THE WHITE ARMY OF 1931: ORIGINS AND LEGITIMATIONS

The League of National Security in Victoria in 1931,
and the means by which it was legitimated.

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This thesis is the product of my own original research. No person collaborated in the writing of it. Material drawn from secondary sources has been acknowledged throughout.

Michael Cathcart
20/6/1985
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### ABBREVIATIONS

<table>
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<th>Abbreviation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AA</td>
<td>Australian Archives</td>
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<td>AFAL</td>
<td>All for Australia League (some texts use AFA)</td>
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<td>Australian Labor Party</td>
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<td>IB</td>
<td>Commonwealth Investigation Branch</td>
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<td>IWW</td>
<td>Industrial Workers of the World</td>
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<td>LNS</td>
<td>League of National Security</td>
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<td>La Trobe</td>
<td>La Trobe Library, State Library of Victoria</td>
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<td>NLA</td>
<td>National Library, Canberra</td>
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<td>PROV</td>
<td>Public Record Office, Victoria</td>
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<td>SMH</td>
<td>Sydney Morning Herald</td>
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<td>UAP</td>
<td>United Australia Party</td>
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<td>UWM</td>
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INTRODUCTION

I first heard of the White Army when I was twelve. Mr Hewett was everyone's idea of the Edwardian gentleman: tweed jacket, healthy tan, straight-backed and filled with a zest for England, the Queen's English and the ridiculous. His idea of a Friday afternoon classroom treat was to play his boys a recording of Dame Sybil Thorndyke reading 'The Lady of Shalott'.

His boys were taught scansion, copperplate, the difference between a Miltonian and a Shakespearian sonnet, how to recognise a gerund, and how the Monarchy was God's gift to the British peoples. All this in Year 8.

Above the blackboard hung a print of Charles the Martyr walking, radiantly, to his execution. (Mr Hewett had angled the frame so that he could observe his charges as he worked at the blackboard.) And at the rear of the room, by the door, was an etching of a malevolent and warty Oliver Cromwell, possibly the most evil man who ever lived.

One afternoon, Mr Hewett told the class about the 'White Guard', an organisation which he had joined in 1931 which was prepared to march into New South Wales and overthrow Lang. Lang, we were given to understand, rivalled Cromwell in his evil betrayal of British tradition and decency. Mr Hewett went further. Lang, he said, had assembled a Red Army which intended to bring about the Revolution. If Her Majesty's representative, Sir Philip Game, had not sacked Lang, there would have been civil war.

Mr Hewett's claim about Lang's Red Army was intriguing, and in the early months of research I set out to find all I could about this revolutionary force. But there was no such body. Certainly, as brawling in New South Wales between New Guardsmen and Laborites became increasingly threatening to the workers, there
was an attempt to organise 'Workers' Defence Corps',\(^1\) and as the crisis of Lang's premiership reached its last weeks, there was talk of swearing in special constables to defend the government from the New Guard. Earlier, too, there had been talk of an Australian Labour Army.\(^2\) But these disorganised measures had nothing to do with revolution, and a good deal to do with maintaining morale as the Labour movement fell into disarray.

The Communist Party, far from being hand in glove with Lang, had entered into bitter rivalry with the ALP. Under the so-called Third Period policy of the Comintern, it was said to be the Labor parties which had become the chief enemy of the working people. Now that capitalism was doomed, the only obstacle to the triumph of the Proletariat was said to be the 'social fascist' policy of the democratic socialists. In any case, the communist party was itself minuscule, having fewer than 2,000 members.\(^3\) As Richard Hall writes, it was 'a marginal group rent by factions, and exploited by opportunists like Jock Garden.' Using figures produced by the Commonwealth intelligence service, Hall has calculated that 130,000 Australian males (or 1 in every 15 men) was a member of some kind of anti-Labour army during the Depression.\(^4\)

In the wider Labour movement there was no talk of revolution either. It was 'no longer a serious issue', writes Frank Farrell, 'and the only scope for radical

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agitation was in united front activities in defence of gains already made and positions won.\(^5\) In this, the Australian Labour movement was mirroring the international decline in radical ferment which had peaked in 1918-19, stimulated by the post-War yearning for a new and juster order and by the apparently glorious success of the Russian revolutionaries. By 1937, Trotsky would be accusing international socialism of 'a partiality for sedative generalizations'. Unable to bring themselves to revolt against their own capitalism, said Trotsky, leading international socialists were content 'to take their stand upon a foreign revolution which has already ebbed back into its channels.' For Trotsky, revolutionary radicalism had given way to 'Socialism for Radical Tourists'.\(^6\) But perhaps it was Inspector Browne of Intelligence who stated the situation most accurately when he wrote in the course of his investigation of the White Army, 'one cannot help feeling that the panic protective measures were grotesquely unnecessary, while the apparent childish belief in the existence of a moving and devouring Red Army on the part of men regarded as sane and solid seems beyond belief.'\(^7\)

So, there was no information about the Red Army, because nothing existed on the scale which the Right alleged. The problem with the Right was more tricky.

In the shadow world of intelligence services and power politics, the papers of Herbert Brookes are a welcome source of light. Unlike some such collections,

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Brookes' papers have not been culled, and researchers do not have to present their work to be vetted.\(^8\)

Perhaps more typical of the sources which could possibly relate to covert activity are the papers of General Sir Brudenell White. White was believed to be a leader of the 1931 White Army, and there is justifiable speculation that this organisation might, therefore, be an extension of the volunteer militia which White assembled to patrol the streets during the Melbourne Police Strike. In the interest of accuracy, his papers, held in the Victorian State Library, ought to have been consulted for this study. Perhaps they contain nothing. But possibly there is a minor diary entry or a vaguely worded letter which, in the course of detailed research, might prove relevant. Possibly White's association with the White Army could have been established more persuasively. Possibly it could have been disproved.

Access to Brudenell White's papers is limited. Permission must be obtained from Lady Rosemary Derham, wife of the former Vice Chancellor of Melbourne University. In reply to my request for access, Lady Derham wrote:

I only grant access to the papers of my father the late General Sir Brudenell White to Military Historians, or historians of senior postgraduate status, recommended by their supervisors. I am sorry to disappoint you.

[Referring to an *Age* article in which John Schaubule presented the evidence that White and Sir Frank Derham (Lady Derham's father-in-law) were senior members of the White Guard, \(^9\) she continued:] I have

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8. Brookes Papers, NLA, MS 1924.

seen and discussed with him the sources of his article in the Age. It was not an accurate article and both families took exception to it.

There is no real evidence that my father had any connection with the White Guard, and all the sources are supposition and therefore suspect ...

I should be happy to meet and talk to you if you come to Melbourne again ... and discuss any evidence you find. There is nothing in my father's papers.

To which we might well reply, then why so cautious?

It is unlikely that Lady Derham is in a position to know whether or not Schauble's article was accurate. The White Army was an exclusively male affair. In the Melbourne metropolitan area secrecy was strict. In the natural course of events, General White's military responsibilities made an acquaintance with secrets a routine affair. It would have been very odd if this man, who was widely respected for his sense of duty, had discussed the White Army's secret with any unauthorised person. Even if that person were his daughter.

Nevertheless, as Lady Derham points out, the available evidence of her father's involvement does not provide absolute proof - one way or the other. He was certainly the kind of person who became involved in such activities throughout the Commonwealth. As we will see, he held anti-democratic views which were consistent with support for the White Army. He had already demonstrated a willingness to mobilise citizen volunteers to protect Melbourne from revolutionary violence during the police strike. An intelligence report on the White Army says he was possibly involved. The oral tradition among members is contradictory. To conclude: the evidence to which the public are permitted access tends to favour the proposition that Brudenell White was involved. Only a
few former members favour the opposite proposition. But they may well be
correct: the matter remains uncertain.

Other obstructions which confront the researcher are more impersonal. In
the early days of this research, one of the most promising leads was a Major Gus
Ebeling, who will turn up in Chapter Two recruiting people for the White Army in
the Mallee and Wimmera. It seemed useful to try to establish a link between
Ebeling and people in Melbourne, and to survey his war record on the chance that
he may have had contact with White Army leaders in the field. An old man in
Avoca, Ebeling's home town, remembered Ebeling well:

Ebeling didn't like Blamey. Hated him. He said that on Gallipoli Blamey
used to make him walk along the spur nearest the Turks so that he'd get
shot.
Did you know Ebeling? What sort of person was he? Ebeling was a real
German. He'd go and kick a calf that was lying down, kick it again and
again, rather than tell it get up. He was that sort of bloke.

Another resident agreed:

Major Gus was really a Fritzy - a squarehead, you know what I mean?
He wasn't very popular in the town - he was a sort of little dictator.
Would you say he was an important person in the town? In his own
opinion he was, yes.

None of this seemed very promising. Perhaps Ebeling was a hothead who acted off
his own bat after hearing news of the planned mobilisation from some unknown
person.

Back in Canberra I revisited the War Memorial. Ebeling is listed in the AIF
Officers' List which indicates that he was a veteran of the Boer War. It shows
that on 25.5.1915 he was made an honorary major while serving with the 8th
Battalion, and that in 1917, he was awarded the D.S.O.. In 1931, two months after a White Army mobilisation, he retired from the Officer Reserve. Perhaps that was significant.

Firstly, what did he win the D.S.O. for? And with whom did he serve? The obvious place to look was the 'War Diary of 8th Battalion' (1914-1918), which is also held at the War Memorial. Nowhere is Ebeling mentioned. He is not named in the 'Nominal Role of Officers in Line' which was included in the diary from time to time. Despite the fact that the diary lists deaths, casualties and decorations as they occur, Ebeling's D.S.O. is not mentioned. Or is it? Like many documents in the War Memorial, sections of this diary are still being withheld from historians. Sixty year old pages are hidden in sheafs of brown paper, complete with a stamp declaring their secrecy. A request to have the restriction lifted was denied.

Then another idea presented itself. Possibly Ebeling's invisibility was a sign that he had been connected with intelligence. The bookshops abound with books about British Intelligence in the 1939-45 War, so finding out about members of intelligence in the first War should present no problem. Not so. Attendants at the War Memorial could not assist me in this area, but suggested that I call at Army Headquarters in St Kilda Road, Melbourne. There were plenty of other vague leads to be followed, and I was beginning to wonder whether Ebeling was worth all this trouble.

However, next time I was in Melbourne, I called at the St Kilda Road office. A soldier at the desk took the details of my request and asked me to wait on a vinyl chair beside a huge potplant. About fifteen minutes later, an efficient looking woman officer arrived, we shook hands and she sat opposite me, laying a
regulation green clip-folder on the low table between us. Her manner was very helpful, perhaps there was hope. Once again I explained that I was from the ANU, and that I was researching non-Labour responses to the Depression. I was interested in a Boer War veteran named Major Gus Ebeling, who had been awarded the D.S.O., and I wondered why.

'Are you a member of his family?', she asked.

'No, I'm not.'

'Then I'm afraid the information is confidential.'

'Oh, come on,' I said, trying to win her collusion with a display of casual camaraderie. 'He won it in 1917! Surely a D.S.O. is a public recognition of a soldier's service or bravery. If it can't be acknowledged in a history book, what's the point?'

'I'm sorry, but that's the way it is.'

'Well, suppose I locate his family, could you tell me then?'

'Locate his family first, then we'll see.'

Of course, there was no way of discovering whether Ebeling had been in Military Intelligence. This too was confidential. 'Why would it matter to anyone any more?' I asked. Apparently, it was a matter of security clearances, and the possibility that I was either a communist or a homosexual. I confess that I began to lose the officer's drift at this point, but, predictably, my assurance that I was neither made no difference.

'Where are the records kept?' I asked. 'Can I write direct to the officer in charge, or go there personally?'

'No, all requests of that kind are directed through this office, and the record centre itself is in a restricted area so you couldn't get in.'

'Because I might be a homosexual, right?'

'Or a communist ...' She smiled. All of a sudden her manner changed.
'Look,' she said, 'the fact is that all those old records are a mess. We've got our hands full just keeping current files in some sort of order. There just aren't the personnel to answer every historical request we get. It just takes too long to find anything. So we have to restrict our answers to family enquiries.'

We talked a little while longer, then I thanked her, and left. As I waited in St Kilda Road for a tram, I wrote the conversation out in my notebook. Perhaps it would come in useful for a short story. If I approached the right people it would probably be possible to get the information, but it seemed ridiculous to pester valuable contacts over what was probably a minor detail. So, instead, I went home and rang each of the Ebelings listed in the phone book. Here is the result.

Gus was the uncle of the well-known Australian tennis player Hans Ebeling, but had no direct descendents. I was invited to call round to see some mementos which the family still had of Gus. There, I couldn't believe it, was his D.S.O., but no citation. Among the documents and photos were two that were particularly relevant. One was a letter from Hans Ebeling to the director of the War Memorial asking for details of Gus's war record. Dated 18 September 1973, it begins:

In conversation with my esteemed friend Sir Edmund Herring at lunch last weekend he suggested I should write to you ...

The second document was Gus Ebeling's will. It was drawn up by Herring and Bathurst, Solicitors. That was Edmund Herring's family firm in Maryborough.10

We know for certain that Edmund Herring was a senior member of the White Army, he was district commander of the area from the edge of the city down the Peninsula to Hastings.

So, it seems that the Ebelings knew the Herrings. The evidence is merely suggestive, but it does support the idea that Ebeling was acting for the White Army on orders from Melbourne, and that his connection was Edmund Herring.

But, it was a long way for a researcher to travel to reach a less than conclusive result. Perhaps this line of inquiry was not the way to proceed. And there were other problems.

Pieces of key evidence have simply disappeared. The entire correspondences of the police commissioner, General Blamey, (who happened also to be head of the White Army) have vanished. The cabinet records of the state Labor government are missing. Key intelligence files have been culled ... in the course of the thesis I will detail these gaps. And I learned that a section on the White Army had appeared in the original manuscript of the autobiography of a well-known Victorian soldier, but that the passage had been struck out by the man's executor.

After almost a year of pleasant conversations and frustrating research, it was becoming clear that there simply was not enough information to write the kind of study I had envisaged. But I also realised that, in Victoria, this kind of study would have been rather dull: lists of names, organisational structures,

11. These should be held at the Public Record Office of Victoria. They are not there ... believe me.
minute variations in the arrangements from one place to the next ... and all in the interest of documenting an organisation which never actually did anything.

But what was coming out of the research was a sense that here was a world view which was worth investigating: the world view of the conservatives in the business and political elite and the conservatives in the male population at large. What mattered was not so much how the White Army was organised, or the names of those who were in it ... but why it was thought a legitimate political instrument by its patrons and (for possibly different reasons) by its members, and whether it really did have the potential, as some people have claimed, to overthrow the liberal democratic system.

I have come to the firm conclusion that it did have such a potential. The White Army was not a bunch of veterans drilling with broom sticks (although such events did occur), but a secret alliance of government officials, small businessmen, university students, professionals and ex-servicemen, most with access to fire-arms, and led by high ranking military or ex-military personnel.

The thesis is in two sections. Section One describes the structure and the social and geographical distribution of the White Army. It looks at the differences between country and the city members. It discloses the totalitarian objectives of the military cabal which ran the organisation. And it discusses the ideological loyalties which caused public servants and the press to withhold from the government the fact that a coup, or at very least serious political violence, was possible. This section, then, is concerned principally with private intentions and public secrecy.
Section Two is concerned with legitimation. It looks beyond individual and group statements of intention to the culture or ideology which informed the White Army as a united social force. The concern here is with language, with the rhetoric within which the White Army was established and within which it functioned. The contention is that many men who were involved simply did not comprehend the full implications of their involvement, and could not have foreseen, whatever their individual intentions, the potential of the movement for serious political violence. The militiamen did not think of themselves as militant or right-wing extremists. Their legitimations were drawn from values and precedents provided by popular conservatism, a body of thought which many of its adherents did not recognise as political at all, believing instead that they were defending fundamental tenets of decency and sheer common sense.

The occasion is Victoria in 1931. It was a federal election year, a year in which the ALP split and a new anti-Labor party, the UAP, won office. It was a year of flux and uncertainty in which a number of political alternatives were being advocated. This thesis is concerned with the words, symbols and actions which comprised one of the most influential of these: the political strain which is most conveniently referred to as conservatism. My interest is in conservative rhetoric and practice, not only as they are found in the immediate drama, but also in the history which they bring to that drama, and of which it is, in some respects, a product.

Having outlined what I am doing in this thesis, let me now avoid misunderstanding by saying what I am not doing.

Firstly, I am not attempting to write another account of how Australians think, or thought, en masse. Initially, I am only concerned with a conservative
strain which became influential, though not quite predominant, during 1931. Secondly, I am not concerned to contrast conservatism as ideology with some other body of economic and social thought which is projected by me as truth. I use the term ideology simply to mean a system of political or ethical thought and rhetoric. I do not use it in Althusser's sense of a falsehood deliberately or incidentally manufactured by the State in order to delude the people and to blind them to the true nature of their own economic interests. I accept Foucault's reply to this use of the term, when he says:

The notion of ideology appears to me to be difficult to use for three reasons. The first is that, whether one wants it to be or not, it is always in virtual opposition to something like truth. Now I believe that the problem is not to make the division between that which, in a discourse, falls under scientificty and truth and that which falls under something else, but to see historically how truth-effects are produced inside discourses which are not in themselves either true or false ... 12

Thirdly, I am not using the term 'conservative' in a loose or pejorative fashion to refer to all non-Labor or anti-socialist thought. I use it only to label a body of thought and practice which I define by showing it in action in the course of this thesis itself.

Conservatism, then, is one of the key concepts used in this study. It cannot be defined exactly here, since clarifying and defining it is one of the thesis's principal concerns. Broadly though, I am referring to such cultural elements as informed a respectable Imperial tradition which opposed Labor as the collapse of colonial capitalism combined with the apparent irrationality of the

Depression. It was a world view which was constructed despite or because of the possibilities presented by the rising liberalism of the period, by the new Keynesianism, by the related ethos of co-operation proposed by the rising manufacturing interests, by the anti-Empire rhetoric of Lang and the radical nationalists and by the socialist and communist alternatives proposed by the Left. This is the barest indication my notion of conservatism, I add further qualifications and riders in the text itself. But the point I want to make here is that one cannot write about the White Army without reference to conservatism or without making it the basis and subject of one's analysis.

Two other concepts which are defined and explored in greater detail in the thesis are dominant ideology and marginalisation. Briefly, by dominant ideology I mean that body of belief and that agenda for debate which are recognised within a society as being the prevailing orthodoxy: those ideas that can be espoused, those issues which can be raised for discussion, without attracting charges of radicalism or reaction. By marginalisation, I mean that process by which individuals, ideas or practices are distanced by agents of the dominant ideology, or willingly distance themselves, so that they are perceived as no longer belonging to orthodox practice or belief. Again, I discuss these concepts in greater detail and define them more fully in the text.

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15. See any edition of the *Australian Manufacturer* for 1931. The journal actually supported the expansionist economic policies advocated by Theodore.
Wherever possible, I have indicated the source of original oral and written anecdotal material. However, because of the delicate nature of the White Army topic, some of those who were interviewed asked not to be named, some, indeed, asked me to stop taking notes when the subject of the White Army was raised.

This thesis owes a great deal to many people. To all those who wrote to me, or who spent half a day talking, I express my gratitude. Interviewees are listed in the bibliography.

Special thanks to Andrew Moore for his great generosity, to John Merritt for his constructive supervision and to Mrs Jessie Clarke whose thoughtfulness and knowledge of who's who made much of the study possible. Also to be thanked are Jane Allen, the late Mrs. Pat Baer, Raymond Bradfield, Jim Cathcart, Mardie Foy, Eric Fry, Tom Harley, Cameron Hazlehurst, Fred Holt, Kate Kantor, Sir Alfred Kemsley, John Molony, Tony Marshall, Kate Sands, John Schauble, Geoff Serle, Barry Stephenson and Christine Wise. My greatest debt is to Jo Goodie who endured all.
PART ONE

THE ORGANISATION
Although fascists occasionally admired the cut of each others' ideologies and drew inspiration from each other's examples, inter-war fascism was, by its very nature, manifested in essentially national movements, each drawing on and generating its own national myths, fears and symbols. What all shared was a fervent conformist patriotism and a literally violent hatred of social democracy.

So we are not concerned here with those political oddballs who have attracted publicity in Australia from time to time by appearing in Nazi regalia and proclaiming a new Reich. David Harcourt's *Everyone Wants to be Fuehrer* is full of them. Lone fanatics posing in suburban lounge-rooms with a Nazi flag on the wall and a picture of Hitler sitting on the television. As Eric Campbell was to discover, once fascist movements become identified as foreign influences they degenerate into fancy dress politics and cease to be relevant to mainstream opinion. In order to be credible, fascism must be unambiguously national. We will see that, in 1931, Victorian fascism achieved this nationalist credibility by establishing among its supporters its preferred meanings of such terms as 'national', 'loyal', 'seditious' and 'citizen'.

For all that, I remain pragmatic about using the word fascist to describe members of the White Army, even though it is a word which some former members have themselves used (some with regret, one with frank enthusiasm). Despite any number of caveats and qualifications, it is impossible to set aside the images of brutality and Nazi genocide which the word inevitably evokes. Perhaps, then, a little Existentialism is indicated. People, as Sartre says, are their actions. Fascism, it might be said, ought to be thought of (and probably is

6. Amos, pp. 92-93.
generally thought of) as a praxis: as the manifestation in action of certain ideas. But the White Army, whatever its aspirations and cultural potentialities, never acted in ways which could reasonably be called fascist. That the organisation was potentially (or proto-) fascist, there is not doubt. But because its incipient fascism was never realised in action, it is absurd to speak of individual members as though they were the moral counterparts of Klaus Barbi or General Pinochet.

On the other hand, historians are not in the business of coining euphemisms. Fascism was not just its leaders or more notorious agents. It was a mass movement. It was not only the brutalities which occurred inside Dachau, it was also the ideology which enabled people in the nearby township to believe that they did not know what was going on. Indeed, what is so threatening about fascism is not that it recruits deviants and psychotics, but that it wins the support and approval of ordinary and respectable folk.

This thesis examines the Victorian para-military organisation, the White Army, and properly locates it within the ideas and methods of inter-war conservatism. I have used the term fascist only where that culture itself supplies the word. My own view is that the Australian secret militias ought to be seen as the national manifestation of the international phenomenon now known as fascism. But, in the end, there is no value or validity in a dispute over the imagined essentialist content of a label. What matters is to understand the armies as they functioned within the political machinery and legitimating rhetoric of Australian conservatism.

For as long as the Depression lasted, conservative attitudes to economic policy and Empire loyalty remained influential. Most of the non-Labour press became openly hostile to Lang and Theodore, until, by the end of 1930, they had
almost all become vehicles for the world view identified in this study as conservatism. The tactic of the conservatives was not to seek new solutions, but to shore up their defences and to proclaim their political and economic affections as moral absolutes.

In 1926, fascism had become so respectable that the middle class Melbourne magazine, Table Talk, bestowed the fascist accolade upon the highly political police commissioner, General Thomas Blamey. Widely recognised as the appointee of the conservative state government, charged with de-unionising the police force in the wake of the 1923 Police Strike, Blamey was praised by the magazine for his resolute leadership and sense of public duty. It accompanied the article with a cartoon in which Blamey sits before a backdrop of policemen each with baton raised, drawn in the shape of a swastika. It was a prophetic image.

By 1930, the idea that Australia should submit to a fascist dictatorship was being openly canvassed. In April 1930, the tireless committeeman and pillar of the Melbourne Establishment, Sir James Barrett, received a letter from a Mr. Alfred Thody, a resident of a boarding house in respectable Camberwell. Thody wrote to Sir James in a familiar, almost confidential style, as though sure that he was communicating with a man of like mind. Thody explained that, in his view:

The political Labor party should cease to exist. It does no good for the working man. To the unemployed there can be little or no consolation in the knowledge that we have a Labor P.M. or Premier. The salvation of the working man lies in work, not politics.

Equally resolute was Thody's solution:

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7. Table Talk, 28 October 1926, p. 13.
Police Commissioner, Brigadier General Thomas Blamey, from a full page personality profile, *Table Talk*, 28 October, 1926.
I am inclined to think that our Parliaments are incapable of leading the country out of the economic lunatic asylum. This may call for an Australian Mussolini. Time will show. That the thought of a Mussolini is creeping into people's minds seems to be demonstrated by the fact that one newspaper not long ago thought it necessary to state that there is no place in Australia for a man like him or Stalin.8

At Melbourne Anzac Day parades between 1930 and at least 1937, Italian fascists were allowed to march as a distinct group. Neither their blackshirts nor their fascist salutes provoked any adverse comment in the major Melbourne dailies.9

This is not to say that great numbers of Australians were explicitly endorsing fascist ideas. But it was a respectable position to take. For some conservatives, Mussolini demonstrated what a stout and patriotic leader could achieve in the struggle against socialism and in the quest for national purpose. The Sydney Morning Herald, for example, urged that tough anti-Labour measures introduced by the Bruce government be supported by citizens, who were asked to note that 'Italy ... was only saved from Red Dominance by the heroic remedy of Fascism.'10 The Nationalist premier of Victoria, H.S.W. Lawson, returned from Italy in 1923 greatly impressed. Mussolini, he said, was 'the man whom Providence wanted to lead Italy.'11

8. A. Thody to Sir James Barrett, L.11.4.1930, Barrett Collection, Box 11, Miscellaneous Correspondence 1930-1938, Melbourne University Archives.
9. G. Cresciani, Fascism, Anti-Fascism and Italians in Australia 1922-1945, ANU Press, 1981, p. 29 and plate XVIII; and relevant issues of The Age, Argus and Sun. Concern was expressed from time to time, both in the press and in government, at the fervour of this new Italian nationalism, not because it was fascist, but simply because it as thought inappropriate for migrants to maintain so passionate a loyalty to a foreign country (Cresciani, p. 25 n8, p. 30).
11. Similar statements were made by Sir George Fuller, premier of New South Wales (Cresciani, p. 139).
Lawson was just one of many Australian visitors to Italy in the 1920s and '30s who sung Mussolini's praises. Even Walter Murdoch admitted to being impressed by the Duce's charisma:

My own impression is that Mussolini is a far greater man than most people outside Italy recognise. Or rather, I think of him as, not a man at all, but a great force - an elemental force, like the earthquake and the hurricane - and the pestilence. One of the extraordinary men whose will admits no impossibilities, is barred by no obstacles, and pushes them into history.

But Murdoch was too much a liberal to be enraptured by Mussolini. Unlike many, Murdoch appreciated the cost of fascist power:

No one can be in Italy for a week without seeing that the long series of assassinations and outrages by the Fascist gangs has done its desired work, and that Mussolini has the country cowed and terrified.\(^1\)

But Mr. Thody was right. The idea that Australia should submit to a fascist dictator was 'creeping into people's minds'. As the liberal *Age* observed with concern:

... loose thinking speakers, impatient at some difficulty, are occasionally heard declaring that "we need a Mussolini" ... It is fashionable at the moment to talk of mob rule and mass emotion as the unstable elements of democratic government - to suggest that dictatorship, or any form of government which is not democratic, is the rule of cold reason and high intellect.\(^2\)

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12. One of the most influential pro-fascist memoires was by the vice-chancellor of Sydney University, Dr. H.M. Moran, *Letters from Rome*, Angus and Robertson, Sydney, 1935. (Others are listed by Cresciani, pp. 48-9).


In inter-war Australia, fear of 'mob rule and mass emotion' really meant fear of the working class (the middle class does not habitually refer to itself as 'the masses'). There were also liberal and conservative fears about the risks of placing working class men in positions of power - a hazard courted by the election of a Labor government. It seemed quite reasonable to that arch-employer, BHP's Essington Lewis, to argue that a bloodless, right-wing revolution would help to ease economic tensions and social misery. A short lived dictatorship under which ministers were appointed 'according to their ability', he said, 'would not be altogether a bad thing for Australia. The favoured candidate for the position of dictator was not General Blarney (who, as leader of the White Army, wanted the job), but General Monash (who commanded almost universal respect, but who soundly disapproved, as we will see, of the entire project).

