17,000 had been contributed by the other unions which were now concerned about the worsening of workers' conditions, these were nearly finished. Motions of disgust with the AWU did not prevent a recognition by the chairman of the need to compromise in order to keep the union organisation intact. The result was a slow collapse of the lockout and piecemeal resumption of work in the yards by the men after the election of 1929.

The Labor Council said it was only a "breathing space", a "temporary retreat", and the CPA, still controlled by

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47 E. Voigt and J. Garden, op. cit., p32.
48 *Workers' Weekly*, 25/10/1929.
51 Ibid.
Kavanagh, said that it was no failure for the unions as it had given "valuable lessons in tactics" and by means of "savage prison sentences" .... "showed unionists the nature of justice under capitalism". 53

However, these claims rang false in the ears of the Sharkey/Moxon group, which was soon to come to power. The Labor Council had itself said at the beginning of the lockout that it was the last chance for the trade union movement in Australia, and had obliquely admitted bungling its direction. The honeymoon of the Labor Council and the CPA was coming to an end.

One of the first points discussed by the new CPA leadership when it came to power was the timber lockout and the Labor Council. It was revealed that the minority report to the Comintern (see Part II Chapter 3) had claimed many errors in the strike and the former Central Committee stood condemned for its failure to criticise the Disputes Committee and the Labor Council conduct. Wright admitted that

The Central Committee was concerned too much (blinded) by the official control - the presence of Kavanagh on the disputes committee in Sydney and of Bodsworth in the timber workers' executive in Melbourne.

It was asserted that the Central Committee had neglected to

53 M. Dixson, Historical Studies, op. cit., p489.
54 Pan Pacific Worker, 1/7/1929, p3, run by Garden, admitted that the Victorian settlement proved "that previous awards can be altered if sufficient resistance is offered by the workers". (This is not the tactic advised in NSW where resistance was limited.)
organise contact with the rank and file of the workers. In fact, there had been some contact with the rank and file through the women's group. The MMM had not intervened at all, however.

A complete reconsideration of party trade union activities and contact with the Labor Council was made. It was, of course, conditioned by the new policy against "social fascism". The general policy decisions for the future ran along the following lines. The capitalist offensive was under way and the ALP's role had been revealed in the previous year as one of strike breaking and promotion of industrial peace conferences. It was attempting fascistisation of the trade unions. The strikes and the failure of arbitration had resulted in "a definite radicalisation of the Australian workers during 1929", though this had not been realised by the party, due to its poor contacts with the workers. The first lesson of the timber strike was that the party must never content itself with mere representation on a strike committee - it must activate the rank and file. The MMM had been neglected but it would come "under the control of the CP, and auxiliary to it, and a means whereby the party can get revolutionary policies adopted by large section of the workers - a task which would be more difficult without such an organisation". It was also a means to new recruitment - the "influx of new members by way of the MMM will depend upon the control and influence of the Party gained through the exercise of the correct leadership". The party fractions
in the MMM should be systematically organised so that party control could be maintained. The MMM must recognise the CPA as the workers' party, as in this period "even small strikes" would lose their economic character and snowball into "mass political struggles". They should always be extended, as this gave the workers greater political experience and would lead to the overthrow of capitalism. In no circumstances should there be political neutrality. Council of action should lead strikes - elected by the rank and file - and should take over full control. The existing leadership would capitulate anyway. But shop and factory committees should also be established, and where they did not exist "every form of mass discontent" should be seized on to campaign for their establishment. Recruiting should be attempted by factory gate meetings where the party had no job contacts. It should be openly acknowledged that factory committees were to fight both the bosses and the trade union officials. Militants should not withdraw from unions but attempt to win mass support for militant struggles and replace the officials with revolutionaries. The revolutionary opposition should work through committees of action and shop committees, but should not regard these as substituting for the trade union itself. Special organisers should watch for areas of discontent and avail themselves of such phenomena. Expulsion of militants by the existing trade union officials was not a reason for the creation of new unions but "the Communists are not opposed in principle to the
splitting of the trade unions when to avoid such a split means the giving up of revolutionary work in the unions". However, these were only permissible and possible "in the process of mass working class action at times of acute class struggle, at a time when the strike wave is on the rise", that is, when the "social fascists" were clearly identified or when the masses endorsed the union's formation or when they had left the reformist unions as a result of militant action or treachery by the officials.

ACTU affiliations would be supported, but it was to have no further power over the unions. Finally, the Labor Council affiliation with the RILU should be strengthened. This last direction could not be carried out because of the already strained relations between Garden and the new CPA leadership.

In 1928 Garden himself had been elected an alternate RILU executive member. On 27 December 1929, it was announced that he had been invited to the Fifth RILU Congress, to be held in 1930. Since the Labor Council and the party were opposed over the timber strike tactics and other matters, this invitation alarmed the CPA leaders, who feared endorsement for Garden's position if he should see Lomovsky before they did. Besides, the CPA's new leadership had already cast itself irrevocably as an enemy of the Labor Council. By the end of 1929 attacks on Garden for "social fascism"

55 Workers' Weekly, 17/1/1930.
were frequently made by communist delegates to the Labor Council and by the CPA press. He remembers Jack Ryan as especially vituperative. Consequently, in the Labor Council elections at the beginning of 1930, when Kavanagh opposed Voigt for a temporary position of secretary in the Council, Garden threw his support behind Voigt and Kavanagh was not elected.56 Wright ran against Garden himself, Jeffrey against Roels, and Ryan against Hook. The party said that members had been nominated against the leading apostles of "industrial peace". No party members were elected.57

However, they need not have been so apprehensive, as Lozovsky had already shown displeasure with the Labor Council in 1929. Two of Garden's supporters, Roels and Hannett, had proceeded to Moscow after attending the 1929 Vladivostok Pan Pacific Trade Union conference to which they were delegates. To Lozovsky they presented "A Report of Labor Activities in Australia 1927-29". Not unnaturally, Garden sought in this document to justify his own policies in the trade union movement, most of which were condemned by the CPA at the 1929 Annual Conference. A special bone of contention had been Garden's attendance at the Industrial Peace Conference at the end of the previous year. The Pan Pacific Worker said that the "net result of the Melbourne Conference, as far as the working class is concerned, is zero",58 and the CPA that

56 SMH, 24/1/1930.
57 Labor Council Bulletin, 6/2/1930, for people elected.
58 Pan Pacific Worker, 15/1/1928, p32.
it was treachery.

One of the things Garden's emissaries defended in their report to the RILU was this participation. It was stated that "a division of opinion manifested itself in the industrial movement on the question of tactics, one section being of the opinion that leaders must at all times be prepared to formulate demands on behalf of the workers, fight for them to be granted and use those demands as a mean of promoting mass action. The other opinion strongly supported was that the movement should not allow itself to be enticed into any conference where the atmosphere of class collaboration would possibly prevail. However class collaboration was not evident at the conference [on Industrial Peace]."\(^{59}\) Roels also told the RILU that he did not think the Labor Council should be openly hostile to the ALP, although the industrial leaders should not condone ALP efforts to maintain arbitration.

The RILU had wholeheartedly endorsed the "social fascist theory and such views were anathema. Industrial Peace conferences were fascism masked. So in reply it sent a reproving letter (dated 10 November 1929). This condemned the Labor Council participation in the conference; demanded that a fight be conducted against arbitration;\(^{60}\) and claimed that the ALP was incapable of carrying out an anti-capitalis-

\(^{59}\) Labor Council Bulletin, 27/3/1930

\(^{60}\) Arbitration had been condoned by a majority Labor Council vote in 1929.
programme. It stated that the future tasks of the Labor Council consisted of demanding the unrestricted right to strike, the repeal of the White Australia policy, the promulgation of RILU policy, the introduction of strike committees, industrial unions and left wing movements. These were virtually the same policies and organisation that the MMM had set itself.

The Labor Council initially proposed a very contrite reply but the RILU instructions were subsequently rejected a day later as inapposite. Garden had been moving away from the communists while the three delegates were overseas, and he now rapidly moved into support of NSW Premier Jack Lang. Soon after he became openly anti-communist, refusing to support "fronts" or CPA activities.

Naturally, Garden decided not to attend the Fifth RILU Congress and opposed the sending of a Labor Council delegation. The party attitude was that "the NSW Trades and Labor Council is fast becoming a bureaucratic organisation, paving the way for social fascism by attempting to prevent the rank and file from electing their own officials".

61 Pan Pacific Worker, 1/4/1930, p113 ff.
62 Argus, 26/5/1930; Workers' Weekly, 9/5/1930; see Australian Worker, 16/4/1930.
63 E.g. the Workers' International Relief. See Workers' Weekly, 21/3/1930.
64 Workers' Weekly, 28/3/1930. The occasion was a dispute over tactics in the unemployed movement.
It also said that Garden's tactics were similar to that "foul creature" the octopus.

Such attacks occurred with increasing frequency until Garden became the party's worst enemy. A practical reaction was the establishment of a Vigilance Committee for the Defence of the RILU in the Labor Council and the proposal to send a party delegation to the Fifth Congress of the RILU. Those selected to go were J. Elder (Queensland), W. Orr (Mineworkers' Council), F. Nolan (Queensland State Branch of the Australian Railways Union), L. Varty (Victorian MIM), and L. Sharkey as representative of the Vigilance Committee.

Meanwhile, Garden entered into the battle with vigour. The Labor Council condemned and attacked the RILU, and Garden attempted to steal communist thunder among the unemployed by establishing his own unemployed organisations.

Sharkey was the main spokesman at the RILU Congress. He said later: "No illusions were left to the Congress on the subject of Garden and his treachery to the workers". He had said that Garden's tactics were diametrically opposed to those of the RILU, and "would liquidate the workers' existence". The Congress did not disaffiliate the Council, as it regarded the bulk of its members as true proletarians who were misled by Garden. It maintained that the CPA should attempt to win them to the principles of the RILU.

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65 Workers' Weekly, 24/10/1930; for report Inprecorr, 20/8/1930.
Garden was, as would be expected, not re-elected to the RILU executive.

On Sharkey's return the relationship between the Communists and Gardenites became very strained. In December a motion by communists that Lang had made a fascist attack on the unemployed workers provoked a riot in the Trades Hall. This sort of brawling in the Trades Hall became a frequent occurrence for the next couple of years. Garden continually accused the Vigilance Committee of sending "false reports" on the Labor Council activity to the RILU, and the CPA replied with abuse.

Finally, in July 1931, Lomovsky made an open statement, prompted by allegations in the press that Garden was associated with the RILU, an assertion favoured by the Nationalists as it discredited the Lang AILP. This statement listed Garden's "record of treachery and anti-working class activities", stating that he had thus put himself outside the RILU. His attacks on the MMM, which had become more frequent in 1931, had put him in "the camp of the enemies of the Australian and international proletariat". There he remained, as far as the CPA was concerned, for some two years, and the Labor Council remained there with him. Henceforth the CPA's main link with the industrial proletariat came through the Militant Minority Movement.

66 *Australian Worker*, 3/12/1930

67 *Workers' Weekly*, 31/7/1931
The communists suggested two basic policies for winning the trade unionists after the 1929 CPA Conference. These were the policies of "boring from within" to take over existing unions, and of supporting separate breakaway "dual" unions. The first policy was applied extensively in several Australian unions after 1930 and, despite the major reservations on the use of the second policy, it was applied once. The first policy met considerable success in many unions and was conducted by the MMM. Not all the unions "infiltrated" will be discussed here, as there is insufficient space. Two case studies will be made. First, the Miners' Federation, which was under communist control by 1935, will be examined to show the first communist union policy and organisation in practice. Then the Pastoral Workers' Industrial Union will be studied as an example of the second policy.

In 1929 the MMM had a foot in the door of the WWF but was rather languishing there because of party neglect and emphasis on work through the Labor Council. Then in 1929 and 1930 it began to take on a new lease of life, in the coalminers' union.

The Miners' Federation, or Australian Coal and Shale Employees' Federation, was fertile ground for militant union policies. It had supported the OBU from 1917 and many
years before that sections of it had supported militants and revolutionaries, especially the IWW. This militancy had persisted in the union throughout the twenties, when it was primarily a response to intermittent employment, especially in the second half of the decade. Certain peculiarities of the mining industry led to further resentment and readiness by the miners to believe Leninist propositions. A scholarly study by F.R.E. Mauldon,¹ made in 1929, admitted that there was "concentration of production and ownership", in other words tendencies towards monopoly in the NSW coal industry, that there was a price fixing system and interlocking connection with other industries, especially shipping, and that the owners had favoured the artificial maintenance of a high price policy, "even at the cost of much intermittency of operations".

Under these conditions the militants had gathered strength after 1926 and in 1928 succeeded in forcing the Miners' Convention to accept a militant programme. This consisted basically of a rejection of arbitration and the adoption of policies of direct action in industrial disputes. The union leadership had opposed the innovations, but they were carried out on a card vote by 15,452 to 12,923.² Thus in 1928, of the two trends in the union, one militant and one moderate, the existing leadership had sided with the

¹ F.R.E. Mauldon, The Economics of Australian Coal, (Melbourne, 1929), p. 91 and passim.
latter.

On the other hand, the owners believed that the miners were spoilt, prone to irresponsible action and not particularly industrious. The result was intransigency on the owners' side as well as militancy on the workers'.

It was in the Miners' Federation that the CPA had established its Left Wing Movement and some members of this still remained, especially in the Western District. Naturally, the CPA profited from the militancy and among the miners of the Western District it had launched a programme of demands for the industry in general: (a) the establishment of a six hour day and a five day week, (b) a national minimum weekly wage of £5/10/0, (c) the abolition of the contract system, (d) the abolition of the coal tribunal, (e) the abolition of a district agreement and the establishment of a national agreement, and (f) the socialisation of industry.³ The Workers' Weekly was already able to assert in June 1928 that the MMM was "feared and respected on the coalfields."⁴ The development of the MMM was given a further fillip in the northern coalminers' lockout of 1929-30.

In 1929 the employers asked that the miners' wages be lowered to compensate for the fall in profits the industry was experiencing. A 20% reduction was demanded in some cases. To counter this the Miners' Federation leaders

³ Labor Daily, 24/3/1928
⁴ Workers' Weekly, 15/6/1928
demanded a Royal Commission to investigate the truth of the assertion that there had been a fall in profits. As in the timber lockout, the government said that the miners had to submit to the reductions demanded by the owners and that then there would be an investigation by a Royal Commission. But, pending the report of the commission, the men on the northern coalfields refused to work at the reduced rates and were locked out by the owners. According to the Miners' secretary, Dai Davies, T. Bavin, the NSW premier, was uncompromising in his refusal to consider the miners' point of view.

The development of the policy of the miners during this lockout is very complicated. The conduct of the dispute was in the hands of the Combined Mining Unions' Committee, composed of ten Federation members and eight from allied transport and engineering unions and the Maitland Deputies and set up in 1928 to deal with such disputes as the lockout. The moderate leadership of the Miners' Federation was not in charge of policy except insofar as members sat on the Committee. The Combined Mining Unions' Committee policy was that the stoppage should be limited. In fact there were 9,700 men locked out, leaving 16,000 at work in

5 D. Davies, A Review of the Coal Question Preceding and During the Lockout on Northern Coalfields, (1929), p3.
6 Ibid.
the mines. As Davies said, this meant that it was impossible to raise sufficient finance to provide the usual relief pay. This left the miners with little but "their determination and their hate" to live on. The Combined Mining Unions' Committee also showed a readiness to negotiate with the owners. In sum, its policy was extremely moderate.

The leaders of the Miners' Federation, although also moderate, were not quite so moderate as the Committee and did not agree with its policy in its entirety. Their first action was to appoint an accountant to investigate the alleged costs of the mining industry, which the owners claim were excessive. The accountant published a series of articles which indicated that the mines were controlled by overseas capitalists. The Combined Mining Unions' Committee's readiness to negotiate was also resented by the militants in the union, as they believed the owners totally deceitful in their allegations about costs. The Miners' Council, already upset by the strength of the militants in the union, had to consider the attitude of these men, which is one possible reason for its opposition to the Committee as the dispute developed.

At first the Council pinned its hopes on Scullin's promise that if returned to govern in 1929 he would put an end to the lockout. Although Labor was returned to the

8 D. Davies, op. cit., p8.
federal government, Scullin did not carry out his promise. As a result, the Miners’ Council came into opposition to the Combined Mining Unions’ Committee and temporarily onto the same ground as the CPA. The CPA initially centred its policy in the dispute on a demand for the withdrawal of safety men from the mines. This the Committee had refused to do. The CPA then demanded that the question be raised in all lodges. “The leaders won’t fight, the militants must act”, it urged. After the failure of Scullin to put an end to the dispute, the Central Miners’ Council itself recommended that the safety men be withdrawn from the mines. This was in April 1929.11 This the Combined Mining Unions’ Committee still declined to do,12 despite an endorsement for withdrawal by the Labor Council.13 The CPA promptly advised the men to disregard the Committee and take the matter into their own hands.14

The success of the MMM after April 1929 is partially explained by the coincidence of its policy not only with that of the Labor Council but with that of the moderate leaders of the union. The only “scoundrels” were the Committee and naturally MMM policy of rank and file control

10 *Workers’ Weekly*, 15/3/1929
11 Minutes, Special Council Meeting, 25-27 April 1929 (all references to minutes in this chapter are to Miners’ Federation Minutes)
13 *Labor Council Bulletin*, 13/6/1929
14 *Workers’ Weekly*, 14/6/1929.
of strikes had considerable success. Many of the miners concerned and their leaders agreed that the Committee was not conducting the lockout properly. The CPA availed itself of this general consensus. After April there was a rapid increase in MMM groups in Cessnock, Abermain, Kurri Kurri and other key points of the coalfields.

One development which facilitated growing party participation in the lockout was the official refusal in June of Labor Council help in the dispute. This annoyed the communists, but it did leave the field clear for the MMM where previously the MMM had been neglected by the party in favour of the Labor Council. Had the Labor Council intervened there could have been a clash between it and the party and MMM over policy, which might have split the militants. The MMM favoured a policy of "all out", that of a general strike throughout the industry but the Labor Council

"did not recommend a general strike in the coal industry. To recommend a general strike in all mines before the safety men have been withdrawn from the locked out mines in the North would have betrayed a lack of understanding of the situation and of the tactics requisite to a successful conclusion to the workers". 16

The Miners' Council and the CPA parted company over the policy of rank and file control which the CPA advised and which the Council could of course not accept. But this did not occur before the Council had facilitated the MMM's

15 Western Toosin, 20/6/1929
16 Labor Council Bulletin, 13/6/1929
success by advocating the same policy of withdrawing safety men. The Council said a propos rank and file control that having been appointed the governing body of the Federation, it repudiated the formation of any other body or so-called Council of Action inside the membership and instructed the members of the Federation not to recognise any such irregular or self-appointed body. However, parallel control in the form of Councils of Action grew rapidly after mid 1929. The introduced mass picketing, advocated by the CPA, and, as R. Gollan says, mass picketing was very intimidating.

The attitude of the Miners' Council to this growing rank and file control, encouraged by the Communist press and spearheaded by the MMM, was one of hostility, even from militant T. (Bondy) Hoare.

In July the MMM held its first annual conference. N. Jeffrey was elected secretary - he promptly went with J. Baddeley, ex-Minister for Mines, on a lecture tour of the coalfields, agitating on behalf of the MMM. The fight was henceforth cast as one against both union leadership and employers, the "traitors" and the exploiters.

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17 Minutes, 14-15 June 1929.
19 Workers' Weekly, 15/3/1929.
21 Minutes, 6, 10, 13 August 1929.
22 Western Toesin, 18/7/1929; F. Mauldon, op. cit., p91.
The MMM began to run an election campaign for official positions in the union, the results of which were evidently feared by the Council as Hoare recommended that MMM members be made ineligible for such positions. C. Nelson of the Lithgow State Mine Lodge was nominated as a candidate for Vice-President of Western District and A. Weston was run against A. Teece as Northern District treasurer in the strike area.

Meanwhile, the mass picketing was causing brawling, as it had in the timber strike, and large reinforcements of police and police volunteers were moved into the area. The Bavln government also responded by passing the Crimes (Intimidation and Molestation) Act 1929, barring picketing. On 18 December there was an especially heavy clash during a mass procession of protest at Rothbury and a bystander, Norman Brown, was killed when the police fired - some others were wounded. He was promptly made a martyr by communist and labour organisations. It was claimed that his death proved that the Australian boss was as murderous as any other that there was no purpose in the workers remaining unarmed; and that a Workers' Defence Corps should be founded.

But the lockout was drawing to a close. The Council banned mass picketing in response to the Act. This was a prelude to negotiation with the owners. The Miners' officials claimed the strike was no longer financially

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23 Proposed 19-28 November 1929.
possible. While the officials met with the owners at a meeting arranged by the Prime Minister, the MMM made the most of the Rothbury incident. Weston displaced Teece as Northern Miners' treasurer and Nelson, who had been considered an outside hope, received 704 first preference votes in a narrow defeat for the position he contested in the Western District. The CPA called for "all out" and a conference of Lodge Delegates endorsed the call in defiance of the Council. The Council itself refused to listen to the rank and file, even while officials were being met with intransigency at the conference with the owners. The Davidson Commission had made no recommendation in favour of the miners and saw the only hope in cutting down employment and lowering conditions. This put the officials at a disadvantage. They finally capitulated to the owners, accepting the following harsh terms: (a) the owners must, in the interest of discipline, insist on the right of dismissal and free selection of employees; (b) that all restrictions on output must be removed; (c) that all contract rates be reduced by 20%; (d) that day wage men be reduced by 1/6 a day; and (e) that boys be paid for the actual job instead of by the age scale.