The calls for Monash to assume control gained momentum after the following letter was published in the 'Open Forum' columns of The Bulletin. At the close of 1930, The Bulletin reviewed the past (and by general agreement, sorry) year. The magazine asked what could be done to enable Australia to turn over a new leaf for 1931. Among the range of solutions, was this modest proposal:

Let John Monash Do It

Dear BULLETIN, - There is only one man who can save Australia, and that is John Monash. Let the remnants of the Old Brigade rally round him and give him a council of financial experts. Put Australia under semi-military rule. Form concentration camps for the starving women and children. Have military pickets; send unemployed out to work for farmers on the land to grow food for the women and children. Put Communists on some old tramps and ship them to the Antarctic with tools, six months' food supply and each man a gun, and let them put into practice their political theories - with full power to use the guns.

General Monash is one of the greatest organisers the world has ever seen, and with the advice of financiers, backed up by drum-head court-martials, he would save Australia within three years. - Yours, OLD DIGGER.16

This began a debate on the merits of fascism in the letter pages of the Bulletin, and produced the following letter in February from one 'Monsoon Mike':

Monash or Mungana

Dear BULLETIN, - Herewith another supporter of the doctrine of handing over Australia to Monash as dictator. Pending his return from representing Australia at Delhi, our humorous and loquacious Governments might show their alleged good faith in the matter of slewing Australia off the straight road to ruin by

(a) Abolishing payment of members;
(b) Halving their clerical armies ...;
(c) Abolishing the baby bonus;
(d) Drastically investigating all old-age and invalid pensions and cutting out the frauds;
(e) Abolishing 'Hansard', State and Federal;
(f) Abolishing all doles ...;
(g) Abolishing all basic wages and union preferences, leaving a fair field to the man who really wants to work;
(h) Rounding up all the work-shy and unemployable parasites and giving them the alternative of either working or starving in labor camps, their wives and families being fed meanwhile from the results of their work. That kind wouldn't starve!

Of course it all sounds very impracticable but it is getting to be high time that the plain everyday Australian staged some sort of a definite protest if he does not really want to become the rickshaw-man for

Monash himself could not escape such talk. Geoffery Serle tells that as early as 1927, Monash had received appeals from Sydney groups urging him to head a military movement to rescue Australia from the politicians and bring about an end to the conflict between Labour and Capital. Throughout 1930 and 1931, publicly and privately, people outside the Labour movement pleaded with Monash to take control. Serle says that the matter became really serious when Monash was approached by three prominent Melburnians, the well-known businessman Robert Knox, Kingsley Henderson, the architect, and L. N. Roach of Bank House. Speaking on behalf of 'certain gentlemen', they urged Monash to establish himself as national leader. At first Monash's rebuffs were briefly stated, but as the likes of Major-General Grimwade swelled the chorus from the Right, Monash felt compelled to spell out his opposition to their plans.

'If ever a time should come', he wrote to Grimwade, 'that an English speaking community alters its system of government and abandons the present democracy, I feel convinced this would come about by constitutional means and not by the methods so familiar in Latin Countries'.

Monash told Grimwade that he would not become a dictator because he was not prepared to abandon the 'present constitutional system'. And as for those who wanted him to organise for the suppression of the revolution which they 'evidently

17. The Bulletin, 11 February 1931, p. 9. See also the disgusted response to this debate in Labor Call, 5 March.
19. Ibid., p. 518.
expect will be instigated by the communists and red-raggers...', Monash wrote, 'I am inclined greatly to discount the existence of any serious danger of upheaval.'

But the suggestion would not be scotched, and finally one correspondent, writing on behalf of 'a number of Sydney businessmen', pushed Monash too far. This time, as Serle says, Monash blew up. So clear is his assessment of what these anti-democrats wanted, that the reproduction of this lengthy passage from Serle might be allowed:

What do you and your friends want me to do? To lead a movement to upset the Constitution, oust the jurisdiction of Parliament, and usurp the governmental power? If so, I have no ambition to embark on High Treason, which any such action would amount to.

What would you say if a similar proposal were made by the Communists and Socialists to seize political power for the benefit of the proletariat and the extinction of the bourgeoisie, as they have done in Russia? Would you not call that Revolution and Treason to the Crown and Constitution?

Depend on it, the only hope for Australia is the ballot box and an educated electorate. You and your people should get busy and form an organisation as efficient, as widespread, and as powerful as that of the Labor Party.

As Serle points out, Monash knew that members of the Naval and Military Club were organising the 'White Army' or League of National Security (LNS) as it was secretly known. Throughout the metropolitan area, dependable ex-servicemen and men from the respectable middle class had taken the White Army's oaths of secrecy and loyalty. As Truth later recalled, in 1931:

20. Ibid., p. 519.
21. Ibid., p. 520.
there was much talk in the bars of the city of a certain organisation known as the 'White Guard'. Scores of the best and most earnest men about the place seemed to belong to it, and there was much winking and blinking and sly joking about guns that made shoulders sore.\textsuperscript{22}

In March, \textit{Smith's Weekly} warned that signs of trouble were everywhere. Dates predicted for general upheaval were discussed at street corners. Chalked on the footpaths of city streets was the invitation "strike now!". More citizens were carrying revolvers than ever before, with gun registrations at record levels. To the wary, it seemed that iron-barred gates and window protections were more common. And at unemployed demonstrations, \textit{Smith's} reported, 'at the slightest sign of disturbance, police appear suddenly from nowhere. Mounted police and light horsemen charge through the streets in spectacular fashion. What', asked the paper, 'does it all mean?'\textsuperscript{23}

On at least three occasions, fears of communist revolution led by the unemployed became extreme. Soon after he returned from the senior diplomatic posting in the United States, Herbert Brookes was warned privately of 'possible "red" risings' on 9 February 1931. Friends at Mt Macedon told him stories of machine guns having been stolen after Scullin discontinued compulsory military service. Ignoring all advice, Brookes drove into Melbourne on the fateful day, to find that the rumours had been taken to heart, and that the streets were deserted.\textsuperscript{24} \textit{The Age} cautioned that:

\begin{quote}
We are passing through difficult times, and minds are disturbed. In many quiet homes ... the occupants are persistently asking what do all the sinister signs mean and whether is Australia drifting? Unless adequate
\end{quote}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{22} \textit{Truth}, 16 January 1932, p. 1.
\item \textsuperscript{23} \textit{Smith's Weekly}, 7 March 1931, p. 1.
\item \textsuperscript{24} \textit{Pocket Diary}, 1931, 4 and 9 February, Brookes Papers, MS 1924/2/302.
\end{itemize}
answers are given, a harmful psychology may be created. As in case of the child, groundless fears may magnify and distort the facts.\textsuperscript{25}

But the rumours persisted. There was talk of communists planning to launch the revolution by blacking out the city with an attack on the power plants at Yallourn.\textsuperscript{26} 6 March was to be the date of a series of unemployed demonstrations in each capital city, and conservatives feared that it was to be the date of the revolution. By a series of accidents, we are in a position to know a good deal of the precautions which were taken that day, and they are the subject of the next chapter. On 31 July, the White Army was once again certain that serious trouble from insurrectionists was imminent. Member of the LNS were placed on alert to await further instructions.\textsuperscript{27} On the following day, between two and three thousand unemployed marched from the Trades Hall, through the city to the Yarra bank. Although there were violent confrontations between the unemployed on the one hand, and police and anti-Bolshevik citizens on the other, once again there was no revolution.\textsuperscript{28}

Nevertheless, Blamey kept his secret para-military organisation on standby. Men of the middle class knew that they might be required at any time. As one ex-member of the White Army, who was an intern in a large Melbourne hospital, recalls:

Members of the League of National Security referred to themselves as "The Friends of Ellen's", and it became apparent from discreet verbal interchange at social gatherings that 'Friends' were all around.\textsuperscript{29}

\textsuperscript{25} \textbf{The Age}, 5 February 1931, p. 6.
\textsuperscript{26} Browne to Jones, 24.1.31, CRS A369.
\textsuperscript{27} \textit{Ibid.}, 31.7.31.
\textsuperscript{28} \textbf{The Age}, 3 August 1931.
\textsuperscript{29} Dr. J.V. Ashburner to M.J.C. L. 12.10.81. "Friends of Ellen's" is a play on the intials LNS.
Towards the end of the summer of 1931, an anti-Labour, anti-Catholic organisation known as the White Army began to generate units across the state of Victoria. As it spread, it was monitored with increasing concern by the head of the Melbourne branch of the Commonwealth secret service, Inspector Roland S. Browne. After three months of inquiry, he reported to his superior in Canberra that 'there is every reason to believe that if it did not approve of constituted authority, it might act in opposition to it - a position which might well lead to Civil War.'

But Browne was an unusual individual: with John Monash, he was one of the few senior military men who perceived the new movement as a threat. The reaction of Browne's chief, the director of the Investigation Branch, Major H. E. Jones, was more typical. He assured Browne that such organisations had been known to him for many years, and remarked:

There is a good deal of that sort of thing in the air these days ... and it is quite likely that the present condition of affairs throughout Australia, with the possibilities of civil commotion at any place and at any time, has forced responsible organisations and citizens to create some form of protection, apart from the ordinary official side.

One month later, units of the White Army throughout the Wimmera were mobilised. Browne sent an agent to investigate, and his report covered at least

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1. Browne's reports on the White Army were collected in two Investigation Branch (IB) files, now held by the Australian Archives: 'Papers Relating to White Army', CRS A395 item, whole series; and 'Formation of Citizens' League' CRS A369 item D858. These will be referred to as CRS A395 and CRS A369 respectively.

2. CRS A395, 23 April 1931.

3. CRS A369, 5 February 1931.
ten file pages. Although - as another writer has observed - the files appear to have been culled⁴, ample evidence remains.

By the evening of Friday, 6 March 1931, days of threats and innuendo had brought the town of Donald to the edge of violence. Inside the local convent, Catholics waited with arms, in fear of a protestant attack. Outside, the White Army patrolled, waiting for the moment when the Catholics and the communists would rise. One of those on the outside was a young soldier settler named Arthur Clifford. In an interview, he recalled the event:

I was out on the farm at the time. I got a call late one Thursday night. Be at Major Sproat's place, first thing in the morning. When we got there, we were told that we'd have to form an organisation to protect the town. We were all sworn to secrecy. They didn't know who it was: whether it was the communists or who. But we had to guard the bridges, and the main buildings, and things like that. We didn't know whether it was the Irish or the communists.

Harris was the head man here. But he said that he didn't know. Some of us thought it was going to be the Catholics. And the Catholics were guarding the convent, because they thought it was us.

I reckon it must have been a put up job to see how far you could have divided the country.

Whoever started it should have been shot. We were so close to shooting at each other that I wouldn't like to say. If one shot had been fired, the whole town would have been at it.

As the storm mounted over the preceding days, Catholic children were terrorised with tales of the fate which awaited them and their parents once the revolution broke. A local minister reported at the time that Catholics were openly threatened and were 'fearing for their lives and property'. But protestants too were afraid. The more vigilant had heard that Father Coghlan and Doctor Flanagan had been ferrying arms to Catholics throughout the district. Doctor Flanagan was also said to have used his car to transport communists into town, while Mr Kelly, the dentist, had been seen driving home with a car-load of crates which were assumed to contain bombs. The agent from the Investigation Branch (IB), Les Simpson, later established that the doctor's communists had been two swaggies who had hitched a lift, and that Kelly's bombs were 'in reality ... two cases of tomatoes from St. Arnaud'.

Although the local protestant ministers attempted to reason with their people against attacking the Catholics, pointing out that Catholics and communists had nothing in common, many local protestants looked to Major Sproat and Colonel Harris for leadership rather than to their clergy. Those who had guns were issued with ammunition; one report put the quantity at 500 rounds each. Plans to guard the electric light plant, the fire station, the railway and the banks were devised, and the militiamen began to drill behind the fire station.

5. CRS A395, 23 April 1931. The file contains seven closely typed foolscap pages detailing the findings of an agent whom Browne sent to investigate unrest in the region.
6. Ibid., 28 April, Statement 5.
7. Ibid., 23 April.
8. Ibid., 28 April.
9. Ibid., 23 April, Statement D.
But the protestants of Donald were not alone. Throughout the Wimmera, 'responsible citizens' had heard that the Catholics, communists and unemployed had formed a dark and treasonous syndicate, which planned to sweep through the region, rifling the banks, commandeering land, wheat and stock, and slaughtering law-abiding Australians in their beds.

In town after town, it was rumoured that piano cases of rifles had been delivered to convents and were now in possession of the nuns. In Wedderburn and Lilydale, the rumour was that the Catholics had a store of arms hidden in the hills.

Towns which are definitely known to have mobilised on 6 March are, Ouyen, Birchip, St Arnaud, Mt Jeffcott, Wycheproof, Yatpool, Donald, Wedderburn, Korong Vale, Charlton, Horsham, Boort, Inglewood and Eckin South near Terang. There is also circumstantial evidence to suggest that mobilisations occurred in Bendigo, Maryborough, Ballarat, Avoca and Geelong.

10. This was a particularly enduring rumour. CRS A395, 28 April, Statement 5; M.J. Nolan to Attorney General, L. 24 March 1931, CRS A395.


18-22. In PROV, Chief Secretary, 1931/A3586.

18. Local Interviews, particularly Mr. Arthur Clifford.

23. Inglewood Advertiser, 13 March 1931, p. 3.

24. Inglewood Advertiser, 13 March 1931, p. 3.

25. Roy Fulton, letter to M.J.C.

28. The Mail (Ballarat), 9 March 1931, report of 'alarmist stories'.

30. The Industrial Herald (Geelong), 12 March 1931, p. 1., rumours of unrest on 6 March said to have been circulated.
Although accounts of the Bolshevik plan varied from town to town, it was generally believed that they planned to march south from the Murray into central Victoria, from where they would be well placed for a strike on Melbourne. Some maintained that there were scores of IWW and communists camped over the river from Mildura, and that there the reds were practising with machine guns until the mobilisation order came. This rumour of an incursion from the north had its root in the presence of a huge camp of unemployed on the riverbank at Mildura. Furthermore, it was across the Murray in New South Wales, that the great Bolshevik Jack Lang was in control. All the rumours agreed that the day appointed for the uprising was 6 March 1931 - a day on which the Unemployed Workers' Movement had announced that its members would demonstrate in each of the capital cities for a better deal.

To meet the approaching force, the war veterans of Ouyen dug trenches to the north of the town. Houses on the main road were evacuated. In Wedderburn, men armed with pitch-forks, rifles and revolvers took up positions in the main street. Alex Holmes, now president of the local historical society, remembers taking his father and another elderly resident out to the reservoir, where they were hoisted into a gum tree to await the worst.

As cars entered Wedderburn from east and west along the Calder Highway, bewildered drivers were interrogated and then instructed to display a white flag or badge as they drove through the town. Drivers who protested were warned that sentries within the town had orders to open fire on any vehicle not carrying a flag.

31. CRS A395, 1 May; and local interviews.
32. CRS A395, Nolan to Attorney General.
Alex Holmes recalls that members of the militia picked up a couple of sustenance workers who had been unable to sleep, and brought them before the local solicitor for cross examination as Bolshevik suspects. The two men told their interrogator that as far as they were concerned the whole town was out of its head, and the following day they moved on for saner parts.

Those chosen to defend the town were either farmers, businessmen or men in secure employment. Alex Holmes and his brother ran a general store. Achilles Gray, a local councillor and J.P., administered the oaths of loyalty and secrecy. And the organiser was Ephray McHugh, a former lieutenant in the AIF.

McHugh, like many of the rural organisers, received his instructions from Melbourne by phone. Beyond that, McHugh told Holmes years later, he had no idea who his orders came from. A phone call to the shire hall had instructed him to form a militia to meet a coming threat. He understood that enlistment was to be carried out discreetly, and, in the event, unemployed and Catholics were excluded. Like others who had acted on the strength of anonymous phone calls from Melbourne, McHugh apparently believed that a network of ex-servicemen had been activated, and he had no doubt that it was his responsibility to answer once more the call of duty.

Some local organisers were approached personally by White Army representatives. Annuello, in the far north of the state, was visited by a solicitor's clerk named Plowman. He contacted Captain Drinkwater, the district's highest ranking officer and instructed him to form a local unit. He also made arrangements for the evacuation of some fifty Melbourne children to the town should the capital become unsafe.33

33. Mrs. Drinkwater to M.J.C., Ls, June, July 1981.
Another particularly diligent White Army recruitment officer was a veteran of the Boer and First World Wars, Major Gus Ebeling. In the days before the March mobilisation, Ebeling had travelled from town to town, contacting ex-officers and urging them to organise local militia to meet the coming revolution. Although he lived in Avoca, Ebeling introduced himself as a member of the secret service from Melbourne.\(^{34}\) It was Ebeling who, in a midnight call early in the week, roused the militia leaders of Donald. It is known that he also alerted officers in Birchip, St Arnaud and Ouyen, and possibly he visited other communities as well.\(^{35}\) Simpson, the IB agent, reported that some of the rumours which were current in Donald after Ebeling's departure were that -

A 'red army' was supposed to be marching on Bendigo, Ballarat, and Geelong and the reds were very strong in Bendigo which was likely 'to fall immediately'. Another 'red army' was to march on Mildura, taking in Wedderburn, Wycheproof and Donald, en route ... He (Major Ebeling) was only in Donald a day or two.\(^{36}\)

But Donald was unusual in one respect: it was one of the few places where Catholics knew sufficient to defend themselves. For the most part, the militiamen's pledge of secrecy held reasonably firm. In some of these towns even today, there are elderly residents who were unemployed, Catholic or Labor supporters during the Depression, and who profess to know nothing of the evening's

\(^{34}\) Simpson, the IB agent, believed that Ebeling was referring to the White Army's own intelligence corps. (CRS A395, 23 April). This is not unlikely. The White Army's intelligence unit was headed by Julian Smith, a director of the printing from Arbuckle & Co. (CRS A 369, verified in an interview with a business associate of Smith's). At its peak, this unit had 600 correspondents supplying it with information (CRS A467, File 42 Bundle 89(2)). A collection of their later summaries survives in the papers of Francis de Groot.

\(^{35}\) CRS A395, 1 May, 28 April; PROV, Chief Secretary 1931/A 3586.

\(^{36}\) CRS A395, 1 May.
activities and never to have heard of the White Army. It is not surprising, then, to find that the overwhelming majority of local newspapers contained nothing to support or refute the rumours which were circulating. But even those few editors who did respond simply contributed to the wave of apprehension and insecurity which was sweeping the Wimmera. In his regular column, 'They Say', the editor of The Birchip Advertiser relayed even the most implausible rumours, and, despite some initial prevarication, finally came down on the side of vigilance. This is a representative selection from the items which he published in the edition immediately before the mobilisation:

THEY SAY

That it was freely hinted that big riots were expected this week.

That amongst other things it was said that two local justices were swearing in volunteers.

That another unsubstantiated statement was to the effect that four policemen had been killed in riots in the city.

That no riots have taken place.

That reports of the disappearance of 1200 military rifles proved inaccurate.

That to be forewarned is to be forearmed.

That every endeavour should be made to prevent the smouldering fires being fanned into flames.

That there are too many peace-loving citizens in this country to ensure success to such an insane movement as Communism.

That before swallowing Communist propaganda ill-advised citizens should ponder the inevitable consequences.
That to be branded traitors for life is an unenviable state to aspire to.

That it behoves everyone to come forward at a time like this and readily exhibit their loyalty.

That several have been greatly worried about their wealth - more than their health.

That they fear for the safety of their money in the bank and are inclined to rush along and draw it out.

That there would be more risk of losing it if removed from the bank.

That if there is any truth in the contention that rioting is to take place at midnight on Friday in the capital cities and elsewhere everybody should be prepared.

That any movement to protect life and property from any impending happening should be encouraged. 37

As we now know, when the sun rose on 7 March there had been no revolution, the banks remained intact and the Depression continued unabated. What had happened in rural Victoria to cause so many responsible citizens to endorse a vigilante force? As one Catholic put it at the time, protestants were 'ready to mow the R.C.s down ... Men around these parts whom I have always credited with a lot of sense all joined up in this White Army.' Although rural townships must have gossiped about the evening's activities, most local newspapers felt it was inappropriate to run the story. Local editors, in effect, helped to restore the White Army's breached security.

37. Birchip Advertiser, 3 March 1931, p. 3.
However a few papers did carry reports, and they give some idea of what responses the mobilisation provoked. The Ouyen Mail printed a brief account of evening's patrols in the town. Accompanying it was a ballad written by one of the participants. Styling himself, 'Agricola', he called his song 'The Battle for Ouyen'. It concluded with these stanzas:

I'll buy a brace of pistols large
a sword or butcher's knife,
And deeds of derring do I'll do,
for children, home and wife.

I'll give my life for Malleedom,
dear to the mortgagee,
And the bloke they call Horatius,
will be nought compared to me.38

Out of context, the sentiments of this poem may seem comically absurd - but its absurdity is also its sadness. It is not the work of a people consumed by rancour, but the verse of a man who craved action and recognition in a social order which seemed to be passing him by. Indeed the poem itself seems to arise not so much from a desire to kill as from a need to compensate in verse for the valiant action which history itself had withheld. To farmers who were watching produce prices falling inexplicably, who were seeing their lands repossessed, and who knew that the roads were swelling with a faceless stream of unemployed - to such people, the rumour that evil forces were loose was all too plausible. Because the White Army presented these men with the illusion that they could once more scale the

heights of Gallipoli and intervene heroically in their own destiny, the failure of
the malignant forces to materialise was all the more unsettling.39

The sense of purpose which the White Army brought to the rural townsmen
cannot be underestimated. The frustration which was expressed by 'Agricola' was
a product of factors which were replicated in the lives of individuals across the
country: the threat of personal financial ruin, the psychological impact of the war
experience, the vastness of the land, the perennial apprehension of an aggressor to
the north - each contributed to an atmosphere of disorientation and fear which the
militia promised to dispel. There were many small business people and farmers
who, like 'Agricola', knew all too painfully that the most immediate threat to their
place in 'Malleedom' was the mortgagee - the bank. Indeed, a sense of alienation
from the storehouses of capital was understandably a recurrent theme throughout
the Depression. In February 1931, Stan Cross reworked this theme when he drew a
cartoon for Smith's Weekly entitled 'A Friend in Need!' It shows the drowning
Australian employer shouting to the fat banker of the pier, 'Help! Quick! A life
belt! I'm sinking!' The banker holds a life-belt labelled credit, but refuses to

39. The writer legitimates the White Army by associating it with that sign of
learning in British-Australian culture, the classics. He dignifies himself as
'Agricola', asserting thereby that he knows his Latin, and also perhaps that
he knows his history: Agricola was also the Roman Governor of Britain who
featured in school history courses as having presided during the triumph of
classical civilisation over the crude local culture. (It would not of course be
the first time that the Pax Romana had been interpreted in such a way that
it legitimated the Pax Britannica). But the evocation of these cultural
values is achieved in a medium which established the writer as 100 per cent
Australian: the poem is a gung-ho bush ballad. Similarly, Horatius is not
some foreign affectation, he is evoked heroically and irreverently as a
'bloke'. In fact, Horatius has less to do with classical culture than with
traditional drawing room culture, his name being associated primarily with a
favourite dramatic poem, 'Horatius and the Bridge' from Macaulay's 'Lays of
Ancient Rome'. To people haunted by fears of illiterate Bolsheviks and
homeless unemployed, these touch-stones of hearth and school reinforced a
sense of legitimacy and of belonging in the face of incomprehensible and
hostile challenges. To country members, the White Army did not seem to be
a political organisation, but a movement which defended personal and
cultural values which preceded politics, or as Macaulay put it, 'Then none
was for the party; / Then all were for the state...'. 
throw it. 'No fear!' he says, 'You swim ashore first - how do I know I'll get it back?' Even today there are people who bitterly recall how their cries for help were spurned by the bankers.

One soldier-settler (an ex-White Army man himself) said in interview, 'I've hated banks all my life. If they'd let me have 500 pound I'd have seen it through. Instead they chucked me off my place, and I had to bust myself to get back on my feet.' Another farmer, a Queenslander, recalled, 'One character in the Bank seemed to think it was a crime to lend us anything. He talked as if he was lending money out of his own pocket! Many rural Australians considered the banks to be insensitive to hardships which a sympathetic loan would have ameliorated. In the country, the banks became a symbol of city controlled interests which made money for city fat cats out of the misfortune of hard-working farmers.

As the Depression deepened, the rural experience of isolation and powerlessness became more extreme. Country people saw themselves not only as victims of wayward economic and climatic forces, but of policies, of institutions and interests from which they were alienated by distance, and, more importantly, by the barrier between town and country world views.

For the wheat farmers - a group strongly represented in the Mallee and Wimmera - the greatest betrayal and cause of ruin was the Scullin government's

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40. Smith's Weekly, 14 February, 1931, p. 3.
41. Interview with Arthur Clifford, Donald.
'Grow More Wheat' campaign, a débâcle still notorious in the legends of the bush.⁴³

After the war, easy credit and attractive prices encouraged both new soldier settlers and established farmers to expand their production capacity. But while the resulting increase enriched the middlemen, it was achieved at too high a cost for many farmers. In order to buy high-priced land, take on extra labour and upgrade machinery, many farmers incurred mortgage and hire-purchase commitments which Schedvin has calculated few could have met, even if production levels had not been savaged by drought and the Depression.⁴⁴

By January 1928, prices had begun to fall, and by mid-1929 many farmers were in serious financial trouble. Yet, says Schedvin, few realised the full seriousness of the downturn: prices had fallen before and credit had been tight—but always in the past things had come good.⁴⁵ Even in the city, there were prominent economists who had not realised that they were witnessing an international collapse. E. R. Walker, who was later to write a key economics text on the Depression, admitted in September 1930 that he had only just come to understand that the crisis was world-wide.⁴⁶


⁴⁴. Schedvin, pp. 146, 149n.

⁴⁵. Ibid., p. 146.

What was understood was that years of irresponsible borrowing had left Australia with massive debts and a dubious credit rating in London. This, and insufficient exports, had seriously upset Australia's balance of payments by the beginning of 1930. But in February that year, Scullin announced a plan which seemed to provide a solution to everyone's problems: Australian farmers would grow more wheat, guaranteed 4/- per bushel at the country sidings. The wheat would be held in a new pool controlled by the growers, and sales would be regulated to take advantage of fluctuations in international prices and demand.

The publicity campaign was a huge success. Advertisements on radio and in the rural press urged farmers to serve their country by increasing their production. The Post Office struck patriotic campaign slogans onto the mail, and the 'Grow More Wheat' motto was printed on the packaging of agricultural products. The patriotic appeal found its mark: there were many ex-diggers toiling in the backblocks, only too pleased to be needed by their country in its hour of need. And for many, the guaranteed price seemed a godsend: a bumper crop would set their personal finances back on the road to recovery. Victorian growers invested labour and money to put more than a million additional acres under wheat; the increase in national acreage was 21%. The total yield was a record 213.6 million bushels, a 30% increase on the average annual yield for the previous four years, and a doubling of the drought-ravaged harvest for each of the previous two years. But between planting and harvest, arrangements in Canberra began to fall apart.

Scullin had had good cause to believe that the programme would succeed. The plan had been agreed upon at a premiers' conference and at a meeting of

47. Dunsdorfs, p. 269.
ministers of agriculture. What Scullin had not foreseen was the hostility of the opposition controlled Senate. Because the campaign had to be promoted before the principal growing season, it was announced while Parliament was still in recess. When it reconvened, the Nationalists used their Senate majority to withhold supply for the scheme, both because they regarded the compulsory pool as a socialistic novelty which struck at the basis of individual freedom, and because they saw the guaranteed price as a disguised form of 'aid' to the farmers - a social welfare innovation to be treated with the greatest suspicion. The Nationalists held no particular brief for the farmers, and for the better part of the year they frustrated each new attempt to implement the policy. The year was almost over before they realised that the situation was so serious that their claim that good years compensate farmers for the bad was tragically inappropriate.

While the federal politicians argued, the Labor governments of Victoria and New South Wales attempted to rescue the farmers by setting up compulsory state pools. But this move also failed after both governments submitted the proposal to a referendum of growers, hoping to win industry-wide co-operation and to reap political endorsement from a section of the electorate outside Labor's usual areas of support. But the farmers stuck to tradition, and rejected the Labor scheme.

Finally, in December, the politicians reached agreement and the Wheat Advancement Bill passed both Houses. A year's debate had reduced the guaranteed price per bushel from 4/- to 2/6d, and the proposal to establish a pool had been abandoned. But even this castrated Act was too radical for the Commonwealth Bank. Acting on the advice of its legal adviser, the Nationalist MLA Robert Menzies, the Bank announced that it regarded the guaranteed price
as an infringement of the inter-state trade provisions of section 92 of the Constitution, and withheld the necessary funds.\textsuperscript{48}

Beaten by conservative forces outside the House, Scullin was forced to abandon the entire project and began to issue implausible denials that a price guarantee had ever been made. The farmers were left to negotiate whatever deal they could, free of 'government interference'. On the world market, the farmers received a mere 1/8d per bushel, the lowest price expressed in gold ever paid for Australian wheat.\textsuperscript{49}

For Scullin and the Treasury, the defeat was something of a reprieve. In so depressed a market the original 4/- would have placed intolerable pressures on the national purse, and despite the low sale prices the increase in the amount of wheat grown had been so massive that the exercise actually did a little to maintain national solvency. The only losers were the growers. After paying their costs, most were around 2/- poorer for every bushel they produced. The more diligently a grower had responded to the 'grow more wheat' entreaty, the greater penalty he endured. Those already in financial trouble found themselves betrayed to their debtors, and by early 1931 the implements of many Wimmera farmers were stacked on the roadsides awaiting sale.\textsuperscript{50}

In the cities, the plight of the farmer was scarcely understood. The respectable dailies certainly published produce prices, summarised proceedings in Canberra and reported many of the meetings which the growers convened. But

\textsuperscript{48} Schedvin, pp. 149-152.

\textsuperscript{49} Dunsdorfs, p. 273.

\textsuperscript{50} Schedvin, pp. 149n, 150; Dunsdorfs, p. 275.
the frustration and anger which the farmers experienced was edited away. Indeed the press was more inclined to depict rural people as little Aussie battlers bearing up cheerfully in Australia's heartland, than as ordinary people who were suffering extreme economic hardship. It took the larrikin Truth to give free rein to the emotions which prevailed in the bush:

In Victoria, the wheat provinces are seething. Birchip quite recently saw a meeting of farmers that was quite on a par with that held in Wagga last week. Men, usually quiet and deliberate, talked against politicians, through clenched teeth and with flashing eyes.

They talked in the shadow of giant stalks of almost worthless wheat which the nation had begged them to grow. They talked with threats of proceedings for overdue taxes in their pockets; they waved peremptory demands by Government departments for payment of liens in their hands.

These men, here and in every State of the Commonwealth, are saying that they will forcibly resist any processes of the law to force them from their lands. In Western Australia police officers have refused to serve civil processes because of the organisation of the farmers to resist execution.51

To some extent, a determination to defend their code of fairness in economic matters did cause Wimmera farmers to take the kind of strong-arm action indicated by Truth, not in the White Army, but in an organisation known as the Farmers' Defensive League. In opposition to the mortgagees, the League declared that its aim was 'to keep decent settlers on the Mallee and to see fair play.'52 Their tactic was to attend auctions at which a farmer was being sold up


52. Truth, 19 September 1931, p. 7, see also Smith's Weekly, 29 October 1931, p. 2.
by the bank, and intimidate or beat potential bidders into silence. The farmers themselves then bought back the farm at a ridiculously low price, and returned it to its rightful owner, stripped of its debts. Or so the story goes. In fact references to these practices are extremely rare. The oral tradition which endures in the bush today tells, not of farmers rescued by the militant solidarity of their peers, but of families walking off or evicted by the banks. Everywhere there are stories of years of labour and trial come to nothing.

Yet the farmers were not about to let themselves be picked off one by one. They saw themselves as a class of victims, and meetings expressing their combined anger were held across the countryside. On 2 March, for example, 300 people attended an 'enthusiastic meeting' at Charlton. They met to 'urge the Government to take immediate steps to come to the assistance of the farmers'. There were calls for the abolition of the 10% penalty on unpaid tax, for a guaranteed minimum price for wheat and for grants to enable endebted farmers to buy seed for planting.\(^33\) At a heated meeting of the Bendigo Agricultural Society, farmers expressed their 'indignation' at the foreclosures. Many others complained that they could not afford to buy fertiliser because the companies were refusing to extend credit. 'It was,' the farmers said, 'a matter beyond party politics.' Joining with growers from Warracknabeal, the Bendigo farmers demanded that the premier reconvene parliament to deal with the situation.\(^54\)

If the farmers were to seek militant action which went beyond thumping the table at local meetings, then the anti-bank tactics advocated by the Farmers' Defensive League would seem to have been an obvious choice. Indeed, the choice

\(^{33}\) **Bendigo and Northern Districts Stock and Station Journal**, 2 March 1931, p. 3.

\(^{54}\) Ibid., 24 March 1931, p. 1.
of the majority, participation in the anti-Catholic, anti-Bolshevik preparations of the White Army, might seem difficult to account for. Compare the apparently irrational actions of the militiamen, who were actually prepared to defend the hated banks - and defend them from a threat no more real than the bunyip - compare that with the direct action taken by rural people in England during the eighteenth-century corn riots. In a well-known article, E. P. Thompson argues that these riots were not, as the common wisdom has maintained, the gut reaction of people hungry for food. They were, he says, a conscious protest: a traditional defense of a shared 'moral economy'. Millers and bakers who adulterated flour or who cheated on weight were treating their businesses as private instruments for advancing their own profit, at great cost to the community they served. Thompson argues that the crowd, responding to the calls of riot-leaders, physically intimidated these merchants until they conformed with the cultural tradition which classified the mills and bakeries as public services: services upon which the rest of the rural economy depended for its survival.

But the traditions and backgrounds of Victorian farmers made for a quite different moral economy, one which was not altogether in the farmers' own interests. The bankers were being hard, but the majority of rural people accepted that the bankers were within their rights. There was no getting round the fact that law and contract were on their side. To most farmers it was inconceivable that they should demand so dishonourable a solution as the re-writing of loan agreements which had already been sealed. In the end, it was for the government and the city economists to rescue the farmers with just such a scheme; by the end

55. Birchip Advertiser, 17 May 1931: 'Several trusted 'white army' recruits were keeping an eye to one of the banks.'

of 1931, city parliamentarians at last realised how serious the rural plight was and followed other states by enacting a moratorium on foreclosures and establishing a scheme of debt readjustment. But until the solution was thrust upon them, any attempt to wriggle out of financial obligations struck many farmers as being a dishonourable recourse to the methods of Jack Lang. As one Mallee spokesman told an emotional political rally in Melbourne, 'The farmer will repudiate repudiation. If the countryman, with all his troubles, would die in his tracks rather than repudiate, it ought to make those fellows who advocate national repudiation ashamed.'

But the farmers could make no material threats having taken this stand; they had no obvious adversary with whom to wrestle. The cautious Labor premier of Victoria, E.J. Hogan was no candidate for the demonic role ascribed to his New South Wales comrade, Jack Lang. Indeed in Victoria, Labor held office only because it had Country Party support. As the Mallee spokesman told the Melbourne rally, 'Farmers have every confidence in the State Government's desire to help them, especially in the Minister, Mr. Bailey.'

In rural New South Wales, such groups as the Riverina Movement were able to direct their fear and anger into fully realised political challenges or even, like the Old Guard, into preparations for the violent overthrow of Lang himself. They became political conservatives. But in the Victorian Mallee and Wimmera, in


58. The New South Wales Premier, Jack Lang, was threatening to withhold loan repayments from British financiers in order to meet needs in his own state, a policy which was vilified as 'repudiation'.


60. Ibid.
March 1931, the enemy was more anonymous. Far removed from Canberra, outside the jurisdiction of Sydney, the Victorian farmers were shooting at shadows. Their fears were not channelled into political action, but remained, for the moment at least, inarticulate paranoia. One newspaperman who understood this reported that people in the Mallee and Wimmera had heard -

... the whisper of training and drilling of 'white' armies. Men who have property to protect are seeking to be prepared if a national crisis should suddenly develop. They fear they know not what.

Surrounded by plagues beyond their control, receiving little sympathy from the city, unable to find outrageous fault with the government, unable to strike at Lang, unable to bring themselves to conceive of having their loan agreements redrafted, what was a community dominated by ex-soldiers to do? Rural propertied people were left with only two Jonahs of whom to ask the mariners' questions, 'What is thine occupation? and whence comest thou? What is thy country? and of what people art thou?' A Grande Peur swept central and eastern Victoria as the farmers found their answer: the strangers who threatened them were the Catholics, the communists and the unemployed. But, as we will see, it was at the moment that they transformed these people into adversaries that the farmers provided themselves with an escape from their isolation, for in so doing they had engaged the rhetoric of urban conservatism.

61. The textbook definition is: a mental condition in which subjects have delusions of being persecuted or pursued, and, in extreme cases, delusions of grandeur. (Guy Lefrancois, Psychology, Wadsworth, California, pp. 27, 501).

In a sense, the endless ranks of unemployed men who trudged from town to town in order to qualify for the government 'sustenance', represented a threat that was quite real: by their example they foreshadowed the slough into which the struggling farmer and the indebted business man could easily slide. As Frank Huelin's first-hand account of life on the road shows, the unemployed were constantly encountering country people and public officials who treated them as undesirables - and moved them on, sometimes with the swing of a baton. But there were other rural people, often paradoxically of the White Army class, who treated local and visiting unemployed with kindness and generosity.63

In one town, I was told of a barber who would give the unemployed a haircut free of charge. In another there was a butcher would would give poor women asking for 'pet food' the best cuts. Both men were said to have been among the militiamen on the night of the mobilisation. Indeed, Alex Taysom, believed by the IB to have been the militia organiser in Inglewood, was also secretary of the local Unemployment Relief Committee.

Jack Lythgo, secretary of the Unemployment Relief Committee in Maryborough recalls the generosity of people towards the jobless:

I found all people very kind-hearted, exceedingly so. Even those on a 3.0.0. a week job. Many whom I knew personally gave 5/- a week and could scarcely afford to do so ...

The families of the unemployed may have been fed with the husts that the swine were fed, but they were most often hungry. A family that is well-fed waits till mother sets the table and they are all seated before they begin their meal. But when I had taken pies and buns to homes this

procedure was not followed. The mother would hand out the bag and there would be no waiting.

Hunger is something pinching the life out of your body. After a time you cannot feel it any more.  

But there was also a group who were quite prepared to express their hostility towards the unemployed. Jack Lythgo writes:

Yes, I did find some opposition to any effort to help the unemployed. This came from a small extreme section who took a heartless view of the situation. Quite a few times I had fists shaken in my face and was told to let the unemployed starve. The sooner they did, these people said, the sooner the government would do something about them. I had good reason for believing that this small fraction sincerely meant what they said.

It is understandable then that in the minds of many property owners, the unemployed were seen as 'margin-dwellers', the Fallen, people open to the temptations of robbery, violence and the Bolshevik lie.

The reason for anti-Catholic paranoia is more deeply rooted, and is dealt with in greater detail in a later section. For the moment we can observe that, until the mobilisation, sectarianism in the bush was little more than a latent prejudice, symbolised by the divisions in education and by the ubiquitous Masonic Lodges. Further, there were those who were unable to forget that Catholics under Mannix had been wanting in their support for the War, there was disquiet about the longstanding Irish Catholic opposition to the Empire and there were always protestants for whom the confessional and the convent wall were cause for suspicion or scandalising.

64. J. Lythgo to M.J.C., L. June 1981.
65. J. Lythgo to M.J.C., L. July 1981.
So it was that the hapless unemployed and the Irish Catholics were transformed into bomb-throwing, anti-Australian Bolsheviki. Suddenly in the Beckettesque uncertainty of the bush, there appeared a tangible enemy, a crowd of flesh and blood individuals on to whom could be projected all the unknowable forces which posed a threat to the 'Australian way of life'.

But how then was vigilante violence legitimated? How was its function as a defence of an imperilled social and moral order established? Like their overseas counterparts, the Australian militia leaders modelled their organisations on the army rather than on (say) the quasi-religious rituals of the Ku Klux Klan, or the summary violence used by the so-called 'Yankee justice' bands on the goldfields. The disciplined, military defence of 'Australia' was an ethos by which every Australian man was defined in the years after the war. A man had either gone, or he had not gone. It was a social classification which no man escaped. And a man was as likely to join the White Army to redeem his own failure or inability to fight in the War as an ex-soldier was likely to join to re-establish contact with his wartime self.

The AIF associations of the White Army were expressed in the language of its oath, in its indentification in some areas with the RSL and its universal identification with former AIF officers. It was always from this group that the White Army's Melbourne HQ chose its local organisers.

Finally, any doubts a recruit may have had about the legitimacy of the organisation would have been dispelled when he looked around at his fellow members. He recognised then that he had been classed with the right kind of people, recognised that the White Army was a collection of the town's 'respectable
citizens: the bank manager, the solicitor, the J.P., the schoolteacher, businessmen and railway officials. It was a new, responsible homeguard, built on the reputation of the AIF.

But how does all this relate to those two old men who spent Friday night up a gum tree waiting for Catholics and Bolsheviks to do unspeakable things to Wedderburn’s water supply? Well, Alex Holmes remembers that around 3.00 a.m. the men guarding the main street began to feel a bit silly. It had become obvious that the Bolsheviks were not going to materialise, says Holmes, ‘and we all went back to one of the houses for a drink. We forgot all about the two blokes out at the reservoir - and it was lunchtime the following day before they made it back to town!’ In Wedderburn, the White Army ended with a laugh - it was not spoken of again, says Holmes. And the same appears to have been true of the other towns which mobilised that night. In each of the Mallee-Wimmera towns visited for this study, one of the main legacies of the night is a couple of stories about how silly people had been, or about practical jokers who sent the whole business up. In one town, boys had thrown king-size light globes which exploded at the feet of the bank manager as he marched earnestly round and round the bank. In another town, a protestant church choir, practising in the early evening, had been terrified by two boys who had crept into the back pew and thrown penny bungers up the aisle. In Ballarat, a practical joker left a dummy bomb inside a shop.

While the White Army persisted in regions not mobilised and continued to expand in the cities until the fall of the Scullin government, the Mallee-Wimmera

66. All the participants in the mobilisation who were identified in the IB reports came from this status level. The only other participants were farmers.

groups declined because of the experience of the mobilisation itself. The mobilisation confronted people - not with an enemy emerging from the shadows - but with the reality of their own fears and responsibility. The man who had, say, crouched with his .303 in a trench outside Ouyen, waiting for an attack, had been met only by the silent rebuke of an early Autumn night. While, like all military exercises, the unmobilised militia operated under a kind of Existential 'bad faith': pretending that bashing or killing people was ethically something other than that, the mobilisation confronted ordinary men with the fact that they had been prepared to kill their Catholic neighbours and their unemployed countrymen. For some at least the experience, reinforced no doubt by the practical jokers, was one of embarrassment or shame. At a meeting of the Korong Shire Council, Councillor Gray apologised to the Catholic shire president for the mobilisation. He admitted that he -

was to a certain extent to blame as he had been willing to take an oath to protect life and property, as all others would do in such circumstances. It was one of those unfortunate cases where indiscreet people made remarks concerning denominations, and they spread like a bush fire. He asked the president not to take the matter personally.®

Most of the papers backtracked, The Birchip Advertiser was a little wiser after the event, observing that -

They say .. that many of the fantastic reports of happenings leading up to the alleged riots were ludicrous.

Nevertheless, the paper was not one to mock, cautioning:

68. Donald Times, 20 March 1931.
that instead of condemning those who were prepared to take risks and who saw fit to spend a little thought on devising ways and means of discouraging lawlessness they should have been commended.69

The Ouyen Mail also believed that the night's 'excitement' had brought out a sterling quality in the local citizenry:

A gratifying feature of the incident was that it demonstrated that the citizens who stand for law and order are prepared to co-operate, for mutual protection when there is a suggestion of danger. This should have a deterring effect on young hooligans who have the idea in their minds that the pathway by which they can secure a bigger share of wealth is the pathway of rioting and revolution.70

The Inglewood Advertiser had it both ways. It reported that the 'formation of a white army has created a state of panic; and wild, ill-founded and ill-advised rumour has gained currency.' Local residents, said the paper, 'are constantly hearing rumours of uprisings, but fortunately these have taken place in the fertile imagination of some crank.' But the paper neither discounted the possibility of future trouble, nor questioned the validity of the White Army itself, explaining:

There may be danger of uprisings, and in view of the possibility, those in control of law and order and the maintenance of essential services, are taking the necessary precautions to circumvent any organised plans being carried into effect. The formation of a white army was an early step ...71

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69. Birchip Advertiser, 10 March 1931, p. 3.
70. Ouyen Mail, 11 March 1931, p. 12.
71. The Inglewood Advertiser, 13 March 1931, p. 3.
So the catharsis which followed the mobilisation was not total. Militia in the larger townships of the region did not disband, and there can be no doubt that a few stalwarts maintained the faith in more remote locations. Nevertheless, the White Army remained more or less discredited in the Mallee and Wimmera. What exactly was happening in other regions has been more difficult to discover in detail, because nothing to match the massive indiscretion of 6 March occurred elsewhere. In some places, militiamen were sworn in and heard no more about it. In others, active precautions were taken against the Menace. In addition to towns already mentioned, White Army activity has been located in Manangatang, Annuello, Dunkeld, Arrarat, Rochester, Loquorn, Nhill, Castlemain, Bairnsdale, Metung, Traralgon, Healsville, Lilydale, Woomelang, and Mildura. Assuming this is a random sample, a glance at the map will show that the entire state was covered.

72. H.R. Blair, to M.J.C., L., May 1981. Group set up by a visiting major. Mr. Blair, a solicitor, says that he later expressed regret about 'the lawless nature of the movement.'

73. Mrs. Drinkwater to M.J.C., L., June, 1981. Group set up by a visiting solicitor's clerk. Arms were available. Arrangements were made to accommodate children evacuated from Melbourne.


80. Interview with Archie Macarthur OBE, Bairnsdale.

81. Interviews with Len Fell and Joe Bull, Metung.

82. Bert Thompson, an extract from his unpublished MS ends this chapter.

83. F. Endacott to M.J.C., L., 7 May 1981. Local businessman, Harry Gunner, swears in members 'to fill the quota allotted to him' - no drill or meetings.

84. CRS A395.


In Mildura, armed militiamen mounted guard on the town's weir and pumping plant over 'some weeks'. One newspaper warned that 'Trigger fingers grow itchy on occasions such as these, and the risk of a shot is not to be disregarded by the unwary wayfarer, who wanders too near the pump after nightfall.'  

In Nhill, the silos were guarded against the possibility of terrorist attacks. Local children due to return to Melbourne for the start of the 1931 school year were kept home because there was talk of the unemployed planning to blow up railway bridges.  

From Woomelang, where the White Army was mostly recruited from the Lodge, a local solicitor writes:

I well remember the fear the White Army had and various members gathered together at night for mutual protection from some mythical enemies. They took water into their homes to guard against poison water. They demanded the Catholic Churches be searched for guns.

A retired shopkeeper from Bendigo, recalled in a telephone conversation:

People went quite mad here. You will still find some people here who are sensitive about this matter. I don't know what we thought was going to happen. But, well, we at the Lodge and some officers from the AIF - no names, no packdrill - we had the wind up about Lang, and reds under the bed ... No, yes, there was one night, sometime in the summer of 1930 or 1931 it would have been, when we got particularly worried ... No, it

87. Ibid.
88. M.C. Renkin to M.J.C., L., 13 May 1981.
89. Gordon Doran to M.J.C., L., 22 April 1981.
didn't put us off. Why should it have? You'd think people would have more common sense, wouldn't you?\textsuperscript{90}

The most efficient rural sector of the White Army was to the east of Melbourne, in Gippsland, where there is no evidence of a March mobilisation. So effective was this group that there is no mention of them in any surviving official file or in the newspapers. The only hint in the press of their existence was a news story which indicated that the conditions for White Army activity existed at Yallourn. In April, \textit{Smith's Weekly} reported a sudden burst of security activity at the Yallourn power station. Melbourne detectives had been rushed the scene after rumours spread that a 'battalion of communists' was employed there, and that they were plotting 'to cripple Yallourn and throw Melbourne into darkness ... in the interests of the "Red" regime.'\textsuperscript{91} In fact, Major Len Fell of Metung recalls that in Gippsland the White Army (called locally the New Guard) -

was well-organised along military lines with a commander and various ranks ... There were a great many branches in the country. This whole region was well covered.

Mr. Fell, a former POW of the Germans, says that he now regards the organisation as having been both misguided and dangerous. But, he says:

At the time, I was bitter against Jack Lang. We got him muddled up with communism. Fascism seemed attractive ... I was a member ... Most of the members were top citizens: civil servants, businessmen, that sort of thing.

\textsuperscript{90} The interviewee asked not to be named because, he said, many of those who were involved 'still have their names up on businesses in town today'.

\textsuperscript{91} \textit{Smith's Weekly}, 4 April 1931, p. 9.
Unlike the Mallee-Wimmera units, the Gippsland militia continued to operate until the economy was perceived to be out of danger. 'Then', says Mr. Fell, 'it died away just as quickly as it started.'

Ving-Commander Archie Macarthur OBE (as he now is) was a prominent stock and station agent in Bairnsdale during the Depression. He was also, along with Nelson Capp, the Gippsland commander of the White Army. 'We had this whole region covered,' he says. 'We got tremendous help from the police force, and I think the Freemasons took a powerful part.'

Mr Macarthur and Mr Capp formed the organisation after an approach from the Melbourne HQ. They were issued with arm bands and received the regular intelligence summaries produced by the White Army's intelligence section. Although they knew ('without doubt' says Mr Macarthur) that Blamey was running the organisation, they never had any face to face contact with the Melbourne leadership.

Mr Macarthur disagrees that the movement was misguided. Using an expression common between the wars, he writes, 'The organisation was formed to meet the enemy within the gates.' In an interview he explained:

'The Depression was a very troubled time. People who were out of work or in difficulty were easily influenced by communist propaganda. The New Guard saved us from that. Australia would be very different today if it hadn't been formed.

In what way?

If it wasn't for the New Guard, the communists would have staged a revolution. But with the New Guard around they knew they would have a fight on their hands.

But the organisation was secret.

Yes.'
But why the secrecy? If the tactic was to warn off the communists, wouldn't it have been better to let them know the organisation existed? O, we would have let them know soon enough.

As we have seen, economic injustice, political bungling, and the threat symbolised by Lang and the unemployed had led men to join units of the White Army throughout the countryside. But whereas the Mallee-Wimmera groups withered after the salutory experience of the mobilisation, groups in other regions, notably Gippsland, remained at the ready. Supporters and detractors alike agree that it is fortunate that the White Army never needed to mobilise seriously - against Jack Lang, the unemployed or anyone else whom they had 'muddle up with communism'.

This chapter ends with an assessment of the White Army and its opposition written by a former member. He leaves no doubt about how extreme he believed the communist threat to have been. The writer is Bert Thompson, a country newspaperman and local historian. He has kindly made available this extract from one of his forthcoming local histories:

At the height of the depression Big Jack Lang became Premier of New South Wales, and the socialist policies he legislated threw a great scare into many people. This extended far outside the borders of his State.

There'd been a bank crisis, interest repudiation, and it seemed likely that property rights might even dissolve. New South Wales could well become a Communist State if the powers of Government developed further. The cold hand of depression was an excellent climate in which to nourish such an ideology.

Out of this perplexity and the fear of those opposed to any form of communism rose an organisation to be known as the New Guard ... It must have been nearing its demise when this organisation's frontier
enveloped Traralgon. I was among those invited to join, which I did along with quite a few other citizens.

More than likely the New Guard, or the idea of the New Guard, will be no more popular in some quarters today than it was with the militants well over forty-six years ago. Nevertheless disruptive elements need containing. Irrespective of the criticism of those who'd sell our way of life to other 'isms' while denouncing others who'd block their machinations as Right-Wing Fascists and the like, it should be remembered such counter-revolutionary formations are hatched only by their own revolutionary intent.

As they revile, trailing at the same time their own smelly red herring of righteous wrath at the obstruction their disloyal intentions has raised, they're hopeful of brainwashing the mass standing on the side-lines to their way of thinking. Normally people don't go along with any type of power-cliques, gangs or groups. It's un-Australian. But in 1932, there was a subversive element about, or so we thought, and of this was born the New Guard.

Not one of us who swore that night to defend our democracy had, I believe, any intention of militant action without being bull-dozed into it. We had no arms, although these were indicated as being available should such drastic need be. No one wished to shoot fellow Australians, yet we'd repel a communistic take-over of our country. 92

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CHAPTER THREE

THE WHITE ARMY IN THE CITY OF MELBOURNE
(and how its secrets were kept)

I. General Blamey and the Intentions of the White Army Leadership

Sir Alfred Kemsley is a distinguished soldier and Melbourne businessperson. He has been a trustee of the Melbourne Shrine of Remembrance since 1938, was president of Legacy in 1932-33 and has been a member of the Blamey Memorial Committee since 1954. He was secretary to the regulating body of the Special constables who patrolled the streets following the 1923 Police Strike, and he is the only soldier still living who is known to have been close to the leadership of the White Army. He writes:

When you talk of the White Army you are on very delicate ground. I was also identified with it. There was almost complete secrecy imposed on each of us and as those who were enrolled were selected after careful scrutiny we observed that secrecy very honorably. I confess my part in it was confined to my own residential area which was a 'safe' area and no paper whatever passed between us. Our C.O., a Major General called occasional meetings at his home... .

All I am prepared to say even at this remote date is that the 'Army' was controlled by extremely competent men accustomed by war experience to mutual trust ... I am not prepared to express myself further as to Commanders or executives or any other details.

In fact, the cabal which commanded the White Army was made up of senior army officers. Not all of them are known by name. However, General Thomas

Blarney was the supreme commander, and close to him were such officers as Col. Francis Derham, an eminent Melbourne lawyer, and Lt. Col. (later Sir) Edmund Herring, a future chief-justice of Victoria.

Blarney's leadership is beyond doubt. In a confidential interview, a member of Blarney's immediate family confirmed that the general led the organisation and seemed surprised that the matter should require any corroboration.

Wing-Commander Archie Macarthur was joint regional commander of the White Army for the Gippsland region. In interview he said, 'Blarney was the boss, there was no question about that.'

The New Guard knew that both Derham and Blarney were leaders of the White Army, and in October 1931 it made contact in the unrealised hope that the Melbourne leaders would agree to co-operate with the Sydney organisation.

Harold Hewett told me that he was certain that Blarney was running it:

Everyone who was in on it knew that it was Blarney's show. No... I don't suppose he was so very popular. But you will understand what I mean when I say that this new role cast him in a different light. He was strong and fiercely loyal. And he was determined to rescue us from socialism. That's why I joined.

It seems that one of the few people to deny Blarney's involvement is his champion and biographer, John Hetherington. The reasons for Hetherington's error are instructive and bear some examination.

Hetherington wrote two biographies of Blarney. The first, Blarney,3 was published in 1954. The second, Blarney: Controversial Soldier,4 published in 1973, is a considerably expanded version of the first, completely rewritten but retaining the same structure and many of the original turns of phrase. It is a military biography of the type which depicts its subject as a man of staunch integrity and a soldier of remarkable intelligence. Hetherington's Blarney is square-jawed, sensible and straight as a die. Although Hetherington scarcely mentions directly that Blarney was massively unpopular with the many servicemen and women who accused him of arrogance, ruthlessness, intemperance and womanising, much of the book is clearly written with the purpose of vindicating Blarney by demonstrating that these charges are the product of terrible misunderstandings.5

Similarly, when writing about Blarney's period as Victorian police commissioner, Hetherington addresses himself to the (this time acknowledged) charges that Blarney was both authoritarian and given to treating political rallies as military operations in which the task of his men was to annihilate the enemy. In the 1954 version, Hetherington insisted that, 'Blarney, though not without a dash of authoritarianism in his nature, was overwhelmingly a champion of democratic principles.'6 It is a claim which Hetherington has prudently omitted from the current edition.7 Furthermore, he now acknowledges that Blarney was unpopular

5. In a similar vein is N.D. Carlyon, I Remember Blarney, Macmillan, South Melbourne, 1980 - possibly the title implies that unfavourable accounts of Blarney come from people who neither remember nor knew him. Edmund Herring's forward takes up the theme of a man who was unpopular because he was deeply misunderstood.
with, indeed vilified by, the Labour movement, but he still refuses to acknowledge that the antipathy was mutual. If Blamey were at all to blame, says Hetherington, then it is perhaps true that he showed 'a lack of tact'. Nothing more? Well, Hetherington will also concede that some police 'were doubtless overbearing in manner and rough' in their treatment of the unemployed, but, he pleads, 'the problem of how to keep the peace without using violence now and then would have baffled Solomon.' Maybe so, but there is no evidence that Blamey addressed himself to that dilemma with any concern.