24 Western Times, 20/12/1929.
25 Minutes, 12-13-14 December 1929.
26 Minutes, 21 December 1929.
27 Royal Commission on Coal Industry, p320 ff. (Davidson Commission)
28 D. Davies, op. cit., p17.
The CPA claimed this was "treachery", but the lockout was over. In the first six months of 1930 men started to resume work. The Council attitude was that this capitulation was necessary to "prevent a debacle from being brought about".  

Although the MMM had made large gains, which became obvious at its next conference, the old Miners' officials were re-elected by large margins at the 1930 elections. So the trade union officials had not yet been completely discredited. On the other hand, arbitration clearly had, as so the "direct action" leaders would obviously start coming to the fore and arbitrationists would fall back in the coming years. Clear enmity between communist organisations and the officials had been established, too, and so there was no confusion about what each stood for. The MMM, increasing supported after 1929, was already established as a vehicle to turn this communist presence in the union into control of the union.  

But now the period of great strikes was over there was a certain defeatism in the unions. The policy of the social fascist period was on the other hand increasingly employed. This was not nearly so appropriate or attractive a policy as it was during the lockout and until the end of 1932 the MMM made little progress. It was a time for quiet consolidation. Instead, the MMM became increasingly revolutionary in its utterances. The promise of early gains was not kept in 1931  

29 Minutes, April and May, 1930.
and 1932. This extremism was a result of the decisions of the Fifth RILU conference, which had been publicised as a guide to action for communist activity in the unions. These decisions advised that in the presence of greatly increased militancy since 1928 the greatest fault was an exclusively defensive attitude and the substitution of party committees for fighting committees. Strikes had not been developed!

The RILU supporters had as their task to develop in the masses the realisation of the need of more and more linking up immediate economic demands with general proletarian class demands, at the same time without the slightest slackening in the struggle for the smaller demands which were presented at the outset. The RILU categorically denied that the workers were apathetic and "not able to fight". A more intense fight against the "bureaucracy" in the trade unions should be stepped up. The strained class relationships and economic struggles were a good training ground for revolutionaries. So were the constant clashes between workers and the forces of law and order. This resulted in militancy. "Bloody repression" gave rise to "revolutionary indignation". "More than ever before the masses in the present day strike struggles show firmness, energy, ... a spirit of self-sacrifice."

30 The Tasks of the Red Trade Unions and MM Resolutions of the 5th Congress RILU, issued by the National Minority Movement, Sydney.
On the whole, this policy was one of offensive action and indeed a welcome acceptance of "bloody repression" as a way the workers should be won. The key to it was the assumption that the workers were militant. Were they in Australia?

Miriam Rechter, in her study of the watersiders and the miners says they were in the waterside industry in 1928.31 However, overall in the Australian trade union movement they were not, according to Arthur Rae who was in a good position to judge.32 He said that having lived and worked under the system of arbitration there were hundreds of thousands of workers who had no knowledge of any other method and looked upon the facts of the early struggles of their fathers as mere babblings of old age passing into its second childhood. They had "lost the capacity to fight". Garden was so sure of this analysis that he was prepared to defy the RILU over it. Even in the period of the coal strikes there was a sufficient lack of militancy for the Davidson Commission to state that its own view was that the great majority of the employees in the coal industry was very little concerned with the "bombastic theories contained in the preamble to the constitution......"33 This was overemphasising the lack of militancy, as militancy was high during all these strikes.

32 Pan Pacific Worker, 2/4/1928, p16.
33 Davidson Commission, op. cit., p137.
but it certainly did not appear too ridiculous a statement to make.

**A fortiori,** after the defeats workers' fear of an extremist policy and strikes would have been greater, and there were few strikes for some years. Indeed, so false was the RILU's 1930 analysis that it had an isolating effect on the MMM in 1931.

Through 1930 the Central Council more sensibly pursued a policy which can only be described as "licking its wounds". It worked a great deal through the ALP and turned frequently to Lang's government, which contained ex-miners (J. Baddeley, A.C. Willis) in positions of importance, to secure legislation to ameliorate conditions. In late 1930 it was moved that D. Rees and Davies be considered for new appointments to the Legislative Council, as had been the tradition in the past for miners' officials. So, while there were no militants on the Miners' Council, the old leadership was showing signs of moving on to political positions.

This led to the first direct MMM attempt to take over the union. At the Fifth RILU Congress there were miners' delegates (W. Orr and G. Richards). Sharkey reported that the MMM was still weak but not without effect. Orr reported of the success of the MMM in the mining strike. A letter was brought back from Congress by the Miners, indicating the tactics which should be used by the MMM on

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34 Inprecorr, 28/8/1930
the Northern Coalfields. The letter advised that an *Industry*
Bureau should be established to carry out the necessary re-
organising work and that district and area councils should be established.

"The work must be carried out in an organised fashion
and MMM members must be put forward as candidates for union positions on the basis of the MMM programme."

It was suggested that "branches" of the union be canvassed for support and that campaigns be conducted in conjunction with the unemployed movements controlled by the CPA.36

Thus, on their return, the MMM prepared to contest the mining union elections. Charles Nelson, the most prominent member, stood for the secretaryship but was unsuccessful.37

In February 1931 the miners' MMM also sent delegates to the ACTU Conference. They declared that that body was defunct, which was precisely the party line. They supported the plan of a general strike in concurrence with the Labor Council but against Miners' officials. In August 1931 the MMM began to have more success with the establishment of a national paper, the *Red Leader*. Its circulation reached 9,000 in October, so MMM policies were being widely publicised.

At the end of 1931, Bill Orr, a CPA and MMM member, stood for the Miners' secretaryship. The result of his campaign was the establishment of more MMM branches on the coalfields.

37 Minutes, 3/8 February 1931.
despite the revolutionary programme, and he was only narrowly defeated by Teece by 6,800 to 4,511 votes in the election.\textsuperscript{36} But there were still no MMM men on the Council. Nor was there any slackening of hostility towards communism by Council members.\textsuperscript{39} Little progress was being made any longer. In April Miles said, "There has been far too much talk in the Minority Movement and too little action", and accused it of left sectarianism and neglect of the unemployed, who were supposed to be incorporated into the organisation.\textsuperscript{40} Its "sectarianism" was evidenced in a pamphlet published in June which attacked Garden and the \textit{Labor Daily} (which included the official miners' organ), and emphasised that it worked inside the unions to expose the leadership.\textsuperscript{41} The MMM started to decline. The \textit{Red Leader} circulation dropped from nine to seven thousand per issue. Parliamentary opposition and that of religious workers, strong on the coalfields, may have contributed to the decline as much as an irrelevant programme.

This led to a stocktaking at the National MMM Conference held on Boxing Day 1931. The National Secretary, now Bill Orr, gave the report, and claimed that there had been real

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{38} \textit{Workers' Weekly}, 10/4/1931
\item \textsuperscript{39} \textit{What is the Minority Movement?}, op. cit., pp.6,10.
\item \textsuperscript{40} \textit{Red Leader}, 9/11/1931
\item \textsuperscript{41} E.g. requests for funds by "front" organisations were still refused, Minutes, 2-6 February 1932.
\end{itemize}
organisational success since the Fifth RILU Conference. But, "we have not yet succeeded in organising the workers who already recognise the correctness of our line". Some sections which had achieved a little success had tended to rest on their laurels. There was too little organising and too much sloganising. On the other hand, too few knew what the RILU tactics were.

"We have failed to appreciate the fact that the workers will only concede leadership of their struggles to us if we are able to win their confidence by participation in, and correct guidance of, the everyday struggles on and off the job."

Bread and butter issues were important. So was the utilisation of existing trade union machinery to reach the workers. Some MMM members had evidently been afraid of being called "revisionist" if it was utilised. Attacks should not be directed at the trade union position but the holder of the position, depending on his policy. There had been too many sectarian mistakes. This was due to a misunderstanding of the RILU policy. To combat this, training, realism and contact with the job were necessary. Workers' conditions did not have to worsen before there was a struggle. Laxity in work on the coalfields had to be overcome now that there was a swing away from the trade union leadership. 42

The whole implication of this report was that the RILU policy was not understood and that it in itself did not

42 Red Leader, 15/1/1932, 22/1/1932; Workers' Weekly, 15/1/1932.
prevent more moderation. In fact, it was inapposite and "sectarian", and Orr was attempting a common manoeuvre of trying to reconcile faith which said one thing when reality said another. The solution was to say that the RILU programme itself was not responsible for the errors he was describing, but that "misunderstanding" of the RILU programme was.

So the RILU programme continued to be advocated in 1932, breeding sectarianism and isolation. On the coalfields the result was the departure of parts of the MMM from the official policy, by men torn between the realities in the coalfields and the theoretical dictates of their leaders.

Charles Nelson led the rebellion. The Lithgow MMM, of which he was leader, was growing rapidly at the end of 1931. At the beginning of the year it seemed quite militant. However, when the State Mine went on strike in the first quarter of the year, Nelson, as chairman of the lodge, advised negotiation and not rank and file offensive, which was the MMM line. He even refused to help form a rank and file committee. He rapidly moved away from the MMM in the second quarter of the year and the MMM declined in the Western District. Finally, unable to stomach the RILU line, he wrote that he could not "square his trade union work and work among the miners with a thorough going bolshevik determination."

43 Red Leader, 18/11/1931.
to carry out the line of the RILU and the Party". He refused to attend Politburo meetings of the CPA, and was finally expelled in July 1932 by the CPA. However, he continued to write for the MMM Red Leader. In the 13 July issue he wrote that a new struggle was developing and that committees of action should be formed to agitate for a return to pre-depression conditions. The Editorial Board wondered, "Is it that Nelson seeks to re-establish his reputation as a militant? He can do that only if he carries out in practice the MMM line, whose theory he understands so clearly.

Indeed, at the beginning of 1933 the stagnation of the M on the coalfields was almost over. This was due to loss of faith in Lang on the part of an important section of workers and a return to a more moderate line by the RILU and MMM. In turn, the improvement in conditions created more militancy in the miners once again. On this new wave MMM candidates moved into control of the union.

This was in marked contrast to the situation in the last quarter of 1932, when it was revealed that the movement had become an isolated sect. The miners themselves at aggregate meetings completely refused to support a general strike which the MMM was advocating (and which, incidently, the Central Council was also advocating). This absence of

44 Workers' Weekly, 8/7/1932.
45 Red Leader, 13/7/1932.
47 Red Leader, 21/9/1932.
militancy was blamed on lack of organisation. The party's displeasure with Nelson was indicated by the fact that an unknown J. Dawson was chosen to contest the presidency. He was unsuccessful. On the other hand, Dave Martin, who opposed Rees for the secretaryship, was beaten by only an eleventh of the votes (5,000 to 6,000).

Then there was an alteration of RILU policy to that of "winning the majority" and not emphasising its revolutionary goal. Especially significant was the stress that not only the most militant workers should be elected to committees. The letter also gave instructions to oppose moves towards industrial unionism, as this was designed to destroy trade union democracy. Finally, systematic recruiting should be carried on. More signs of miners' hostility towards the Council were evident this year and there was even a suggestion that it be abolished. On the whole, the communists now started to play a more moderate role.

So in April 1933 MMM policies mirrored the swing in Part policies. Basically, the MMM Manifesto of this date suggest a united front against fascism. But it also suggested "all kinds of protests" by the workers. If other labour organisations accepted these two suggestions, then the MMM would stop attacking "leading organs of the reformist unions".

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48 Ibid, 4/1/1933, 11/1/1933, 18/1/1933, 25/1/1933, 1/2/1933
49 There were nearly 3,000 MMM members in Australia at this time.
50 Minutes, 2-11 February, 1933.
51 Red Leader, 19/4/1933
The MMM now set its sights on "capturing the majority", regardless of the political or religious loyalties of the worker. It decided the time had come to "appreciate local differences".

Over the year the most important MMM growth had been in Newcastle, the local capital, so it is not surprising that the majority was quickly captured there. Nelson, now back in favour, and Orr were run for the two most important Council positions. By this time MMM propaganda had reached great numbers of workers hitherto repulsed by the sectarianism of 1930-32. Many were refusing to buy the Labor Daily, an act of symbolic defiance encouraged by the MMM. Suggestions that the Miners' Federation disaffiliate from the ALP were also coming from various lodges. No more were prominent labour personalities like Garden attacking the MMM.

As a result, the elections showed a 64-74% vote against the old leaders, and Orr beat Teece for the miners' secretaryship by 6,321 to 4,818 votes. Hoare was beaten by MMM candidate J. Jack for the Northern Miners' secretarship. Although Teece complained bitterly about the result, on the grounds of Orr's ineligibility, the election results were accepted.

The victory was attributed to correct use of united front tactics in isolating the reformist trade union officials, to good organisation and to proving "to the miners that we know the problems which must be tackled and that we are capable of doing the organising work necessary to give the mine
workers the chance of victory in their struggle". But all the success of 1933 was attributed to better organisation. This consisted of holding regular meetings by MMM groups, regular discussions of questions and co-ordination of action before lodge meetings. As J. Henry, at that time engaged in this activity, says, "By ceaseless work and by taking advantage of the too frequently inert, incompetent or dishonest union leadership, one union after another was gradually captured at the State or Federal level". Communist and MMM members were always at meetings, the officials were not.

Before 1933 propaganda and agitation had been good, but not organisation. Committees of action were really only established after 1932. The method of establishment had been as follows: first, MMM members got together at their place of work. They conducted propaganda according to the particular nature of their factory or mine. Chats, visits to the home and so on, were all encouraged. Sympathisers were worked

52 Ibid, 3/1/1934, 10/1/1934.
54 "I will give some of my experiences in making contact with fellow workers for the MMM derived in an industry where systematic espionage was in force.

"My first contact was made whilst the workers were lined up at the Bundy clocks. A wag in the crowd shouted 'Through the grading pens again'.

"Here was a real chance for a lead. I shouted, 'When are WE going to alter it?'. Back came the reply, 'That's the stuff. WE've got to do it.'

"Here was my first contact. After a few minutes talk in the workshop, within a week this worker was actively
MMM members split up to work among the workers at lunch times, to discover what grievances existed and who was sympathetic. The MMM infiltrated clubs and societies attached to the industry. The newspaper expressed the grievances shown and thus identified the workers' problems with the MMM. All this work was co-ordinated by the district or area committee. The sympathetic were then formed into a Committee of Action.

These activities were carried out in the mines. Eventually Orr and Jack were elected to official positions. This still did not give the communists control of the union. The moderate opposition in Council was still dominant.

With the Wonthaggi strike the MMM made further gains. The Wonthaggi strike was run by militants using MMM program and tactics. It was a success, and MMM membership in the area doubled. The result was the capture of 5 executive positions in the Miners' Union in Victoria. Then, when Rees resigned, Nelson won the presidency of the Federation and the militants and communists moved into full control of the miners' union. As such, the call by the MMM for the extension of Wonthaggi strike into a general strike had considerable

"...This first contact of mine was a pugilist; my second was a preacher". Red Leader, 5/7/1933.

Red Leader, 26/4/1933

Minutes, 6-10 February 1934. Orr, Jack and Idriess Williams (CPA members) were on the Council.

It was a head on collision with the government which demanded unconditional surrender.
force. A general strike did not, however, eventuate.

Having won the Miners' Federation, it only remained to consolidate gains. This had to be done in the face of organised ALP-endorsed opposition. Before, it had been MMM organisation against official lack of organisation. Now it was one form of organisation against another.

The ALP fought the campaign for the next Miners' election on the grounds that Orr and Nelson were communists. C. Anlezark and A. Teece were run by ALP. The campaign started with a letter from Anlezark to the Labor Daily claiming that (a) the Wonthaggi strikers accepted the proposals submitted by the Government, (b) that the Central Council schemed to build up a central fund out of the Wonthaggi levy and (c) that the Council had climbed into office on the basis of propaganda against the ALP. In reply, the Red Leader pointed out that Nelson was not a member of the executive at the time of the strike, and Orr said that the allegation were a pack of lies. Each side made a tour of the lodges. Anlezark lost a lot of support by refusing to meet Orr in a public debate. As a result, he was repudiated by his own lodge. The lodges backed Orr and Nelson and endorsed the MMM proposal for a withdrawal from the Arbitration Court.

In response, the ALP stepped up its campaign throughout

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58 Minutes, October, 1934, report the beginning of Anlezark's campaign.

59 Common Cause, 9/11/1935; also W. Orr, Mechanization, Threatened Catastrophe for Coalfields, Miners' Federation (1935).
the labour movement. Leaflets attacking Orr and Nelson were widely distributed. The MMM was expelled from various unions and failed in elections at others (Boilermakers', Engineers, WWF). Orr was soundly beaten for the presidency of the ACTU, but in the Miners' Federation the bastion stood. Anlezark lost the secretaryship of his lodge. Even an attempt to summon Orr and Nelson for illegal striking failed. Evidence of the Labor tactics, of the "mean" variety, repelled the mine workers and the communists were returned with an even greater majority. A new strike wave allowed them to consolidate their victory.

The reintroduction of a separate newspaper, Common Cause, under a communist editor, in November was one result of the ALP campaign. By espousing the miners' grievances against mechanisation, as well as espousing militancy, the Council made sure that it would retain the loyalty of the miners. This loyalty was expressed in the following vote in 1935: Nelson 3,242, Anlezark 1,377, and Orr 2,961, Teece 719.

The CPA benefited in many ways from this success. First, all "front" organisations were supported by the Council. Some examples, from late 1934, are: a donation of £5/5/0 to the Congress Against War, held in Melbourne; a donation of

60 Common Cause, 9/11/1935.
61 Ibid, 16/11/1935
£20 for the defence of Egon Kisch, who was probably a commun
(see Part IV); and the circulation of pamphlets condemning h
arrest. Such help was of considerable importance to the
"front", Movement Against War and Fascism. The support cont
ued throughout 1935.62 Then, all militant calls from the
CPA would meet with an affirmative response from the miners.
When the CPA started a campaign against a postal ban on
various newspapers associated with it, the miners' union was
quick to join in the protest.63 The miners' officials
rapidly contacted other militant unions to create a united
front campaign. So the prestige of the officials lent
enormous weight to policies put forward by the party, polici
which might otherwise have been ineffectual. Co-operation
with the CPA was the rule after the MMM won control of the
Miners' Federation.64 The party benefited on many counts.
Certainly, many miners came into the CPA via the MMM and
apparently many more supported it in elections without being
members.65

62 Minutes 1935 passim.
64 Common Cause, 30/11/1935.
65 E. Ross says this was W. Orr's opinion.
11 A dual union: the Pastoral Workers' Industrial Union of Australia.

There is only one example of the CPA supporting a breakaway union before 1935. The union was the Pastoral Workers' Industrial Union of Australia (PWIU). It was established to provide an alternative to a more militant union than the AWU. It was never very successful and was dissolved in 1937. The history of the PWIU is bound up with the history and temporary decline of the AWU in the depression, and must be discussed in relation to the other union.

The AWU's predecessors had been quite militant in the strikes of the nineties, but over the years the union had become quite moderate. The immediate question this poses is where had all the militant shearsers gone? Had they suddenly forgotten their militancy? They quite certainly had not, although they were outnumbered by less militant bushworkers. Led by men like Arthur Rae, they had conducted a continual opposition to the AWU's leaders and harked back to the values and attitudes of the nineties. They were outmanoeuvred and frequently expelled or prevented from obtaining official positions by the machinations of the union leaders. Rae was expelled at least once. The

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1 The complex nature of its establishment is discussed below. There is adequate evidence to regard it as a "dual" union. I am especially grateful to N. Jeffrey for his kind help with material and reminiscence, without which this section could not have been written.

conclusion is that there were men in the AWU who were ill at ease in that union but forced to belong to it and to abide by its leaders' values because of the union's virtual monopoly of unionism in bush industries. It is not surprising that they considered forming a separate union, but rather that they took so long to do so. One reason for the final decision was perhaps the extreme hostility of the AWU to union militancy during the twenties of this century. This hostility was continued after 1928 when the union was controlled by the convinced arbitrationists George Buckland, E. Grayndler and J. Bailey. Their hostility towards the supporters of direct action in the unions bordered on hatred.

After 1927 the AWU strength was concentrated inter alia on breaking the ties of the ACTU established at Garden's behest in 1927 with the semi-communist Pan Pacific Trade Union Secretariat. The AWU had strenuously opposed this affiliation in 1927. In 1929, as has been seen, the AWU was instrumental in the failure of the strikes. As a result, among militants the union and its bureaucracy were held in contempt and frequently attacked. It was a large union and very wealthy and the militants, though growing in strength, did little damage. In 1930 the AWU referred to MMM activities in the coalfields as the activities of "mad Muscovites", and used its strength to force the ACTU to break its affiliation with the PPTUS and reaffirm its belief in White Australia and

3 What is the PPTUS?, op. cit., p6.
The characteristic of AWU activity was then an unremittent attack on communism, the MMM and militant activity, and a defence of the traditional methods of the Australian labour movement: arbitration, White Australia and reformism. Any attempt to establish rank and file committees in the AWU was denounced as bogus, but these committees were formed, and one of the earliest groups of the MMM was in the AWU.