This biography is not a history. It is a memorial - a memorial in which the determination to vindicate a besmirched reputation before a post-1945 liberal democratic readership has resulted in a failure to locate the man within the beliefs and values of inter-war military conservatives - a group neither democratic by conviction nor pacific by temperament.

All of which brings us to Hetherington's denial that Blamey was involved in the 1931 White Army. In the 1954 version, Hetherington insisted that Blamey opposed the activities of the militiamen within his state, saying bluntly that, 'Blamey would have no truck with them.' By 1973, he moved ground a little, allowing that 'Blamey had no objection to anything they did so long as they stayed within the law.' However he then added, 'but he would have no truck with little Hitlers.' Quite so. But little Hitlers are not the issue - at least not within the connotations which such an expression carries in our post-war culture. The term is an historical anachronism which misrepresents the cultural standing of the

8. Ibid.
White Army and which cannot, by sheer fact of chronology, accurately represent Blamey's relationship to it. The White Army was not a bunch of Nazi-sympathisers. It was a patriotic, British-Australian paramilitary organisation which believed that it opposed communism, but which defined communism very broadly.

But here's the rub. By the time Hetherington came to re-write the book, he had learned (or now felt able to mention) that Blamey had formed a secret army after the Second World War. While still denying that he could possibly have been involved in the White Army during the Scullin period, Hetherington tells us that:

Blamey gave much of his time in the late 1940s to directing an organisation of whose existence most Australians never heard. Many of its members called it The Association; others called it the White Army...

An Australia-wide organisation of unpaid volunteers, it reached a strength of perhaps 100,000. The members were all Second World War ex-servicemen ... They banded together in the belief that communism was on the march everywhere and that no country was safe from an attempted coup d'état. 11

It was no coincidence that at the very time this later White Army came into being, the Chifley Labor government was facing the bank nationalisation crisis, and once more incurring the old charge that the ALP was in the lap of communism. The 1973 biography contains about 1,000 words of this later White Army. The command structure which Hetherington describes is exactly the same as that used in 1931. The same public facilities were to be protected. Exactly the same divisions of manpower were used. And, writes Hetherington with pride, 'At the pinnacle was the national commander: Blamey.' 12

11. Ibid., p. 389.
12. Ibid.
What then were Blarney's personal political beliefs? The lack of private papers from the early '30s makes it impossible to give a direct account. However, a great deal can be concluded from the aims of the White Army, which we will examine in a moment, and from Blarney's hostile relationship with the Labour movement. Also suggestive are a series of talks which Blarney gave anonymously on radio station 3UZ in 1938 and '39, dealing with foreign affairs.

At the end of 1938, Blarney was still promoting the view of Italian fascism which *The Age* had described as 'fashionable' in 1931. Late in 1938, he recounted Mussolini's rise to power:

The Reds were committing revolting atrocities. Mussolini determined to establish an organisation for law and order and on 23rd March 1919, the first 'Fascio' was formed at the office of his newspaper. At first the movement as it grew was content to carry out its self imposed task of breaking revolutionary strikes. But as successive weak governments lost grip of the situation, more and more the Fascists developed a constructive programme.13

At first in these talks, Blarney discounted as ridiculous the suggestion that Nazism posed a threat of renewed war. Echoing a view common in allied military circles,14 Blarney announced that Germany knew that it did not have the resources to 'sustain a world war today and win'.15 The fact was that under Hitler Germany was growing towards internal prosperity and dignity.16 Later, Blarney

15. 'Sentinel', 27 March 1938, p. 2.
16. Ibid.
realised that the Lebensraum principle did indeed pose a threat of war but he remained fulsome in his praise of the new Germany, and called for residual anti-German feeling to be replaced by understanding.

Now I am not suggesting that Blarney was yet another Nazi-sympathiser, in the subversive sense of that charge. Blarney was, and remained, an Australian career soldier and an authoritarian Australian patriot. Furthermore, there is no evidence that he was anti-semitic. Indeed one talk, which may never have been delivered, expressed total repugnance for the violence which was turned against the Jews on Kristalnacht. Nevertheless, he was impressed by the purposefulness and vigor of Nazi authoritarianism, and he was under no illusions about the violence which that authoritarianism entailed. In Germany, he explained:

... there is a totalitarian government of a most powerful character. Its nationalism is based on a belief in the race as a product of blood and iron. It is manifested in a universal and compulsory discipline of the whole population under the control of a single party organisation under one group and one man ... It relies on violence in dealing with its opponents. Opinions are formed, not by public discussion, but by intensive onesided propaganda.

But if this were a cost, apparently it was a cost worth paying. For Blarney went on directly to say:

The vigour and determination of the National Socialist movement has ended the defeatism and the despair of a few short years ago. The moral

17. Ibid., 1 May 1938.
18. Ibid., 22 May 1938, pp. 1, 9.
19. The talks have been arranged in sequence, each is numbered and dated, most have been typed. However, this particular talk was handwritten and carries no date. There is no gap in the numbered manuscripts which this talk might have filled.
corruption has been cleared up largely and the new generation in Germany is growing up with a sense of purpose, direction and discipline.  

This is far from being the statement of a man who will have 'no truck' with fascism. When a general, who has been called authoritarian by his most admiring biographer, praises fascism's 'purpose, direction and discipline', there can be little doubt where his political sympathies lie. Admittedly, these remarks were made eight years after the 1931 White Army ceased to be needed, but it will be allowed, all other things considered, that these remarks are at very least suggestive of the kind of ideology which underpinned Blamey's White Army leadership. Indeed, as we will now see, the plans which Blamey and the LNS Executive had for Australia entailed an end to democratically elected governments, and the establishment of what can only be described as an Australian counterpart to the fascist organisations and regimes which functioned elsewhere in the West.

The majority of ordinary men who pledged secrecy and obedience to the LNS appear to have done so, either because they feared a Bolshevik/Catholic/unemployed rising, because they feared a general collapse of law and order, or because they suspected that the Labor governments - particularly the New South Wales government - planned to launch a violent revolution (an odd concept in some ways, given that Lang was already in office). But the objectives of the elite which ran the LNS would have remained a matter for speculation were it not for the indiscretions of Captain de Groot: the generous collection of his papers held by the Mitchell Library contains a small number of documents generated by the headquarters of the LNS itself.

20. Ibid., p. 9.
The most important of these is a draft of the aims and principles of the League. This document indicates that the White Army's ruling cabal intended to establish a national military movement, organised hierarchically by districts, and establish that movement as the national government. In its every activity, the secrecy of the LNS was to be a principal concern. It was proposed that security and loyalty be reenforced by a catalogue of rituals which owed a great deal to the Masons, and a little to the boy scouts. It was suggested at one stage, for example, that each new recruit should be brought blind-folded to his first group meeting; there, with the lights dimmed, he would be sworn to silence and introduced to the aims of the League. He would then be asked to take a lengthy oath of secrecy and obedience. The prescription continues:

After having taken the oath the member will be given the light and will be made to realise the full meaning of his obligation. He will then be given the pass word and grips and his badge or badges...21

The leaders eventually decided to allocate members to one of three service categories. In Category A were the troops; Category B provided essential services such as transport, ambulances and supplies; and members in Category C were to guard the homes of men on service22. An earlier draft of these arrangements indicates the range of services which were to be performed:


1. Regulars
2. Militia

Protection

{3. Reserve
4. 2nd Reserve}

Voluntary

b. Civil Group:- Essential Services

Obligatory


22. This format was actually implemented throughout the metropolitan region, see CRS A369; Dr Ashburner (below, p. 79) and the LNS oath.
Personnel are to be allocated as far as possible so as not to upset the normal course of civil activities.\(^{23}\)

Action would be taken, the document laid down, in the event of an 'industrial crisis' which could result either from 'Repressive Government by a Government sympathetic to militant Trades Unionism', or from 'Trade depression' - in short, under the political circumstances which conservatives believed prevailed in 1931. What was this action to be? The leaders were very blunt: it was the 'Assumption of Control of all stratigic (sic) points and machinery of Government' and the maintenance of essential public services and supplies. Should these objectives be threatened 'as a result of retaliatory action on behalf of trades organisations [i.e. unions] or other consideration', then the LNS would move to achieve 'The consolidation of the position of the League as a governing body, and the development of its National Policy'.\(^{24}\)

\(^{23}\) de Groot, Vol. 8, p. 1b.

The new, one party state, was to be organised hierarchically. The following extract lays down the proposed new system of government: the League planned to replace the federal Parliament with a bi-cameral 'Federal Council', to replace the state Parliaments with bi-cameral 'provincial Councils', and to replace local councils with 'District Councils'. The grassroots of the League would be organised in 'Groups':

The Executive of the Federal Council shall consist of the Chief of the League who shall be Chairman of the upper Council[Chamber], the Vice Chief, who shall be the Chairman of the Lower Chamber, and the Heads of the Federal Government Departments.

The Executive of the Provincial Council shall consist of the Chairman of the Upper House, the Chairman of the Lower House, and the Heads of Department of the State legislature.

The Executive of the District Council shall consist of the President, Vice President and Secretary.

The Executive of a Group shall consist of the President, Vice President and Secretary.25

It was a characteristically fascist arrangement. As Angelo Tasca observed, the basis of any fascist organisation 'is military with its cadre of officers, discipline, meetings, training ... Fascism always begins by declaring itself "anti-party" and ends by turning itself into a political party ...'26

Clearly an organisation with these intentions would have been of more than passing interest to the Scullin and Hogan Labor governments. The White Army


was investigated by three different agencies of the State: the Victoria Police, the Commonwealth Investigation Branch and Military Intelligence. Not one of these reported to any Labor government the details of their findings.  

2. The White Army Organisation in Melbourne

Friday, 6 March 1931. Even as members of the White Army are being mobilised throughout the Mallee-Wimmera, Roland Browne is preparing his first major report on the White Army's municipal activities. For the past two months, he has been observing, with growing disquiet, the increasing support for the White Army among his business and military friends. Tonight, he is working late at his home in the settled bayside suburb of Hampton, encoding his first detailed report for his Canberra superior, Major H. E. Jones. A month ago, Browne reported to Jones:

There is no doubt a big organisation (or more than one) exists here. I believe that Col. Derham (solicitor) is one of, if not, the head serang ... They have 'groups' in the city suburbs and can assemble a formidable protective force in the twinkling of an eye.¹

Browne has also heard that Brudenell White is a leader², and, from another source, that Blamey is at the head of the organisation and that 'he was to be a dictator'.³

27. Sections of each agency's report have been culled or lost, but sufficient remains to indicate the course of the investigations and the way in which their fundings were misrepresented to the Labor governments. This is a subject dealt with later in this chapter.

1. CRS A369, c. 8 February 1931. 'Serang' is an Anglo-Indian word for Commander (OED).

2. Ibid. See also Stuart Sayers, Ned Herring, Hyland House, Melbourne, 1980, p. 92. I doubt White's involvement, a matter which I will discuss later.

3. CRS A369, 6 March 1931.
Four weeks ago Browne had been inclined to treat such rumours with caution. But as his infiltration of the organisation has become more effective, his caution has turned to alarm. He has now learnt that 30,000 men have taken the White Army's oaths of loyalty and secrecy, and that they are standing ready to mobilise should the signal for 'zero hour' be sounded. They will know the moment has come when planes from the aero clubs fly low over the city, delivering a series of short and long blasts on claxons. The signal will be taken up by factory whistles and broadcast over the wireless. Browne now knows that organisation has firearms including machine guns, and that members have been granted insurance covers should they be killed or injured.

4. Ibid.

5. No firm indication of the source of such money has been uncovered, but Browne's information is not implausible: insurance companies trade on their conservatism, and had a good deal to fear from talk of nationalisation and of anarchy. Insurance companies and stock brokers were both in the vanguard of the anti-Labour All for Australia League. Mrs. M.H. was an employee of the AMP at the time. She recalls:

I was a Labor voter (most unusual for the AMP) and when the management had speakers from the All for Australia League and pressured the staff to join, from memory most of the staff joined. I think I can remember a circular badge which people wore. Needless to say, being politically more educated, I refused to join. The manager called me into his office and asked why ... The atmosphere of the time suggested you were being very disloyal if you dared to query the policies of conservative governments.

The National Mutual Life also supported the AFAL, taking out full page advertisements in its campaign pamphlets. Sir John MacFarland, the Chairman of the National Mutual also chaired AFAL meetings. While it cannot be established where financial support for the White Army came from, a glance at the following list of sometime members of the board of the National Mutual suggests that, in insurance circles, such support should not be wanting.

Brookes, Herbert 1928 - 52
Bruce, S.M. 1919 - 22
Fraser, W.S. 1927 - 28
Gibson, Sir Robert 1922 - 34
Herring, Lt. Gen. E.F. 1939 - 43
Luxton, Sir Harold 1930 - 54
Masson, Sir D. Orme 1925 - 37
Stawell, Sir Richard 1927 - 35
White, Sir Brudenell 1928 - 40
Secret meetings are held, often in outer suburbs, to allow members to become familiar with their duties. However, vertical secrecy within the organisation is very tight. In theory, no member is supposed to know the names of members or senior officers with whom he does not have direct contact. Company commanders know their group commanders, but they are not supposed to know the identity of the chief company commander.

Browne has also learned that the White Army has a secret name, the League of National Security (occasionally misreported as the League of National Safety). He also knows that no Roman Catholic is eligible for membership, although this rule may be waived in the case of absolutely dependable men.6

A dummy enlistment form issued by White Army HQ, indicates the calibre of man the White Army wants. Its model recruits are a clerk from Myers, a manager from the liquor and grocery chain Moran and Cato, a doctor, and an insurance agent from the AMP. Each is given an address befitting the solid middle class: Surrey Hills, Hawthorn and Kew. A special enrolment procedure is provided for 'distinguished or Influential persons' - company managers, senior officers or senior public servants - whose details are to be forwarded to the district commander.7

In tactical terms, the most significant membership group are the men and officers of the Citizen Forces (later to be known as the CMF). At one stage, the White Army's leadership considered a proposal that each new recruit should be

6. Lt. Col. Jack Clarebrough, a veteran of the 1914-18 War, was a group commander and a Catholic (source: personal interview).

7. de Groot papers, Vol. 8, pp. 4, 7, 8.
instructed to hold himself in readiness to join a unit of the militia forces or its reserve ...' Browne has already realised the significance of the CMF: its drill halls house armouries. If the commanding officer is prepared to supply the keys, then the mobilised White Army will have no shortage of weapons. As Browne knows, the White Army is confident that it can rely on an arsenal of batons, rifles, hand guns and machine guns. As soon as possible, he will begin working on a list of Victorian drill halls and their commanding officers. Although the lists themselves will survive in the record, the details of his findings will not. Perhaps this is no surprise. Some of Victoria's most distinguished soldiers and public men are commanding citizens' militia units in 1931.

Lt. Col. Edmund Herring D.S.O., M.C. commanded the unit which used the drill hall in Chapel Street, East St Kilda. In his laudatory biography of Herring, Stuart Sayers provides nearly two pages of information about the White Army which appears to be based on oral sources. Sayers reports that:

Herring was a regional commander in the White Guard, accepting responsibility for part of the Mornington Peninsula. He thought of the movement as the 'white ants', a highly organised but unsuspected army, capable of undermining a chosen adversary with speed and surprise. The White Guard was active for about ten years, its existence largely unknown to the public ...

8. Ibid., p. 2.
9. CRS A369, 7 March 1931.
10. CRS A369.
In 1981, I interviewed a well-known, elderly accountant in his Collins Street office and later at his club. He volunteered the information that he had been a member of Herring's White Army unit. He confirmed that they had been responsible for the region from the edge of the city down to Hastings, and recalled that they had patrolled the region regularly. The security of a military installation in the district gave them particular concern, and he said that on one occasion they demolished some old farm sheds which might have provided communists with machine-gun posts from which to threaten the installation.

A retired lawyer spoke to me at his home in Frankston. He told me that he had been recruited into the White Army through his CMF unit in Prahran. He explained that the CMF had been a major source of recruits for the LNS, and was the first to point out that since each drill hall contained an armoury, the LNS could be sure of its weapons.

From 1927 until 1934, Lt. Col. Jack Clarebrough was commanding officer of the Melbourne University Rifles (MUR), a unit of the citizens' militia which drilled on the university campus. In the White Army, he was the group commander of the area from the edge of the city to the Williamstown naval dockyard. He recalls that his unit regularly patrolled the area, and that they were particularly concerned about security within the naval dock which was, he says, 'crawling with communists'.

These were the days when a university education was a respectable asset, the days when there was a certain snob value to 'having letters after your name'. Professor Charles Moorhouse recalls that in this, the society of his student days,
the Melbourne University Rifles had a higher status than most other corps because it was believed more likely to open the way to a commission.\textsuperscript{13}

But this gathering of respectable young men drew attention to itself for another reason. In April 1931, Browne reported that the MUR was believed to have many LNS sympathisers in its ranks. To accommodate a growing interest in membership, the unit applied to the Defence Department to have its force increased from 100 to 150 men. The Defence Department refused the application, because, Browne said:

'It is considered likely that the marked interest in recruiting is not wholly due to a desire to serve in the Citizen Forces, but rather to propaganda of the L.N.S. amongst University students, and that the military unit mentioned would provide a ready means of obtaining military training. It is thought that in the case of imagined eventualities involving the sudden use of force that the University may provide the 'shock troops' ...\textsuperscript{14}

One member of the MUR the previous year (1930) is now Dr Val Ashburner FRANZCP, a retired Lieutenant Colonel from the RAAMC. It was as a member of the MUR that he first became involved in law and order precautions. He recalls:

the organisation seemed to have, what we would now recognise as fascist characteristics. The situation was that the Civil Power was about to lose control and that the R.S.L. was mobilising support at least amongst its members who were neither Jewish nor Catholic ... I was a member of the militia and the Melbourne University Rifles. We had been given to

\textsuperscript{13} Interview.

\textsuperscript{14} CRS A395, 28 April, p. 4
understand by the Adjutant that persons were required to be available in
the event of civil emergency and that this was quite unofficial. A
number of us went to the drill hall each lunch time, made contact with
the Adjutant, although no further words were spoken, and then went to
practising handling our automatic weapons and machine guns ...

There was a lot of practice with weapons on weekends at the rifle
range. It was stated machine gun locks and bolts were kept overnight in
safe deposit but this did not prevent us from having the weapons for
weekend practice ... I was responsible for the care of two or three
machine guns from Saturday afternoon until Monday morning. They
were housed in the boot of the car at home ...

Shortly after this (1931) I moved out of the A.M.F. By then I had
reached the stage of my medical course which took me to a hospital.
There I was confronted by one of the surgeons on the staff, who
informed me of the League of National Security and invited me to join.
I was given to understand that there were three divisions of the
organisation. The first consisted of fighting troops, the second of supply
and support persons to keep essential services going, and the third of
home guards whose duty would be to protect the homes of those who
were on more active duty. It was clearly understood that the prime oath
was to obey the law, which meant that the organisation would not come
into operation until the 'Civil Power' had lost control, and the law was no
longer effective. There could therefore be no meetings, parades,
carrying of weapons etc. In the event of civil commotion, members
would be called upon through a cell-like system of communication, and
would work in a military manner. I can remember being particular about
reading the form of the oath which clearly outlawed abrogation of
ordinary civil disobedience.

Of course, I was not asked to do anything, nor to my recollection was
anybody else ...

The oath contained none of the racist or religious bigotry which were
part of the earliest movements which subsequently became fascism. My
own orientation at the time was quite sympathetic to the left, so I was alert for this kind of thing, and could find nothing contrary to my leftist, democratic and military obligations.  

Dr Ashburner's comments about his own leftist views single him out as an extremely unusual member of the LNS. But his membership in the face of this personal political orientation is a further indication of how effectively the LNS established itself as being 'non-political'. This sense that the nation was facing a crisis which was beyond politics is reflected in Dr Ashburner's own choice of words. He speaks, not of the government, but of the 'Civil Power' losing control. He did not apprehend a communist rising, but a 'civil emergency': which is to say that he did not expect revolution by the proletariat, but looting by the apolitical mob. It should be remarked that Dr Ashburner's is by far the more plausible of the two eventualities.  

But Dr Ashburner's remarks also draw attention to a second characteristic of the LNS: it is an entity which is thought of as 'an organisation' only at the risk of ignoring its more intangible attributes. In Dr Ashburner's view, the LNS was quite discrete from the vigilante activities he had pursued at University in 1930.  

In the early '30s, student life at Melbourne University was dominated by young men who had grown up in the middle-class and ruling-class suburbs of Melbourne. Politically, a radical minority was overwhelmed by a Nationalist majority. The political tone of the residential colleges was, Professor Moorhouse recalls, particularly conservative. Unlike the campus demonstrations of the '60s in which the conflicts were between students and the establishment (be it represented by government, police, or university administration), the  

demonstrations of the '50s set student against student. This occasionally led to ungentlemanly brawling between members of the largely pro-Soviet Labour Club and the loyalists. There are many who recall the day when the radical student, Sam White, and some of his friends were hustled down to the university lake where they were repeatedly dunked until (says one account) they agreed to stand in the water and sing the National Anthem.  

In Lygon Street, a mere block away, the Italian community's internal fighting between the dominant, respectable fascists and the anti-fascist organisations could not but have some effect on the wider society. An incursion on to the campus by members of the anti-fascist Matteotti League led to further violence and to charges that the radical Labour Club was in league with the 'outsiders'.

As meetings and lectures became increasingly subject to disruption by one side or the other, the SRC suspended all society meetings in early May 1932 and attempted to mediate. It issued a statement which attempted to dispel rumours that the Labour Club was inflexibly communist or that it was conspiring with outside organisations. And it attempted to subdue well-founded anti-fascist anxieties by declaring, wrongly, that 'There is not a "White" or "New" Guard in the University'. Farrago's editors expressed the conservative view when they attacked the Labour Club radicals, saying, 'Any group which advocates war, bloodshed, violence and crime must be stamped out of existence ... A Red revolution is being extolled'. The paper went on to ask:

16. There are many oral accounts, see Farrago, 2 May 1932. Photographs of the incident were published by the Sun, 4 May 1932, p. 1.
17. Farrago, 10 May 1932; see also Cresciani, p. 102.
18. Farrago, 10 May 1932.
Why should we not meet projected violence with force, and crush these propagandists out of a community of two thousand which is being disturbed by a collection of, at most, fifty communists, led by an unmatriculated fresher, a disgruntled theological student and an egotistical law student ...

This cannot continue. Even a New Guard would be acceptable. Farrago warns these fanatics that it hears rumblings in the undergraduate body.\(^{19}\)

This, apparently, was the dominant view: when the Debating Society considered the proposal, 'That the New Guard be suppressed', the motion was lost when put to a vote.\(^{20}\)

But here, the university was simply a microcosm of the wider society. In both, the communists were a handful of revolutionary dreamers who believed Moscow was the capital of Utopia. But the brawling between radicals and would-be guardsmen disguises a far more significant struggle which was going on within the privileged student population - and, therefore, within the rising ruling class itself. It was a struggle for hegemonic supremacy between the conservative Imperialists and the resurgent liberal pluralists, between those who believed it was the role of the university and the State to perpetuate received values and 'truths', and those who believed in the value of debate.

Farrago itself testifies to this internal struggle. The vehemence of its editorial policy notwithstanding, throughout 1931 it often carried articles debating reform politics, or discussing the evils or glories of the Soviet Union. The SRC itself was dominated by a liberal faction, which attempted to put an end

\(^{19}\) Farrago, 3 May 1932.

\(^{20}\) Farrago, 27 April 1932.
to campus violence by issuing a code of ethics. At the head of this statement, the SRC declared that:

The Council recognises that the University occupies a unique position in the community in the propagation of thought. For this reason it is undesirable to suppress discussion on any live controversial subject. But the S.R.C. desires to put on record its belief that disloyal utterances are repugnant to the great majority of students.\textsuperscript{21}

Farrago itself was charged with having contributed to the friction on campus and was directed to 'adopt a conciliatory attitude' to the Left. A conservative attempt to have the Labour Club disaffiliated from the SRC failed. Instead, the SRC chose to uphold the anti-socialist consensus by instructing the club to insert a notice in its paper, \textit{Proletariat}, stating that it was not an official publication of the SRC, and that it therefore did not 'necessarily express the views of the body of the University students'.\textsuperscript{22}

This may sound hopelessly conservative, but \textit{Proletariat} was an enthusiastically pro-Moscow publication. Nothing like it had been seen on the campus before. It is true that liberals and conservatives were simply carrying on a debate within the same camp: the pecking order of the chiefs might have been facing a shake up, but chiefs they would remain. Nevertheless, there remained a significant difference between the conservative and liberal impulses in free enterprise thought: the liberals tended to accept diversity. They tended to value debate. And they tended, not to see 'communism' as a contaminant, but simply as a point of view with which they vigorously disagreed. The difference in the ruling-class camp was, to put it bluntly, the difference between a liberal

\textsuperscript{21} Farrago, 10 May 1932.

\textsuperscript{22} Ibid.
democracy prepared to tolerate a degree of dissent, and a conservative autocracy psychologically equipped to support the mobilisation of the proto-fascist Right.

One of the students drawn to the conservative side was a staunch monarchist named Harold Hewett. He recalls that an Italian friend took him to a fascist display at a small theatre in Russell Street. The gathering is reported by Cresciani: it occurred on 27 October 1929 at the Temperance Hall in Russell Street. It was, says Harold, a display which impressed him greatly. On the stage both the Italian Flag and the Union Jack were hung. In the audience, jackbooted blackshirts watched a performance of songs, fascist speeches, dancing and films about Mussolini. Harold's recollection is that a group of left-wing students demonstrated outside the hall until the blackshirts rose as one man, marched outside and took care of the disturbance. The leftists were held until Russell Street was rung and the police came and took the intruders away. When the blackshirts returned to their places, several of them were injured. 'But', says Harold, 'their discipline impressed me and I decided to join.'

However, Harold says that he came to realise that the Italian fascists were on the wrong track, and he was pleased when the White Army gave him an alternative. He recalls that he was approached on campus by a fellow student who sounded him out and then administered the oath of the White Army. Although he heard no more about it, he understood that if he were needed, he would be contacted. Jack Lang, he says, had formed a Red Army which threatened to seize

23. Cresciani's account is a little different: 'On 27 October, 1929, while 100 to 150 of Melbourne's Fascists, all wearing their blackshirts, were celebrating at the Temperance Hall in Russell Street the seventh anniversary of the March on Rome, they were attacked by Carmagnola, leader of the Italian anarchists and his men who rushed into the hall and took them by surprise. Before they realised what was happening, several Fascists were injured.' (Cresciani, p. 106).
power. If need be, the White Army would have marched north into New South Wales to liberate it from the tyranny of socialism.

Obviously, the ideological difference between Harold Hewett and Dr Ashburner was very great. The success of the White Army is not only that it recruited both, but that both men conceived of the organisation's policies in their own, quite different, terms.

3. Secrecy

From Browne's files, it is clear that he had penetrated and understood the White Army at least to the level described, and probably (given the missing sections of the file) in a good deal more detail. But despite his findings, and those made independently by the Victoria Police and Military Intelligence, the White Army's secrecy was not seriously breached, and neither governments nor the public had any idea of what was going on. In this section we will see how these three agencies of the State undertook investigations and how they failed to alert the Labor governments of their findings. Despite these omissions however, the indiscretions and the breakdown in discipline which occurred within the White Army in early March came very close to exposing the organisation, both to governments and public alike. For it was then that the White Army found itself reported in the press.