The depression was affecting even the AWU, just as it had with the Timberworkers' and others. Conditions in the pastoral industry, whence the AWU drew most of its strength, were worsening and, as elsewhere, the solution was seen in a reduction of wages. In early 1930 Judge Dethbridge made an award which discredited arbitration in AWU members' eyes. Even the union officially regarded the award as marking the collapse of arbitration. The communists claimed the AWU was being shown up by the march of events. The AWU, which initially fought the decision to lower wages before the Arbitration Court, withdrew after deciding that the judges were "capitalist biased". Wages fell in percentages of up to 20% for shearers and country workers. In the face of this debacle the AWU allowed its workers to abide by the decision, although it condemned it. The result of this

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6 Reported in *Workers' Weekly*, 12/7/1929.
7 *Australian Worker*, 5/2/1930.
Defeatism was a loss of faith in the AWU by thousands of its members. Certain of the disillusioned started to hold unofficial rank and file meetings. A strike started among the NSW shearsers. It was unofficial as the union condemned it and agreed to the introduction of "scab" labour. In Queensland the disputes in the south were ignored until conditions worsened there as well. A wage decrease led to a delegate conference on 26-27 November at Longreach. This conference decided that the decrease should be fought. Endorsement for the decision was received from 23 centres and so the shearsers' strike spread north. At first the AWU participated officially in Queensland. But the revolt against the AWU leadership became widespread. Though this was apparently the condition required (see Part III, ch.8)\(^9\) before a separate union would receive communist support the MMM counselled against creating such a union "because of the almost entire absence of preparatory work for building a Red Union".\(^{10}\)

But when the AWU rank and file proceeded to build one in NSW in October 1930 the MMM immediately lent it all its

\(^9\) "It is absolutely incorrect to mechanically create new unions, which only tends to separate the most class conscious portion of the proletariat from the backward portion of the proletariat. New unions may be called into life only when the wave of the strike movement has risen to its culminating point, when the class struggle has become most violent, when the absolute majority of the proletarian masses have fully realised the treacherous role played by the reformist trade union bureaucracy, and when the masses militantly support the organisation of new unions." RILU resolution.

\(^{10}\) *Red Leader*, 16/10/1931.
support. The new union was called the Pastoral Workers' Industrial Union of Australia.

The PWIU held its first conference in Sydney. Among the 65 delegates in attendance were some men from the striking Queensland sheds. It was decided that a Queensland branch would be established. The new union came firmly under militant and MMM control. The executive was composed of Norm Jeffrey as Secretary, B. Patterson as President, Arthur Rae as Treasurer and the following members, D. Eatock, L. McGinty, M. Mercer, G. Ryan, J. Thurban, P. Monoghan, J. Doyle, T. Mulheron, T. Williams and M. Foley. Only N. Jeffrey was a communist at this time but later some of the others joined the CPA.\(^{11}\)

The union adopted a militant policy and organisation. Its objects were: (a) to organise the workers in the pastoral and related rural industries and those following the calling coming under the general heading bushwork, with the object of securing better wages and improved working conditions; (b) to equip all workers in the industries covered with a better knowledge of the class nature of the struggle that goes on in society; (c) to expose the Arbitration and Conciliation Courts and all forms of class collaboration as the instruments of the ruling class; and (d) to fight all forms of class oppression and exploitation and to organise for the ultimate overthrow of capitalism and the introduction of

\(^{11}\) *Workers' Weekly*, 9/11/1931; Information supplied by Norm Jeffrey to the writer.
of a socialist state as the means of achieving freedom and justice.

Its methods were to organise the workers into job committees, to institute direct negotiation with employers, and to use strike methods in disputes.12

As the NSW strike collapsed early, the PWIU's first activities were among the Queensland strikers. The AWU executive in the northern state was very hostile and condemned the rank and file meetings in which the PWIU participated. It advised "goats like the self-styled Pastoral Workers' Union" to stick to NSW.13 However, the "goats" moved north and the PWIU took an active part in the strike. The AWU had decided to introduce "scabs" and did so. This was "fought with all methods". The culmination of bitterness in this strike was the battle of Emerald, which was captained by PWIU members. The Graziers' Co-operative Society had hired a train from the NSW Lang government to bring several hundred "scabs" into Queensland. The AWU officials and the Queensland government supported this import of "scab" labour on the train and the strikers prepared to meet it.

"A bombardment of stones met the train, and the police replied with heavy bashings, dealing it out indiscriminately to men and women. All the casualties, however, were not on the side of the strikers; an inspector of police and a few constables forgot to duck when stones came their way .....",
says a militant source.14 Other bashings resulted in the

13 Australian Worker, 31/12/1930.
14 Pen Pacific Worker, 1/3/1931, p7.
arrest of the northern organiser of the PWIU, "Trucker" Brow and two other leading militants, Jack Welsh and Chris Mitchell. All cases against them were eventually dismissed. The strike raged on, reminiscent of the nineties. The AWU officials remained against it and attacked the PWIU and its own rank and file whenever possible.\textsuperscript{15} Rae, who was touring as PWIU agitator, was dubbed "an old man in his dotage, who maunders and drivels".\textsuperscript{16} Accusations were made that the Australian worker's plight was due to "his carelessness and unpardonable stupidity" in voting the wrong way in elections. Not surprisingly, AWU members resigned en masse. AWU rank and file leaders associated with the MMM and PWIU promptly sold many membership tickets at 5/- each. Greatest growth was in the rank and file movement rather than the PWIU itself. But despite this growth, the strikers, divided as they were by the official opposition to the strike, and poorly organise finally collapsed in April 1931. The PWIU attitude was the extreme one that had there been more violence used on "scabs" the strike might have been won.

After this time the AWU membership started to decline rapidly in NSW and Queensland. The PWIU did not meet with corresponding success. Garden had refused credentials to it although somehow it had two delegates to the Trades Hall.\textsuperscript{16}

\textsuperscript{15}Australian Worker, 14/1/31.
\textsuperscript{16}Ibid, 21/1/1931.
\textsuperscript{17}Ibid, 4/2/1931.
\textsuperscript{18}Workers' Weekly, 20/2/1931.
So although AWU members were resigning they were not joining the PWIU. AWU claims that rank and file control did not exist in the PWIU and that PWIU dues were not accounted for may have been a reason for the new union's lack of success. Certainly it was untrue to say that the money was unaccounted for, as there was a regular audit by Stanley Allen, a Quaker, and then by a public auditor. On the other hand, plebiscite control of the officials of the PWIU had been rejected at its first annual conference.

In 1931 the activity of the two unions was limited to making tours and counter-tours to win the non-union "bushies". Each side claimed success, but in fact workers tended to be lost to both unions. 19

The AWU was getting slightly the better of the competition in Queensland. Here the PWIU had a "stormy history" and initial gains were soon lost as graziers stepped up victimisation campaigns, backed by the unconditional preference of the Forgan Smith government for the AWU. This lost the PWIU nearly all of its Queensland membership. Victimisation did not stop at refusal to hire either, frequently men were beaten up by AWU rivals or by the graziers. 20

In NSW the young union survived the struggle in 1931 and continued to limp along. Here it provided support for the MMM and the CPA "fronts". It printed a bulletin and

19 Australian Worker, 15/4/1931, 18/11/1931; Pan Pacific Worker, 1/3/1931, p7-8.

20 Interview Norm Jeffrey, February 1963.
sent out its organisers on tours. Depression conditions made workers prepared to listen. At the union's second annual conference, held immediately after Christmas 1931, the union affiliated with the MMM and the RILU and thus its actions became dependent on RILU directions until that body chose to dissolve the PWIU. The general policy adopted at this conference was to agitate for improvement in wages and conditions. A delegation was elected to go to the Soviet Union. Membership at this stage was 1,028.21

The reason why victimisation was not so extreme in NSW was, according to Norm Jeffrey, that many PWIU members were "gun" shearers. Their skill made them indispensable to the graziers and popular with their fellows.

In mid 1932 the PWIU ran its first strike in response to a 21/- "cost of living" cut in wages. Only some sheds went on strike and the whole affair became a fiasco.23 The AWU and Garden opposed it and it petered out. The net result was the formation of a branch in Victoria. Yet the failure of the United Laborers' Union set up by Garden to win militants away from the PWIU indicated considerable loyalty among the small following of the dual union. The union therefore managed to survive the "social fascist" period of RILU history.

21 Red Leader, 15/1/1932.
22 Ibid, 4/1/1933.
23 See Red Leader, June and July 1932.
At the third conference of the union it was decided that branches should be formed in the fruit and agricultural industries. Such branches would have complete autonomy, elect their own officials and make their own rules, as long as they did not conflict with the principles and policy of the union. This decision meant plenty of work and intense organisation. The union would also campaign against the pastoral award and AWU preference. The conference said that new rules would be drafted to bring the union into line with new policies.  

Instructions from the RILU to the MMM that it was to lend more support to the PWIU and the building of rank and file pastoral committees were published in January.

This added support and the reversion to united front policies in April 1933 led to increased PWIU success in the second half of the year.  

This was achieved despite the AWU move "left" to the support of Lang - a move which often deprived the CPA of support elsewhere. Most success was due, it appears, to the simple fact that conditions were bad among the shearers and the PWIU was prepared to do something about it. A tour specially made by Jeffrey in Queensland met considerable success. Most of his work was directed at building "bushworkers' committees", nominally non-political organs for collective defence - they were not composed of

\[24\] Ibid, 11/1/1933.

\[25\] This success had begun by April.
PWITU members. A network of these had been built up slowly in the outback of NSW by 1934. They functioned like shop committees and one at least issued regular roneoed news sheets.

With this growth victimisation became more common, according to the militants. Men applying for jobs had to sign a Graziers' Association form which said,

I hereby certify that I am not a member of the Pastoral Workers' Industrial Union of Australia, and undertake that if engaged I will not become a member pending the completion of my employment.

On occasion the party lawyers won "breach of contract" cases for PWIU members.

The change to the united front had meant that the PWIU no longer attacked the AWU, though the AWU, fearful of communist success in the sugar area of Queensland, did not stop its vituperation, and now AWU and PWIU men sometimes co-operated (e.g. at Maffra). Increased success was met in small, short stoppages.

Jeffrey and R. Morgan (now president of the PWIU) had successfully established bushworkers' committees at Armidale, Uralla, Walcha, Inverell, Moree and Narrabri by 1934. These spread later on and it seems from the semi-regular appearance of news sheets that they kept going. As they were having success in winning higher shearing rates they

26 *Red Leader*, 22/11/1933.

27 *Ibid*, 28/2/1934. Others had been established at Coonamble, Orange and Gunnedah.
were extended to Queensland and Victoria.

By the middle of the year the union was sufficiently successful and had enough money to introduce a free newspaper in place of the bulletin it had hitherto published. It was called the United Bushworker and had a circulation of 1,000 - 2,000 copies. It was financed by union funds and appeals. The appearance of this newspaper marked a big step forward.

The union rapidly spread through the sheds. Several organisers, Tom Brislan, Denny Maher, Robinson, Bob Morgan and George Chenery, were selling tickets. The organisers worked under considerable difficulty. They were ill paid, "subject to attention by squatters and their flunkies", and had to travel in "bombs". They relied considerably on the generosity of the bushworkers for food and petrol. The new paper reported continual success. It protested to the Minister for Labour and Industry over conditions of accommodation and was successful. It started to moot the formation of a north western branch.

At this time its vaunted rank and file control seems to have attracted recruits and its policy of direct negotiation on a log of claims which were submitted for mass endorsement was also favoured.

28 At the following sheds: Dumble £13/10/0, Beanbah £15, Success £2, Brindala £2, Prairie £6/15/0.

29 Personal notes made by N. Jeffrey, in my possession.

30 United Bushworker, 20/8/1934.

31 Ibid, 24/9/1934.
At its 1934 Conference it took stock. There were delegates present from Moree, Uralla, Bourke, Cobar and Coonamble districts and from several sheds. It was decided that branches should be formed at Coonamble and Moree and that there should be planned sustained work by organisers in country districts, starting early in the year. Work should also be conducted in Queensland (where the union was barely viable) to build up the bushworkers' committees, which would work together with the MMM. Of the 42,000 pastoral workers in NSW, only 500 belonged to the PWIU and 5,558 to the AWU. The obvious task was to organise the non-organised.

By April the new branches had been started. Ray Brown was secretary for Moree and Bert Robinson for Coonamble. More bushworkers' committees had been formed. According to the rules, there must have been over 50 members in each of the two branches.

However, the main aim of organising the non-organised met with little success. The Communist Review of October 1935 still reported that 30,000 NSW pastoral workers were outside the unions. A proposal for a united front to the AWU also went unanswered, but at rank and file level members of both unions co-operated to extract rises from the now more prosperous wool industry.

32 Including other sorts of rural workers.
While the union was working quite efficiently, it was not growing. Though it had obtained a foothold in both Queensland and Victoria, especially in the establishment of bushworkers' committees, it is doubtful if membership ever exceeded 1,500.

By the end of 1935 the usefulness of the separate union was outlived and the RILU's new tactics dictated by the Comintern Seventh Congress made a separate union de trop. Norm Jeffrey says that members were quite hostile to the idea of a united front and were only won to the idea with considerable persuasion. But at the 1935 Conference the united front was reaffirmed. Soon the PWIU, on instructions from the RILU, was proposing amalgamation into the AWU. Finally it dissolved itself and members re-entered the AWU as individuals. In 1937 Australia's only Red Union was no more.

This experience of the PWIU does not suggest that separate red unions were and are always inappropriate in Australia. Several PWIU members opposed its dissolution as they felt that in 1936 it was just getting onto its feet and conditions favoured its further growth. It was designed for shearsers and bushworkers, whose only real alternative was to join the AWU. Within these occupations there had always been a strong militant tradition dating back to the strikes of the nineties. Unless it is assumed that this had completely disappeared a large number of AWU members must have opposed the policies of the union. It was reasonable to assume that they provided the basis for another union in the bush.

industries. This CPA policy was not really inappropriate.

iii Conclusions

The PWIU was the only dual union established in Australia. The policy and organisation used in the Miners' Federation were, on the other hand, also applied in many other unions. Some modifications were made, depending on the industry or the union in which the MMM was operating, but the effects of this policy of "boring from within" everywhere followed basically the same pattern as in the Miners' Federation. The MMM failed nearly everywhere to achieve the aims of the policy before 1933, but thereafter it met comparative success. In some cases this meant control of union positions and in others it meant only the establishment of a large militant minority which supported the MMM. How widespread was this communist inspired activity and where was it successful?

The MMM only became established in 1930, though small groups had been formed in 1929 in various unions. In 1931 it was reported that there were MMM oppositions in 33 NSW unions.¹ In 1932, at the height of the period of the failure of communist policies, when the aggressive policy of general strike was resulting in setbacks for the MMM, it was reported that the MMM was issuing bulletins in "every workshop" in NSW and that it had 33,000 supporters. The unions in which

¹ Red Leader, 30/10/1931.
an MMM opposition was functioning in NSW were the AWU, the Federated Ironworkers' Association, the Australian Railways Union, Electrical Trades Union, Moulders' Union, Amalgamated Engineering Union, Boilermakers' Union, the Locomotive Engineers' Union, Plumbers' and Gasfitters' Union, Federated Enginedrivers' and Firemen's Association, Seamen's Union, Waterside Workers' Federation, Storemen and Packers', Ship Painters' and Dockers', Textiles, Carpenters', Bricklayers', Painters' Unions, Builders' Laborers' Federation, Sheet Metal Workers', Miners', PWIU, Sydney Labor Council and South Coast Trades and Labor Council.

In Queensland a similar degree of influence had been attained. The MMM had very little influence outside these two states, though in 1932 there were small groups in Victoria and South Australia. 2

This following of 33,000 in NSW was only about 6% of the total number of trade unionists in Australia at the time. 3 In NSW, Queensland and Victoria 28.3% of the unionists were unemployed. The MMM supporters probably included unemployed as well as employed trade unionists, as the communist-inspired Unemployed Workers' Movement was technically linked with the MMM. Even assuming that the MMM had the support of another


3 The Report of the Committee to make a Preliminary Survey of the Economic Problem (1932), p22, gives a total of 420,000 trade unionists in Australia.
30,000 in Queensland, Victoria and South Australia, the followers of the MMM would have totalled only some 12% of Australian unionists in 1932. It should be noted that support of the MMM does not mean membership of the MMM.

By 1935, when the MMM was beginning to win its greatest success, it was claimed that there was an MMM in every important union in the country. This assertion was borne out by non-communist sources as early as the beginning of 1934.

No more unions seem to have been penetrated in NSW, but in Victoria the unions in which oppositions existed by 1935 included the ARU, Miners, Enginedrivers' and Firemen's, Waterside Workers' Federation, Tramways, Amalgamated Engineering Union, PWIU, Locomotive Engineers', Australian Meat Industries Employees' Union, Seamen's Union: and in the Trade Hall Council in Melbourne. In all there were 36 unions with MMM oppositions in Victoria by 1933 but it is difficult to ascertain precisely which these unions were.

While no more unions had been penetrated in NSW, the number of supporters there had grown to about 50,000 by 1935. To this figure must be added a claimed 32,000 supporters in Victoria. There was definitely a large number of supporters in Queensland still and the MMM was functioning,


SMH, 9/1/1934, said, 'There is, for instance, hardly a single industry of any size without its militant minority group or nucleus of a similar organisation. These groups are always very active'.
especially in the Waterside Workers' Federation, Tramways and Miners' Unions, in South Australia and Western Australia as well. This would probably mean an MMM opposition and following of over 20% of all unionists in Australia in 1935.

These oppositions were not all MMM members but were probably composed of the militant group which had traditionally existed in Australian unions. The MMM itself only comprised hard core actionists and leaders for the large minority of militants. As late as 1934 it was not even as big as the CPA itself. 6 Exactly how big it was is difficult to determine, but 2,269 workers participated in the elections to the 1934 second MMM National Conference, 7 and apparently there were never more than 3,000 paid up, active MMM members. This meant that in many unions listed above the MMM was too weak to lead. It was frequently no more than a party "trade union department". 8

On the other hand it cannot be dismissed as something too small to be effectual, after 1933, despite party acknowledgements that it was neglected and weak. This was an admonition which was belied by the success of the MMM in organising the militants and in gaining control of unions. It was perhaps true that before 1933 it was ineffectual, but

6 Communist Review, April-May 1934, p50; for Victorian unions Red Leader, 1931-5, passim; figures based on circulation of MMM papers, Trade Union Leader, October 1935, p65.

7 Red Leader, 17/1/1934.

8 Communist Review, August 1934, p17.
thereafter the MMM took on a new lease of life. The reality of the matter lay in the union executive positions which were won by the MMM.

Before 1932 the MMM had control of no unions and no executive positions, except for G. Bodsworth who was on the Timberworkers' Victorian executive as vice president. But in 1932 there had been evidence that the MMM was winning control of branches and low units of unions in the WWF, Amalgamated Engineering Union, Miners' Federation and Australian Railways Union. In early 1933 the phenomenon was repeated in the Engine Drivers' and Firemen's, Tramways and Textile Workers' unions in Victoria. Then Moss of the MMM won the presidency of the Victorian Federated Engine Drivers' and Firemen's Association and the militant candidates were narrowly beaten in the Amalgamated Engineering Union in NSW. This started a rush of MMM successes. J. Bergin won the presidency and W. Smith the vice-presidency of the Victorian Tramways executive. The majority of the other positions was won by the MMM candidates. An MMM candidate then won the secretaryship of the Sydney branch of the WWF. In 1934, apart from winning the Miners' Federation, the MMM also captured five positions on the Victorian Miners' executive, including the presidency, which went to Idriss Williams. Later the Leather and Tanners Union and the Lithgow branch of the Federated Engine Drivers' and Firemen's Association were won by the MMM and Finney was elected to the Australian Council of Tramways. One position was won on the
Amalgamated Engineering Union executive in early 1935. Tom Payne was elected to the Victorian Trades Hall Council in the same year.9

The net implication of this incomplete list of successes was that, small though the MMM might be, it controlled a large number of key posts in 1935. In 1936 it added the key secretaryships of the Federated Ironworkers' and Sheetmetal Workers' and in 1937 its successors controlled the WWF, on the basis of lesser gains made before 1935.10

The purpose of this trade union control was first to win the workers' support for communist trade union tactics and secondly to win their support for communism. Finally, their transmission left, via the MMM, was intended to carry them into the ranks of the CPA.

It is almost impossible to determine how successful each of these three aims were. The first was manifestly successful. In the Miners' Federation, which numbered about 14,000 workers in 1934 (figures vary), Orr and Nelson received about 70% of the votes in the election of that year, indicating a wide endorsement for their policies, those of the MMM. In the Wonthaggi elections of 1934 the MMM candidates received about 60% of the votes.11

There is little way of telling what proportion of unionists supported communism at elections without being party members.
members, but voting in the coalmining areas tended to be higher for communist candidates than elsewhere.

How many of these unionists joined the CPA as a result of contact with the MMM or control of their union by communists is also impossible to discover. But at Wonthaggi, of the 400 new members who joined the MMM after the success of the strike there in 1934, 40 joined the CPA, i.e. 10%.\(^{12}\) This is insufficient evidence to make any generalisation about what proportion went into the CPA via the "transmission belt", but evidently some miners did. They may have also done so elsewhere.

In conclusion, by 1935 the CPA 'front' Militant Minority Movement had met remarkable success in the unions of eastern Australia. It controlled no unions in 1928; in 1937 it controlled four large militant unions at federal level and held many posts in others at state and branch level.\(^ {13}\)

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\(^{12}\) *Communist International*, 20/3/1935, p265.

\(^{13}\) Sharkey listed the following unions as, in some way, under communist influence in 1935: Australian Railways Union, Miners', Leather and Tanners, Seamen's, Ironworkers', Tramways and Engineers', *Inprecorr*, 10/10/1935, p1303 ff.
CHAPTER 10

THE "FRONT" ORGANISATION

The main aim of all communist policies was to win sufficient support to carry out revolution. The CPA tried various ways of winning support. It tried direct methods of recruiting, it tried working through the trade unions and finally it tried the "front" organisations, known to communists as fraternals.

The origin of the "front" organisation can be traced back to 1902 when, with the publication of Lenin's pamphlet What is to be Done?, there was a new development in the practical application of Marxism. Hitherto many of the chief propagators of Marxism, among whom were Karl Kautsky, Eduard Bernstein, Antonio Labriola and G. Plekanov, had understood that marxist theories would express themselves, practically, in an evolutionary fashion. They believed that the industrial proletariat would become aware as it evolved of the truths of marxism, would create its own organs to fight for a change in the social structure and as it grew into the preponderant class in society, some believed that it would vote the old way of life out of existence and put the proletariat in control of the means of production. Kautsky

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1 See G. Plekanov, The Development of the Monist View of History, (Moscow, 1956); A. Labriola, La Concezione materialistica della storia, (Bari, 1953); for Bernstein see V. Lenin, What is to be Done?, (Moscow, 1952), p12 ff.
appears to have believed this even late in his life. Lenin's
What is to be Done? introduced the notion that the marxist
teachings would be known first to a small élite of revolut-
ionaries who would bring them to the working class from
"above". He rejected the spontaneous awareness theory of the
Germans and indeed of the "father" of Russian marxism, Plekanov. There was, of course, a reason for this new dep-
arture; in Europe huge mass workers' parties which were
marxist already existed but in Russia the theories of Marx
were known only to a limited revolutionary intelligentsia. So it was obviously the task of these revolutionaries to
enlighten the workers, to make contact with the masses and
to bring them into the revolutionary movement. How was this
to be done? First, Lenin proposed a direct method, a
propaganda newspaper, and recruiting select men to swell the
élite group. Then in 1917 the bolsheviks used the already
existing workers' organisations, the All-Russian Congress
of Soviets and the co-operatives set up by other political
progressives to meet the mass and propagandise. This habit
of meeting the workers in a "half-way" house was exalted to
a system by Stalin. In his Problems of Leninism (1926) he
listed the obvious "half-way" houses in Russia, the trade
unions, soviets, co-operatives and youth leagues. These

3 V. Lenin, What is to be Done?, op. cit., p184 ff, indicates this.
organs were to act as a "transmission belt" carrying the masses to communism. Party members were to influence their members to accept voluntarily the CPSU(B) political guidance. The advantages of using a "half-way" house instead of bypassing it were obvious. First, it already existed as an organised labour body, secondly, both the communists and the non-communists could work harmoniously on a common ground for the working class and against common enemies, thirdly, the communists could discover fellow spirits and recruit them, and finally, communists could spread their teachings among non-communist members.

In Anglo-Saxon countries this theory of Lenin was of the greatest importance, as in the USA, Great Britain and Australia the communist parties formed after the First World War were small groups of revolutionaries without much influence in the mass of the proletariat. Naturally they desired to win this mass to their cause. So, like the Russian bolsheviks, they went to the already existing "half-way" houses to make contact with the mass. Part III of this thesis discussed how they went into the unions in Australia. There were not nearly enough ready-made organs. The obvious conclusion to be drawn from this fact was the need to create new ones where communists and non-communists could work together for a common end, and the communists could work on the non-communists. In Australia few of these new organisations

6 Ibid, p104.
appeared between 1921-28 as this was the united front period when the CPA worked together with the ALP and possibly regarded the mass following of the latter as its own by proxy. In 1928, however, the "social fascist" period began and the CPA broke off its united front with the ALP, dubbing that party the worst enemy of the working class. Now the CPA found itself with a dearth of followers. It promptly went to the "half-way" houses of the workers to get some followers, creating special "non-party" bodies like the MMM to work in the trade unions and elsewhere. It also created what has become known as the "front" organisation, that is, a specially floated "half-way" house, which because of its ostensible aims allowed men of all opinions to work together while, in fact, implementing communist policy without apparent CPA control and also enabling converts to be made more easily than with a direct approach. A "front" might also prove a useful cover if the CPA was declared illegal. Stalin had stated in relation to the Russian "transmission belts" that they were not to be controlled by the CPSU(B)\(^7\) but as that party already controlled the country it did not matter. The "transmission belts" were effectively controlled by the CPSU(B). The CPA claimed that the Australian "fronts" were "non-party", but in 1926 the Comintern had given quite clear instructions on the subordination of these new bodies to the political party. O. Kuusinen instructed the various

\(^7\) Ibid, p104.
parties to build a "whole solar system" of these organisations, nominally independent but controlled by the party, to serve as a bridge to the masses. The CPA certainly issued party members with elaborate instructions on how to work in these bodies and how to form them without making them obviously party bodies. It emphasised that the object was not to win control of executive positions but to win the confidence of the members. By the early 1930s the CPA had launched the Militant Minority Movement, the Unemployed Workers' Movement, the Friends of the Soviet Union, which "undertakes to prepare the workers for the defence of the Soviet Union and to counteract the misleading propaganda of the capitalist press and other agencies", the League against Imperialism/Movement against War and Fascism, the International Class War Prisoners' Aid, later the International Labor Defence (a legal service for workers), the Workers' International Relief, which supplied help of various sorts to strikers, and the Workers' Defence Corps, a sort of unofficial workers' militia. There were also lesser known returned soldiers' leagues and organs such as the United Front against Fascism, Hands off India Committee and so on which incorporated into other "fronts" later. (E.g. the United Front against Fascism became part of the International Labor Defence). These organisations were known by their initials: MMM, UWM, FOSU, LAI, MAWAF,

8 Quoted in H. Pelling, op. cit., p38.
9 Original copy held in Mitchell Library, Sydney.
ILD and so on. Some were very successful.

Their launching proved quite a delicate business as they had to be started by the CPA without appearing controlled by it. First, the party rolls were combed for the names of those with decorations or degrees. J.N. Rawling, who was responsible for the launching of the LAI, wrote, "Jack Simpson of the Central Committee emerged as ex-Sergeant Major, with a DCM and an MM, there was Dr. O'Day and the inevitable Katherine Susannah Pritchard". Then prominent clergymen or members of parliament would be approached to lend their names to the organisation. Rawling says that only those who would accept the "Moscow outlook" were approached. In fact, any sympathiser with the published aims of the organisation was approached. Rawling himself mentions approaching Bishop E. Burgman to join the MAWAF. The bishop, after initial qualms, agreed. For, although the aims of each organisation might correspond with those of the Comintern or the USSR, they were often aims to which any idealist could subscribe. The Australian press often said that the participants were "gullible", but this was not always so.


13 I have an excerpt from a letter of Bishop Burgman, supplied
Sometimes men like Maurice Blackburn or Arthur Rae, who were often on the executives of such "front" organisations, would be strong defenders of communist idealism.

When well known names had been collected as the executive, on which there was usually a small minority of communists, a circular letter would be sent out to working class and allied organisations inviting them to send delegates to the first conference or inaugural meeting. With such names as K.S. Pritchard, Dr. A. Rivett, Bishop Burgman, A. Rae, E. Ward, J.B. Steel, and so on on the letterhead, the support of many non-communists was quickly acquired. The names like those of J.N. Rawling, E.C. Tripp and E.M. Higgins of the CPA went almost unnoticed beside these prominent idealists also listed on the letterheads.

With well known men on the executive, and usually in the majority, it is surprising that the CPA managed to retain control of these bodies. In some cases it did not but in most it did without resorting to any underhand or undemocratic methods. First, the "names" were nearly all sympathisers with the general aims of the body. Then, the key positions of a full-time nature, such as secretary and treasurer, were usually in communist hands. At meetings of the executive the CPA fraction would nearly always be there, often forming by Rev. H. Oakes, which reads: "With regard to the UWM and the Communists we knew that the Comms were at work on any front that they could gain entrance into and use, but the clergy, so far as I know, did not fall for it. They were (or all the Anglicans) so thoroughly anti-communist that they did not get near each other".
a majority, while others only appeared occasionally.\textsuperscript{14}

The communists prepared their proposals beforehand, worked as a disciplined body, and seldom had them rejected.\textsuperscript{15} Sometimes, of course CPA members formed the bulk of the executive.\textsuperscript{16} So on the whole the communists kept control.

J.N. Rawling asserts that they misused this control sometimes, appropriating the "front's" funds for party use. There is no evidence for this assertion though it is possible that communist members, acting as individuals, misused such funds. There is one documented case of such misuse, that of E.C. Tripp of the FOSU. He was rapidly removed by the party, not the FOSU, showing that the CPA kept a careful control over its own members in such organisations. The Workers' Weekly published this account of Tripp's misdeeds and his subsequent removal. The newspaper reported that Tripp's removal was ordered after investigation into the activities of Tripp and B. Palley and after an audit was made of the FOSU books which revealed that a portion of the fund collected by a central campaign committee to send a delegation to the Soviet Union had been used to equip the new Sydney premises of the FOSU. The step taken by the CPA was necessary to

\textsuperscript{14} J.N. Rawling, \textit{Quadrant}, \textit{op. cit.}, p28; Kavanagh's diary describes the pre-meeting CPA fraction meetings.

\textsuperscript{15} J.N. Rawling, \textit{The Communist Party of Australia 1930-45}, \textit{op. cit.}, p5.

\textsuperscript{16} \textit{Ibid}, p6.
"protect the interests of the working class", Tripp, B. Weiner and Palley had, it was said, formed a clique leadership of the FOSU.

Comrade Tripp accepted the ruling of the Party and withdrew from the secretaryship of the FOSU. This does not mean that the Communist Party has intervened bureaucratically in the affairs of the FOSU. It means that the Party is exercising its right to control the activities of its members especially those holding responsible class positions before the working class.17

Naturally those who opposed communism dubbed the organisations "fronts" behind which the CPA lurked. The government penalised them with postal bans and raided their offices. R. Menzies said in the House of Representatives on 14 November 1934: "I say that this congress against war and fascism [which was organised by the MAWAF] was directly and intimately associated with the Communist movement".18 R. Casey and the Minister for the Interior, Harrison, backed him up. The CPA denied that the fronts were communist organisations, and so did the fronts themselves.19 The communists were perfectly correct in a juridical sense, but they did intend to use these organisations for their own purposes, as they occasionally admitted themselves.

The MMM will become, under the control of the CP, an auxiliary to it, and a means whereby the Party can get revolutionary policies adopted by large sections of the workers.20

17 Workers' Weekly, 4/8/1933.
19 Soviets Today, February 1933.
20 Workers' Weekly, 17/1/1930.
Another feature of the UWM is that it will, under the leadership of the Communist Party, be brought into opposition against the capitalist Labor government and municipal councils.21

The history of two of these "fronts" will be told to illustrate the degree to which they followed the general pattern described in this chapter and to which they achieved party aims.

21 Ibid, 27/6/1930.
CHAPTER 11

TWO CASE STUDIES

1. The League Against Imperialism and Movement Against War and Fascism.

The League against Imperialism was formed in Brussels in February 1927 with Willi Muenzenberg as its secretary-general. Muenzenberg has been described as the patron saint of the "fellow traveller" and to him R. Carew Hunt attributes the success and importance the "front" organisation had in communist history. The new organisation was promptly denounced by the Socialist International as "nothing but a communist manoeuvre". Though its statutes were designed to disguise this reality and make it acceptable to all anti-imperialists, raids made by the German police headquarters indeed indicated that its directives did come from the Comintern, that the proposals of non-communists on its governing body were invariably sidetracked, and that it ran an elaborate espionage apparatus in Germany. In 1933, after the Nazis came to power, the headquarters were shifted from Berlin to Paris, where it continued to work until abolished after the Comintern Seventh World Congress of 1935.¹ So, long before the body was established in Australia it had international ramifications and was controlled by communists. In a garbled form some

Australians realised this.  

It was established in Australia in 1930. At the first Plenum of the CC CPA in June 1930 a resolution was passed called "Defend the Indian Revolution" and the party demanded that Hands off India Committees be set up. A conference was organised for June at which a national Hands off India committee of communists, "fellow travellers", ALP executive members and the following personalities: Senator Arthur Rae, Rev. C.W. Chandler, J.B. Steel, L. Easton, and Alderman E. Ward, was created. The Committee was at this stage concerned primarily with resistance "to plans for Australian intervention in aid of the imperialists in their war on India". The first Congress of the Committee, held on 23 July 1930 was a failure. Sixty eight delegates resigned. Some were not interested in India and others refused to support Indian capitalists against British capitalists. So at the second delegate conference on 6 August it was decided to change the Hands off India Committee into the Australian League against Imperialism (LAI). Eight extra committee members were elected to the committee and J.B. Steel (ALP) and E.M. Higgins (CPA) were elected provisional president and secretary respectively.  

At this August conference there were 58 delegates. All were certainly not communists but the constitution adopted

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2 J. Lang, *Communism in Australia*, (Sydney, n.d.) p94.
began with an assertion that the Australian LAI adhered to the decisions of the World Congress of the LAI and worked in association with the central body. The central body was controlled by the Comintern. Apart from the general anti-imperialist programme, the specific tasks of the Australian section were to unite the working class and all individuals who were genuinely against imperialism; to undertake continuous anti-imperialist propaganda, especially to arouse the Australian working class to a realisation of its common interest with the working class and national revolutionary movements of colonial countries; to organise meetings, demonstration and special campaigns in connection with imperialism; to publish a journal and to make contact with other anti-imperialist groups, especially in the Pacific. The National Committee reserved the right to expel the disloyal and an organisational hierarchy on communist lines was set up; section, district committee, state committee, and national committee. The national conference met once a year and elected a committee of 15-20. Fees were five shillings a year for employed persons.4

Despite the prominent people on the committee, some thought that there was too much communist influence from the LAI's formation. Actually there were only nine communists out of 37 members on the first over-large committee. The CPA defended its prominence on the ground that the organisation was of special importance to it. Even so, the Rev. C.

4 LAI Draft Constitution, Rawling Coll, ANU Archives.
Chandler resigned because of communist influence and began a one man campaign against the LAI.

The LAI started to publish the journal *World Survey* and issued speakers notes on the "Chinese Revolution" and a regular information bulletin, but it only limped along despite claims that it was forming local sections and groups. At the first delegate conference on 25 March 1931, held at 192 Castlereagh Street, Sydney, the chairman said that there had been a calamitous shortage of cash and failure to establish "live" contacts with the Australian "empire", New Guinea. At the Sydney District LAI conference of the same year it was stated that the August demonstration against imperialism had indicated weaknesses in the Sydney organisation. Members had worked but not as LAI members. "The League itself was hardly to be seen." Locals at Ryde, Surry Hills, Glebe and Paddington had all faded out. There was little finance and affiliated organisations had allowed their affiliations to lapse. The LAI lantern slide shows had been no match for an ALP ban on ALP members joining the LAI, introduced in 1930, and the Rev. Chandler's public attacks.

This report only bore out J.B. Miles' grumble that the "...fraternal organisations do not grow, it is questionable

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5 *Workers' Weekly*, 19/9/1930.

6 Minutes of the LAI Sydney District Conference 10/12/1931, Rawling Coll. There were 1,500 in the Sydney anti-imperialist procession but it was a complete failure elsewhere, *SMH*, 3/8/1931.
if any of them is larger than the Party". He blamed the failure on the extremism of communist members, on their "sectarianism". The Trotskyites and ALP "front" members were certainly regarded with hostility by the CPA members. For this the "social fascist" theory was certainly, in part, responsible. Communists acted very rigidly against those of different political beliefs, claiming, when there were differences, that their opponents were introducing politics into a non-political organisation. It was in this way that Jack Ryan, a former member of the Kavanagh group, was excluded from the "front". So in a sense the "front" was hamstrung by the very policy of leftism which prompted its introduction. The CPA could not simultaneously abuse the ALP and expect its members to join a "front" in which communists were obviously active, if not in control. The LAI therefore remained with little effect.

At the national conference of the LAI in 1932 its strength was so reduced that Higgins produced a "bogus" cable from Muenzenberg, commending the LAI, possibly with the intention of keeping it going. Indeed, the LAI had failed abysmally in the demonstrations it had organised over the PPTUS secretary's arrest, demonstrations which the

7 *Workers' Weekly*, 20/11/1931.
9 See article in *Advertiser*, 20/3/1934.
10 *Victorian Royal Commission*, op. cit., p80.
Comintern had made the central task of the LAI. It was becoming an embarrassment to the CPA, according to J.N. Rawling. It could not have been known that the fortunes of the "front" were about to change.

The Comintern was growing increasingly concerned about the development of fascism and the danger of war in Europe. So Muenzenberg arranged that Henri Barbusse organise an anti-war conference in Amsterdam in August 1932. Naturally the Comintern supported it. The conference was attended by thousands of delegates. In June 1933 another conference of the same sort in Amsterdam converted the committee of action elected there into the World Committee against War and Fascism. A new "front" had been created. A head office was established in Paris. Communist parties throughout the world had erected local movements against war in 1932 after the first conference. In Australia the LAI handled the affairs of the Movement against War which was then directing most attacks against the "French interventionists", who were the current bogeys in the USSR. In 1932 the United Front against Fascism was also formed in Australia, with a newspaper Anti Fascist. The CPA and the LAI were already dividing their attention between previous policies and new anti-fascist policies by the end of 1932. This preluded a change which became official with the success of Hitler in 1933 and the

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11 *Inprecorr*, 25/8/1932. See also *Pan Pacific Worker*, 14/12/1931, p1, for the organisation of the LAI campaign.
collapse of the German communist party. German Nazism became the worst and soon the most worrying enemy of the Comintern. The Comintern abruptly discarded its former extreme policy and tentatively proposed conciliation with Labor parties, the former "social fascists". Communists became much less sectarian and more easy to work with. On the other hand there were great numbers of idealists protesting against Hitler and fascism. These people attended the Amsterdam conference of June 1933 and represented all shades of pacifist and anti-fascist opinion. The Comintern did not protest.  

At the April 1933 conference of the LAI, the ALP's boycott emphasised the isolation of the body once again. In the same month the Comintern instructed the CPA to approach the ALP with a proposal of a united front against fascism. The LAI was obviously an anachronism from a policy point of view. This was re-emphasised when the CPA started to foster committees against war and announced an Australian Congress against war for 30 September 1933.  

It would be opportune if the LAI disappeared or was changed into something else. The CPA decided to change the LAI's name to accord with the new popular anti-war and anti-Nazi feeling. It is in this manoeuvre that the extent of communist control of the LAI becomes obvious. J.N. Rawling has given a full account, one  

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12 E.g. World Youth Congress against War and Fascism reported in Inpressort, 29/9/1933.  
13 Workers' Weekly, 14/7/1933.
which was denied by leading communist Ralph Gibson at the Victorian Royal Commission into communism.

The CPA instructed the CPA fraction in the LAI to let the name LAI die.

The only announcement to be made is one in World Survey indicating that owing to the intention of the National Committee against Imperialist War to publish a newspaper the LAI has decided to cease publication and leave a clear field for the newspaper and calls upon all supporters of the World Survey to assist the new paper. To risk all sorts of questions and having to explain about what is practically non-existent will be harmful. The LAI is in fact absorbed ...... Carefully drop the name LAI. 14

This was done by the communists in the LAI without the president, J.B. Steel, or other members even being consulted. Later the words "and Fascism" were surreptitiously attached to the name of the new "front", the Movement against War, making it the Movement against War and Fascism (MAWAF).

While the name was changed by the CPA it should not be forgotten that there was considerable anti-Nazi feeling among the Australian working class and among intellectuals. The CPA was filling a need to give organised expression to this hostility towards fascism and the war it could bring. It had been organising this opinion since April 1933.

At the April 1933 conference the LAI had established a provisional Anti-War Committee after considerable activity in which it advertised in 150 country newspapers and sent out a thousand letters, as well as publishing 150,000 War Looms.

14 J.N. Rawling, Quadrant, op. cit., p30.
pamphlets, 20,000 of which went to Victoria and 10,000 each to South Australia and Queensland. The War Loom pamphlets stated the Australian war preparations were evident in the laying down of the Darwin Airport and in the development of the Lithgow small arms factory. They asserted that the Pacific would be the main battlefield in the next war and suggested that the trade unions stop the transportation of munitions. The pamphlets, together with a film called the "First World War" which was designed to "shock into consciousness", had the hoped for effect of organising the anti-war sentiments of the country. 750 people attended the first conference of the Movement against War. Many unions were represented, E.A. Chapman, a prominent Australian Railways Union official being in the chair. Nugent of the CPA emphasised the new liberalism of the CPA by making quite clear that the anti-war movement was wide enough to incorporate all sections of the community, intellectuals, artists, all religious and similar organisations. Every section of the community was invited to come into the organisation to work against war. The main task "at present" was to organise to prevent the transport of munitions to the scene of war. 15 A manifesto was issued, and reissued at the first National Congress against War in September 1933. It said that despite the fact that the congress delegates had ideological

15 Report of the NSW conference against War, 8 April 1933, Rawling Coll, ANU Archives.
and political differences they claimed that capitalism was responsible for war; they claimed that the big newspapers were silent through "servility or love of gain". The Congress pointed out that the Soviet Union had a steadfast peace policy and it repudiated "the legend of Red Imperialism". The Congress opposed the League of Nations. 16

The MAWAF spread rapidly, despite the obvious communist influence at the first National Congress. By the end of 1933 Victoria had a Council against War and a newspaper War. A liaison was rapidly built up with other "fronts". 17 In all other states similar movements were built up, though the South Australian movement refused for a long time to affiliate with the national body. Throughout Australia journals and newspapers were printed agitating against war. NSW had War, What For?, Victoria, War, Queensland Anti War News, Newtown Anti War Journal and so on, from state newspapers down to suburban 6 x 4 inch four page news sheets.