(a) The public and the press

On 7 March, the White Army story was broken by two metropolitan weeklies, Truth and Smith's Weekly. Amid growing fears that outbreaks of political violence were imminent, rumours had begun to circulate that machine guns had been stolen
from the army by a group 'planning to take control'. Some said the weapons had fallen into the hands of communists. Others believed that a new, paramilitary organisation, the White Army, was responsible. In any case, word of the White Army was abroad, and ardent young men were imperilling the organisation's secrecy with talk of guns and declarations of eagerness to take on the Reds.¹

Smith's Weekly was troubled by this gun-toting enthusiasm and, although it was no lover of communists itself, the paper attempted to calm the growing anticipation of revolutionary violence:

Communism in Melbourne is mischievous and bombastic but it hasn't shown itself particularly warlike yet. Its demonstrators have not evidenced a desire to meet police batons, even though themselves armed with bludgeons disguised as banneret holders ...²

The article warned that 'Folk who know the risk of the remedy developing into something as bad as the disease will hope the necessity never arises for the White Army to action.' But tensions were running high, and talk of impending revolution was common place.³

As the rich became fearful for the safety of their property, burglaries in Toorak and other fashionable suburbs were blamed on 'the lawless hand of Communism'.⁴ The idea of a White Army, 'observed Smith's, 'has caught on.' -

3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
It has found its most ardent supporters among men of the well-to-do and middle classes who have had military experience and who have not lost a taste for it. From this section came the most eager responses when volunteers were called for at the time of the police strike. The cracking of a head or two when the cracker is vested with a little brief authority, has a certain appeal, it seems.\(^5\)

The following week, *Smith's Weekly* reported that revelations about the White Army had led to desperate efforts on the part of those who are behind this movement to prevent any leakage of information. The atmosphere of mystery has thickened.\(^6\) However, the paper did discover that orders had been placed with certain timber firms for the manufacture of several hundred batons. These had been delivered, the report said -

> to homes where in the military spirit is more or less prominent - a circumstance which must be of some importance when it is stated that the most ardent supporters of the White Army idea are young militia officers whose ardor flourishes mightily in the arm-chairs of the Naval and Military Club.\(^7\)

For its part, *Truth* reported that twenty maxim machine guns (*Smith's* had said it was Lewis guns and about 40 rifles) had been stolen. The paper linked the theft to "talk of a "white army" organisation", and went on to report:

> It is understood that an organisation of young men has got together in this city for the purpose of preparing against an outbreak of violence.

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5. Ibid.
7. Ibid.
It has been suggested, too, on quite reliable authority, that this organisation has some 30,000 men at its call in Melbourne and in the country. Another circumstantial story is that 2,500 hardwood batons were recently delivered to this organisation by a big firm of timber merchants.

Many citizens will recall that wooden batons of the pick handle type were the favourite weapon of those who rallied to the cause of law and order on the occasion of Melbourne's last outbreak of lawlessness during the memorable police strike of 1923.8

The two papers, especially Smith's Weekly, had already stuck their necks out by running a story which none of the dailies was prepared to print. But Smith's went even further. In its original story, Smith's reported that the number of revolvers registered over the previous three months was the highest on record. The unwonted ease with which a gun licence could be obtained at Russell Street led Smith's to engage in a little suggestive reporting on the subject of the White Army's leadership:

The men higher up are figures of mystery, though a shrewd guess may be made as to their identity ... the ease with which formalities are disposed of by police officers does a great deal towards confirming the belief that somebody in authority has passed the word along.

8. Truth, 14 March 1931, p. 1. As it turned out, the theft was the work of neither side. The missing guns were eventually found in the seedy boarding-house room of a soldier named Claude Walter Baker. Baker had a habit of acting out military fantasies which were so peculiar that his Irish landlady told official investigators that she thought the man 'not at all normal in his senses'. The matter was dealt with by the army internally and was not made public. (AA MP707 V/8718).

The only other known case of a major theft of weapons was the burglary of Lt. Col. S.G. Savige's drill hall in Surrey Hills. Savige wrote a furious letter of complaint to Blamey. According to Blamey's biographer, John Hetherington, the theft was the work of members of the White Army (Hetherington, Blamey Controversial Soldier, p. 63).
In the face of this, a peculiarly bland and childlike innocence adopted at police headquarters when the White Army is mentioned becomes rather amusing.\(^9\)

It is difficult to see what this could mean, other than that Smith's Weekly knew or suspected that Victoria's high profile, and violently anti-communist police commissioner was himself involved.

Both papers carried further reports about the rural activities of the White Army, although their information was very patchy. But, for all the gaps, there was a reasonably substantial story here - and yet the fact of the White Army's existence was not established in the public memory - or in the mind of the Labour movement. Today, people who were not sworn into the organisation cannot recall it. Some Labour activists of the period remember the Order of Silent Knights, a small right-wing militia based in Brunswick,\(^10\) but even historically conscious communists of the period such as Jack Blake and Ralph Gibson say they have never heard of the White Army.\(^11\) The present premier of Victoria, John Cain, writes, 'I have no recollection of the White Army ever being mentioned in any discussions that I had with my father.'\(^12\) Perhaps this cultural amnesia is not so surprising. By contrast, the New South Wales New Guard was real enough: it was shown on newsreels and reported in the daily press. The White Army was reported in neither. Its story appeared in the weekly Truth, a paper whose columns

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11. Interviews.

cloistered a world of divorce, abortions, gang-land violence, and sport. It was a world which people paid to read about, not because they wanted to be informed, but because they wanted to be titillated. And it was reported in Smith's Weekly, a paper whose gum-nut common sense manifested itself in humour, larrikinism and cartoons of scantily clad flappers. Given the risqué reputation and low credibility of these two low-brow publications, the public memory failed to assimilate as real a secret army which had not been mentioned in the respectable dailies.

(b) The Victorian Police and the State Government

Mr Gath of Korong Vale had heard rumours that a vast army of unemployed and communists was to strike at his home town on the night of Friday, 6 March, but being a sensible man he paid no heed and went to bed. When he woke the next day to hear that armed guards had been patrolling the streets in cars he was stunned. To his friend, Arthur Cook MLA, he wrote:

Those who are not in the know would very much like to get to the bottom of it. No doubt political propaganda to discredit the Labour Party or to divide the workers is at the real bottom of it but there is no proof.¹

'It is Masonic in origin', Gath wrote, 'and probably Blamey is right in the thick of it ...² Albert Dunstan, Country Progressive Party MLA for the district, received similar news from Wedderburn, and both politicians placed the matter in the hands of the Labor chief secretary,³ Tom Tunnecliffe. Tunnecliffe, whose portfolio

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¹ G.A. Gath to A.E. Cook, L. 10 March 1931, Chief Secretary Correspondence, 1931/A3586.
² G.A. Gath to A.E. Cook, L. 11 March 1931, Chief Secretary Correspondence, 1931/A3586.
³ Chief Secretary, 1931/A3586.
included responsibility for the police force, asked the police commissioner to investigate. Dutifully, General Blamey initiated an investigation into the Wimmera activities of his own secret army.

Blamey himself had good cause to want information about the evening's unrest, for, as Inspector Browne surmised, it seems likely that the mobilisation had been a terrible accident. 'There is reason to believe', Browne wrote, 'that some of the leaders of the White Army movement are realising that this creation may prove to be a Frankenstein which may devour them.'

For his part, Blamey did what he could to minimise the damage which the mobilisation had done to the White Army's cause. Firstly, when he mounted the investigation which the chief secretary had requested, he worded his directive in extremely narrow terms:

It is reported that a Branch of the so-called Defence League or White Army has been formed at Donald and that members are drilling with rifles.

Please cause enquiry to be made into this matter and if the report is correct ascertain the names of any persons who may be drilling with Defence Department rifles.

The allegations of anti-Catholic activity, the fact that the White Army had patrolled the streets - none of these was mentioned. But the instruction was well framed to serve Blamey's purposes: it would satisfy the chief secretary, and it would provide the LNS leaders with information about the breakdown of

4. CRS A395, 23 April, p. 3.
5. Chief Secretary, 1931/A3586, 19 March.
discipline which had occurred. Drilling and moonlight vigils were the last development the LNS leaders could have wanted. The key to their policy (indeed it was almost an obsession) was total secrecy; and now their organisation was on the front page of Truth.

It seems that Blarney had been a little concerned that wild rumours about the unemployed demonstration of 6 March might have caused similar improprieties among metropolitan militiamen. After the much-feared demonstration had passed without triggering the Revolution, The Age asked Blarney to comment on 'the circulation within the past few weeks of alarmist stories concerning the possibilities of public disturbances.' Blarney replied that there had been 'childish and absurd rumours current, and these had been magnified as they had been repeated.' The unemployed had not turned violent, despite the attempts of a few noisy communists to create trouble. 'The danger from this quarter, indeed', he said, 'was no more pronounced than it had been at any time during the last five years, but there was a lot of ridiculous nonsense being spread abroad, and often by people who should know better.\(^6\)

But Blarney's attitude to communists was far less offhand than this suggested. After the state Labor government fell, he regularly plied his minister with union newsletters and other items which he alleged were evidence of Labour sedition. In addition, he agitated for an increase in his own power to authorise search and arrest, even to the point of drafting his own legislation.\(^7\)

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7. See Chief Secretary, 1934/15524: 24 October 1930 and 29 August 1933, Blarney requests increased powers. 21 October 1932, 22 June 1933, Blarney sends large batches of union newsletters and political leaflets to chief secretary as examples of communist propaganda.
When Inspector Browne read Blarey's remarks in Saturday's paper, he was incredulous. 'He more than any other', he observed, 'is responsible for giving the public something to talk about and exaggerate to hysteria and nonsense, and I think it would be a good thing if he were told so.'

Blarey's final tactic to minimise the damage done by the mobilisation was to play the White Army down. He let it be known that 'as far as can be ascertained there has been no suggestion that the activities of the body are directed against any religious organisation.' And, he said, 'The claim has been advanced that the body in question is acting within the law ... there does not appear to be any ground upon which the police can take action at present.'

Inevitably, the question arises of how the state Labor government and the Labour movement responded to these events. Reports that the police commissioner was running an anti-Labour, anti-Catholic secret army which had mobilised in the bush would surely have ruffled a few Labour feathers. The chief secretary had seen two suggestions that Blarey was involved. And Premier Hogan, a Catholic himself, had received an articulate account of the anti-Catholic activity from a Horsham lawyer who also suggested grounds upon which prosecutions might be launched. Wry comments in Smith's Weekly suggested that Blarey's involvement was a matter of open speculation in some circles. But the government did nothing. In order to understand this inaction, it is necessary

8. CRS A369, 7 March.
10. Chief Secretary Tunnecliffe had seen all the material already mentioned. Hogan had, at very least, seen a letter sent to him by the Horsham solicitor, M.F. Bourke, reprinted in Truth, 30 March 1931. The letter was registered by Premier's Department (PROV, 1931/2563) and forwarded to the Chief Secretary (1931/B2292), but it has now disappeared.
to look both at the circumstances surrounding Blarney's tenure of the commissioner's job, and at the internal struggles within the state ALP.

General Blarney had been appointed by the Nationalists to perform the overtly political task of creating a conservative state police force to replace the allegedly radical force which had been sacked for striking in 1923. He was inherited by the Hogan government when it came to power in 1927, his contract not due to expire until mid-1930. But by June 1928, Blarney and the then chief secretary, Mr Prendergast, were arguing publicly after Blarney had dispensed with the system of promotion by seniority in order to elevate his own supporters in the force. For many police, the manipulation of the promotion system remained a constant source of anger. By November 1929, the Police Association's Police Journal was editorialising that at no time since the Police Strike had the 'general feeling of discontent' been 'more pronounced'.

The second-in-command at Russell Street resigned in protest, and there was a general feeling in Labour circles that Blarney was reconstructing the force along political lines. In late 1930, Blarney had the secretary of the Police Association arrested. The man was charged with being the secretary of an illegal organisation and was jailed without the choice of a fine. Prendergast (now ex-chief secretary) attacked the police commissioner saying that he 'wants to pursue a vendetta against anything that does not come into his own hands, or which might take away from him a modicum of power ...'

12. VPD, 1930, p. 3971.
Blarney was ready to condemn most forms of dissent as communist, and had persistently mobilised riot squads against demonstrators, creating so much ill-will that the Left had actually begun staging anti-police demonstrations under the banner of Free Speech.\textsuperscript{13} Even an elderly member of the Melbourne Club (who describes himself as 'a crusty old industrialist'), now thinks of Blarney's police as 'nothing but a licenced basher squad'. Opposition to Blarney was so extreme within the Labour movement that one paper remarked, 'no doubt the commissioner would welcome a Nationalist victory at the next state elections.'\textsuperscript{14} Nor was opposition to Blarney limited to political considerations: in puritan Melbourne the rumours of Blarney's moral and financial improprieties, and his poor reputation with many ordinary servicemen all compounded his divisiveness. But to conservatives, he remained a symbol of resolute opposition to radicalism and of the force of law and order.

As expected, when the general's contract finally expired, the Hogan government advertised his job - at a reduced salary. This snub (for there was no doubt that that is what it was) infuriated Melbourne conservatives who mobilised in his defence. While Blarney's faction within the police force prepared to stage a public demonstration,\textsuperscript{15} a meeting of concerned citizens was convened by a group

\textsuperscript{13} See Les Barnes and Noel Counihan in Lowenstein, pp. 388-396. The most notorious anti-Labour act by Blarney's police occurred in November 1928 when police fired on waterside workers attempting to maintain a picket on Prince's Pier. (Smith's Weekly, 10 November 1928, p. 3). Police were constantly accused of breaking into, and ransacking, homes in the search for revolutionary literature. In 1931 they were accused of being particularly harsh in this respect on leaders of the unemployed. (See Labor Call, 29 January 1931, p. 11; Argus, 27 October 1931, p. 9). Radical speakers - especially those condemning police brutality - were arrested from time to time, and charged with offensive behaviour, or - if they were unemployed - with vagrancy. (Argus, 27 October 1931, p. 9; 31 October 1931, p. 9).

\textsuperscript{14} Smith's Weekly, 26 June 1928, p. 3.

\textsuperscript{15} Argus, 30 July 1930, p. 8.
of retired army officers in the Lower Town Hall and was addressed by prominent Melburnians. Opposition leader, Sir Stanley Argyle, berated the government for the 'most curt and cavalier manner' in which they had effectively dismissed the chief commissioner. Mr Mackrell the member for Upper Goulburn spoke for all conservatives when he declared, 'I sincerely hope that Brigadier-General Blamey will make application to be re-appointed.'

Blamey reapplied. And the cabinet, which was never the most full-blooded of Labor administrations, caved in under conservative pressure and reappointed him. The Labour movement was disgusted.

Both Premier Hogan and Chief Secretary Tunnecliffe faced rebellion within the Party. In meetings of the state ALP Central Executive, the government was assailed by such motions as:

That the action of the Hogan Government be condemned for allowing the police force to prevent the workers holding meetings and processions to protest against the present deplorable conditions.

Their view, in short, was that a Labor government had sanctioned the continued bashing and arrest of activists fighting for the working class. Maurice Blackburn warned that manhandling demonstrators was the way, not to prevent civil commotion, but to incite it. 'When police batons are used against the workers', he told his Party, 'it will not be long before the workers find their own way of

17. VPD, 30 July 1930, p. 1428.
18. 'Agenda for Annual Conference of the ALP (Vic) at Trades Hall, 3 April 1931', in Victorian Central Executives Minutes, 1931, La Trobe, p. 189, Item 77. Motion from the Shop Assistants' Union.
combating those acts of violence. I deplore violence in all forms, and Governmental violence is particularly distasteful.¹⁹

But police hostility was not the only issue over which the leadership was fighting for its survival within the Party. Its whole style of government was thought to show a disappointing neglect of Labour values. Condemnation was coming from the branches which believed that too little was being done for the unemployed. The Castlemaine Branch of the Party felt that the government should be reminded of 'the unwritten law of the Labor movement that we are our Brother's keeper' so keenly did it feel that worker solidarity and care of the unemployed were being neglected.²⁰ At the annual conference of the Victorian ALP, held in the first week of April 1931, an orchestrated challenge was mounted to the policies of the government. Ten motions appeared on the notice paper condemning the government's stand on industrial or social welfare matters.²¹ The young Albert Monk, then a representative of the Clerks' Union, moved a lengthy anti-government motion which was eventually carried after a day's debate. Among its many grievances was the claim that 'the Victorian State Government Relief Act contains provisions which are a violation of the principles of the Labour movement.'²²

Labour disillusionment with the performance of the government is nicely expressed in the following article from Labor Call. It was headlined 'Boodle Triumphant'.

²⁰. Ibid.
²¹. Victorian Central Executive Minutes, 1931, p. 189ff, Items 68-78.
²². Ibid., p. 196.
Whilst the workers who have lost their jobs trudge wearily down the various ways of poverty, the workers who still retain theirs face life mirthfully, and visit the picture plays. But the path of destruction and despair that is now being trodden miserably by the unemployed homeless will soon be theirs to tread. The economic machine that brought doom to others will as surely, in due time, doom them. The Pit is ready to receive them and the hour and circumstances approach. Their laughter of indifference now, will be changed to tears of bitterness hereafter. The workers in and out of employment must have sympathy for each other, and be class consciously solid. The oblations offered up by politicians on the altar of the God of Wind, will not help the workers in their present trouble ... All Governments alike use batons freely on the heads of the poor and hungry, when they announce their poverty too offensively. The police baton is never for the head of the Pawnbroker or the Profiteer. It is only and inevitably for the worker. A Labor Government, like other Governments, will crucify the workers for the Pawnbrokers and Profiteers as often as the occasion arises.23

It was a pretty fair account, and was far from being the product of mere Left-wing dogma. Indeed, as Les Louis has explained, Victorian Labour policy of the period was dictated for the most part by 'expediency and opportunism, with the maintenance of real wages as the principal aim.24 Although the official Objective of the ALP and the trade union movement was the socialisation of industry, by 1929 the Objective commanded little enthusiasm, 'It was regarded', writes Louis, 'as an electoral embarrassment, appropriate certainly as a slogan on such occasions as May Day, but having little relevance to matters of practical politics.'25 As Jack Hughes, a Labour radical of the period, recalls: it was only


25. Ibid., p. 7.
the militants who were concerned with the attempt to give meaning to the Objective. And among them, he says with some sense of self-irony, 'there were many brands of socialism, according to the number of speakers - very often - that were supplied.'

So, the unionists were not Che Guevara revolutionaries, but they were prepared to fight the battles of the workers in the struggle against conservatism and privilege: some Labour people were also prepared to speak for the poor and the unemployed who had been so harshly treated in post-war Australia. With these values in mind, there was a generally held view among unions that the Parliamentary Labor Party was their political arm: that they should control the party machine and thereby the government. In short, the unions wanted to fight - as they had always had to fight - and saw the compromises of career politicians as a betrayal of the cause of the working people who had elected them to government.

For Tunnecliffe and Hogan, then, Labour movement anger over the violence of Blamey's police and the rumours that the police commissioner was involved in the White Army were simply two more sabres to be juggled in the act of surviving in the Victorian political ring. But the Party was not the only group whom the government had to appease; in Parliament, Hogan lacked an absolute majority. For more than a decade after the War, effective government in Victoria had been hampered by a bewildering array of factionalised alliances. Throughout the '20s


and '30s, the Victorian leadership of the Nationalists (and then the UAP) remained in the hands of men whose temperament and values were more suited to a British Raj than a British liberal democracy. Neither they, nor the Labor Party, were able to attract sufficient voters away from the centrist factions to win a popular majority. As a result, the country parties were the most influential political grouping. Until 1952, no party, Liberal or Labor, sat on the government benches without them. Since in the minds of many non-Labour people, populist Labour ideology was constantly being confused with communism, the Labor leaders found it difficult to pursue traditional Labour reforms without jeopardising the support of their rural allies in the Parliament or the support of an extremely fickle electorate.

Just how close the White Army came to being the issue which destroyed the government within the Party is indicated by the next part of Labor Call's attack on the government in 'Boodle Triumphant'. The article continued:

It is reported now that in this country a White Army is being secretly organised to thrash the workers back to their chains and duty should Parliament fail to cut drastically enough to that end, when called upon by the buglers of allied Bossdom. Tory militants are training the police under them to use machine guns and gas on the workers whenever necessary. Parliaments with Labor majorities are silent when these things are mentioned in the press. Are the elect of the workers the friends of the workers, or are they merely the dogs that bark at the command of Boodle Triumphant? The crucifixion of Anstey, McGrath and Beasly at the demand of Bossdom is a bad omen for the workers of Australia.

28. Ibid., pp. 48-59.
29. Labor Call, 19 March 1931, p. 7. A similar article appeared in the Sydney communist Workers Weekly, 13 March 1931. The White Army was referred to as 'Blamey's army of thugs'.

Fortunately for the government, Labor Call had no idea whether its claims about the White Army were true or not. The material is drawn from the reports which had appeared in the previous two editions of Smith's Weekly and Truth. Labor Call had no new information of its own, and was sufficiently unsure of so sensational a story that it was denied a headline. Soon the White Army had become just one more rumour to have been exploited in political rhetoric, and then abandoned. Labor Call never mentioned it again, and the story did not take hold in the Labour movement at large. Aided by the silence of the major dailies, the White Army recovered its anonymity.

Tunnecliffe himself certainly did what he could to keep the story quiet. In August, when the matter finally arose in Parliament, the chief secretary was less than frank. Tunnecliffe's predecessor and Blamey's old rival, Prendergast, put the following question:

Mr PRENDERGAST. (Footscray) asked the Premier -

1. If he is aware that an organisation called the 'New Guard' has been established in Australia, based on military lines, apparently for the purpose of bringing about Fascism?

2. Whether he will take steps to see that no such organisation is allowed to come into existence or continue, as far as such a matter is under the control of this State?

Prendergast had chosen his words carefully. But Tunnecliffe was even more circumspect:

For Mr HOGAN (Premier and Treasurer), Mr TUNNECLIFFE (Chief Secretary). - The Answers are -

1. The only information in the possession of the Government is that appearing in the public press that an organisation under this title has been formed in New South Wales.
2. The Government will take action to prevent the formation or continuance of any unlawful organisation.\(^{30}\)

Tunnecliffe knew this was misleading: in April he had read the report on the Wimmera White Army which Blarney had been instructed to prepare. Basically the file contained reports from some towns where the White Army had mobilised on 6 March and a roughly typed copy of the White Army oath. Blarney himself made no comment or evaluation of the report, he simply forwarded it as requested. Tunnecliffe may genuinely have been misled by the report into thinking that the White Army was nothing more than a brief response to an isolated scare. Certainly that is the impression he gave when he wrote to the Country Progressive Party leader, A. A. Dunstan, replying to Dunstan's request about the progress of the Wimmera investigation:

> The police have taken action which should result in preventing any repetition of this happening, and it is hardly necessary to add that they are quite competent to deal with any infringement of the law which may take place.

> From the information received, it would seem that the 'scare' has now disappeared, and there is no reason to anticipate any recurrence.\(^{31}\)

Tunnecliffe might also point out that his answer in the Parliament had been technically correct. The White Army had been determined, by the crown solicitor, not to be unlawful. The opinion had been prepared after the Mallee-Wimmera mobilisation at Hogan's request. Ignoring statute law which could have been used

\(^{30}\) VPD, 11 August 1931, p. 2025.

\(^{31}\) Chief Secretary, 1931/A3586, 9 April 1931.
to prosecute members of the White Army, the crown solicitor drew instead on an old English common law principle to conclude that the organisation was legal. The opinion was hardly surprising. The crown solicitor was Frank Gladstone Menzies, brother of Robert Menzies.32

Even if Hogan and Tunncliffe knew that the White Army amounted to more than this, they had good reasons for wanting to preserve its secrecy. If the Labor Party had learned that Blamey - whose reappointment already had alienated them from the Party - was heading an anti-radical, anti-Catholic para-military force, the mounting opposition within the Party would have become overwhelming. But the party never learned what was going on. The matter was never raised in the proceedings of the State Parliamentary Party, nor does it appear in the minutes of the ALP Victorian Central Executive. The White Army has never been named in the memoirs of any Labour activist of the period (it appears only in the memoirs of conservatives). And apart from the brief exchange already cited, it was never named or hinted at in Parliament. In the research for the present study, no Labour or communist activist of the period has been found who recalled the name or the organisation.

Whether the Hogan cabinet knew of or discussed the White Army, it is impossible to say. The cabinet papers of the Hogan government have disappeared. They are not in the Public Record Office where they ought to be. Nor are they held by the Premier's Department. The ALP does not have them. Nor does the Victorian Parliamentary Library. Nor are they among the Labour and DLP papers held by the La Trobe Library.

32. This opinion is not a document of public record. It is held in the Crown Solicitor's Office. The gist of the document was provided to me by a senior member of the Office, by phone.
From Hogan's point of view, the conclusion to the story was not a happy one. As relations within the party grew increasingly strained, Hogan demonstrated little capacity for achieving consensus, and became increasingly belligerent and embattled. Early in 1932, he found himself one of five state Labor parliamentarians who refused to follow the policy of the ALP State Conference rejecting the Premier's Plan. Even after the divided Labor Party was routed in the state election of May 1932, Hogan, now a broken man, defied the party and was expelled. He remained in Parliament as an independent until 1935, when he joined the Country Party, becoming a minister in the Dunstan government. In 1953, he went on to publish a 200-page cold war tract entitled What's Wrong With Australia? to which the answer on every count was communism.

Tunnecliffe succeeded Hogan as a rather ineffective party leader, but not before he too had experienced the displeasure of the rank and file at first hand. At the May Day march in 1932, two weeks before the abortive election, Tunnecliffe attempted to assure the marchers that he at least had retained the ideals of his Party. But he sounded like a man on the defensive:

'I am standing where I have always stood since I was aged 16,' he told the marchers, 'and that is four-square with the rank and file of the working class in their aspirations for a greater share of the good things of society. We are nearer our goal than ever before in our history ...'
It was a call for solidarity and moderation from a man claiming to be an elder of the movement. What many of the marchers heard was a politician touting for support ... His claim that, in the midst of a depression, working people were better off than ever before was hardly tactful. And before the end of the day, Tunnecliffe had been abused and roughed up by radicals and unemployed.37

To summarise. Labour radicals never realised that the police commissioner they so disliked was waging a campaign against them, not only through the overt aggression of the police force, but also through the covert preparations which the White Army was making across the state. We might guess that this blindness was caused, at least in part, by the radicals' tendency to see the police brutality as evidence of the government's betrayal of Labour principles. They might more usefully have treated the police force as part of the State's repressive apparatus with which both unions and the social democratic government had to contend. It is difficult to see how the government could have survived in so unstable an electorate if it had not compromised itself, especially given its dependence upon rural non-Labor politicians for its control of the parliament.

Because key documents have been lost or destroyed, it is impossible to know for certain whether Hogan and Tunnecliffe appreciated that the White Army was anything more than an isolated rural disturbance. At best, they allowed themselves to be misled by Police Commissioner Blarney into believing that the Wimmera affair was so trivial that no good political purpose would be served if it were aired publicly. At worst, they had themselves come to believe in the Red bogey, influenced perhaps by the disruption (as they saw it) which radicals were causing for the government within the Party.

37. Ibid.
Whichever were true, the actions of the two men served the White Army's policy of secrecy well. It was not without cause that Col. Frank Derham, a White Army leader, conceded that the Hogan government were 'a pretty decent crowd'.

(c) The Scullin Government and the Investigation Branch

Like their Victorian counterparts, the federal Labor government had no idea of the scale on which militia were being organised throughout the Commonwealth. But it was, once again, the Wimmera affair which did most to endanger the secrecy of the White Army. Late in March 1931, the federal attorney general, Frank Brennan, received a long and troubled letter from a Mr M. J. Nolan, a fellow Catholic who lived in the isolation of Mt Jeffcott. His letter began:

Dear Sir,

I would like to draw your attention to a matter that happened around these parts on 6th March ... the Protestants and Freemasons were organised and armed with rifles and ammunition ready to mow the R.C.s down, and the R.Cs were supposed to be Communists and did not know anything as far as religion at all. Men were sworn in by a man named Jack Pitt J. P. Donald Auctioneer and up the Mildura line as far as that men were organised in camps on that night. Men around these parts whom I have always credited with a lot of sense all joined up in this White Army as it is named. Of course as you can imagine a spirit of distrust has sprung up and bitterness which is damnable.