In July 1934 it was reported in the popular press that the National Anti War Movement was "being thrust very much to the forefront in Australia at the moment", that there were 52 branches in NSW and that it was quite strong in Queensland.

16 Manifesto of the All Australian Congress against War, 30 September - 2 October, 1933, Rawling Coll, ANU Archives.
17 War, December 1933, p12-13.
In fact only in Tasmania and Western Australia was it not strong. 18

The way these anti-war councils functioned on a day to day level is known, as the minutes of the NSW Council are available. The Council met about once a week. Although most office holders in NSW were communists, meetings were quite formal. Most business concerned the day-to-day needs of the organisation: approaches to bodies for money or other support, the organisation of dances and so on. Considerable dispute existed at all meetings, so they were not merely rubber stamps for pre-decided actions. The Council also used to canvass prominent people to see if they would make statements on the danger of war. As the ALP had placed the organisation under a black ban the direct approaches to that party went unanswered. The Council therefore approached the ALP at a low level, usually branch level, for support. From these minutes we know that local subscriptions of one shilling a week paid for the Council offices. All extraordinary expenses for delegates were paid for by the locals. Dances and pageants were a favourite way of raising funds. The funds were distributed in a ratio of a third each to the National Council, State Councils and locals. Because of the emphasis on these dances, the locals tended to function as social clubs and were comparatively inactive apart from this. But they paid for a flood of journals and pamphlets. Obviously

18 Argus, 31/7/1934; Advertiser, 31/7/1934.
the MAWAF had no need of CPA finance.

Some jealousy existed between the states. Victoria, especially, was very jealous of the fact that the journal *War What For?* appeared in Sydney. Indeed, the National Council forced the Victorian Council to cease the publication of *War* as it interfered with the flow of finance to the centre. The Queensland *Anti War News* was tolerated, however, and gives a good account of how a local council against war was formed.19 Members of the community were approached in a house to house canvass and caught at the door with an affiliation card. Canvassers concentrated on the leading members of the community and when they were agreeable made them members of the provisional council. The best hall in the district was hired for the inaugural meeting. Dances were held to attract youth to the movement. Help of various sorts was obtained from the State Council. In this way a nucleus was collected and a local established.20

Though many of these locals met the same financial difficulties as the central bodies they kept going. The circulation of their journals was numbered in thousands. The National Congress of 1933 had set the pace with its 546 delegates from 340 organisations and the movement remained strong in Eastern Australia.21 Its social composition

19 *Anti War News*, 20/1/1934.
20 Ibid, 12/10/1934.
21 Inprecoll, 15/6/1934.
remained varied, as elsewhere in the world.\textsuperscript{22} The Victorian State Conference of 1934 was attended, for example, by Professor Greenwood, Dr. Alan Finger, Dr. Nichols and other intellectuals, including a student local from Melbourne University.\textsuperscript{23}

In June 1934 the MAWAF intensified its activity, after similar intensification by the World Committee of the MAWAF. Mrs. Moroney of the CPA was despatched to the women's conference of the organisation in Paris in August and in the middle of the year the movement started to grow where it had previously been moribund, Western Australia. The South Australian movement affiliated with the National Council after a visit by the national secretary, Nugent.\textsuperscript{24}

The factor most responsible for the growth of the organisation was the visit of Egon Kisch, the author, in late 1934. He was invited as guest speaker to the anti-war rally which the MAWAF planned for the same date as the Melbourne centenary celebrations. These celebrations were regarded as martial and chauvinistic by the CPA. The star government guest was the Duke of Gloucester, who was on a royal visit and was front-page news in the month preceding the November centenary celebration. Other important guests were Sir Maurice Hankey, Field Marshal Lord Milne and Sir John Cadman,

\textsuperscript{22} \textit{Ibid}, 17/8/1934.

\textsuperscript{23} \textit{Workers' Voice}, 10/8/1934.

\textsuperscript{24} \textit{Red Star}, 3/8/1934.
all associated with the military forces of Great Britain. Subsequently they actually did hold talks with the Australian government over defence co-ordination. The MAWAF rally was obviously planned as a challenge to the Centenary celebrations. Although it could not presume to challenge the centenary celebrations as a mass attraction, the MAWAF was sufficiently large to cause the lack of harmony so unwanted by planners of royal visits. Three thousand invitations had been sent out by the MAWAF. 25

It had not originally been intended that Kisch attend. The MAWAF had suggested to the World Committee that it send a star guest and had proposed one of the following persons, Lord Marley, president of the anti-war movement of Great Britain, Henri Barbusse, or Madame Despard, sister of Lord French. 26 Instead Kisch was sent. Kisch was a famous Austrian writer and journalist. He was at that time ranked with the writers L. Feuchwanger and T. Mann, and his name is still found in German encyclopaedias. Together with the former two writers he was co-president of the fellowship of German writers. He was sufficiently prominent to have been a leading character in a novel by Franz Werfel. He was multi-lingual and the author of scholarly works. He was actually writing about the French Revolution when the invitation to come to Australia arrived. 27

25 Workers’ Voice, 26/10/1934.
26 Kisch’s Censored Speech, What they prevented Kisch from saying. (Sydney, 28/12/1934), p6.
If this was not sufficient qualification as a speaker, then the fact that he was the sole survivor of the group in which he was arrested by the Nazis after the Reichstag trial made him eminently qualified as a speaker on war and fascism. He was an ardent and militant anti-fascist. There is some doubt whether he was at that time a communist, though he certainly was later on. He had definitely been a participant in the Austrian revolutionary movement after the First World War and was very close to communism in 1934 if not a party member. 28

Another delegate, Gerald Griffin, who was a communist, was coming from New Zealand. The fact that one was a communist and the other probably a communist, appeared to provide the government with a weapon to pull the thorn from the side of the centenary. Hitherto it had done its best to disrupt MAWAF preparations for the congress by raiding its office and by preventing it from obtaining a hall in which to hold the rally, but this had little decisive effect, as the MAWAF was used to working under such conditions. If both delegates were communists they could be excluded as undesirable aliens without much popular protest. But some members of parliament 29 denied that Kisch was a communist and he himself limited his reply to the question whether he was a communist to an equivocation. This should have warned the government that

28 Ibid.
29 e.g., Jock Garden in CPD, Vol 145, p269.
exclusion of Kisch might be seen not as a ban on communist propaganda but as a ban on free speech of an anti-fascist.

The Immigration Department had assured the MAWAF that there would be no trouble over Kisch's entry. Some time subsequent to the assurance the government decided to keep him out and thus deprive the MAWAF congress of its star attraction. Though the decision was made by E. Harrison, the Minister for the Interior, the brief was handed to R.G. Menzies, the young but able attorney general. The problem was how to keep Kisch out. It was decided that he would be a prohibited immigrant under paragraph gh of section 3 and section 7 of the Immigration Act. Paragraph gh read "Any person declared by the Minister to be, in his opinion, from information received from the Government of the United Kingdom, or any other part of the British Dominions, or from any foreign government through official or diplomatic channels, undesirable as an inhabitant of, or visitor to the Commonwealth .... [may be excluded]." Kisch had once been excluded temporarily from Great Britain and the advice was supposedly from there. As Kisch said, the government claim to have received such notice "smacked of untruth". It is doubtful if any information was sent from Great Britain. Certainly later the British Home Secretary announced in the House of Commons that the British Government had not prompted the banning of Kisch.

31 OPR, Vol 145, p256.
32 SMH, 3/12/1934.
Yet the assertion that German Nazis in Australia were responsible for the government action is hardly credible, although they were perhaps listened to by Menzies and/or Harrison. 33

When Kisch arrived in Fremantle he was informed that he could not land. The WA branch of the MAWAF held the first of the protest meetings against the ban on his entry in the Rechabite Hall. 34 The Kisch Reception Committees elsewhere were turned into defence committees. While the British press supported the Australian government's action, except for the Manchester Guardian which dubbed it petty, a grumble of protest started in Australia. Prominent intellectuals sent letters of protest to the government or sympathy to the victim. 35 Vance Palmer, Louis Esson, A.G. Brady and K.S. Pritchard made public declarations condemning the action of the government and Kisch also protested, trusting "the misunderstanding will soon be cleared up and so remove the deep embarrassment of my position".

A large crowd met him at Melbourne and invaded the ship when he was not allowed to land. 36 The International Labor Defence started to work for Kisch's release and probably

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33 E. Kisch, op. cit., p53 said this. See also Argus, 12/11/1934; Red Star, 9/11/1934.

34 E. Kisch, op. cit., p34; Inprecorr, 16/2/1935, p203.

36 Advertiser, 8/11/1934, reported a huge crowd expected. SMH, 14/11/1934, "representatives of every organisation which had protested" were present.
incriminated him more from the government's point of view. It made an application for an order nisi on a kidnapping charge against the Strathaird's captain. The stay in Melbourne did not last long enough for the International Labor Defence to secure his release. The ship prepared to sail with the International drowning the customary patriotic airs. Kisch, chafing at his confinement, which he regarded as unjust, added drama to the whole affair by leaping from the ship to the wharf 15-20 feet below. Though his leg was broken the police picked him up and put him on board again. The Kisch affair now began to receive considerable attention in the press, bringing the affair in the public eye. Protest grew louder. The Fellowship of Australian Writers and the Journalists Association protested and some trade unions held stop work meetings. Some ministers even preached from the pulpit against his exclusion. So, despite his absence, the MAWAF congress in Melbourne was quite successful. There were 285 delegates in attendance and the hall was crowded. Protests about the detention of various German communists were coupled with a protest about Kisch's detention, thus implying that there was a similarity. The conference reported considerable MAWAF progress and some failures. It decided

37 Argus, 14/11/1934 said that it was sprained. It was broken.

38 Workers' Weekly, 19/11/1934; Argus, 19/11/1934.

to hold a series of Kisch protest rallies. The first of these was held in Melbourne soon after. There were about 7,000 in attendance.

When Kisch arrived in Sydney on 15 November, Dr. Suzanne Abramovitch of the International Labor Defence confirmed that he had a broken leg and that he should be transferred to hospital. Kisch gave his first lecture on Australian soil sitting on a stretcher, "white with pain and emotion" on the wharf. "My leg is painful but my heart is happy to be here", he said.

The government was completely unmoved and claimed that its decision to exclude Kisch was irrevocable. In the House of Representatives in Canberra, F. Brennan accused Menzies of bungling the affair inexcusably, and this expressed the attitude of much of the ALP. Menzies replied that he believed in free speech but not for revolutionaries. He vowed that Kisch would not land. Indeed, the communists say that he had a plan to hand Kisch over to a Nazi ship in Sydney Harbour. This dispute in Canberra only brought Kisch more in the public eye and emphasised the division of opinion on whether the government was banning Communist propaganda or not allowing the expression of anti-fascist beliefs.

Griffin had been deported, but he re-entered Australia under the name of Dodds and, as Kisch was being brought to trial in Sydney as an illegal immigrant, he attended a

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40 Argus, 16/11/1934.
41 CPD, Vol 145, p254.
protest rally in Melbourne at which 4,000 were in attendance. He spoke a few words and was hustled away before the police present could arrest him. When he appeared at Wonthaggi later, it became obvious that there had been more bungling. In the words of a member of parliament, the government's action "must be regarded as ridiculous by all thinking people".

Meanwhile, Kisch was defended by C. Jollie Smith and Mr. A. Piddington. His counsel turned the trial into a farce. Kisch was asked to write something in Gaelic, which he could not do. His counsel then argued that Gaelic was not a language within the meaning of the relevant act which excluded those who could not pass tests in a foreign language. Initially sentenced to six months hard labour, on appeal Kisch's case was upheld and he was acquitted. 42 Although the case was won on technicalities, the mass protest which had been generated also may have played a part. 43 The temporarily free Kisch addressed large meetings, the attendance of which could only have been augmented by the publicity which the government's action had given both Kisch and Griffin. Yet the government prepared to bring a new summons against Kisch. He, on his own behalf, brought an action against the Sydney Morning Herald for libel and was a guest at an official

42 The Kisch case started off a series of letters from irate Scots in SMH, 7/1/1935, 8/1/1935 and accusations of anti-semitism against the Bulletin.
43 Kisch thought so and so did his defence. See Australian Labor Defender, January/February, 1935; Inprecorr, 22/6/1935, p893.
dinner of the Australian Fellowship of Writers. The members of parliament invited decided to stay away. Kisch also visited Queensland and Victoria and met considerable success on his lecture tours there. He also won his case against the Sydney Morning Herald, though there were no damages. Then came the second case against Kisch and a case against Griffin. They received prison sentences of three and six months respectively. The press itself was bemused by the government's new actions. They can only be attributed to excessively piqued vanity on the part of the officials, as Kisch's tour was nearly over anyway. Besides, he was now assuming the proportions of a popular hero. In Sydney he was feted. He met Trotskyites, Social Crediters, intellectuals and miners, gave radio talks, speeches at dinners and so on. It might have been this sort of popularity which resulted in the government's offer to allow Kisch and Griffin to leave the country. Costs for the second trial amounting to £1,524/12/8 were awarded against the Commonwealth. Kisch and Griffin left. The Austrian was farewelled by large crowds in every port of Australia at which his ship touched.

Naturally, after the tremendous limelight of the Kisch

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44 *Argus*, 23/11/1934; Banjo Patterson, C.E.W. Bean, Norman Lindsay, Mary Gilmore, E. Baume, P.R. Stephenson, Dr. MacKaness, Brunsdon Fletcher were in attendance.

45 *Workers' Weekly*, 15/2/1935.

campaign, the activities of the MAWAF for the last eight months of 1935 were a trifle anti-climactic but the Kisch campaign well and truly established the MAWAF. The target for the circulation of its journal was now 20,000 a month which is some indication of the organisation's influence after Kisch's visit. The rank and file of the ALP started to come into the MAWAF in considerable numbers. The August 1935 conference of the Victorian Council was a great success and Maurice Blackburn, an ALP member of parliament, was in the chair in defiance of his executive's directions not to associate with the MAWAF. But even now, in the united front period, the communists kept tight control of the movement. When the secretary, who was a CPA member, sent a letter to Prime Minister Lyons, supporting the application of sanctions against Italy, which he signed "yours fraternally", he was reproved by the CPA and had to explain his "error" in the October issue of War What For?

The main events which now drew the attention of the MAWAF were Mussolini's occupation of Abyssinia and the proposed application of sanctions against Italy for this aggression. The movement, like the CPA, strongly supported the application of sanctions and K.S. Pritchard and a number of others wrote pamphlets connecting Mussolini with a possible world war.47

Like the Comintern, the MAWAF was against the League of

47 War What For?, April, 1935, p207.
Nations, explained wars in terms of capitalist imperialist conflicts and still urged soldiers to turn on their officers if Australia was attacked, so the united front policy did not affect its attitudes before 1936. The leaders still asserted that it was not a communist body and growing ALP rank and file support seemed to support the claim. Members were still aware that this was not completely true. Bishop Burgman left because of MAWAF adherence to "class warefare" as late as 1935. Even so, the movement continued to spread, especially into the universities and among foreigners resident in Australia.

11. The Friends of the Soviet Union.

Another "front" which had considerable success in the years 1930-35 was the Friends of the Soviet Union (FOSU). Apparently a significant number of recruits came to the CPA via membership in this organisation.

The FOSU was originally set up in Moscow in 1927 to organise admirers of the achievements of the Soviet Union. After 1927 it rapidly spread throughout the communist and socialist world. It held regular conferences in Moscow. Finally, in 1930, after discussions between an Australian, L.P. Fox, The First World War and the Second, (Melbourne, 1935), passim.

Workers' Voice, 8/8/1935.

H. Pelling, op. cit., p66.
P. Hannett and the German FOSU it was decided that a branch would be formed in Australia.\(^2\) Hannett was not a communist but he had been a delegate to the PPTUS conference in Vladivostok in 1929 and he was a well known "fellow-traveller". So it was not actually on the initiative of the CPA that the FOSU was formed in September 1930. Its aims definitely benefited the CPA. The main object of the FOSU was to popularise the achievements of the Soviet Union and it also supplied another organisation to send delegates to CPA and "fellow-travelling" conferences.

Its sole function in the first year of its existence was to provide such delegates, as it remained moribund until late 1931. Continual exhortations that it be supported appeared in the CPA and "front" press in late 1930 and early 1931 but met with little response, and the FOSU was only able to hold its first conference in January 1932, which is an indication of the early weakness of the organisation.\(^3\) By this time it had started to produce a journal, *Soviets Today*.\(^4\) The report of the 1932 conference revealed that though the FOSU had recruited 900 nominal members in Sydney, only "a mere handful of members is active in the centre".\(^5\) Elsewhere the FOSU

\(^2\) *Pan Pacific Worker*, 1 May, 1930, p135.

\(^3\) *Workers' Weekly*, 11/9/1931.

\(^4\) The first number I have been able to find is dated December 1931. There was a November issue according to Les Barnes. See typed notes on CPA in Les Barnes Collection, ANU Archives.

\(^5\) *Workers' Weekly*, 15/1/1932.
had been a failure, although it had been established in Queensland as well as NSW.

In District 1 there were only 51 party members in the FOSU, in District 2 there were 7 and in District 3 there were 11.6 These figures showed a gross neglect by the party, which now had about 2,000 members in these Districts. On the other hand the few active members probably included most of the party members. Certainly if the other 800-odd members of the FOSU had shown any initiative they could easily have prevented CPA control of the FOSU.

At the January 1932 conference the CPA recognised that it had neglected the FOSU and proposed remedies to counteract this. Probably the most important reason for this new interest was the instructions of the Eleventh plenum of the ECCI which complained about the lack of attention paid to the FOSU throughout the communist movement. The CPA accordingly blamed FOSU failures in 1931, such as that experienced in FOSU organised demonstrations on the Russian Revolution's anniversary, on neglect by the party rather than on popular disinterest in the organisation. The CPA demanded organised fraction work and a systematic disposition of party forces in "front" work. It also emphasised the need to set up groups in industry to attract workers into the FOSU and finally, at the behest of the International Bureau of the FOSU, it stressed the need to recruit intellectuals into the organisation.7

6 Ibid.
7 Soviets Today, December, 1931, p3.
But it was probably other factors which caused an improvement in the fortunes of the FOSU in 1932, though some prominent intellectuals, among them Professor John Anderson and Professor N. Greenwood, joined after the drive began. First of all there was the journal. It was an attractive journal and interesting compared with other "front" publications. Its circulation started to rise rapidly. The FOSU held frequent dances, concerts and lectures. The Sydney branch at 114 Liverpool Street, held the following functions during one week in February: Sunday, lecture; Monday, concert; Tuesday, dance; Wednesday, lecture; Thursday, lecture; Saturday, dance. These social functions were very attractive to the young people of the depression. Not unnaturally, the FOSU grew in all Eastern state capitals, though it remained a nominal body elsewhere.

Now the FOSU started to function quite well. It propagated in favour of the Soviet Union, pointing out how much better conditions were under socialism and promulgating current Soviet policies. For example, a pamphlet called War in the Pacific said that the Sino-Japanese war was only a prelude to intervention in the Soviet Union by the capitalists. Another called Red Wheat praised Soviet collectivisation. A further pamphlet by Professor Greenwood emphasised that the Soviet Union was the only state where there was no economic

8 Ibid, February 1932, p16.
depression. "Whilst in many ways they are politically restricted, the Soviet system permits a much greater control by the masses, of the general economic and social activities, than is the case in any of the democratic countries". What persecution there was, was necessary, the pamphlet concluded. These pamphlets were more important than is apparent at first sight. The Soviet Union was proceeding with its first Five Year Plan, with all the misery and oppression that that entailed. Garbled reports of the horror of collectivisation were reaching the outside world and were being used by organisations hostile to communism to discredit the communists of their own country as well as those of the Soviet Union. In many quarters accounts of Soviet collectivisation at machine gun point and liquidation of the kulaks was not believed, especially as they emanated from bodies which were very hostile to communism. However, the Second International congress of the FOSU indicated the concern of the Comintern with the effects of such reports by stating that the task of the FOSU was to protect the Soviet Union from growing "calumnies". Australia was flooded with anti-Soviet writings, coming from individuals such as A. Grenfell-Price and organisations such as the Sane Democracy League. The FOSU pamphlets, often written by prominent people, counteracted this anti-Soviet propaganda. The FOSU pamphlet praised with faint damning

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10 *Inprecorr*, 13/2/1930, passim.
and this was usually convincing where the CPA "hard-sell" denial that anything at all was wrong with the Soviet Union met raised eyebrows. It was a clever move to have the FOSU appear to present the middle of the way account and thus implicitly discredit the "extremists" on the right. Actually, as recent scholarship and Soviet revelations have indicated, the anti-Soviet pamphlets were generally a great deal more accurate in their reportage of events in the Soviet Union than, for example, Professor Greenwood's pamphlet. On the other hand they were completely wrong in their auguries that the Soviet Union would collapse as a result of Stalin's policies. The moral question of whether the ends justify the means will always remain open.