38. de Groot Papers, Vol. 9, p. 286.

Nolan went on to tell Brennan the stories he had heard from other towns in the region.

On 1 April, this letter was forwarded to the director of the Investigation Branch, Major H. E. Jones. Jones in turn sent it to Inspector Browne in Melbourne. Browne had been filing reports on the White Army since the beginning of the year, but Jones took the view that his Minister should not be told of the White Army's activities. However, this silence did not pass unchallenged. Between the lines of the Canberra file, an argument developed between Browne, the liberal democrat, and Jones, the conservative, over their responsibility to the government.

From the outset, Browne believed the government ought to be told. At the end of January he reported to Jones that the subject of the White Army had been broached to him 'almost daily' during the past week. He had learned that the organisation had 'a complete spy system' and 'trusted men in every place where Communist plans might be said to be likely to be hatched.' The organisation was secret, Browne reported, because the government was not to know of its existence. He explained that 'the sponsors did not trust certain personnel in the Cabinet', two members of which were rumoured to be 'disloyal'. Furthermore, he told Jones, 'It is believed that the agents of the Government will be kept from all possible knowledge of the matter as they may report to the Government as in duty bound.' Browne's statement of principle was clear.\(^2\)

But Major Jones saw his duty in quite different terms. As far as he was concerned, the White Army was thoroughly pukka:

\(^2\) CRS A 369, 24 January 1931.
I have made some inquiries from which I gather that something is likely to be doing in the direction indicated, as there is a good deal of this sort of thing in the air these days.

I do know, however, that some years ago a definite basis of organisation was formed in cases of emergency. It was organised by a permanent military officer, quite unofficially. The idea of such an organisation was no doubt suggested by the American Protective League, a body of people banded together in all branches of activities to safeguard constitutional Government ... it is quite likely that the present condition of affairs throughout Australia, with the possibilities of civil commotion at any place and at any time, has forced responsible organisations and citizens to create some form of protection, apart from the ordinary official side.

And then, no doubt recalling the model of the Australian Protective League, Jones continued:

... but so far as we are concerned officially, we cannot directly or indirectly be associated with any movement of this description unless instructed by our Minister.3

And unofficially? ... perhaps Jones was saying nothing more than that his hands were tied.

But Browne did not share his superior's high estimation of these 'responsible people'. He regarded their fears of revolution with incredulity.

'But what of the Red organisation, if any?' he wondered:

3. Ibid., 5 February. At this stage Jones seems not to have understood Browne's position. Browne didn't want the IB to be 'associated with' the LNS.
Is the whole business a steel hammer to crush a nut? If it is it will do a power of harm because the decent unemployed who are becoming bitter will resent the very idea of a secret force being organised to combat something which they have no intention of doing. 4

At the end of July, Browne learnt that, like Millenarians who plunge from one anticipated apocalypse to the next, the LNS were again gearing up for yet another possible 'zero hour'. Once again, Browne reported, they feared that a march of unemployed was the signal for revolution. And once again, there were new rumours of hidden stores of communist arms. As Browne put it, the LNS 'is in receipt of information which appears to be accepted at its face value, however absurd.' 5

By April, Browne's infiltration of the White Army was well established. He was receiving information from the White Army's own intelligence section, had documented the Wimmera affair and was continuing to accumulate data on the White Army's personnel and resources. He was so securely placed that he was able to report that 'next week there may be a parade of one of the White Army "groups" which will be attended by the "heads". I hope to be in a position to attend this meeting myself.' 6

It was at this advanced stage of his investigation that Browne made his most troubling assessment of the movement. And he did so in a manner which directly attacked Jones' own comfortable view of the White Army's function. At the end of a three page report, Browne concluded:

4. Ibid., 14 March.
5. Ibid., 31 July.
6. Ibid., 23 April.
It is said that the White Army is purely protective and would not be used without constitutional authority, but there is every reason to believe that if it did not approve of constituted authority it might act in opposition to it - a position which might well lead to Civil war.

To put it bluntly it was not beyond the bounds of possibility that the White Army might be mobilised against the Labor government. And once again, Browne went on to insist that government ought to be told:

It is because I believe this to be a possibility arising out of a grave dissemination of false or misleading propaganda in the future that I mention it as a matter of duty to the Government in office ... I would like to see a pronouncement by the leaders of all opposition parties in association with the Government to denounce what may become a national peril.

But Browne now doubted that Jones was going to inform his Minister. For his own security, Browne ended with a request which was quite outside the normal style of his letters to Canberra:

I shall be glad if you will acknowledge the safe receipt of this report, and would like your comment as to whether the information is along the lines desired.  

Browne was right to be cautious. Jones did not see it as his responsibility to tell his Minister. There is nothing in Brennan's behaviour at this time to indicate that he had ever heard of the League of National Security. Like Tunnecliffe and Hogan, Brennan seems to have known no more than he had been told by a troubled resident of the Mallee-Wimmera. It would seem that he too was led to believe

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7. Ibid., 23 April.
that the Wimmera incident had been an isolated outburst. If that were not so, then the White Army would surely have entered Labour folklore. If the federal government had known, if Brennan had seen the White Army file, then it is inconceivable that Labor politicians would not have raised the matter in Parliament, that they would not, at very least, have attempted to make political capital out of the fact that two Nationalist politicians were named in the report as having White Army ties.

Jones did not tell his Labor minister, because he saw the White Army as part of the legitimate machinery of the State. Its purpose: to undermine any attempt by Labor to put its socialisation objective into practice. In fact Jones entitled his own report of the secret militia throughout Australia, 'The formation of secret bodies in the Commonwealth for the protection of the State against BOLSHEVISM.' Bolshevism was exactly what the conservatives accused the Labor Party of endorsing. Langism and Sovietism were interchangeable items of abuse, while Theodore's inflationary economics were deemed to be 'Soviet' in their intention.

8. Jones did what he could to be low-key about the organisation. An internal Branch memo, attached to the front of one White Army file, dealt with claims that right-wingers in Melbourne had stolen machine guns. On it, Jones pencilled: 'Inform Mr. Brennan that matter investigated and the whole story appears to be the result of hysteria on the part of certain people aided no doubt by certain individuals who are endeavouring to seek the limelight. J.' (CRS A395). Its very vagueness suggests that the term 'White Army' did not arise, yet Jones' file is entitled 'Papers relating to the White Army'.

9. Moore describes Jones' involvement in plans to swear in members of the NSW Old Guard as 'Peace Officers' under the Peace Officers Act (1932), only days before Governor Game forestalled the imminent mobilisation of the Old Guard by sacking Lang. Moore, 'Send Lawyers, Guns and money?' Ph.D. Thesis, La Trobe University, 1982, p. 346ff.

10. CRS A369.

11. See, for example, Argus, 31 October 1930, p. 9.
The 1931 split between Lang Labor and the ALP, the expulsion of communists from the ALP, the communist charge that the ALP were 'social fascists' - none of these characteristically socialist divisions convinced the conservatives that ALP was not part of a giant socialist plot, orchestrated from Moscow. The White Army's secret Intelligence Summary actually charged that these divisions were a 'false impression which is deliberately created to mislead the public'. The Labour movement was merely pretending to be divided!

Of course, Lang was the target of most of these accusations. But for his abrasive demagogy, it is doubtful whether the secret armies would have attracted so many middle-of-the-road supporters. But inevitably, the public image of the entire ALP was tainted. There was nothing peculiarly Australian about this. Democratic socialist governments throughout the West were being met with similar charges and similar modes of resistance.

As far as Jones was concerned, it was not his job to tell a Labor attorney general what the militiamen were planning. The fact that the attorney general was a member of a popularly elected government made no difference. Jones was part of that elite which believed - and continues to believe - that it is their job to defend the national interest from the wayward fantasies and the seditious thoughts of Labor governments and the popular majorities which elect them to power.

(d) The Scullin Government and Military Intelligence

The final group of public servants who shielded the White Army from the ALP were senior officers of the Australian Army. In March 1931, the Military Board noted that it had known about the White Army 'for some considerable time'. However, it had become concerned that CMF and Army facilities were being used to equip the organisation, and that regular soldiers had joined its ranks.

The Board issued a high level memorandum on 4 March instructing all unit commanders to terminate the unofficial use of drill halls and equipment. Officers were told that they were to cease lending any kind of assistance to the White Army, and any regular soldier who had 'inadvertently' joined was ordered to rescind his membership.¹

But these instructions were not successfully enforced. On 31 July, Browne reported that he had 'conclusive' proof that many AMF officers were still 'actively associated with the L.N.S.'² Nevertheless, whatever its reasons, the Military Board did recognise that the LNS was not completely legitimate - and yet it did nothing to inform the Commonwealth government.

Meanwhile, Military Intelligence was engaged in the surveillance of Australian citizens - just why, is not altogether clear. Most of its reports dealt with left-wing groups, but it also kept tabs on the White Army. Unfortunately, all of this material has been purged from the Military Intelligence holdings in the

1. "Confidential circular memorandum to Members of the Staff Corps and Australian Instructional Corps", Military Board, Melbourne, 4 March 1931, AA (Melb.), CRS A369, D585.
2. CRS A369, 31 July 1931.
Australian Archives. (MI's Victorian monthly intelligence summaries for this period have been reduced to a kind of practical joke. Manilla folders have been provided, seriously indexed, labelled and boxed. But most of the folders contain nothing more than a brief memo of the form: Dear X, please find attached the monthly intelligence summary for the month Y. A pin hole is all that remains.)

However, one summary did survive elsewhere. After the fall of the Scullin government, Military Intelligence provided the new attorney general, John Latham, with the information it had withheld from Brennan: it sent him the monthly intelligence summary for June 1932. The relevant section is headed 'Summary No. 5 Information of Various Secret and Other Organisations'. It contains 150 words describing the decline of the League following the defeat of the Lang and Hogan governments. The summary was accompanied by a note telling Latham that this kind of material was regularly produced by Military Intelligence, and that if he was interested they would be only too pleased to send him further copies. Whereas the Labor attorney general had been treated to silence, his conservative replacement was welcomed as a valued client.

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3. AA MP 95/3.

PART TWO

LEGITIMATIONS
So far we have seen how the White Army was organised and how its secrecy was preserved. We have also seen some of the factors which caused people to join and the plans of those who ran it. We have seen that the movement was, especially in the country-side, to a degree a spontaneous response to fears, prejudices and economic hardships of the historical moment. The White Army enabled men to given expression to an emotional undercurrent which like the Grande Peur, was already surging through their community. Certainly local groups were instigated by White Army emissaries, phoning or visiting from outside. But, like the organisers of the All for Australia League, men recruiting for the White Army filled a cultural need. Men joined, not because they were persuaded to, but because it seemed like the right, or loyal, or responsible, or only thing to do.

The question now is, what potential did the organisation have for violence, at whom was that violence likely to be directed, and under what provocation? We have seen that some conservatives were urging Monash to seize power and that Monash himself believed that such people were in effect arguing for the violent overthrow of representative democracy. We have also seen that the leadership of the LNS had the will and intention to install a fascist, one-party system of government. But what of the membership? Was there a world view which would enable ordinary members of the militia to believe that violence was justified?

Some members have claimed in interview that the White Army was 'a purely defensive organisation' that it existed to deter communists from taking revolutionary action, and to 'keep the wheels of society turning' if 'essential services' were paralysed by a general strike. Archie Macarthur, the militia commander in Gippsland, claims that the White Army was instrumental in keeping
the peace, simply because the reds knew that they would have a fight on their hands. But the question then is, why was it secret? An organisation whose existence is unknown cannot be a deterrent. And the White Army was not just a closed society like the masons. It was a para-military organisation, so obsessed with keeping its existence secret that its very name was never to be spoken.

Others, like Major Len Fell of Metung and Harold Hewett, have claimed that the White Army represented a more offensive threat, that, in the White Army's mind, the ALP and the UWM had already mounted an attack against which 'Australia' had to be defended.

Although there may be many ex-members who resist the idea, my own conclusion is that the White Army, like such para-military movements as the Croix de Feu, was equipped with a world view which would have legitimated a physical assault on government itself.\(^1\) Whether they realised it or not, the members of the White Army had committed themselves, not just to a secret society, but to a rhetoric - to a whole way of thinking, which was likely to make an attack on government a patriotic duty. This is the subject of this second section of the thesis.

1931 was an extremely volatile federal election year. Some observers considered that the election was not simply a struggle for power between Labor

\(^1\) The French Croix de Feu was founded in 1927 with the financial support of such prominent businessmen as the perfumer Coty. Originally an organisation of decorated veterans, it spawned fraternal organisations attracting a membership estimated between 200,000 and 700,000 men. Death and injury resulted when, on 6 February 1934, the Croix de Feu attempted to storm parliament and unseat the socialist government only to be defeated by government troops. Commenting on the violence, the Croix de Feu leader, Colonel de la Rocque, accused to the government of making war against the 'true Frenchmen', and declared that government ministers were 'murderers' who 'must be put outside the law'. (Grand Larousse encyclopédique, III, p. 675; M. Thorez, France To-Day and the People's Front, Gallancz, London, 1936, p. 118; David Thomson, Democracy in France Since 1870, p. 196).
and non-Labor, it was a choice between the UAP and, to use Inspector Browne's words, 'civil war'. It would determine whether Australia were to be governed by an elected coalition of liberals and conservatives, or whether conservatives would feel compelled to stage a coup in order to deliver Australia from a Labor government elected for a second, intolerable term. Of course there can be no certainty that such a coup would have been attempted. But, as we will see, during 1931 the conservative world view developed powerful imperatives legitimating the use of the militia to such an end.

Broadly speaking, the White Army was formed by an alliance of conservative males from the ruling class and from the bourgeoisie. But if the world view which informed that alliance is to be examined with any rigour, class is not a concept on which an analysis can satisfactorily be grounded. By 1931, already made ambiguous by national mythologies of egalitarianism and individualism, class was further confused in popular perception as the Depression disadvantaged some groups and advantaged others across class boundaries. Small business people who entered the Depression with high debts, and clerical staff in unstable companies, occasionally found themselves facing bankruptcy or unemployment. On the other hand, many people on regular salaries actually benefited from the Depression. Even after nominal wage reductions ranging from 10% to 20%, most wage earners were still better off in real terms in 1933 than they had been in 1929.

3. Douglas Copland, Australia in the World Crisis 1929-1933, Cambridge University Press, 1934, pp. 123-129. However, the real value of the basic wage fell by about 8% (ibid., p. 124) and there are reports of under-award payments both to union and non-union members (Louis, Trade Unions and the Depression, p. 142). But while it might be thought that this would have led to clear, working class political action, such was not the case. The unions, as Louis says, were for the most part in retreat on the industrial front (ibid., p. 63ff.), while those sections of the Labour movement which did attempt to take industrial or political action often complained of worker apathy (ibid., p. 126). So, once again, class is a difficult concept to use with precision because, when it comes to the working class, it is, as Louis says, 'virtually impossible to gauge what the inarticulate rank and file were thinking' (ibid., p. 146).
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One of the key anti-Labor initiatives to emerge from the fracas was the appropriation of the concept of 'citizenship'. As we will see, it was a concept which was used to legitimate both the White Army and the All for Australia League/UAP. An ideal which explicitly rejected class thinking, it depicted society, not as the site of conflict between groups with different economic interests or aspirations, but as a unity of loyal individuals threatened by enemies within their midst.

This emphasis on 'citizenship' was only one element in a much broader ideological event. I have called this event conservatism. It is a term which requires some qualification however. History - especially the history of ideas - takes account of both continuity and change, it seeks explanations by plotting the diachronic against the synchronic. The conservatism of 1931, then, is unique to that moment. It is, in its particular manifestations, distinctively, 'the conservatism of 1931'. But it is also a world view which is the product of traditions and past events and initiatives. And it is, in turn, a world view which has provided precedents for the future. If conservatism is thought of as a system, as synchrony, then it is only by seeing it in operation across time that it is possible to see the range of its conceptual resources and to appreciate their implications. Both the precedents and the products of the 'conservatism of 1931' may be instructive, if that particular conservatism, in its own historical moment, is to be understood more fully.  

5. cf. Tynianov and Jacobson: 'The history of a system is in turn also a system. Pure synchrony is now turning out to be an illusion: each synchronic system contains its past and future as inseparable structural elements of the system... The opposition between synchrony and diachrony was an opposition between the notion of system and the notion of evolution. It loses its principal importance insofar as we recognise that each system is necessarily given as an evolution and that on the other hand, evolution inevitably has a systematic character'. 'Problems in the Study of Language and Literature', in DeGeorge (ed.) The Structuralists from Marx to Levi-Strauss, Doubleday, New York, 1972, p. 82.
Insofar as the 'conservatism of 1931', legitimated the formation of potentially fascist secret armies, it might be thought of as being (to use a psychoanalytic metaphor) a neurotic distortion of a conservative norm induced by the apprehension of crisis. This is not an altogether satisfactory formulation however, not least because the idea of a conservative norm or a conservative ideal type may be too ahistorical a fiction to be sustained. We are better served to follow R.D. Laing or Thomas Szasz, and regard such extreme behaviour as a 'normal' response to an extraordinary situation - a response for which individual and group responsibility are not abrogated by the plea (albeit metaphorical) of insanity.  

In so far as an individual contributed or subscribed to conservative rhetoric or participated in actions legitimated by that rhetoric, then it is reasonable to refer to that individual, in that moment, as a conservative. We must note, however, that a person may be a conservative in some matters and a progressive in others. To classify someone as a conservative does not indicate a wholesale subscription to a catechism (unlike such a terms as 'Calvinist' or 'Maoist'). A conservative is simply an individual who participates in the event of conservatism, whether through belief or (and the two are by no means unrelated) self-interest. To deny the applicability of the category under these conditions is to court the disappearance of people from history altogether.


7. Thus in Chapter Five, I discuss the contribution made by General Brudenell White to the validation of the anti-democratic ideas which helped legitimate the secret army, even though White himself possibly disapproved of its activities.
My interest is in the 'conservatism of 1931' as a rhetoric within which certain social entities were legitimated and others marginalised. It was not a world-view manufactured for the occasion in some ideological think-tank within the ruling class. As I have already suggested, cultural production is plainly more complex than that. However, in choosing to ground this analysis in the political category 'conservatism' rather than couching it in specifically class terms, I do not mean to suggest that class categories had fallen into complete disuse, or that historians are prevented from making statements about different classes during the Depression. My point is only that, in a discussion of popular political consciousness during the Depression, class is too unstable a concept to form the basis of the analysis.

While the level of explicit class consciousness in the society at large was low, I would argue that a new class, the unemployed, emerged, and that an old class, the ruling class, endured. The 'conservatism of 1931' was a world view which, by definition, upheld - or sought to uphold - the interests of the Melbourne ruling class of 1931. The first chapter of this section examines, not the conservatism which operated within the popular sphere, but the conservative notions which were available exclusively to the ruling class itself. The chapter asks whether there were, within ruling class thought, the conceptual resources for the legitimation of the White Army and its use.
CHAPTER FOUR

DEFENDING THE NATIONAL TUCKSHOP

There is often no clear distinction between the world-view which prevails among ruling-class men, and the dominant world view of the society at large. But there is one place where ruling class ideas can be located in, as it were, an uncontaminated form. That place is the school magazines of Melbourne's major boys' public schools. In this section we will see reservations about democracy are neither a personal idiosyncracy nor a peculiarity of the historical moment. They were a long-standing resource of ruling class morality.

Let two potential misunderstandings first be laid to rest. There is no suggestion here that the public schools in any way generated or nurtured secret army ideology. The generation and transmission of values is more complex than that. The values and attitudes which a child learns from its parents and the culture which is transmitted in the schoolyard are at least as significant to the child's developing world-view as are the contents of the official curriculum. Furthermore, the official school culture is as likely to expose ruling class boys to liberalising and humanising influences as it is to make crusty conservatives of them. This thesis is as much a product of the public school-university experience as any of the events which it discusses.

Secondly, it follows from this that this section makes no claim to be an exhaustive account of ruling class ideas. Ideology is like a box full of different blocks. A few blocks are taken from the box and used to construct an understanding of the world which suits the economic and psychological pressures of the historical moment. The full range of blocks is never on display at any one time - not least because many of them are mutually incompatible. But the diverse resources of the range are always available, and are always being augmented.
In Melbourne, the most powerful families in the ruling class sent (and still send) their sons to one of the big six public schools, and they sent them nowhere else. Not all of these boys came to subscribe to the ideas which I am about to outline. But in the range of ideas available to them, there was a distinctive set of elitist ideas which was available to them alone. It would have made sense to no other social group. This was the distinctive ideology and culture of the ruling class public schoolboys. In their school magazines, we hear the rising ruling class rehearsing its social philosophy - its theories of class, power and justice - rehearsing that philosophy with disarming candour.

The river of death has brimmed its banks
And England's far and honour a name,
But the voice of a schoolboy rallies the ranks:
'Play up! play up! and play the game!'

So strong is our culture's sense of the fundamental decency of the public schoolboy that few can fail to identify Henry Newbolt's schoolboy aright. He is clearly - so clearly that it need not be stated - a boy from one of England's great public schools. He announces himself as a plucky fellow who accepts his birthright of leader with cheerfulness and humanity. Indeed the verse achieves its stirring sentimentality by its very recognition of the boy as the herald of traditional values which had momentarily seemed lost in a god-forsaken war. Even the manner in which the voice seems to come from behind the action suggests that the boy is a hero, not by battleskill, but by right. He is both manfully within the action, and aristocratically apart from its faceless ranks.

The British public schools provided the models for the education of ruling class Melburnians. Headmasters and staff were regularly recruited from the
British Isles, and the ruling class itself learned to speak a peculiarly plummy brand of the King's English.

The First World War was as great a proving time for the public schools as it was for the nation at large. Never before had the schools been afforded such an opportunity to demonstrate the 'leadership potential' of their clients while they were still so closely identified with the schools. If the grim experience of the trenches had given birth to a national mythology of egalitarianism and national birth, it had also generated a counter myth of the worthy public school officer, leading the fight for Empire. One Geelong Grammarian writing from the front expressed the empathy which some of the Victorian public school men felt towards their English counterparts. Writing to his old school magazine, he extolled the virtues of the English schools in such a way that the praise was understood to apply also to his school fellows:

It must often be asked how it is that England has been able to find amateur officers for an army of millions she has been able to raise. I think the Universities and Public Schools are responsible for training them. Here a man is inspired with the spirit that fits him for leadership. His association and education have trained him for it and he falls into his place as naturally on the battlefield as he does on the football ground.¹

In her history of Geelong Grammar, Jane Carolan recorded that 417 Old Grammarians enlisted. All became officers. The list included 110 lieutenants, 53 captains, 24 majors, 10 lieutenant colonels and 1 brigadier general. She went on to remark that 'The number of Old Grammarians who became officers was high

but not extraordinary given that they were educated men reared in the knowledge
that they should accept authority.\textsuperscript{2}

Although no one was gauche enough to say it in as many words, there was
implicit in the celebration of the public school contribution to Empire a belief
that public schoolboys were morally superior to, and better fitted for leadership,
than boys from the state high schools. J. D. Burns summed up the conscious ethos
which united the great brotherhood of public schools in the following editorial in
the \textit{Scotch Collegian}. Less than six months later, Burns would be lying dead at
Gallipoli:

\ldots It is certainly the case that the public school does set its peculiar
mark on every one of its sons \ldots What the public school does is not to
destroy individuality but to build up character, which will enable
individuality to develop itself on its own lines \ldots The basis upon which
character is formed is love of the school; it must be an unselfish love,
which braces each to strive with heart and soul not for his own glory, but
for that of the school \ldots

This loyalty to the school is the first stage of the boy’s development;
later he will look with pride and affection on the great brotherhood of
public schools, all striving with a common aim towards a common end
- the making of men for the Empire. When he leaves his school, the
loyalty of the man will become wider and more universal, and patriotism
for the Empire will succeed, though not replace, loyalty to the school.
This then is the ‘type’ against which so many shafts of criticism have
been aimed - a type of men united in loyalty, strong and independent in
character upon the foundation of which individuality has safely
developed itself, without fear of degenerating into mere selfishness.\textsuperscript{3}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{2} Carolan, p. 167.
\item \textsuperscript{3} \textit{Scotch Collegian}, December 1914, p. 126.
\end{itemize}
To dramatise their contribution to the Empire, most schools were able to draw from the ranks an individual who, through valor or through sacrifice, had distinguished himself as a hero. At Scotch College it was J. D. Burns; at Xavier, Joe Lalor. For Melbourne Grammar it was future V.C. winner, and future conservative politician, Wilfred Kent Hughes. As the school magazine proclaimed:

The call of the Empire in her hour of need has been heard by Old Melburnians wherever they have been ... It must make the heart of every Old Melburnian swell with pride to know that the Captain of the School, W. S. Kent Hughes, has not only volunteered but has been accepted. And as he marched through the crowded streets at the head of his company en route for Broadmeadows, on August 19, with dozens of Old Melburnians in the ranks, as well, we felt that The School had at this juncture, as it has in the past, provided its best for the Empire and the Flag we all revere.

So naturally does leadership come to such boys, that Kent Hughes' transition from school captain to senior officer is achieved without explanation, in a subordinate clause. There is clearly little room in this self-assured universe for leadership based in the Labour movement or in militant trades union. These public school men, 'united in loyalty, strong and independent', are hardly likely to be sympathetic to a democratic mass which opposes conscription or to a Catholic Church led by the great disloyalist Mannix.

But the wartime rhetoric of national unity precluded any explicit rejection of democracy or of universal franchise. However, once the war was over, anti-democratic rhetoric was immediately reinstated. On Speech Day, in November

5. Melburnian, August 1914, p. 59.
1918, some of Melbourne's most influential men and women gathered with their sons under a marquee in the Melbourne Grammar quad. Like all speech days, this was an occasion for rehearsing the beliefs and ideals which the school's patrons would see it foster. The acting-headmaster, Canon Girdlestone, invited his audience to put the War behind them, and to consider the task of building for the future. In the great undertaking, he said, the public schoolboys should claim a special responsibility. He continued:

Surely it is amazing that a people which insists on educational qualifications for insignificant and trivial posts should demand no qualifications for the most serious of all responsibilities - the right to vote and legislate.

The qualification which Girdlestone proposed was that mark of the public school man: a competence in Classics. Rome and Greece have trod where we tread now, he argued, and it is in the classics that are stored the answers to that 'vast complexity of problems which are the natural consequences of prosperity.'

All this tragedy of politics [he declared] has been played down to the last act in Athens and Rome, and in other Empires that have perished with them. How much of the history and literature of those proud democracies is known to the leather-lunged voter of today?  

The surviving soldiers had not yet returned home, and already sections of the Establishment were rehearsing the belief that, while the rulers were morally fit for political decision-making, the great leather-lunged electorate was not.

Meanwhile the mythology of the brotherhood of Australian males, which the AIF had forged, retained currency. In this spirit of khaki-egalitarianism, boys

from various district and school based cadet units were brought together in cadet sporting competitions. In 1920, one of these competitions was held at Wesley College, with Wesley and Melbourne Grammar units competing with boys from units based in working-class districts. The event was a fiasco. The spirit of the AIF was abandoned as the meet degenerated into a class brawl.

A Wesley boy wrote the following account of the event in a school literary magazine called The Lion. This was a jaunty, irreverent journal which thrived on in-jokes about the mannerisms of the Headmaster and the smell of the Prefects' Study. Because the magazine was circulated only within the immediate school community, the question of its public acceptability did not arise. The article is therefore an especially significant indication of one of the class attitudes which was current in the homes and schoolyards of Melbourne's future Establishment. The article is reproduced in full; the opening sentence sets the tone of sarcasm which recurs throughout:

CADET SPORTS AND — ARISTOCRACY

An amusing and pleasing break from the monotonous regime of Public School contests was observed in the Cadet Sports on Saturday the 10th of April. There was an entire absence of anything in the way of disorder and roughness, and a friendly and sporting attitude was everywhere apparent. The lower classes in the persons of Grammar and Wesley lined the grounds, and in due time the Port Melbourne Aristocrats arrived — a thousand picked gentlemen from the breezy environment of the bike-chain district. In the drizzling rain the Prahran Extremists and South Melbourne Bolsheviks arrived, and soon their white spats could be seen flashing amongst the legs of the spectators. The weather was perfect, the ground nicely soft and moist. About fifty of the visitors entered for each event, and promised to mob the Wesley and Grammar representatives if they caught them. But they were to be disappointed. Handicapped as they were with heavy flannels, silk and even crepe-de-
chene trousers, and light football boots, they had but little chance, and Wesley and Grammar usually came home easy firsts. Perhaps the most humorous event was the high jump which was won by Duigan, with Norman second. Forty-seven of the visitors fell in the first round, but one Doddlike alien, with hair on his legs as far as the eye could see, managed to get the pole under him and came an easy third. The most enterprising athlete was probably one of the dejected forty-seven. He was wearing spikes and consequently felt sure of his footing. But each time he reached the pole Nemesis intervened, and he flew through the air like lightning, finally landing on his juxtaposition. He did this twice, posing, however, a little better the second time, much to the admiration of the bystanders. Then the third try arrived. Discarding spikes, he put on his bare feet, lacing them up carefully while he looked at the pole with that "sic itur ad astra" look, so common to him before. With a superhuman effort he rushed at the pole - and got there! Then Nemesis again interrupted. The result was electrical. Hurtling through the air like a doubled-up porcupine, he completed a number of double turns and a few minutes later landed on the green some distance away, on the small of his back. McIntosh couldn't have done it better - and he wondered why we laughed!

By this time some half-dozen events were over, and the amicable and friendly disposition of our visitors was becoming more and more pronounced. An officer who tried to stop a South-Port Melbourne 'stouch' was tactfully mobbed and corporally thanked for his pains. Becoming more and more fascinated by the beauty of the College, they tenderly tore pickets off the fence and carried them round as curios. The Head, crossing to his position of judge on the turf, was enveloped in a whirlwind of Australian jargon so utterly original that it literally 'shook his foundations'. We shivered to think how near an accident he had been, but feel thankful that now he is safe. We could not help wistfully wishing that the frowardness of these higher English gentlemen could be eliminated, and that they could condescend to regard us as at least their intellectual equals. Thank heaven they tolerated us! The next outburst of judicial humour by these 'rhyming mother wits' was their visit to the tuck-shop. Skilfully camouflaging the door of the building with a number of their motley throng, some fifty entered, and with that inward sense of etiquette and social decorum so strongly
visualised in the higher classes, gave the ladies a carefully conducted representation of 'manners at home'. In a moment the atmosphere was thick with transferred epithets and coarse humour. Biscuits were sensibly stolen and eaten and, portraying that keen sense of respect for the property of others, they threw down a box of wafers and trampled on them. Bottles were methodically broken and cast around the floor, and chairs hurled to and fro in a blind ecstasy of joy. Affairs on the ground were also reaching an interesting stage by this time. It took the man with the pistol - Tom Mix or someone - to clear the track for the 440. In the mile walk, which was fought out by Wesley and Grammar, the genial crowd mobbed the ground and in their eagerness to congratulate the winners, would not allow the contestants to finish. We might add that in the open mile they bowled the time-keeper over, but this is a mere detail and we only mentioned it as a passing thought. After unsuccessfully attempting to carry off the jumping poles, and to put the hurdles in their pockets, the aristocrats crossed over the tug-of-war, in which to their intense and vividly expressed satisfaction, Grammar beat them. The winners then met a scratch Wesley team picked by Daley in a hurry. Thanks to the fact that Daley didn't have time to use judgement, our team won, despite the fact that it took the Gambles all the first round to show them which way to pull. This win brought out total to eight. Grammar having won the other three, and, as the Head said later, this contributed greatly to a keen feeling of friendship and amicability towards the two schools. In the face of insults and remarks that would make the paper shrivel if they were written down, Wesley and Grammar had to grin and bear it. Perhaps it was better for them that we did. Our attitude was one of abject scorn and utter disgust. We'd seen the same spirit displayed in beaten curs, but never in human beings. It was a revelation, but no idle dream. They left behind them a nasty odour and the marks of an unsavoury presence; merely a few broken seats, a broken cable and a number of uprooted posts; but it was enough. If they are the bloated Aristocracy - as no doubt they are - thank God we're the poor, despised, down-trodden, over-ridden Democrats! At least we are clean! The only thing that can be said to their credit is that they acted their dirty part admirably! No one thought them capable of it. But there you are; they were the chosen representatives!

7. The Lion, Wesley College, May 1920, pp. 8-10.
The outrage and the passionate disgust which the strangers provoke in the schoolboy are confronted directly in the final Swiftian paragraph. Here all irony has been cast off:

Our attitude was one of abject scorn and utter disgust ... They left behind them a nasty odour and the marks of an unsavoury presence.

Yahoos to the core.

The issue of course is class: class culture, class fears and breeding. But, in Australian ruling class ideology, the question of class is a little delicate. References to it are either considered to be in bad taste - or to be an ideological afront: a Marxian challenge to the sacred proposition that Australia is a one-class liner on which anyone can earn a chair on the promenade deck.

For most of the article, then, the schoolboy obfuscates by using the inverse logic of sarcasm. He asserts a class-view of the world, masquerading it for some of the time as if he were satirising the workers' ideas:

If they are the bloated Aristocracy - as no doubt they are - thank God we're the poor despised, down-trodden, over-ridden Democrats! At least we are clean.

Apparently, the schoolboy believes he is parodying left-wing rhetoric here (parodying the world view of the 'Prahran extremists' and the 'South Melbourne Bolsheviks' as he imagines it to be). What is significant is that he sees the two sides in the confrontation as being the Aristocrats on the one hand, and the Democrats on the other. Now where did that idea come from? It is not a distinction which is particularly characteristic of radical tracts. (In any case, there is no way that the public schoolboys from the south of the Yarra could have had any familiarity with the roneoed tracts distributed to strikers, unionists and
small, radical meetings.) The idea, surely, is drawn from the epistemological baggage of the boy's own tribe. In some senses, the public schoolboys think of themselves as the young Aristocrats; it is the working class boys who are the democrats. But the logic of the passage goes further than this. The effect of the sarcasm is not only to reverse the roles, but also to reject the validity of the epithets which attach to them: the Wesley boys are Aristocrats - but not 'bloated' (as left-wingers no doubt suggest). The workers are Democrats, but they are simply whinging when they suggest that they are 'poor', 'despised', 'down-trodden' or 'over-ridden'.

It does not occur to the Wesley boy that his account demonstrates that the violence was provoked. Not only would the workers obviously be frustrated by their inability to match the highly coached proficiency of their privileged opponents, not only would they have felt awkward in their ungainly, poor sporting gear, but they would have been further humiliated and finally angered by the mockery and laughter to which they were treated by their hosts. In a film recreation of the event, the schoolboys would not emerge as particularly pleasant people.

Once again, the anti-Labour forces are analysing their society into the sacred and the profane. The fact that the workers were provoked is not understood, because their fundamental personhood is not recognised. They remain Bolsheviks, Democrats, malcontents, Yahoos: even their most successful athlete is a 'Doddlke alien, with hair on his legs as far as the eye could see'.

Six years later, an old Melbourne Grammar boy returned to the theme of aristocrats versus democrats. He was the prime minister, Stanley Melbourne Bruce. The future member of the House of Lords expressed his reservations about democracy in the following terms:
It is an old saying, but a true one, that democracy and education go hand in hand. The theory of democracy is that all people are taking an intelligent interest in the work of government, and exercising a degree of rational supervision over their representatives.

If this theory is not fulfilled in practice, what is called democracy may become one of the most dangerous forms of government imaginable.

In the old aristocratic systems the governing class had at least a degree of responsibility which comes from a tradition of service to the State, but an uneducated and careless democracy may, in fact, become subject to the worst kind of tyranny, through the coming into power of men with no tradition of service, and no check up upon their activities in the shape of an enlightened public opinion.8

In the wake of the general election a year earlier, a senator in Bruce's Government expressed similar fears in a private letter to an Old Scotch Collegean, J. G. Latham. Senator Guthrie was a pastoralist who had been a prominent Geelong College athlete before the turn of the century.9 As he explained to Latham, he had feared that the conservatives might lose the election:

... for however good our Leader, our Party and our programme is, and however bad their's (sic) is, it is somewhat distressing to think that 45% of the people vote for the side running hand in glove with Mob rule, job control and the Red Flag.10

8. S.M. Bruce, 'The People's Responsibilities', Popular Politics, 16 August 1926, p. 8; and cf. the headmaster of Geelong Grammar, who wrote that public schools 'provide qualities of leadership through their tradition which should become a habit with their old boys ... No country can live without some people who are prepared to practise the spirit of "Noblesse Oblige", even if it does imply the existence of diversities of position and responsibility. Complete social democracy is an impossibility even if it was desirable. It is immensely important that there should not be wanting men who are not afraid to lead public opinion in morals and manners as well as in public life. To this end, one should have no fear of being called 'a snob because one behaves in a slightly more restrained way than ordinary men.' (J.R. Darling, 'Public School Education', Australian Quarterly, March 1931, p. 28).


This equation of Labor government with treachery and violence is not an electioneering ruse. It is not a tool of propaganda manufactured in Althusser's Ideological State Apparatus. It is an idea which is genuinely believed, not by everyone active in anti-Labour politics, but by people on the Right of the ruling elite, and it is an idea which can, at times, achieve a more general hearing.

For members of the Establishment who hold that their own aristocratic exercise of power is in the interest of the highest social good, serious moral questions of duty will be raised if the hoi polloi gains control. What are the Aristocrats to do if a party which seems to represent the Prahran Extremists and the South Melbourne Bolsheviks is elected to power? Clearly, one way or another, the natural capacity of the ruling class for rule has to be pressed into service.

For conservative Melburnians, that question arose twice within a decade. The first occasion was in 1923, when Melbourne police refused to go on duty until a number of long-standing grievances were answered. The conservative government responded by sacking all the strikers: 636 men out of a total of 1,820. Members of both the state government and opposition believed that outbreaks of violence was likely to follow the dismissals, and the Parliament met in emergency session two days before the sackings to enact legislation enabling the government to license volunteer police. Even after a Royal Commission chaired by General Monash found that the strike had been provoked by broken government promises, bad pay and disgusting conditions, the government refused to reinstate the men. As the conservative Argus put it, 'the voice of the Communist had been heard from the ranks of the disloyal police strikers.'


first hundreds of loyal conservative men armed with long wooden batons patrolled
the streets, immune under the law from the consequences of any of their actions.

There were two groups: an official force under military command, known as the
'Specials', and a semi-secret, unofficial group, led by Brudenell White, and known
as the 'White Army'.

The chief fear among ultra-conservatives was not of general lawlessness, but
of a Bolshevik rebellion. In addition to the civilian volunteers, soldiers were
transported into the city area to guard the main public buildings. The Fitzroy
telephone exchange was barricaded with barbed wire. At the Treasury soldiers
were sand-bagged in. Parliament and key public facilities were placed under
military security. But the guardians were waiting in the wrong places. No one
wanted to run riot in the Fitzroy telephone exchange. When the attack came, it
was not an Easter 1916 grab for the post office. It was a riotous grab for
commodities. Every window on the city main retail block was smashed in the
night after the police were sacked. It was the prelude to two days of looting,
arson and gangland killings, which only came to an end when the Specials took to
the streets. To the conservative Argus it was nothing less than a Bolshevik
Orgy.' Conservatives did not accept that the looting had been caused by simple
greed, or the hunger of the ignored 10% unemployed. They remained convinced
that it was part of a Communist plot. The following year, in a Defence

13. The Police Strike turns up in most studies of Australian para-military
activities. One of the most authoritative studies is J. Templeton, 'Rebel
Guardians', in John Iremonger and others, Strikes: Studies in Twentieth
Century Australian Social History, Angus and Robertson, Sydney, 1973. See
also an autobiographical account of the night of looting in Alan Marshall, This
is the Grass, Cheshire, 1972, p. 129. Extensive official files detailing the
mobilisation of the military and the organisation of male citizens to act as
'Special Constables' at AA B197 1887/1 and 2; MP 367, 489/1/285.

Department minute paper entitled 'Recent Police Troubles in Melbourne', Henry Chauvel expressed the view that revolution had only just been averted, and that military strength should be increased to provide adequate counter-revolutionary force:

Communism has adherents in each of these Cities (the capitals) and Newcastle where outbursts against Government Property and Public Utilities may occur along definitely prepared lines at any chosen moment, but more probably during a time of serious industrial upheaval ... At present no organised armed force can be concentrated at the requisite spot in time to afford protection. As an example it may be said, as regards Melbourne, that the General Post Offices, the Commonwealth Treasury, Parliament House, Government House, the Customs House, the Magazines, the Ordnance Stores at Victoria Barracks, the Aircraft Depot at Spotswood, etc. etc., could have been seized or destroyed by fire at any time during the night of Friday, November 2nd ... up to mid-day of Sunday, 4th November, despite the entirely fortuitous presence in port of several of H.M.A. Ships. If it had not been for the presence of the Navy it would have been quite impossible to have guarded all vital localities when we did.  

In a sense, Chauvel was right. Tactically, it would have been possible for malcontents to seize or torch major installations anytime that weekend. The point is that no such threat materialised. If it comes to that, any mass movement which was set upon blowing up the post office or the telephone exchanges could have mobilised at anytime, before ... or since. Yet, at the time of writing, the GPO is still standing. What Chauvel believed in was a communist horde, or rather a communist plague: the contagion which had gripped the Police Force and which now was certain to spread. What actually existed was a handful of street corner revolutionaries and communist activists engaged in the first round of a protracted

15. AA B197 1887/1/71.
struggle with the non-Marxist majority at the Trades Hall. As far as the communists were concerned, they were in the earliest stages of 'educating' the workers so that the proletariat would be ready when the Revolution presented itself. The news that the date for the Revolution had been set at November 6th 1923 would have thrown them into a panic.

While conservatives believed that communists had caused the violence, a more balanced assessment might suggest that government policy was the principal cause: sacking a police force is a fairly confrontational approach to industrial relations. The Monash Royal Commission found that the police had a number of just grievances including unacceptable supervision procedures, primitive sanitation and an unsympathetic police commissioner. At the heart of the dispute was the demand for the reintroduction of the police pension plan which had been abolished by Parliament in 1902. Hopes were raised when government rumours and the budget of 9 October 1923 promised the plan's restoration, but the necessary legislation was never enacted. Monash's findings were very critical of the government:

While we hold strongly to the view that a refusal of duty of members of the Police Force, on the ground of the failure of successive Governments to accede to the demands for pensions, cannot be justified, yet the course which events actually took, shows conclusively that, if pensions had been restored, there would have been no refusal of duty by a considerable section of the Force ... When it is remembered that the Police Force is the only agency which stands between organized society and anarchy, and that it is the only instrument available to Government to enforce the observance of law and order, it is a matter of surprise and regret that throughout a long series of years successive Governments delayed action which would restore to the Police Force as a whole that wise and prudent security of tenure and provision for old age, upon the
basis of which the Force was originally organised, and which, in our opinion, is so necessary to guarantee its stability as an efficient instrument for the protection of society.\textsuperscript{16}

Monash's report is, in its even-handedness, a model example of the alternative ethic which existed within middle-class culture: progressive, Australian liberalism - a liberalism which supported private business, the development of indigenous secondary industry and the concept of social welfare. This is the tradition which has been explicated by Tim Rowse in \textit{Australian Liberalism and National Character}.\textsuperscript{17} Most significantly, it was a liberalism which subscribed to a variety of empirical enquiry and rational debate which believed itself to be the key both to popular education and to social decision making. Its flagship was to become Keynesian economics, and its popular forum, the ABC. It is as though there were a tussle within the dominant ideology for hegemonic supremacy - a tussle between liberalism of the Monash variety and authoritarian conservatism of the Blamey variety. A choice between a cautious pluralism and a staunch adherence to the notion of unity through purity. A choice between a parliamentary democracy in which the popular election of a government was its own legitimation, and a system in which the legitimacy of a government depended on its respect for the 'right-mindedness' of the powerful few. But that, of course is to put it too simply. Neither strand was to conquer the other: the rhetoric and the ideas of both were to exist side by side in the Australian State, and were to be personified in all their contradictions and resilience in the figure of Prime Minister Menzies. But in 1923, that partnership was still in its early phase.

\textsuperscript{16} Monash Royal Commission, pp. 6-7.

\textsuperscript{17} Tim Rowse, \textit{Australian Liberalism and National Character}, Kribble, Malmsbury, 1978.
By 1930, as secret army activity was moving towards its peak, the conservative imagination was haunted by three events: the Russian Revolution, the Police Strike and the recent collapse of the Weimar Economy. To men who valued law and order as the sole alternative to the Bolshevik orgy, the street riots which followed the Police Strike seemed to have brought to light the dark, primitive forces which lurked in the hearts of the Prahran Extremists and the South Melbourne Bolsheviks. Without British law, there was chaos. But what was truly frightening was that the officers of the law had shown that even they were not immune to the Bolshevik lure: how else was the treacherous strike of 1923 to be explained? If the Police could not be trusted beyond all doubt, then citizens themselves had to recognise that they themselves were last defence against the profane.

The collapse of the Weimar Economy gave conservatives further evidence that they had much to fear from the Laborites. The papers were full of the still familiar tales of a currency which had been dragged off, heels first, by galloping inflation.\textsuperscript{18} And now here - in the Australia of the depression - the mob had voted in the Party of the Mob, the party riddled by Bolshevism. And its main economic innovators - Lang and Theodore - were advocating policies of inflation and economic irresponsibility.\textsuperscript{19} Clearly, democracy had failed. How, then, was the national tuckshop to be defended?

\textsuperscript{18} On fears of following the German experience see Schedvin, \textit{Australia and the Great Depression}, p. 80.

\textsuperscript{19} Arguments of this kind could be documented \textit{ad nauseam}. See, for example, the \textit{Melbourne Sun}, 14 January 1931, p. 3. Commenting on Theodore's fiduciary note scheme, the \textit{Sun} said, "Behind the resolution is grouped the Red element which wishes "chaos and then reconstruction". The repudiationists who wish to wipe out our national debts, and the weak-minded who think that by watering down the currency they can produce real money. In the midst of them all lurks the figure of Mr. Theodore."
CHAPTER FIVE

CITIZENSHIP AND MARGINALISATION

This chapter examines the concepts and rhetoric which were available to legitimate an attack on the processes of liberal democracy. It is concerned too to explain why it was that the White Army dramatised as enemies Catholics, Laborites, communists and the unemployed, seemingly without distinguishing between them. We begin, however, with a brief case study of Herbert Brookes. Brookes is a significant figure in this study both because his enormous collection of unculled papers is a revealing clearing house for intra-ruling class ideas and practices and because he was an influential anti-Labor thinker and activist of a most complex kind. In everything, save his intolerance of Catholics and the Labor Party, he was an idiosyncratic and occasionally inspired liberal. Whereas most members of the elite tended to be either temperamentally conservative or liberal, Brookes encompassed both positions and thereby personifies many of the contradictions within ruling class thought itself. As we will see later in this chapter, he was instrumental in establishing some of the most effective expressions of anti-Labor ideology in the period immediately preceding the Depression. So, before we move onto a wider study of the rhetoric of citizenship, let us sketch one influential man who carried the ethic of the public schoolboy elite into the endeavours of his adult life.

1. Herbert Brookes, a citizen at the centre of power

To his staff and to his friends, Herbert Brookes was a gentle, cultivated man, whose impressive South Yarra home was a place of literature, fine Australian art and good company. The radicalism of his youth had mellowed to a world view
which Brookes himself associated with the liberalism of his next-door neighbour, Alfred Deakin.

Although some thought Brookes a little eccentric, throughout his life he commanded the respect and trust of his class. Between 1914 and 1918 alone they called upon him to be chairman of the Victorian Chamber of Manufactures and President of the Associated Chambers of Manufactures. He served on the Lord Mayor's Patriotic Committee, the State War Council, the State Munitions Committee and the Electricity Supply Board. In 1929, he was appointed by Prime Minister Bruce to head Australia's permanent diplomatic mission in America; in 1932, the Lyons government appointed him foundation vice-chairman of the ABC; and the list constitutes the merest selection of the posts in which he served.

The son of a self-made millionaire, Brookes was himself an archetypal member of the Melbourne Establishment. In 1925, he married Alfred Deakin's daughter, Ivy. Their children were educated at leading independent schools and have led distinguished lives. Sir Wilfred Brookes has been a director of a number of leading Australian companies, including Perpetual Executors, APPM, Alcoa and Western Mining; Sir Alfred Brookes was the director of the Australian Secret Intelligence Service (ASIS) and Mrs Jessie Clarke was the founder of the innovative and successful Nappy Wash company and is well-known in Melbourne Society.

Brookes saw his life mission as a quest to achieve social harmony. 'There ought not to be any gulf separating classes in this community', he told the Victorian Chambers of Manufactures in 1913, '... all are and should be engaged in

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social services - manufacturer and mechanic, employer and employee alike. For Brookes, there was no music in the dissonances of a culturally diverse and often vulgar democratic society. His joy was the artistic wealth and the economic resourcefulness of the British. These were qualities which he believed British-Australians could recreate for themselves. So, while he worked to attract international musicians to Australia to perform for the ABC, he also supported Bernard Heinze in his enterprise to establish quality orchestras in Australia. While he socialised with and admired Rudyard Kipling, he also patronised such Australian artists as Rupert Bunny and E. Phillips Fox. In short, as Macmahon Ball has said, "He helped to make Australia a more civilised place." He worked with self-effacing dedication for the day when all Australians could share that leafy vision which was the homeland of his imagination.

This is the Herbert Brookes who was the subject of the biography, *Australian Citizen*, written by Brookes' nephew the Labour journalist Rohan Rivett. But as we will see, the portrait is far from complete. Yet there are no contradictions between the Brookes of the Loyalty League and the Brookes of *Australian Citizen*. For Brookes was not a democrat, but a paternalist. His dream was a generous dream, but he had vicious antipathy for people who challenged his vision.

The greatest of these challenges were posed by the Catholic Church and by the Labor Party. Both were rooted in the as yet uncivilised working class. The one was hostile to the Empire, the other contained socialists who refused to recognise the need for him and his class. To Brookes both were the embodiment of totalitarianism, institutions in which unknown authorities cultivated

2. Ibid., p. 54.
3. Ibid., p. 3.
superstition and sedition. Australian Catholics were called 'an ulcerous and open sore' and 'an impurity in our social system.' The irony is that the rhetoric to which these challenges moved Brookes was all too reminiscent of the language which was to impassion reasonable people in the Europe of the '20s and '30s.

A Labor government was, he claimed, undemocratic by definition. Labor was simply the 'Machine of a class for a class.' The 'anti-Labour party' was the only party which - whether people knew it or not - truly represented all Australians. The Labour movement could not even claim to have contributed to any improvement in the employment condition of workers. In a personal jotting, Brookes noted:

Where would the workers have been but for the fight for freedom of all true Liberals of the past.

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It remains for the Liberal party to protect the gift they have won for the workers - from a section of the workers themselves.

'The machine', he insisted again and again, 'must be broken'.


5. Private notes, Brookes Papers, MS 1924/19/869. (Series 19 is a collection of small slips of paper on which Brookes made jottings. Some are clearly records of conversations. Some may be speech notes, but they may also be simply mental jottings, representing a habit of scribbling down striking phrases. They are undated).

6. Brookes to W. Hughes, L. January 1923, Brookes Papers, MS 1924/1/6222, p. 47.

7. Private notes, Brookes Papers, MS 1924/19/871.

8. Brookes Papers, MS 1924/19/870.
The argument in full then, runs along these lines: democracy is rule by the people. But the Labor Party represents rule by a class. We believe in democracy. Therefore, we must ensure that the only democratic party, the Liberal/Nationalist Party, retains government.

So Brookes' ideal was not democratic government (if that term is to be returned to its more orthodox meaning), but good government, government by the right sort of person. Ultimately, the basis of this ideology is power. It is the ideology which has justified secret vigilante groups, discrimination against Catholics, deportation of immigrant union leaders, political censorship and the removal of elected governments by governors. And, when all else fails, it can be used to legitimate coup d'etat. All become legitimate means of securing the machinery which will enable the anti-Labour elite to serve the society which has so manifestly fitted them for leadership. Any unorthodox strategy for terminating the period in office of a Labor government which has 'gone too far' is seen, not as a seizure of power, but as a resumption of power; not as a radical departure from democratic norms but as the termination of a period when the ruling class licensed and tolerated a Labor government, the election of which was itself seen as the unorthodox departure.

Brookes, the man, demonstrates through his work and through his ideas, one kind of quite extreme person who was accepted and trusted by other people in power in Australia.

For all that, the prominence which has been given to Brookes is a little unfair - just as it was unfair for Darroch to call him 'the man behind Australia's secret armies'. There was no such person. As Moore has shown in his study of New South Wales, it was common for leaders of business, police and the legal
profession to dedicate time and money to these kinds of final-option organisations. Among such people, Brookes was unusually liberal in his social vision. The militia are less usefully thought of as the brainchildren of individual schemers than as a result of a particular world view - a world view which became part of the conventional mental equipment of men who were accustomed to making national decisions within the precincts of the Melbourne Club.

2. Marginalisation

Marginalisation is the process by which certain ideas and practices are defined as tangential to the life and values of a given society. The model of a culture as a series of concentric regions, some deemed central, others regarded as increasingly marginal, is quite common. We speak of an individual being 'close to the centre of power', of formerly influential people being 'on the outer', of people who have 'dropped out', of spies who 'come in from the cold', of 'outlaws', 'outcasts' and 'eccentrics'.

When particular forms of non-conformity or dissent are perceived by those who hold power as being potentially destructive rather than harmless or creative, then strategies will be mounted to marginalise the offending conduct. Among the most extreme forms of marginalisation (so extreme that marginalisation is scarcely an adequate description) are execution, physical torture and deportation. Next in order of severity are such means as gaoling, forms of segregation such as apartheid, and committal to certain kinds of hospital (for such individuals as the elderly, the destitute, the insane and the war-maimed).

In extreme or sensitive cases of mass dissent or non-conformity, the margin may be defined by police or troopers, either defending the ideology of the centre
from ideological attack, or attempting to contain or suppress activities which are considered dangerously marginal.

The dominant ideology is the political culture which is generally recognised as 'central'. That is to say, it is the world view which is generally acknowledged to be the prevailing orthodoxy. It need not be the expression of the views of the majority, nor need it encapsulate the private convictions of the ruling class, but it is necessarily the world view which the majority recognises as authoritative, even if only because it is enforced by menace or fear. And it is necessarily an ideology consistent with the continued authority of the ruling class. A ruling class which ceased to be identified with the dominant ideology would, by definition, lose its authority. A ruling class is defined, not necessarily by its ability to enforce its own, preferred point of view, but by its ability to enforce or sanction a point of view consistent with its own continued exercise of power. Once again, a ruling class which could no longer exercise that authority would cease to rule.

But the expression 'point of view' may be misleading, for the dominant ideology is that amalgam of social forces which establishes its interpretations and practices as objectively true, sane or moral. It dominates the realm of the self-evident. Under different dominant ideologies, such concepts as the flat earth, market forces, the mental and moral baseness of slaves, Lebensraum, the tenets of Marxism-Leninism and (to take one modern Australian example) multiculturalism, have been established as objective realities or moral absolutes. The marginalisation of alternatives which are regarded as threatening to the dominant ideology (and thereby to the prevailing power structures) need not necessarily be achieved by physical punishment or persecution. In some cases, marginalisation may be achieved simply by branding such alternatives as departures from the
given nature of things. They may be declared, say, biased, immoral, dishonest, heretical or insane.

Because this is the case, there are those who seek to influence social policy by winning acceptance at the 'centre', by having their conduct recognised as legitimate, responsible or creative. It could be said then, that in a tolerant society, perhaps in any society, the dominant ideology consists not only of a code of beliefs and rhetorical protocols. It also comprehends an agenda of topics in debate. There will always be a range of matters on which it is acceptable for alternatives to be aired. However, while some may seek to effect change from the centre, there are others who actually choose to become marginal, believing that it is only from the margins that worthwhile alternatives to the dominant ideology can be promoted. Such marginal forces may be as disparate as guerrilla bands and lesbian separatists, or wandering ballad singers and graffiti artists.