Another function of the FOSU was to organise visits to the Soviet Union. The first delegation went in 1931 but it was rather badly supported. The second was despatched in 1932 and thereafter delegations were sent each year. The purpose of these delegations was to demonstrate the determined opposition in Australia to an "imperialist attack on the Soviet workers' country". The money for these delegations, and it was frequently over £100 per person, was raised by appeals to readers of Soviets Today and donations by trade unionists. Usually delegates were from militant organisations. In 1932 the Australian Railways Union sent three, the Carpenters' Union, which had a regular page in the Red Leader, sent one, the Textile workers' union sent one and the Militant Women's Movement of the CPA sent a delegate. There
does not ever seem to have been great difficulty in raising finance for such delegations. The delegates added their voices to the propaganda in favour of the Soviet Union on their return by giving lecture tours.\textsuperscript{11}

One result of all this activity was an increase in the size of the FOSU in 1932 and 1933, though there was a slight setback in 1932. In mid-1932 the size of the support for the FOSU rather than the extent of its membership can be gauged from the fact that crowds of 1,000 in Sydney and 2,000 in Melbourne saw the 1932 delegation to the Soviet Union off on its voyage.\textsuperscript{12} The extent of the membership can be gathered from the fact that Victoria was aiming at 1,000 members by July. Membership was certainly less than a thousand here and probably less than that in Sydney too. An estimate of 1,500 overall does not seem unfair, given the inactivity of the FOSU outside the eastern states and the fact that although its membership was rising rapidly it was barely more than 2,000 in late 1932. (see below) The organisation was very active. In Sydney by mid-1932 locals had been formed at Morts Dock, Wyangala Dam, Surry Hills, Paddington, Darlinghurst and Annandale. Further branches were proposed for the South Coast of the state. Growth was especially large on the coalfields, where E.C. Tripp had given a series of successful

\textsuperscript{11} Soviets Today, October 1932, p15; September 1932, p9.
\textsuperscript{12} Ibid, April 1932.
lantern slide lectures. In Queensland lectures were being held regularly in Brisbane, Toowoomba and Ipswich, and slow but steady progress was being made in Adelaide and Launceston.

FOSU activities were proliferating, too. Two special committees were set up. There was an anti-war campaign committee¹³ and a committee to arrange meetings in competition with the New Guard. High expenditure despite voluntary labour also indicated considerable activity.¹⁴

At the end of the year the FOSU showed further gains. Circulation of Soviets Today had reached 12,500 monthly by December, whereas it had had a circulation of less than 9,000 in October. The increase in members in December was 287 and in January 1933, 142. Membership reached 2,073 in February. In January 1933 the FOSU held 80 lectures in Melbourne and 45 in Sydney. In all other states there were weekly lectures.

Each District held a conference in the early months of 1933 in preparation for the first Australian FOSU conference, which would lay down policies for and combat weaknesses in the organisation.

This rate of growth was despite setbacks in 1932. In NSW the ALP had imposed a "black" ban in January 1932 on all supposed "front" organisations, including the FOSU.¹⁵ This move had been copied by the ALP in other states as well.

¹³ Ibid, June, 1932, p12.
¹⁴ Ibid, April, 1932. Expenditure in the first three months of 1932 had been £694/8/2.
¹⁵ SMH, 20/1/1932.
As the ban had little immediate effect on the ALP FOSU members, the ALP threatened the expulsion of those of its members who continued to associate with "fronts". ALP members were thus prevented from joining the FOSU.

Other sanctions were stepped up against the FOSU. Miss Beatrice Taylor of the 1932 FOSU delegation to the Soviet Union was dismissed by the Department of Education from her teaching post. The FOSU was quite strong by this time and large protest meetings together with the ALP contributed to the reinstatement of Miss Taylor by the Department. The FOSU was forbidden the right to speak publicly in Victoria. It defied the ban and in Melbourne the 1932 Russian Revolution celebrations were attended by more than a thousand people. Police interference made them a fiasco in Sydney.

By the Australian conference of 1933 the FOSU had become quite a strong organisation and it would have been a useful asset to the CPA if the party could completely control it. The activities in which it was engaged are no proof that the CPA controlled it. Pro-Soviet literature is not written only by communist dupes - it would be wrong to describe John Anderson as the dupe of anybody. Indeed, in 1932 and 1933 the FOSU had tended to go its own way and had been neglected by the communists, just as it had been in 1930-1. It had become a series of "club organisations" and was not the mass propaganda machine that the CPA desired. It was


17 Tripp wrote a letter to the *Workers' Weekly* to this effect. *Workers' Weekly*, 3/3/1933.
also too "bourgeois", having little contact with the working class and working class youth. The fact that it had become a series of "club" organisations had led to failure in March 1933 to send a delegation to the Soviet Union. Apart from general apathy, the main reason for the lack of party control was the fact that the FOSU had a rebellious national secretary, E. C. Tripp, who was also technically leader of the CPA fraction in the organisation. The frequent accusations that the FOSU was communist controlled, which were the basis for the ALP ban and police raids on FOSU premises, were in fact unjustified before late 1933. Communists certainly formed only a small percentage of the membership in early 1933. Three-quarters of the FOSU belonged to no political party and 4% to the ALP; the residue, some 18%, might have been CPA members. As has been seen, communist control did not depend on communists having a majority of the membership but on good fraction work and control of key positions. The national secretary, Tripp, was certainly a communist and seems

18 Only in Melbourne was there a youth group in February 1933. It had 134 members. For communists youth are those too young to join the CPA.

19 J.N. Rawling tells this story in The Communist Party of Australia 1930-45, op. cit., p7. "The Party was always in need of funds. It could never get enough. Here was a source. One Monday morning, the usual time for accounting and banking, while the officials were making up the tally, preparatory to banking, the Chairman of the Party Central Control Commission (roughly equivalent on a smaller scale to the GPU or Gestapo) walked in, opened a bag he was carrying, swept everything on the table in it and walked out - after telling the FOSU officials, all Party members, to report to the CCC for disciplinary action. The Secretary, E.C. Tripp, had resisted attempts by the Party to have some of the FOSU [money] passed over to it."
to have ruled the FOSU from 1931 until August 1933, when he
was removed by the CPA for misuse of funds. Together with
two other communists, B. Weiner and B. Palley, he ran the
FOSU. But there was little fraction work and the CPA could
not control him. Tripp had been a supporter of Kavanagh and
was quite moderate in his attitudes. He was content to let
the FOSU run itself. The result was a very uncommunist
laxness in the organisation. State branches could not be
controlled by the centre\(^{20}\) and fraction work was less than
in other "fronts". It was at the 1933 conference that the
CPA did its best to gain control of the FOSU and correct the
"errors" of the Tripp period of control. The conference was
actually rather small, as delegates from Queensland, Tasmania
and Western Australia did not attend. At the conference a
clear definition of FOSU aims settled any dispute about the
nature of the FOSU, in favour of the party view.

The central task of the FOSU is the steady and
systematic popularisation of the socialist construc-
tion in the Soviet Union. Our entire work must
be for the purpose of drawing in the widest circle
of workers, employees, farmers and intellectuals,
aquainted with the tremendous achievements of the
working class rule in the Soviet Union and to
mobilise all really sympathising masses into a real
proletarian mass organisation for the defence of the
Soviet Union.

\(^{19}\) (cont.)

Rawling cites no authority and certainly not all officials
were CPA members so the story is unverifiable. Corrobora-
tion for it was not found anywhere else by the writer.

\(^{20}\) \textit{Workers' Weekly}, 21/4/1933 reports that the Brisbane branch
did not attend the conference and was censured. \textit{Red Leader},
8/6/1934 reported that the WA FOSU secretary had been
expelled for opposing the CPA over FOSU matters.
The "bourgeois" nature of the FOSU was also implicitly condemned by the demand that factory and local groups be increased in a drive for a membership of 7,500 and a circulation of 25,000 for the journal. Committees for agitation and propaganda were to be established in all units. Films, radio and exhibitions should be used to spread propaganda and new methods should be used to attract workers, farmers and intellectuals into the FOSU. The organisation of the FOSU was altered to create a National Bureau of 25 members, on which several intellectuals and prominent trade union officials sat. One position each was reserved for the State nominees, who were nearly always communists.

In August 1933 the party capped its redirection of the FOSU achieved at the 1933 conference with the removal of Tripp and the appointment of CPA member Sam Aarons as national secretary. Aarons was a "safe" man. If anything, the party probably made the FOSU too communist as Inkpin, the international secretary of the FOSU, rebuked the Australian FOSU soon after Tripp's removal for producing pamphlets on Leninist theory.

The commotion caused by Tripp's removal caused a short setback, marked by a fall in magazine sales, but this was soon overcome. By 1934 the organisation was growing once more in all states - it increasingly stressed that its

22 Ibid.
23 Ibid, November 1933, p15.
objects were those to which "any liberal minded person may subscribe...", even though the CPA fraction was now more in control, though not completely so, preferring to let the FOSU run itself. The party still periodically rebuked the FOSU fraction. The 1934 delegation was the most successful yet, although two delegates, W.A. Smith and W.McKissock, were not reinstated in their employment on their return. By the end of 1934 party fortunes were themselves beginning to improve and this naturally had side effects on the FOSU in the form of more trade union support and support from other "fronts." Large rallies were held throughout the year in various capitals and by the final quarter of 1935 it was claimed that Soviets Today had a circulation of 20,000. This was achieved despite a government postal ban on the magazine, imposed in April 1935, and a court case against the FOSU pending under the Crimes Act. At the end of 1935 the organisation held a conference to demonstrate friendship to the Soviet Union at which 500 delegates were present. This was a climax to the previous five years' work.

24 Workers' Weekly, 4/5/1934.

25 The delegation was S. Aarons (FOSU), W. Smith (Vice President, Victorian Tramways Union), W. McKissock (Australian Railways Union), J. Goldsmith (Wonthaggi miners), B. Scott (Sydney WWF), J. Shakespeare (NSW coalminers), Jim Healy (Mackay miners ?watersiders), V. Daddow (North Queensland railways), Advertiser, 30/3/1934.

26 Soviets Today, November, 1935.
Conclusions.

Besides the FOSU and the MAWAF the only "front" which was a success as a "mass" organisation before 1935 was the Unemployed Workers' Movement. It was in fact the largest of the "fronts" of 1928-35 but after 1935 it declined in size and importance due to the fall in unemployment, while the FOSU and the MAWAF, under various names, thrived. The other "fronts" were either still-born like the Workers' Defence Corps, the Educational Workers' League and the Returned Soldiers' League because they were inappropriate or because there were already well-established organisations for teachers or soldiers, or they were amalgamated into other "fronts" like the United Front against Fascism and the International Class War Prisoners' Aid, which became the International Labor Defence, or, like the International Labor Defence itself, were changed from "mass" organisations into specialist agencies with a small but effective membership. In all three cases, given the purpose of "front" organisations already described, they must be regarded as failures.

However, the MAWAF, the FOSU and the UWM were manifestly successful in providing mass support for communist policies. Though their membership may have overlapped it was imposing

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28 J. Kavanagh, Diary, BS; SMH, 28/6/1932.

in size. The UWM papers circulated among 60,000 unemployed and those of the other two "fronts" reached a combined maximum, as has been seen, of almost 40,000 by 1935. Throughout this mass of readers was disseminated the communist view (more or less) of the cause of unemployment, the nature of war, and the truth about the Soviet Union.

It is impossible to calculate with any precision how many of the members of these organisations came into the CPA as a result of propaganda and persuasion brought to bear on them by communist fellow members of these organisations. It would not be too hazardous to say that the CPA won many new recruits and "fellow-travellers", especially from the UWM where it concentrated most of its members' activity.30 About half the CPA recruits in 1929-35 were unemployed when they joined which suggests that there was a large influx via the UWM. In the case of the FOSU the exact numbers carried on the "transmission belt" into the CPA are also difficult to assess but some definitely joined the CPA. Audrey Blake says she went into the CPA via membership in the FOSU, Ralph Gibson says the same31, so does Noel Counihan and G. O'Day.32 Later all were leaders in the Victorian CPA branch. On the whole all three "fronts" seemed to have served their purpose - that of winning new CPA members as well as spreading CPA

30 Workers' Weekly, 15/1/1932.
31 Guardian, 17/6/1939.
32 Ibid, 30/10/1938.
doctrine.

On the other hand, though the communists usually kept control of all three organisations this control was usually maintained by good organisation and not by undemocratic methods. Certainly in the case of the MAWAF, where the executive even contained a majority of communists, the Australian government found it difficult to achieve a wide consensus that its speakers should be banned as they were communists speaking for a communist organisation.

The complicated juridical relationship of the CPA and the "fronts" left the political party in the enviable position of being able, on the one hand, to say to the Comintern that it exercised decisive influence over the unemployed in Victoria and NSW, and on the other to avoid the hostility which the word "communist" could arouse by presenting the UWM as an organisation independent of the CPA when it wished to establish that some policy or other had popular support. But, it must be remembered that this did not in fact make the members of these "fronts" dupes or "gullible". Large numbers knew of the ambivalent position of the CPA but, even so, were prepared to work in the "fronts" because they provided avenues of protest about real social evils.

33 For UWM see Report of Unemployed and Employed Conference, 14/2/1932, Rawling Coll, ANU Archives.

34 Inprecorr, 10/10/1935, p1304.
PART V
CHAPTER 12

CONCLUSIONS.

This thesis set out to discover what were the policies and organisation of the CPA between 1920 and 1935, and whether, through their inappropriateness, they contributed to the relative failure of the CPA to win support. Before reaching any conclusions about these things, it must be pointed out that the CPA was quite strong and had won considerable support by 1935, especially in the unions and the "fronts". So the policy and organisation could only have had a retarding effect on party growth and were obviously not the most important factors determining the rate of party growth. It would appear from the varying rates of growth in the twenties and thirties that economic conditions were far more important. These two points must be borne in mind when reading the following conclusions.

The history of the CPA, as told in this thesis, is first the history of the convergence of two traditions of socialist activity, the Russian and the Australian. Both had been evolved in response to the peculiar social, economic and political conditions of their country of origin, long before the Communist Party of Australia was formed. The history is, secondly, the gradual supplanting of the Australian tradition in policy and organisation by the Russian tradition in the CPA. This is a process which took over ten years and was marked by continual clashes between supporters of the two
traditions, which were almost diametrically opposite in their views of how socialism could and should be achieved. Thirdly, the history of the CPA after 1930 is the history of a party working in an environment totally different from that for which the alien Russian tradition it had adopted was intended. Over all, it is the history of the supplanting of appropriate policies by inappropriate policies, but it is not the history of the supplanting of appropriate organisation by inappropriate organisation.

The two traditions actually converged at the Third Congress of the Communist International in 1921. By that time the CPSU(B), which represented the Russian socialist tradition, a tradition so peculiar and individual that it had not only been rejected but had been condemned by socialists elsewhere, had ensured that the Comintern made as a condition of membership the adoption of the Russian beliefs about how socialism would be introduced. So the policy demanded from all communist parties was one of fostering world revolution and the organisation demanded was that of democratic centralism.

The concept of world revolution embodied three propositions important for the CPA: that capitalist developments had to be viewed globally and not nationally and that Comintern policies had therefore to be based on a world wide analysis and not an analysis of local conditions; that this had to be done because capitalism had supranational organic links in the period of imperialism; and that when a revolution began it would spread rapidly and unavoidably from one country to another because
of these international organic links. Implicitly, when the Comintern decided that there was going to be a world wide revolution, and it was formed because the Russians believed that there was going to be one, it would draw up policies which would be inappropriate in those countries which the revolution had not yet reached, and yet their communist parties would be bound to adopt those policies, on the grounds that the revolution would spread to their countries later. The Comintern always envisaged that some countries would not be at the same stage of revolution as others, but it never differentiated nationally to the degree that it admitted that this or that country had no revolutionary situation. Consequently, whenever it forecast a revolution there would be some communist parties which had to follow completely incorrect policies, at least temporarily.

This theory of world revolution was the dogmatic starting point of all Comintern policies in the period 1920-35. It had deleterious effects even when the Comintern was not asserting that the world revolution was imminent. Even the united front period (1921-28) policies worked within the framework of the belief that a world revolution would occur eventually. Hence, general policies already coined when the revolution was regarded as imminent, such as that which claimed that all other labour parties were outmoded and treacherous, were retained. Even though by 1928 the most prominent theoretician of world revolution, Trotsky, had been expelled from the CPSU(B), the theory on the broad lines described above still applied. One programme
and policy was laid down for the whole communist movement.

Naturally, the moment the CPA came under the control of
the Comintern, either willingly or unwillingly, it would have
committed itself to the possibility of having to follow
inappropriate policies while it waited for the revolution to
reach Australia. But it did not immediately come under
Comintern control from the moment it was created.

Before 1921 the CPA had adopted the traditional Australian
socialist policy of "boring from within" the ALP and soon adopted
organisational methods like those of the socialist parties of
Australia which preceded it. The policy was quite effective,
contributing to the growth of support for the CPA and succeeding
in its aim of getting the ALP to adopt a socialist objective.
Not surprisingly, although the tradition adopted by the CPA
and that adopted by the Comintern were almost contradictory,
the Russian traditions of policy and organisation did not
immediately supplant the Australian in the CPA. They had first
to oust the entrenched tradition. This was difficult to do.
First, the Russian notion that all decisions should be made
at the centre by the Comintern and not by the local party
was completely novel. Despite lip service, the CPA sometimes
made no attempt to do what the Comintern directed, such as to
break with previous socialist organisational traditions and
introduce the Russian methods of organisation.

However, in 1921 the party started, as the Comintern had
directed, to establish a united front with the ALP. This
policy of the united front worked within the world revolutionary
analysis and was therefore generally applied by all Comintern parties. Perhaps one reason why it was so readily accepted by the CPA was that, isolated from the framework of world revolution, it did not appear obviously inappropriate for Australia and did not appear to depart from previous Australian tradition. But since it stemmed from the world revolutionary theory which was the raison d'être of the Comintern it actually differed from the previous policy of "boring from within" in that it sought to destroy the ALP rather than turn the ALP into a socialist party. When this difference was realised by the ALP, the CPA was expelled from its ranks. The CPA, in turn, was riddled with faction fights over the appropriateness of the world wide analysis of the Comintern and virtually disintegrated after the expulsion from the ALP, dwindling into a tiny sect. The party then swung back to the Australian socialist traditions, for the united front had reduced party support so much by 1924 in the context of the Australian labour movement that strong opposition to Comintern policies was shown by some leaders of the CPA. Indeed, the leadership of the CP from 1926 to 1929 refused to adopt wholeheartedly policies and organisation demanded by the Comintern. The CPA formally adopted the organisational system of the CPSU(B) in 1926, and from 1926 to 1929 officially sought a united front with the ALP, but in fact it continued to work as the socialist party of Australia had and also concentrated on a propagandist, educatory policy like that practised by one of the socialist
parties which preceded it, the ASP.

Within the party an opposition group grew up between 1927 and 1929 and in 1929 made itself the supporter of the Comintern’s right to decide policy for the CPA and defender of the obligation of the party to accept such decisions. When this opposition came to power in 1930 the clash between the supporters of the Australian socialist tradition and the supporters of the Russian tradition effectively came to an end. Henceforth the leadership of the party, and therefore the party, became committed solely to the Russian tradition. Democratic centralism was introduced for the first time and the Comintern policies introduced at the Sixth World Congress were also adopted.

The process which had started when the Comintern admitted the CPA to membership on the basis of the twenty one conditions had only ended ten years later. As far as the Comintern was concerned, the CPA was subordinate to it from 1922, but not until the constitution of 1931 was the CPA officially made subordinate to the Comintern by the CPA.

Now the party success in winning supporters would depend on the appropriateness of policies and organisation decided without reference to Australian socialist tradition or Australian conditions. For the Australian party leaders the vindication of their belief that the Comintern’s policy and organisation would be more effective than that of the local socialists would be CPA success in winning support over the next years.

They were both vindicated and yet not vindicated.
The political line the Comintern instructed the CPA to adopt in the years 1930-34 was so inappropriate in Australia that it probably did more damage than any previous policy in preventing the party from acquiring support. Furthermore, it left legacies which made the aims of policies introduced by the CPA at Comintern behest in 1934 impossible to achieve. The policy of 1930-34 had been introduced because it was believed that once again there was a world revolutionary situation and therefore all communist parties had to adopt policies which were based on this theory. So in Australia, where even the party recognised that there was no revolutionary situation, policies based on the assumption that there was were adopted. Consequently, they prevented the party making use of the advantageous situation to win recruits.

Yet the system of democratic centralism introduced in 1931 made the party function much more efficiently, after a short time lag caused by the problems of conversion. The reason for the success of the Russian organisation in Australia seems due to the fact that it was originally designed for a small party trying to work independently in hostile surroundings and therefore fitted the CPA's situation. A party working independently had to establish direct links with the people it wished to have as its supporters and the factory nucleus did this. The monolithic structure prevented the wastage of energy by internal fighting. It enabled the party to function unitedly and actively. The increased efficiency was detrimentally affected by inappropriate policy and quite possibly more
could have been achieved by correct policy and different organisation, but, given the policies the party was obliged to follow, the organisation introduced was most effective. It helped the party to grow.

In the case of party work in the unions, the pattern of supercession of Australian methods of winning support by those coined in Moscow can be observed also, although here the adoption of the RILU-directed policies only came in 1924. At first the CPA appears to have worked in the traditional IWW and OBU fashion, by "white anting" unions. It attempted to capture the unions by organised work among their rank and file. This policy lasted too short a time for any sure conclusions to be made about whether it won supporters for the party. On the balance of probabilities it did not. Then the CPA adopted a policy of which Garden was the author. His own position as secretary of the NSW Labor Council and his belief that through that organisation the CPA could lead the unions without having to attempt to take them over at union level led to the party relying for influence in the trade unions on a small number of men who held posts in the Labor Council. The unions themselves were not won for communism by this policy. When the unions would no longer be led by the Labor Council the party turned to RILU policies for the first time. The policies of this organisation were essentially policies of organisation, designed to win trade unions to communism, and its recommendations were organisational recommendations. They, too, worked in the wider framework of the political line of the party and were
affected adversely by it when it was inappropriate, and to a
certain extent were modified when the political line of the
Comintern changed. For example, the introduction of separate
unions, that is, a new organisational form for winning workers,
hinged on belief in an imminent world revolution. Yet the
activity of the CPA in the unions was an organisational activity.
So communist success in unions must be attributed to organis-
ational effectiveness and not to policies in the strict sense,
even though we speak of RILU policies. Certainly the CPA won
considerable support in the unions after 1930 with its policy
of rank and file activity and organised contact via the factory
nucleus. Defeats can be ascribed to the inappropriateness of
the political line, which did not allow the party to reap full
benefit of its effective organisation. The more moderate
political line of 1934-35, although of no benefit to the party
itself, allowed its active organisational methods in the unions
to win many unionists for CPA union methods.

"Front" work was also essentially an organisational method
designed to win followers and also limited by the political
policies of the party. Though the front organisation was an
overall success because it provided a means for the expression
of popular sentiment about real social evils, each individual
"front" was not successful, as some were directed towards
activities which either did not interest Australians or for
which Australians already had organisations. Some functioned
excellently from a communist point of view. It was widely
accepted that the "fronts" were communist inspired but they
still attracted support because of their aims. While the communists could not always control a "front", this could be regarded as a hazard inherent in the way they tried to maintain control rather than a failure of communist organisational methods.

So both the "front" organisation and the organisational methods of the RILU were quite successful in Australia, while in trade union work the local methods followed before 1924 had not increased support for the party.

In conclusion, the history of the organisation and policy of the CPA and their effects on the success of the party in winning support in 1920-35 seems a history of the success of policy and the failure of organisation, if we understand trade union work as organisational, while the party worked in the Australian tradition, and the failure of policy and success of organisation after the CPA came under Comintern control. Though it cannot be denied that by 1935 CPA inner-party organisation was very efficient, its very success would facilitate the adoption of inappropriate policies and thus threatened to take away in the future whatever efficient organisation gained. There was a monolithic party which had no dividing opposition like that of the twenties and thus it was stronger. The unity was, however, acquired by the general acceptance of the idea that the Comintern should decide party policy on the basis of its world revolutionary theory. In the past this had always damaged the party. Yet democratic centralism would ensure that it blindly accept those policies in the future.
APPENDIX A

THE TWENTY ONE CONDITIONS

1. All propaganda and agitation must be of a genuinely communist character and in conformity with the programme and decisions of the Communist International. The entire party press must be run by reliable communists who have proved their devotion to the cause of the proletariat. The dictatorship of the proletariat is to be treated not simply as a current formula learnt by rote; it must be advocated in a way which makes its necessity comprehensible to every ordinary working man and woman, every soldier and peasant, from the facts of their daily life, which must be systematically noted in our press and made use of every day.

The periodical press and other publications, and all party publishing houses, must be completely subordinated to the party presidium, regardless of whether the party as a whole is at the moment legal or illegal. Publishing houses must not be allowed to abuse their independence and pursue a policy which is not wholly in accordance with the policy of the party.

In the columns of the press, at popular meetings, in the trade unions and co-operatives, wherever the adherents of the Communist International have an entry, it is necessary to denounce, systematically and unrelentingly, not only the bourgeoisie, but also their assistants, the reformists of all shades.
2. Every organisation which wishes to join the Communist International must, in an orderly and planned fashion, remove reformists and centrists from all responsible positions in the workers' movement (party organisations, editorial boards, trade unions, parliamentary fractions, co-operatives, local government bodies) and replace them by tried communists, even if, particularly at the beginning, experienced opportunists have to be replaced by ordinary rank and file workers.

3. In practically every country of Europe and America the class struggle is entering the phase of civil war. In these circumstances communists can have no confidence in bourgeois legality. They are obliged everywhere to create a parallel illegal organisation which at the decisive moment will help the party to do its duty to the revolution. In all those countries where, because of a state of siege or of emergency laws, communists are unable to do their work legally, it is absolutely essential to combine legal and illegal work.

4. The obligation to spread communist ideas includes the special obligation to carry on systematic and energetic propaganda in the army. Where such agitation is prevented by emergency laws, it must be carried on illegally. Refusal to undertake such work would be tantamount to dereliction of revolutionary duty and is incompatible with membership of the Communist International.
5. Systematic and well-planned agitation must be carried on in the countryside. The working class cannot consolidate its victory if it has not by its policy assured itself of the support of at least part of the rural proletariat and the poorest peasants, and of the neutrality of part of the rest of the rural population. At the present time communist work in rural areas is acquiring first rate importance. It should be conducted primarily with the help of revolutionary communist urban and rural workers who have close connexions with the countryside. To neglect this work, or to leave it in unreliable semi-reformist hands, is tantamount to renouncing the proletarian revolution.

6. Every party which wishes to join the Communist International is obliged to expose not only avowed social-patriotism, but also the insincerity and hypocrisy of social-pacifism; to bring home to the workers systematically that without the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism no international court of arbitration, no agreement to limit armaments, no 'democratic' reorganisation of the League of Nations, will be able to prevent new imperialist wars.

7. Parties which wish to join the Communist International are obliged to recognise the necessity for a complete and absolute break with reformism and the policy of the 'centre', and to advocate this break as widely as possible among their members. Without that no consistent communist policy is possible.
The Communist International demands unconditionally and categorically that this break be effected as quickly as possible. The Communist International is unable to agree that notorious opportunists, such as Turati, Modigliani, Kautsky, Hilferding, Hilquit, Longuet, MacDonald, etc., shall have the right to appear as members of the Communist International. That could only lead to the Communist International becoming in many respects similar to the Second International, which has gone to pieces.

8. A particularly explicit and clear attitude on the question of the colonies and the oppressed peoples is necessary for the parties in those countries where the bourgeoisie possess colonies and oppress other nations. Every party which wishes to join the Communist International is obliged to expose the tricks and dodges of 'its' imperialists in the colonies, to support every colonial liberation movement not merely in words but in deeds, to demand the expulsion of their own imperialists from these colonies, to inculcate among the workers of their country a genuinely fraternal attitude to the working people of the colonies and the oppressed nations, and to carry on systematic agitation among the troops of their country against any oppression of their colonial peoples.

9. Every party which wishes to join the Communist International must carry on systematic and persistent communist activity inside the trade unions, the workers' councils and factory committees, the co-operatives, and other mass workers'
organisations. Within these organisations communist cells must be organised which shall by persistent and unflagging work win the trade unions etc., for the communist cause. In their daily work the cells must everywhere expose the treachery of the social-patriots and the instability of the 'centre'. The communist cells must be completely subordinate to the party as a whole.

10. Every party belonging to the Communist International is obliged to wage an unyielding struggle against the Amsterdam 'International' of yellow trade unions. It must conduct the most vigorous propaganda among trade unionists for the necessity of a break with the yellow Amsterdam International. It must do all it can to support the international association of red trade unions, adhering to the Communist International, which is being formed.

11. Parties which wish to join the Communist International are obliged to review the personnel of their parliamentary fraction and remove all unreliable elements, to make these fractions not only verbally but in fact subordinate to the party presidium, requiring of each individual communist member of parliament that he should subordinate his entire activity to the interests of genuinely revolutionary propaganda and agitation.

12. Parties belonging to the Communist International must be based on the principle of democratic centralism. In the present epoch of acute civil war the communist party will be able to
fulfil its duty only if its organisation is as centralised as possible, if iron discipline prevails, and if the party centre, upheld by the confidence of the party membership, has strength and authority and is equipped with the most comprehensive powers.

13. Communist parties in those countries where communists carry on their work legally must from time to time undertake cleansing (re-registration) of the membership of the party in order to get rid of any petty bourgeois elements which have crept in.

14. Every party which wishes to join the Communist International is obliged to give unconditional support to any Soviet republic in its struggle against counter-revolutionary forces. Communist parties must carry on unambiguous propaganda to prevent the dispatch of munitions transports to the enemies of the Soviet republics; they must also carry on propaganda by every means, legal or illegal, among the troops sent to strangle workers' republics.

15. Parties which still retain their old social-democratic programmes are obliged to revise them as quickly as possible, and to draw up, in accordance with the special conditions of their country, a new communist programme in conformity with the decisions of the Communist International. As a rule, the programme of every party belonging to the Communist International must be ratified by the regular congress of the Communist International or by the Executive Committee. Should
the programme of the party not be ratified by the ECCI, the party concerned has the right of appeal to the congress of the Communist International.

16. All the decisions of the congresses of the Communist International, as well as the decisions of its Executive Committee, are binding on all parties belonging to the Communist International. The Communist International, working in conditions of acute civil war, must be far more centralised in its structure than was the Second International. Consideration must of course be given by the Communist International and its Executive Committee in all their activities to the varying conditions in which the individual parties have to fight and work, and they must take decisions of general validity only when such decisions are possible.

17. In this connexion, all parties which wish to join the Communist International must change their names. Every party which wishes to join the Communist International must be called: Communist party of such and such a country (section of the Communist International). This question of name is not merely a formal matter, but essentially a political question of great importance. The Communist International has declared war on the entire bourgeois world and on all yellow social-democratic parties. The difference between the communist parties and the old official 'social-democratic' or 'socialist' parties, which have betrayed the banner of the working class, must be brought home to every ordinary worker.
18. All leading party press organs in all countries are obliged to publish all important official documents of the Executive Committee of the Communist International.

19. All parties belonging to the Communist International and those which have applied for admission, are obliged to convene an extraordinary congress as soon as possible, and in any case not later than four months after the second congress of the Communist International, to examine all these conditions of admission. On this connexion all party centres must see that the decisions of the second congress of the Communist International are made known to all local organisations.

20. Those parties which now wish to join the Communist International, but which have not radically changed their former tactics, must see to it that, before entering the Communist International, not less than two thirds of the members of the central committee and of all their leading central bodies consist of comrades who publicly and unambiguously advocated the entry of their party into the Communist International before its second congress. Exceptions can be made with the consent of the Executive Committee of the Communist International. The ECCI also has the right to make exceptions in the case of representatives of the centre mentioned in paragraph 7.

21. Those members of the party who reject in principle the
conditions and theses put forward by the Communist International are to be expelled from the party. The same applies in particular to delegates to the extraordinary congresses.

Every effort has been made to ensure that these biographical notes are correct. They have been crosschecked where possible. But, due to the paucity of evidence and the cloak of secrecy favoured by the CPA, they may contain errors. Further notes of a similar sort about other communists, and the history after 1935 of those listed here, can be found in J. Playford's Ph.D. thesis (see bibliography); Strategy and Tactics of World Communism, Report of Sub-Committee No. 5 National and International Movements, U.S. Government Printing Office (1948); and in the Communist Review, 1934-65, passim.
BAKER, C.W.

Australian or American. Optician by profession, was a rationalist in Melbourne. He was converted from rationalism to socialism by Moses Baritz, a London socialist, who spent some years in Australia. Member of the Victorian Socialist Party 1917-20. Foundation member of the CPA. Editor of the Proletarian and Communist after 1921. Left the party in 1924 or 1925.

BARACCHI, GUIDO

Australian. Born 1887, son of an Italian nobleman, the Victorian government astronomer. Educated Melbourne Grammar and Melbourne University. Visited England and Europe shortly before First World War. Came under influence of guild socialists while in England. On return to Melbourne University became active anti-conscriptionist and was jailed for this activity in early 1918. Now in close contact with Percy Laidler (qv infra) and joined International Industrial Workers, as the IW.W was then called. Editor of IW.W newspaper Industrial Solidarity until 1920. Together with Laidler produced and edited the Proletarian Review 1920-21. Foundation member of both the Sydney and Melbourne branches of the CPA. Visited New Zealand 1921 and then Europe where he joined the Berlin branch of the German Communist Party. Became editor of the English language edition of the International Press Correspondence (Inprecorr). Returned to England in 1924 and joined CP of Great Britain. Then
returned in late 1924 to Australia. Leading member of the CPA until expulsion in 1925 for "liquidationism". Rejoined the party in 1935, finally expelled due to opposition to Nazi-Soviet pact.

DENFORD, H.L.
Australian. Born 1883. Left school 1889. He started work on the South Australian tramways. At 14 years of age dismissed for organising a strike to obtain higher wages. Became an itinerant farm worker and came under the influence of a disciple of Robert Blatchford c 1903-4. 1907 went to Broken Hill and joined Amalgamated Miners' Association. Left Broken Hill 1909 and went to work on the wharves at Port Pirie. Joined Adelaide Socialist Party and United Laborers Union. Met Tom Mann and R.S. Ross. Denford was delegate to the 1910 Sydney conference of the Socialist Federation of Australia. Suggested the formation of the IWW in 1911 and became first secretary of the Sydney local in that year. He was secretary of the ASP in 1912-14. Worked as a tram conductor. He left the ASP and joined the Social Democratic League and then the Socialist Labor Party. He was an active anti-conscriptionist during the war. Foundation member of the CPA 1920 and Central Executive member 1920-25. He was at that time a member of the Federated Ironworkers' Association and elected Sydney branch secretary in 1924, thus becoming the only communist union official outside the Trades Hall. He left the CPA when Garden was expelled in 1926.
EARSMAN, W.P.
Scottish. Came to Australia in 1916. Prominent in the formation of Labor Colleges in Melbourne where he was district secretary of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers. Went to Sydney to form Labor Colleges in 1918 (?). Foundation member of the CPA. Delegate to Third (1921) and Fourth (1922) Comintern Congresses. Joined Trotsky's entourage and lectured at a military college in Russia until 1925 when it appears he returned to Great Britain to participate in shop steward movement of 1926. Possibly expelled from Communist Party when Trotsky was expelled in Russia.

FREEMAN, PAUL
American or German. He claimed the first nationality. Came to Australia in 1911. Joined the IWW. Deported under War Precautions Act in 1919 for speaking against the war. U.S. authorities refused to allow him to land from the "Sonoma". Finally landed in Germany. Helped by anarchists to reach Russia where he presented himself as the delegate of the Australian IWW to the Second Congress of the Comintern. In 1920 returned secretly to Australia, under the name Miller, to arrange Australian delegation to the first RILU conference. Returned to Third Congress of Comintern as ASP delegate. Killed in train crash in Russia in 1921.

GARDEN, J.S.

GIBSON, R.

HEALY, J.
English. Born Manchester 1898. Father an Irish labourer, a member of the Irish Land League. J. Healy served in the First World War. Worked afterwards as a metal worker. Came to Australia in 1925 and became a sugar worker. Joined the AWU and then the WWF. Member of the ALP until 1934 when he visited the Soviet Union. In 1935 became a CPA member and won the general secretaryship of the WWF in 1937.

HIGGINS, E.M.
Russia in 1920 and then worked in Labour Research Bureau in London. Returned to Australia c1924 and joined CPA. Became editor of the Workers' Weekly while he worked as a labourer and factory hand. Central Executive member until 1931. Left the party before 1935 and returned to academic life.

HOWIE, J.

JEFFREY, NORMAN
Australian. Born Footscray, Melbourne, 21 December 1894. Arrived Perth c1899. Educated Fremantle Boys School until 1909 when he was apprenticed to a seagrass furniture factory. Joined Federated Furniture Trade Union 1911. His first contact with socialist ideas came from hearing Monty Miller speak for the West Australian Socialist Party on the Perth Esplanade in 1912-13. He was influenced by an English cousin, Frank Jeffrey, formerly of the Independent Labor Party, who introduced him to the writings of Blatchford, the Fabians and the Communist Manifesto. He also heard Tom Mann and Pat Hickey speak at about this time. Together with IWW, tramways and general workers, he formed an IWW local in 1914. He was secretary of the Fremantle local. In 1915 went to Sydney to seek employment. Made contact with the Sydney IWW led by Tom Barker. Humped his bluey in NSW for a year and then went to Melbourne, where he again joined the IWW, of which he became secretary in 1916. He had contacts with
the VSP and the ASP. He returned to Sydney before 1920 and either joined or had contact with the SLP. He was a foundation member of the CPA in 1920. Delegate to the Soviet Union in 1928. He held various official CPA positions before 1935 and was an executive member of the Pastoral Workers' Industrial Union 1930-37.

KAVANAGH, J.

Irish. Born 1879. Spent his early life in Liverpool. His trade was tile laying. He served in the Boer War where he became disillusioned with imperialism. On return to England he entered socialist politics. In 1907 he emigrated to Canada and in 1910 he joined the Socialist Party of Canada. In 1918 he became President of the British Columbia Federation of Labor, and in the same year a supporter of the OBU scheme and an official in that movement. In 1919 he was expelled from the Socialist Party. In 1922 he was an executive member of Workers' Party (communist) and editor of the Worker. In 1925 he emigrated to Australia. He was a member of the CPA from that time until 1931, when he was expelled and then readmitted. He was finally expelled in 1934 and became a Trotskyite for a short period.

LAIDLER, P.

1908. From 1911 employed by Andrade's bookshop and printers in Melbourne. Joined the IWW. Foundation member of Melbourne CPA branch. When this collapsed he became secretary of the Labor Propaganda League (Labor Discussion Group) in 1923. Founded CPA again in 1924. President of the Shop Assistants' Union and member of the Trades Hall executive 1924. Member of the CPA from that date.

HILDS, J.B.
Scottish. Born Hawick 1888, the eldest of six. His father was a building contractor and stone mason. Educated until 14 at Board school. Emigrated with wife to Australia in 1913, having already read Blatchford's Clarion and having belonged to the Newcastle socialist society and the Independent Labour Party since the age of 17. After his arrival he left the trade union movement for some years, disillusioned with the Australian socialists. He joined the ALP and then the Queensland Socialist League (1918) and was a member of the Labor College movement in Queensland in 1919. Foundation member of the CPA Sydney and Brisbane branches. In 1922 he became Brisbane CPA branch secretary and Australian Meat Industries Employees' Union delegate to the Trades Hall there. He became a stonemason after 1924 and full time CPA secretary 1931-48.

NELSON, C.
Scottish. Born 1896. Orphan at two. Liberal religious opinions and anti-militarism inculcated by grandfather at
an early age. Educated at a "public" school until 13 years old. Joined Independent Labour Party in 1911 and the Scottish Shale Miners' Association in 1913. At this time he read Snowden and Blatchford. He arrived in Australia in 1914. He worked on the railways where he met a Russian refugee, Sam Rose, who introduced him to the writings of Karl Marx. He was an IWW member and later supported the OBU.

In the early 1920's he joined the CPA and started working in the Lithgow State Mine. After 1925 he was the leader of the Plebs' League there. He recruited R. Dixon, J. Blake and Bill Orr, all later prominent CPA members. He organised the Left Wing conference of the mid twenties and the establishment of the Hartley and Macquarie District Assembly. He was secretary of the Lithgow CPA branch. In 1929 he was elected president of the State Mine Lodge and vice-president of the Western District of the Miners' Federation in 1931. In 1934 he became president of the Miners' Federation. He was expelled from the CPA in 1940 and lost the Miners' presidency in 1941.

Orr, W.

Scottish. Born 1900. Serviceman in the First World War. Then came to Australia and became a member of the ALP. He joined the CPA in 1922 or 1923 and organised the Left Wing Movement in the Western Mining District together with Charles Nelson (qv supra) in 1924. He organised the May Day celebrations there from 1925. He was executive member of
the Vale of Clwydd Lodges at about that time and representative on the Western District delegate board. He was National Organiser of the Militant Minority Movement after 1931, Miners' Federation secretary after 1933, and a member of the CPA Central Committee from 1932, remaining a prominent member of the party until his death in 1954.

PAYNE, T.

Australian. Born Clunes, Victoria, 1898, father a bookmaker. Payne joined the ALP in 1915 and then joined the ASP. He was party to the defection of the ASP Sydney branch, of which he was a member, in 1922. He was a delegate of the CPA to the Fourth Comintern Congress in 1922. He was at that time a member of the Clerks' Union. He drifted out of the party c1925-6 and rejoined the Labor Party. He was a leading member of the Socialisation Units of that party in the early thirties and an official in the Unemployed Workers' Movement after 1930. He rejoined the CPA in 1933.

REARDON, A.S.

English. Emigrated to Australia from Nottingham. His trade was railway blacksmith. He worked at the Clyde Engineering works in Sydney. Though self-educated, he wrote articles on technical aspects of blacksmithing and took part in repertory productions. Member of the SLP, he left it for the ASP in 1917. He was secretary of the ASP in 1918-20. He was a foundation member of the CPA but left it when the ASP left it. He was expelled from the Labor Council in 1922 for
opposition to Garden and was not associated with the CPA after this date.

RAWLING, J.N.
Australian. Born 27 May 1898. Educated Sydney University, B.A. 1929, M.A. 1946. He was a serviceman in the First World War, schoolteacher by profession. He joined the CPA in 1925. Prominent in the League against Imperialism, Movement against war and Fascism and other "fronts" after 1929. Expelled from party in 1939 after disagreement with the Nazi-Soviet Pact. Became a Trotskyite for a short time.

RICKIE, NELLIE
Australian. Born Myers Flat, Victoria. Joined VSP in 1916. Anti-conscriptionist in 1917 under R.S. Ross' leadership. Imprisoned in Pentridge in 1918 for flying the Red Flag. In Trades Hall, as delegate from the Theatrical Employees' Union. Foundation member of the Melbourne branch of the CPA. She was a Central Executive member of the CPA in 1924 and electoral candidate a year later. No further information available.

SERGAYEFF, F.A. (ARTEM)
Russian. Born Kursk 1883. Revolutionary from the age of 16. Imprisoned at 19. Joined Russian Social Democratic workers' Party in 1902. Went to Austria and then France in the same year. Attended Free Russian University in Paris in the same year. Returned to Russia in 1903. Again imprisoned. Active revolutionary 1903-10. In 1910 he was
exiled to Siberia. Escaped via China to Australia in 1911. Set up branch of the Union of Russian Emigrants in Brisbane in 1911 and then Russian Workers' Association. He took part in the 1912 tramways strike and established a revolutionary paper for Russians, *Echo of Australia*, in 1912. Jailed in 1913 for participation in ASP free speech agitation. Introduced Leninism to Russians. Member, first of the Waterfront Workers' Federation, and then Australian Meat Industries Employees' Union and ASP. He returned to Russia in 1917 and was made CC member of Russian Communist Party and vice president of the Ukrainian Soviet and then Commissar for Mines. In 1919 he became a member of the Executive Committee of the Comintern. He was killed in a train crash in 1921, with Paul Freeman.

**SHARKEY, L.L.**

Australian. Born Warry Creek near Orange, NSW, 6 August 1898. Of Irish descent, he imbibed a strong anti-imperialist attitude from his parents, who were small farmers. He started work at 14 years of age. He was an active member of the IWW in the First World War. At that time he worked as a liftman in Foy's. Miscellaneous Workers' Union delegate to the NSW LC at this time. He joined the CPA in 1922 and was a Central Executive member from 1927 onwards. In 1931-48 he was president of the party and General Secretary from 1938-65. Leader of the party after election to the ECCI in 1935.
SIMONOFF, PETER
Russian. Born Saratov 21 June 1883. His father was a peasant and his own trade was that of labourer. He emigrated to Australia in 1911 after some contact with the Russian revolutionary movement. He worked as a cane cutter in Bundaberg and became secretary of the Russian Workers' Association in Brisbane and editor of its newspaper, Knowledge and Unity. He was a firm revolutionary and active worker to co-ordinate the activities of Russian and Australian socialists in that city and elsewhere. In 1918 he was appointed Bolshevik consul to Australia but the government refused to recognise him. He was imprisoned under the War Precautions Act in 1918. He supported the foundation of the CPA. He was author of the popular book What is Russia?, which was banned by the censor. He left Australia in 1922.

SMITH, CHRISTIAN JOLLIE
Australian. Father presbyterian clergyman and Professor of Theology at Ormond College. Her own profession was that of lawyer.

THORNTON, E.
English. Born 13 March 1907 in Huddersfield. He came to Queensland in 1914. He joined the CPA in 1931 and was expelled in 1932. He was re-admitted in 1933 after tendering a written apology. He became General Secretary of the Federated Ironworkers' Association in 1936.
WALSH, ADELA PANKHURST

English. Born 1878, daughter of Emmeline Pankhurst. Profession teacher. In gaol in Strangeways in 1897. Came to Australia in 1914 and joined the WSP. She married Tom Walsh, a militant unionist (q.v. infra), in the war years. She was a foundation member of the Sydney CPA in 1920 and a central executive member until she drifted out of the party in c.1922.

WALSH, TOM

Irish. Educated for the priesthood but became a seaman. Came to Australia in 1890's. Became a member of the Social Democratic Vanguard in Brisbane in 1894 (?). He was in Lane's circle with R.S. Ross. Later, in 1909, he was associated with H. Holland in the Newcastle socialist group and became an official of Seamen's Union there in the same year. In 1912 he was an official of the same union in Sydney but he was dismissed for alleged personal unreliability. In the great strike of 1916-17 he was a leader of the rank and file movement and in 1918 again became secretary of the Seamen's Union. In 1919 he became general secretary of the union and was general president 1920-27. In 1920 he was a foundation member of the CPA. He left it again in 1922(?).

WILLIS, A.C.

Welsh. Born Tonyrefail 1876. Educated Bryn Mawr board school, King's College, London, and Ruskin College, Oxford. He emigrated to Australia in 1911. He was president of the Illawarra Miners' Association in 1913 and first secretary
of the Australian Coal and Shale Employees' Federation 1916-25. He was founder and managing director of the Labor Daily 1923-31. He was a member of the NSW Legislative Council 1925-33 and Vice President of the executive council 1925-29, 1930-31. He was NSW Agent-General in London in 1931-32.

WRIGHT, T.


ZWOLSMAN, J.F.

Dutch. Born 1891. Served in the First World War and was decorated for gallantry. Member of the South Australian IWW from arrival in Australia until 1930, when he joined the new CPA branch, of which he became an executive member.
APPENDIX C

PRINCIPLES AND OBJECTS OF THE SOCIALIST PARTY OF VICTORIA.

The Socialist Party looks forward to the establishment of the co-operative Commonwealth, in which Land and Capital shall be managed by those who use them in the interest of the whole community to the end that the product of labor shall belong to the producer.

The Socialist Party seeks to show the people and especially the workers that this Co-operative Commonwealth is not only a beautiful ideal but that it is practically possible and inevitably necessary. The Socialist Party of Victoria also seeks to show the workers that the present stage of industrial development compels the workers to organize in unions according to the industries in which they work and the things they produce or the services they render instead of as at present organizing according to the crafts or branches of industry in which they are engaged and the tools which they use. By this means they will prepare themselves for the management of industry and will concentrate their strength for the struggle with the Capitalist class which will never cease until Socialism shall supersede Capitalism.

Source: Victorian Socialist Party minutes, 27/5/1918.
The Communist Party of Australia, together with the Communist International, accepts a scientific theory that the Capitalist System of production and distribution has outlived its usefulness and become reactionary and destructive for humanity. We realise that this system has in its development and maturity done great service to humanity by bringing about extensive and efficient social production and distribution of necessities, and by introducing wonderful labor saving devices. But the Capitalist System itself presents the fundamental contradiction of Social Production and individual or private ownership both of the means of production and the products. From this fact arise the two classes of modern society, the Bourgeoisie and the Proletariat. The bourgeoisie, by virtue of it being in possession of the state power, established and maintained itself as the dominant class and it thereby enabled to shelter behind the empty phrases of popular democracy. By monopolising and holding by any and every means of skill, cunning, deceit and even terrorism, all the means of subsistence, a dominant class perpetuates the existing form of society, whilst the Proletariat, deprived of everything, sometimes even of bare subsistence, is subject to degradation and most humiliating slavery. Thus does modern society present (?) itself a system wherein one class provides all the things, and owns
nothing, whilst the other class own everything and produce nothing. The Communist Party recognising this contradiction sets itself to abolish the system, to overthrow this class monopoly and to abolish the private ownership of the means of production. Its aim is to establish a system of social ownership of the means of production, thereby making the ownership coincide with the social process of production.

Source: From original in Hancock Coll, ML, Mss 772/8.
## APPENDIX E

### UNEMPLOYMENT 1921-35

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<tr>
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<td>9.5</td>
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Source: Official Yearbook of the Commonwealth of Australia.
APPENDIX F.

1930-31.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

NEW SOUTH WALES

COMMUNISTS

(LIST OF NAMES OF CERTAIN, IN NEW SOUTH WALES)

Printed under No. 38 Report from Printing Committee, 23 December, 1931.

Presented to Parliament in connection with the Question asked on 1st December, by the Hon. Member for Willoughby.

COMMUNIST LEADERS.

Mr. SANDERS: I wish to ask the Colonial Secretary if it is a fact that he has an official report giving the Government a list of the leaders of the Communists? If so, will he table the report?

Mr. GOSLING: I have no objection.

MEMBERS OF THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY IN NEW SOUTH WALES.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Address</th>
<th>Native of</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aarons, Samuel</td>
<td>&quot;Wonga&quot;, Matilda St., Bondi.</td>
<td>Victoria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anderson, Andrew</td>
<td>No particular place of abode.</td>
<td>Scotland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barrington, Joyce</td>
<td>152 Hastings Parade, Bondi.</td>
<td>West Australia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burns, Bernard</td>
<td>163 Dowling Street, East Sydney.</td>
<td>New South Wales</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burns, J. (Mrs.)</td>
<td>163 Dowling Street, East Sydney.</td>
<td>Not known, believed New South Wales.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Address</td>
<td>Native of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>Crowe, -</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Docker, Edward John</td>
<td>Arkin St., Randwick.</td>
<td>Australia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dodds, Frank</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Densfield, Wood</td>
<td>Brisbane.</td>
<td>Australia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Devanny, Jean</td>
<td>Germany.</td>
<td>New Zealand</td>
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<tr>
<td>Delaney, Thomas</td>
<td>130 McIlhone Street, East Sydney.</td>
<td>South Australia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Densfield, Betty</td>
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<tr>
<td>Finney, Ernest</td>
<td>650 Bourke Street, Sydney.</td>
<td>New South Wales.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Frew, Samuel</td>
<td>43 Meadow Crest, Meadowbank.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gray, Robert</td>
<td>1 Bellevue Street, Surry Hills.</td>
<td>England.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Griffin, Oliver</td>
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<td>Australia</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hurwurth, -</td>
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<td>Not known.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Higgins, Esme</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hunt, Stanley</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hade, Matthew</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isaacs, Annie</td>
<td>207 Avoca Street, Randwick.</td>
<td>Australian Jew</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jeffrey, Norman</td>
<td>10 Creek Street, Glebe.</td>
<td>Australia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knight, Ernest</td>
<td>12 Westmorland St., Glebe.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lamma, Mary</td>
<td>Glebe.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Loughran, John</td>
<td>45 Yule Street, Dulwich Hill.</td>
<td>Ireland</td>
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<tr>
<td>Miles, John B.</td>
<td>43 Douglas Street, Redfern.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Morrison, John William</td>
<td>&quot;Hillborrow&quot;, Glebe Road, Glebe.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Moxon, Herbert</td>
<td>17 Ramsay Road, Haberfield.</td>
<td>Australia</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mountjoy, Wilfred</td>
<td>148 St. Johns Road, Glebe.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mountjoy, Jane Lindsay</td>
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<td>Miller, F.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Moore (known as &quot;X.Y.Z.&quot;)</td>
<td>66 Tabrett Street, Banksia.</td>
<td>A believed Russian.</td>
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<tr>
<td>McCowley, Thomas</td>
<td>396 Annandale Street, Annandale.</td>
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<tr>
<td>McGillick, Thomas</td>
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<tr>
<td>McGority or McGroarty (Mrs.)</td>
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<td>Ireland.</td>
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### Members of the Communist Party in New South Wales - continued.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
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<td>Nelson, C.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Orr, William</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ryan, Michael</td>
<td>187 Albion Street, Sydney.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ross, Hector</td>
<td>1511 Allen Street, Pyrmont.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sharkey, William</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shelley, Joseph</td>
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<tr>
<td>(Correct name</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shellenburg)</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
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<td>Tripp, Edward</td>
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<td>Thomas, William</td>
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<tr>
<td>Joseph</td>
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<tr>
<td>Walker, Clifford</td>
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<tr>
<td>Williams, David</td>
<td>342 Crown St., City.</td>
<td>Patagonia, S.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wilson, Fred</td>
<td>Annandale (U.W.M. Rooms)</td>
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### LIST 2 - MILITANT COMMUNISTS NOT ATTACHED TO THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE.

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<td>Aarons, Myrtle</td>
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<tr>
<td>Anderson, Isa</td>
<td>395 Sussex St., Sydney</td>
<td>Sweden</td>
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<tr>
<td>Anderson, David</td>
<td>Ivy St., Darlington, Darlington</td>
<td>Scotland</td>
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<tr>
<td>Applerly or Weir</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anderson, Arthur</td>
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<td>Australia</td>
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<tr>
<td>Borg, Frank</td>
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<td>Malta</td>
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<tr>
<td>Banks, Reginald</td>
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<tr>
<td>Baudistel, Gustave</td>
<td>185 Albion Street, Surry Hills.</td>
<td>German</td>
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<tr>
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Militant Communists not attached to the Central Committee - continued.

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APPENDIX G.

PROGRAMMATIC DECLARATION OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY.

AIMS OF COMMUNIST MOVEMENT OF AUSTRALIA.

The economic and political situation throughout the world grows more serious from day to day. In the midst of bountiful harvests, bursting granaries and warehouses there is displayed the supreme contradiction of modern society; because the markets are glutted with goods, millions are unemployed, starving and destitute. The crisis leads to a further concentration of wealth into fewer hands, the growth of monopoly and the ruination of tremendous numbers of middle class people who are dispossessed and hurled into the ranks of the working class. Between the different nations of the capitalist world, the struggle for markets grows more bitter and leads from tariff wars, price cutting, monopolizing raw materials, &c., to feverish preparations for a new imperialist war to re-divide the world.

REPUDIATE THE DEBTS.

The world decline in prices has been more catastrophic in relation to raw materials and foodstuffs than in manufactured goods, and as a consequence the world crisis has affected with particular severity Australia and those other countries dependent upon the export of primary products. The situation in Australia is worsened still more by indebtedness overseas, chiefly to British Finance Capital. The decline in prices necessitates an increased share of Australian exports being
used to pay for interest to British and American bondholders.

Within Australia the various sections of the capitalist class manoeuvre and struggle, each against the other, over the division of the reduced national wealth. This internal conflict is reflected in the new political alignments, within the Labour Party, the National and Country Parties, the Riverina and other movements in New South Wales, the formation of the All For Australia League, the New Guard, and other fascist organisations.

UNITY - AGAINST THE WORKERS.

Despite the internal struggles of the capitalist class, reflected in the antagonisms of the various capitalist political parties, all sections of the capitalist class present a united front against the toiling masses in town and country - just as in the international field all capitalist nations unite against the Soviet Union, conduct lying propaganda, and prepare for a war of aggression against it.

In the Federal Parliament, Scullin, Lyons, Latham and Page unite for the most ruthless and callous impoverishment of the toilers. Through the Federal Arbitration machinery, wage cuts of unprecedented magnitude are imposed upon the working class, and all forms of social insurance are reduced, including old-age pensions and the pensions of those maimed in the late world war. From experience, the ruling class of finance and industrial capitalists and big land owners have learned that Labour Governments, because of their influence over the masses, are best fitted to lead the offensive against
the masses. The difference between Scullin and the demagogic
Lang in New South Wales is a difference in method only. While
Scullin cynically and openly proclaims the policy of reduced
standards of living for the workers, Lang loudly condemns
such a policy in order more efficiently to carry it into
effect. Under the smoke-screen of verbal attacks upon the
Governor and the Upper House, Lang in New South Wales develops
and intensifies the offensive against the working class.
Lang, who participated in the unanimous decisions of the
last Premiers' Conference, including the 20 per cent. cut in
all "adjustable" Government expenditure, neglects to inform
the masses that the abolition of the Upper House in Queensland
and the appointment of an Australian, instead of an English
Governor-General in the Commonwealth, have not altered the
character of capitalist exploitation or its effects on the
toiling masses.

While the crisis affects with great severity all sections
of the toilers, it is particularly harsh with the children,
youth and women of the working class. Rampant malnutrition
claims a heavy toll of sickness and mortality among children,
increasing numbers of the youth are denied the right to
enter industry and learn an occupation, and women, underpaid
in normal times in relation to other workers, through wage-
cuts and unemployment are subjected to the dangers of the
vilest degradation.
The impoverishment of the industrial workers and the working farmers has intensified the struggle inherent in all class society. While the leadership of the Labour Party and the reformist trade unions become linked with the State apparatus (the instrument of the ruling class for suppressing the workers and small farmers), the capitalist class organizes open fascist organizations, the All for Australia League, the Citizens' League, New Guard, &c., some of which openly proclaim their military form of organization and their aims of armed violence against the working class movement, commencing with attacks upon its militant organizations.

In opposition to the ruling class, the Labour Party and the fascists, the Communist Party of Australia proclaims the following brief summary of its aims on behalf of the workers of town and country:

**Programme.**

With the support of a majority of the people we will overthrow and smash the power of the capitalists and big land owners.

We will expel all governors and other representatives of British finance capital, withdraw from the British Empire and establish in Australia a workers' and farmers' Republic, with a Soviet form of government led by the workers - the dictatorship of the proletariat.

We will establish a firm political and economic alliance with the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics and such other
countries as may be under the control of the workers and farmers.

We shall at once throw off the tremendous burden of interest payments by cancelling the national debt of more than a Thousand million pounds owing to capitalists at home and abroad. Provision will be made to compensate workers and those working middle-class people who have invested their savings in these bonds.

We will end the imperialist policy of the Australian bourgeoisie in their subjection and exploitation of native races, at home, in New Guinea, and other possessions in the Pacific. We will give to these native races our friendship and economic co-operation with the unqualified right of self-determination.

In contrast to the mouthings of Lang and others of the Labour Party against the big bankers, we will effect the proletarian nationalization of the banks and annul all debts to Australian and overseas capitalists.

We will seize without compensation the big industrial undertakings so that industrial production may be organized on a socialist basis.

We will expropriate without compensation the big land owners and make their land available to the poor farmers. We will set up Soviet estates equipped with the most modern machinery, and give to the rural workers the same working conditions as those enjoyed by the city workers; through collective farming and co-operation we will draw the mass
of working farmers into the work of socialist construction.

When we have come to power we shall nationalize wholesale trade and thus put an end to the machinations of the wholesale dealers who rob the farmers and ruin small shopkeepers.

We will create powerful consumers' co-operatives representing the interests of the toilers, and destroy any speculation taking advantage of their needs.

By introducing the seven-hour day and the five-day week, and by raising the purchasing power of the masses, we will abolish unemployment. The productive forces will be placed at the service of the toilers. The working women and working youth will have full political equality, with equal pay for the same work.

We will expropriate the wealthy house owners without compensation and quarter the workers and poor population of the towns in the houses of the rich. Payment for rent, gas, water, electricity and all other communal services will be graduated according to the principle of classes and reduced to a minimum for all toilers possessing little means.

By seizing power, taking over without compensation the enterprises, banks, big house property, and wholesale trade we will put an end to the taxation policy of the capitalist class and create the basis of a class budget for the Soviet State. Social insurance of every kind will be put upon a sound basis at the cost of the State (unemployment, accident, sickness, old age, war cripples, invalids, and the dependants of those incapacitated or fallen in war).
SOCIALISM ONLY ALTERNATIVE.

We Communists bring to the toilers the programme of their social emancipation from the shackles of capitalism. In the Soviet Union, under the leadership of the Communist Party, this programme has been achieved, and the Soviet Union goes forward with giant strides in the building of socialism, expanding production, improving its technical basis, and raising incessantly the standard of living and cultural level of its population.

History offers no alternative; the various stages of class society, chattel slavery, feudalism and capitalism will be superseded by socialism. Under the dictatorship of the working class, private ownership of the means of production will be abolished, production and distribution of wealth will be socialized progressively, until all class divisions will disappear and humanity will be united in one world-wide society, free from economic and political antagonisms.

The Communist Party calls upon all workers, all small farmers, and all working middle-class people, suffering under the crisis, to break from the parties of capitalism and from fascism, the oppressors and deceivers of the people. The Communist Party is fighting the battle of the exploited against the exploiters - is leading the struggle for the overthrow of the rule of the capitalists and big land owners. When the masses of exploited gather round the Communist Party this task will be achieved, and all capitalist
resistance will prove futile.

There is no easy road to victory for the toilers. The fascist bloodhounds are straining at the leash. Power can be wrested from the hands of the ruling class only by ruthless class struggle. Victory can be gained only by a mass revolutionary front with the Communists. We call upon all toilers to join the army of the class struggle in the fight for the dictatorship of the proletariat.

Down with Imperialism.
Down with Capitalist Governments.
Down with Labour Traitors.
Down with Langism.
Down with Fascism.
Long live the Dictatorship of the Proletariat.
Long live the Workers' and Farmers' Soviet Republic of Australia.

Political Bureau, Communist Party of Australia.
29th August, 1931.

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This is a select bibliography. All works consulted when writing a thesis do not prove relevant in a direct way. So only works cited in this thesis or directly relevant to it have been listed. The bibliography is divided into two parts. Part I contains material relating to the Comintern and the world communist movement; Part II material relating to the CPA and Australia.

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c. Metropolitan Newspapers

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Australian National Review

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Railroad

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   Pan Pacific Worker (Pan Pacific Trade Union Secretariat)
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