But the margin may also be sought as a place of freedom. Such individuals as gypsies, beachcombers, tourists, clowns and members of the communes may, in certain societies, be margin-dwellers in search of a degree of immunity from the dominant power relations and way of seeing which prevail at the centre. So, paradoxically, the margins may be thought of as cultural regions (and actual institutions) into which ideas (and people) are relegated in order to disempower them; regions which people willingly occupy in order to exert pressure on the centre; and regions where people seek freedom from the ideology of the centre.

Conservatives believed that social cohesion is the product of widely shared values. Conservatism, in common parlance, signifies a small tolerance for non-conformist behaviour. The degree to which dissent is regarded as creative is slight or non-existent. Under this definition such states as the USSR, the China of
the Cultural Revolution, Nazi Germany and McCarthyite America are all conservative - all use the tactic of marginalisation so ruthlessly that the margin becomes the only site at which significant social criticism can be expressed. In such a society, an act of protest may become the act of submitting to physical and even violent marginalisation. Even in an otherwise tolerant society, there may be issues on which the dominant powers are inflexible. In either case, protest may become the act of submitting to persecution. Examples of such protests are those made by Solzenhitsyn, Bobby Sands, Joan of Arc and the English suffragettes.

A more liberal attitude to dissent allows that social coherence is a consequence, not of uniform beliefs, but of tolerance and of respect for shared rules of discourse. Dissent and non-conformity are not seen as necessarily threatening. Their challenge may actually be viewed as creative. Although even the most liberal society must define political and ethical limits, generally it will be the extent to which non-conformity causes actual physical or economic damage which determines the extent to which those limits have been transgressed.

The complement of marginalisation is, in one form or another, the notion of citizenship. In nation states, the concept of 'the citizen' is more than a legal technicality or the mere consequence of an individual's place of birth. It is an indication that an individual is recognised at large as a legitimate and enfranchised member of society. In Australia, the notion of citizenship has usually been associated with a fairly deferential attitude to the prevailing social structure. It has tended to signify attributes of co-operation, loyalty and civic service rather than an enthusiasm for social criticism, reform and independence. In general, the civic training courses provided in school syllabi have depicted the social system as an achieved perfection, the result of evolution from the lessons
and struggles of the past.\(^1\) In 1931, at a time when the notion of citizenship was especially prominent in Western countries, Charles Merriam wrote a study of the civic training courses promoted in several communist, fascist and democratic countries. He found that in each case prospective citizens were asked to believe that theirs was a form of government which was, essentially, perfect. In the various civics courses, he found that 'Justice, liberty, security and prosperity are attached in diverse ways to each of these forms of government and are presumed to flow from its special qualities.'\(^2\)

But precisely because citizenship is identified with the prevailing power structures of a society, it may be adopted rhetorically by groups or individuals who wish to promote dissenting ideas while resisting pressure to force them to the margins. Groups which are not revolutionary (which do not aspire to displace those who exercise power from the centre) and which are unable to use economic power to enforce their point of view, but which do have a radical cause, may need to rely on their status as citizens if they are to resist violent marginalisation or charges of lunacy or treason.\(^3\) If, like the English suffragettes, they are violently marginalised, then the inconsistency between their status as citizens and their continued persecution by the State may become intolerable to influential

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1. It is difficult to demonstrate this point with a single quotation; this attitude to society pervades entire texts. See, Walter Murdoch, *The Australian Citizen: An Elementary Account of Civic Rights and Duties*, Whitcombe, Melbourne, 1916; the rather more progressive J.S. Lay, *Citizenship, Everyday Social Problems for the Nation's Youth*, Macmillan, Melbourne, 1927; C.H. Wright, *The Australian Citizen*, Cheshire, Melbourne, 1956. All have been specified as texts for Victorian high schools in the official *Education Gazette* or earlier in the *Government Gazette*.


3. 'Citizens for ...' or 'Citizens against ...' is a familiar formula, e.g. Citizens for democracy, an organisation which rallied in the Melbourne Town Hall on the first anniversary of Whitlam's dismissal. Other examples occur below.
opinion. If it does, then they will probably achieve some social reform. However, if their violent marginalisation continues to be tolerated by influential elements of the citizenry, then, like Bobby Sands they may become, in the eyes of their supporters, martyrs to a cause not yet won.

3. Catholics and sedition
(or 'You can tell them by their eyes')

In the wake of the Democratic Labor Party and the National Civic Council, the Catholic Church in Australia is generally thought of as a conservative institution. The role of the DLP during the Vietnam years, the Church's hostility to radical women's issues, the patriarchal values which are sanctified in a leadership of celibate males, and the unpopularity of Christianity in the new secular Australia have all tended to place the Church in opposition to radicals. But this is an extremely recent development. Since the early Nineteenth Century, Australian Catholicism, as the advocate for rebels, underdogs and the One True Faith, posed a challenge to the supremacy of established protestantism. In colonial Australia, there were many reasons why a culture which had its roots in Ireland, Rome and trade unionism should come into conflict with a culture which looked to England, Scripture and capital for its legitimacy and salvation.

From the earliest years of settlement, the community was berated by protestant leaders who condemned the Catholic Church as a seditious autocracy which presided over a rabble of lazy, superstitious, working class drunks. To those protestants who saw Catholicism as a foreign import which threatened the integrity of colonial society, every appointment of a Catholic to public office simply evidenced the great Papist plan for domination.1

1. M. Roe, Quest for Authority In Eastern Australia 1835-1851, MUP, 1965, p. 137.
There was nothing genteel about this rivalry. Its rhetoric was typified by John Pascoe Fawkner in 1855, when he sized up the newly arrived Gavin Duffy, and demanded:

Pray, Sir, have you ventured into Victoria to form a party? or have you been invited here by the 'active genius' who pulls the puppet wires of his church in this colony? Have you been invited here by or through the chief mover of your church in this colony, in order to establish this colony as an appanage of the Roman See?

This fear of a plot to overthrow an exclusive version of the 'Australian way of life' naturally led some to argue that Australia should be purged of the undesirable aliens. Even so progressive a politician as John Dunmore Lang became a kind of sectarian McCarthyist when he turned his attention to the Catholic Church. In 1843, he was voted into Parliament after claiming during his campaign that:

Catholicism was only a second hand religion, and it was the bounden duty of every Protestant in the colony to endeavour by every means in his power to extirpate it from the face of the earth, and that at this particular time it was especially the duty of true protestants to league together in the defence of their own religion and to root out a system of religion so abominable, so soul-destroying as Catholicism.

Lang was not alone, he was simply participating in the most bitter of the power struggles which were waged in colonial society in the 1840s. As Henry Turner wrote, the coals of sectarianism were 'continually being fanned into the

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flame of outbreak between Irish Roman Catholics and the injudicious persons who fanatically kept the sacred anniversary of the Boyne.  

These injudicious persons, the Orangemen, first made news in 1844 when they announced that they would march in celebration of the protestant victory at the Battle of the Boyne. The Catholics responded by letting it be known that they would also turn out for the occasion, and that they would be carrying large pieces of timber. The Orangemen prudently thought the better of their plan and stayed home. The farce was repeated the following year; and then, in 1846, the protestants declared that they would feast the Catholic defeat behind the stone walls of the Pastoral Hotel in Elizabeth Street. On the afternoon of 16 July, the Orangemen preparing the evening's banquet taunted the Catholics by hanging Orange banners from the windows in the pub. An angry crowd gathered in the street, and by the time police arrived, the two sides were shooting at each other.

Although the Orange-controlled Argus dubbed the fracas the 'Popish Riots', it was the Orangemen whom the police identified as the source of the trouble. 'Loyal' as the Orangemen's self-image was, their stewardship of the dominant ideology was not yet universally acknowledged. During the next unsettled week, gatherings from both sides were broken up by police. But just how unresolved the

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7. Ibid. The Argus was edited by William Kerr who was also Provincial Grand Master of the Orange Lodge. (Turner, p. 325).
8. *Argus*, 14 July 1846 reported that all of the Orangemen with firearms were arrested, while their assailants were allowed to retire, unmolested.
balance of power in the new society remained was indicated by Chief Constable Sugden who warned the Mayor, 'I have no reliance on the men under my charge; they almost to a man belong to either one party or the other now disturbing the peaceable inhabitants of the Town of Melbourne.\textsuperscript{10}

Betrayed by the law, and unable to win majority support in the Parliament (indeed Parliament passed the Party Processions Act which kept the Orangemen off the streets until it was repealed in the 1880s), the Orangemen declared the justice of their cause resided in a higher authority than mere governments. In the aftermath of the shoot-out, the \textit{Argus} published the 'Protestant Warning', written by none other than 'Cromwell's Ghost'. It began:

Ye Orangemen of Melbourne, who fondly dream'd the laws Were strong enough at least to clip the Papist rabble's claws No longer on the broken reed of Government rely, But 'put your trust in God, my Boys, and keep your powder dry!' Sharp ground be every sabre which hangs against your wall, Well furnish'd every loyal house, with powder and with ball.\textsuperscript{11}

Here, in 1846, is the forerunner of the ideology of the anti-Labour militia - an ideology which claims dominance of the social order as its right, and which refuses to recognise the ultimate authority of an elected government. It is not a call to arms issued by revolutionaries, nor by people dissatisfied with the fundamental power relations of their society. On the contrary, it is issued by people who believe those relations to be under challenge, and who regard the imperilled order as their unique charge. Whether they expect the challenge to come in the form of revolutionary

\textsuperscript{10} \textit{Argus}, 4 August 1846.

\textsuperscript{11} \textit{Argus}, 24 July 1846.
violence is not always an issue; for what they are preparing to defend is not their lives, but their way of life.

It might be objected that there is no valid parallel between the two periods. The society of the 1840s, it might be said, was still working itself out; as different individuals and interest groups jostled for influence, it was not yet clear what the fundamental ideological or economic divisions were to be. The fact that the militant Protestant bourgeoisie used the rhetoric and conduct of a dominant ideology indicates, not that they had achieved that dominance, but that they aspired to it. Of course that aspiration was in some measure realised, but - the objection might continue - in the society's formative years a little unruliness was only to be expected; the 1930s were very different.

All this is quite true. However, the dignified façade of the Melbourne Club ought not to obscure the fact that, from time to time, it has seemed to the men who gathered inside that society was again about 'to work itself out' and that their authority was once more being challenged. Such an apprehension has been most obvious during the periods of Labor government. And at such moments, the methods which were appropriate to their Orange predecessors have sometimes seemed called for. The Depression was one such time. In the world of the editorial writers, the old monetarism still had the force of a moral absolute, supporters of Lang's defiant policies wore buttons proclaiming 'Lang is Right', advocates of Douglas Credit won converts to their mission, and a few communists talked of revolution from street corners. The winning card - a prototype of the new economics, shortly to be formalised by Keynes - was held, ironically, by the Labor treasurer, Ted Theodore. Meanwhile, the members of the Melbourne Club looked nervously out at the ranks of unemployed who marched up Collins Street in demonstrations, some of them organised by the Unemployed Workers Union, a communist front.
But it was not only genuine communists who troubled the Melbourne Clubmen. The whole chorus of dissent and reform sounded a deafening challenge to the elite and to the way of life they valued and from which they benefited. The problem for the elite was - as always - to assess which forms of dissent were tolerable, and which might encourage popular unrest of a kind which, for conservatives at least, was synonymous with chaos.

In the mid-Nineteenth Century, militant Victorian protestants attempted to have Irish Catholics repatriated and their schools and churches closed. Although the Irish and the Church were able to resist such extreme methods of discrimination, it was nevertheless clear that the protestants were closer to the centre of power (as the saying is) than were the Catholics. The Irish were sufficiently widely regarded as undesirable to prompt immigration controls designed to ensure that arrivals from England and Scotland would always outnumber new arrivals from Ireland. 12

The bitterness of sectarian conflict was aggravated by the divisive conscription referenda of 1916 and 1917. For conservatives appalled that conscription should be twice rejected in time of war, the loss was proof that an anti-Empire conspiracy was once more threatening the centre of Australian society.

The conscription issue was put to vote, not as an exercise in democracy, but as a calculated device for marginalising the anti-conscription faction within the governing Labor Party. 13 The conscriptionists were sure they would win; all the indicators of the


dominant ideology showed that the referendum would be passed. All the major newspapers favoured conscription. The opposition and much of the Labor Party advocated it. Prominent citizens publicly supported it. A positive outcome was, according to The Age, 'certain'.

When the conscription referendum was lost, many Victorian conservatives blamed the one prominent Melburnian who had opposed the draft - the Catholic Archbishop of Melbourne, Daniel Mannix. Throughout both campaigns, Mannix had tackled the Protestant Ascendancy and questioned the morality of compelling young men to kill for the Empire against their will. When his opponents accused him of misusing his authority to influence the Catholic vote, Mannix insisted that he spoke simply as a 'citizen' - and that, like any other citizen, he had a right to contribute to the debate. His most publicised anti-conscription speech ended with the statement:

I notice that certain authorities of the Anglican Church have given their public support to Conscription. They are, of course, quite within their rights in doing so. We all have equal right to contribute to the discussion and, in exercise of that right, I have spoken tonight.

But, unlike Mannix, the protestants claimed to be expressing not merely their own point of view, but the will of God himself. 22 October 1916 was declared 'Conscription Sunday' by the protestant churches. W.M. Hughes preached in favour of the draft at Wesley Church in central Melbourne. The militant anti-Catholic publicist, Rev. T.E.

14. Although Ernest Scott tries to account for the defeat of the proposal, in the long run, he paints a picture of a pro-war Australia in which a pro-Conscription vote seems inevitable. It was Scott who wrote that the policy had the support 'of every prominent man'. Scott, Australia During the War, Australian War Memorial, Canberra, 1936, p. 359 and preceding.

15. Age, 23 October 1916, p. 8, 18 September 1916, p. 5.

Ruth, told the congregation of the Collins Street Baptist Church that he 'knew' that conscription was supported by Jesus. At St. Paul's Anglican Cathedral, Archdeacon Hindley declared that conscription was demanded by scripture. For was it not written in Psalm 78, 'The children of Ephraim, being armed and carrying bows, turned back in the day of battle. They kept not the conventants of God and refused to walk in his laws'? Were Australians also going to spurn the law of God and vote no? Hindley was sure they were not. At least he was sure about the authentic Australians: Australians who, like him, were Anglo-Australians:

Is Australian character, like that of the race from which Australians spring, to be indicated in future by the bull dog, which stands for courage, tenacity and dignity; or is it to be indicated by the dingo, which stands for lawlessness, cowardice and fickleness? ... Let Australians be true to the father who begat them, and to the nation to which they belong. Let the world know that in Australia there are men and women who are worthy of the great traditions of the British race.

The irony, of course, is that the archdeacon was a man of so foreign a sensibility that, apparently without reflection, he used a foreign dog as a symbol of the true Australian character and used the only native Australian dog to represent the betrayal of the Australian spirit. But, like the Argus's contention that Australia remained conscriptionist 'at heart', such rhetoric was not as nonsensical as it seems. These claims could be sustained within the conservative world view because conservatives thought it self-evident that Imperial loyalty and Australian loyalty were indivisible. Mannix and his Irish cohorts were seen, not as opponents in the political process, but as marginal to the political process itself; Mannix's very right to participate in public debate was challenged.

18. Ibid., transcribed from indirect speech.
In 1918, Mannix reinforced the conservative Protestant attitude by participating in a public display which seemed to leave no doubt that the Catholic leader was disloyal. At the Melbourne St Patrick's Day parade in 1918, Mannix failed to bare his head during the playing of 'God Save the King', thereby refusing, as he saw it, to honour the battle song of the Empire which oppressed his fellow Irish. The problem was, of course, that the hymn of the Empire happened also to be the Australian national anthem. Moments later, Mannix delivered the final insult. When a banner passed commemorating the martyrs of Easter 1916, Mannix doffed his biretta (as one incensed observer noted) 'in lowly reverence'.

Darroch exaggerates a little when he claims that the incident puts 16 March 1916 on a par with 25 April 1915 and 11 November 1975. But opponents of Mannix and of working class Catholics did invest Mannix's display of Irish nationalism with monumental significance. The event was reported in the papers, and provoked a venomous response from the letter writers. Dr Leeper, the Warden of Trinity College, urged that Mannix's 'noxious influence' was grounds for charging him with sedition. The Argus blamed Mannix for the 'rancorous and truculent spirit' which had been revived.

Herbert Brookes responded by forming the Citizens' Loyalty Committee which in turn became the Loyalty League. A match of public demonstrations developed. Mannix remained defiant at a series of public meetings. Loyalists marched in protest through the streets, led by Brookes and endorsed by Hughes.

19. Argus, 18 March 1918.
Under the patronage of John Wren, Mannix staged a monster Catholic demonstration at the Richmond Race Course, in the centre of Labour country.22

Brookes, in turn, retaliated by hiring the Exhibition Building for a 'Loyalist Demonstration' on 9 April 1918. It was an ideological extravaganza. Speeches were given simultaneously from five platforms by the cream of Melbourne's non-Labour intellect, by protestant ministers, a prominent Catholic loyalist and conservative politicians. 40,000 people came, a crowd so large that not everyone could get in. Dr. Floyd conducted the choir and orchestra in renditions of such Empire favourites as 'Rule Britannia', 'The British Grenadiers', 'Scots wha hae wi' Wallace bled', and the wartime hit song, 'Australia will be there'.23 Almost everyone, it seemed, was waving, not the Australian flag, but the Union Jack. It was the British flag which, according to The Age, had become the 'national emblem'.24

Amidst cheering and singing and Imperial bunting, the speakers denounced Mannix and Sinn Fein. It was Mannix, they said, who had introduced sectarian feeling into Australian society, Chaplain Rentoul declared, to great applause, that:

This great meeting is drawn from every quarter, every class and every creed. There is here no sectarianism. And yet, in the last few days, the treacherous assertion has been made that this loyal movement is sectarian. This, ladies and gentlemen, is a dark and disloyal falsehood.25

22. The outburst in the press and the subsequent battle of rallies and demonstrations is detailed by Rivett, Australian Citizen, pp. 63-69.
23. Roneed programme and printed programme - booklet, Brookes Papers, MS 1924/21/13, 16. 'Australia will be there' was an unscheduled addition, Age, 10 April 1918, p. 9.
24. Ibid.
25. Ibid., transposed from indirect speech.
This non-sectarian sectarianism was not unlike the non-political politics which the same sector of the community would be using against Labor in the 1931 election. Once again, Anglo-Australians were asserting their stewardship of Australian culture, by declaring their loyalties to be above debate and dismissing Irish Catholics as marginal and suspect. Indeed, as the following resolution shows, the attitudes of the organisers at least were utterly ruthless:

That this meeting records its keen gratification that the Commonwealth Government has created fresh powers for the suppression of disloyal utterances, demonstrations, and emblems, and hopes that in the highest interests of Australia there will be swift and drastic action should the offences be repeated. The meeting affirms its conviction that the vast majority of Australians are loyal to their country and to the Motherland, and would eagerly support the Government in any measures taken against traitors, who are striving for the disruption of the Empire on which Australia's life and liberty depend.26

This belief that Mannix and the Irish Catholics were traitors was not the mere product of an impassioned moment. Writing twenty years later about these events, Ernest Scott still regarded Mannix and his followers as disruptive outsiders. During the conscription debate, Mannix, in Scott's view -

formed a separate storm-centre, giving to and receiving from the main subject of controversy elements which, strictly speaking, were foreign to it ... Dr. Mannix, and the thousands who soon came to look on him as their mouthpiece and their leader, espoused another loyalty than that which animated every class and section in Australia in the early months of the war.27

26. Brookes Papers, MS 1924/21/16.
27. Scott, op. cit., p. 344.
Despite the fact that he had claimed that this was a book in which 'Final judgements are not attempted', Scott, in his own polite way, was accusing Mannix and like-minded Catholics of disloyalty. So completely are they marginalised in Scott's account, that they are depicted as being alien to 'every class and section in Australia'.

Others were more direct, and they carried the logic of this world view into the most extreme expression of marginalisation, conspiracy theory. Herbert Brookes attacked Mannix as that 'Romish Hun'. Graham Worsley called him 'the Rasputin of Australia'. Irish, German, Roman or Russian, the point had to be made: the man was an outsider, in league with alien forces. Such anti-Catholic rhetoric was not simply a colourful form of abuse. Militant protestants believed that Australia's security was threatened by a Dublin-Berlin-Moscow conspiracy. In 1919, Rev. Daly warned Melburnians, on behalf of the influential Protestant Federation:

Sinn Feiners are working with the I.W.W. and the Bolsheviks to revolt as soon as they get a chance ... the time has come when Protestants must say to every Section who tries to dismember the Empire, 'If you are not satisfied, get out.'

The protestants argued that since Catholicism was a religion which demanded obedience to the Church, the loyalty of all Catholics was in doubt, the more so given their anti-British roots and the outspoken opinions of their Melbourne leader. It was in the hope

28. Ibid., p. xiv.

29. C. Worsley to H. Brookes, L. 2 April 1918, Brookes Papers, 1924/21/3.

of discrediting Australian Catholics that the Loyalty League's executive wrote to the acting prime minister, respectfully suggesting:

that when an armistice is granted by the Allies to the Germans that representatives of the Allied Powers be placed in the archives at Berlin and Vienna to prevent the destruction of documents, more especially all such as have passed between the Vatican on the one hand and the Kaiser and the Emperor of Austria on the other.  

Though the war had ended, the conspiracy, it was believed, continued. In March 1920, Mr. E.D. Patterson maintained:

It is undoubtedly a fact that the present Bolshevik and Sinn Fein risings are simply the second card being played by the Pope of Rome and the Kaiser ... The Bolshevik and Sinn Fein organisations are out against all constituted authority and primarily their method is the murder of the wealthy people and confiscation of their possessions ... The Protestant and loyal people of the Commonwealth are at the present moment faced with a greater menace than [that posed by] the Central Powers in the late war.

This is an assessment which, clearly, would legitimate quite extreme anti-Catholic measures. In its public stance, the Loyalty League was intolerant enough. It sought to have all Catholics removed from the public service. It attempted to destroy Catholic education by demanding that all school curricula be outlawed which were not approved by the State. So confident were the protestants that Irish sympathies would be viewed by citizens at large as seditious,

31. Brookes MS 1924/1/6219.
32. Patterson to Brookes, L. March 1920, MS 1924/21/35-38.
that the Loyalty League also argued that an alleged flow of funds to Ireland could be dammed if all religious, charitable and educational bodies were forced to publish their annual accounts.33

The Loyalty League was not an irrelevant fringe group. Indeed, it is fair to say that, while the more militant an Irish Catholic man, the more marginal his relationship to the centre of power and cultural legitimacy, militant protestants operated at the centre of power itself. The Loyalty League was a respectable organisation which maintained friendly ties with the Loyal Orange Lodge, the Victorian Protestant Federation and the Freemasons.34 As we will see, the League also had the confidential ear of government. But, most importantly, it behaved with the assurance of its own legitimacy. Its rhetoric was loyalist and self-justifying. Furthermore, it mounted an operation which was to influence future establishment movements: it formed a secret service.

Graham Worsley had argued that it was necessary for the Loyalty League to mount a covert operation if loyal Australians were to counter the growing threat posed by the enemy within the gates which was using 'every German and Jesuitical method known in the diplomacy of underground conspiracy.' Against so cunning a foe, warned Worsley, it was naive to suppose that the League's propaganda campaigns were any deterrent.35 Using only volunteer agents, the Loyalty League managed by October 1918 to infiltrate the Trades Hall, the One Big Union Movement, the Transport Workers Union, the railway union and the police

33. Brookes Papers, MS 1924/21/35-38.
34. Brookes Papers, MS 1924/21/113-6.
35. Worsley to Brookes, L., 6 April 1918, Brookes MS 1924/21/7.
department. By the following year, agents all over the state (33 in Eastern Victoria alone) were reporting on union, Labor and Catholic activities to Loyalty League headquarters.36

In the dossiers which have survived, the amateur status of the agents is very obvious. They had not yet learned to couch their reports in the legitimating rhetoric of objective, ostensibly value-free terminology.37 A report on the 1918 Annual Federal Conference of the ALP described the conference as 'This notorious gathering of Labour Delegates'.38 A dossier on the Queensland Labor politician, Robert Carroll, was similarly resolute, declaring, 'This man is and has for some time been an organiser of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers and a disloyalist of the first water ...39 For Herbert Brookes, the Loyalty League was now engaged in the only kind of action which would rescue Australia from internal sedition. As he wrote to Boyce Gibson in a confidential letter:

We state in our own platform what you and every other thinking man knows to be the main cause of our lack of National Unity and we are going to do our best to scotch it with more than vague words. As well try to ward off the spring of a tiger with a baby's rattle as to coin phrases and talk of educating the Tiger.40


37. See dossiers in Brookes MS 1924/17. The series deals with the Australian Protective League, but the dossiers have clearly been miscatalogued. They date from a period when the Australian Protective League was still under debate.

38. Ibid., MS 1924/17/70.

39. Ibid., MS 1924/17/78.

40. Brookes to Boyce Gibson, L., 6 February 1919, Brookes MS 1924/1/871.
Although Brookes's sense of his own cultural legitimacy was unshakable, he was well aware that he was combating people who had a very different view of what characterised the genuine Australia. One letter writer told him so in the bluntest terms.

Dear Bertie,

It is a great pity you had nothing more useful to occupy your attention than accompanying fanatical hypocrites to the Town Hall to give vent to gutter abuse and calumniating your fellow man ... I suppose you think you have done a great service to the community. All sane people looked on with contempt, and disgust. It is a pity someone did not throw a bomb in the midst of the lot of you, it would have rid the world of some of the vermin.\(^4\)

Australian

By 1918 conservative Anglo-Australians had a great deal to worry them. They faced this kind of vernacular confidence, the double rejection of conscription, the new-found radicalism of the Labor Party and an unrepentant Irish nationalism. As Brookes' ungrateful letter-writer demonstrated when he signed himself 'Australian', there was now explicit conflict over who the real Australians were. The ideological struggle had moved into its most fundamental phase: the struggle to possess the name of the country itself.

In government circles, the Loyalty League's defence of the conservative view of 'Australia' did not pass unrecognised. At 11 a.m. on Wednesday 27 May 1918, Herbert Brookes walked into the Melbourne office of the acting prime minister, W.A. Watt. He had been invited to a meeting to discuss the

\(^{4}\) L. 25 March 1918, Brookes MS 1924/21/1.
incorporation of his citizen spy network into an official civilian intelligence outfit to be known, significantly, as the Australian Protective League. 42

Inside, Brookes found fifteen leaders of Melbourne's business and professional community, Major-General J.G. Legge, W.A. Watt and Senator George Pearce, the Minister for Defence. Pearce told the meeting that the government hoped to 'link up bodies through the Commonwealth such as Bankers, Mining Societies, Members of the Commercial Travellers Association ... and even clergy 43 in a national surveillance network. Brookes became a member of a committee of four charged with framing recommendations for the minister. The other members of the committee were Sir George Steward (head of the Counter Espionage Bureau and private secretary to the Governor General), Major E.L. Piesse (head of Military Intelligence) and F.C. Urquart (Queensland police commissioner with a reputation for being tough on 'reds'). 44

At its early meetings, the committee juggled with forms of words and debated a series of possible organisational structures. By the end of the first month, a rift had developed between Brookes and Urquart, and Steward and Piesse. Brookes and Urquart favoured the creation of a dual structure. One wing would be staffed by professional intelligence officers. The other would implement the original proposal of using citizens as agents, organised into what Brookes

42. Letter inviting Brookes to meeting from Prime Minister's Department. 27 May 1918. Brookes MS 1924/1/1.

43. N. Meaney, 'Australia's Secret Service in World War I, Quadrant, July 1979, p. 22.

44. The papers of this committee are now series 17 of the Brookes Papers.
referred to as 'the volunteer army'. His plan, he wrote, was to use masons, Loyalty League agents, servicemen and various other people to act as 'Vigilantes'.

The precise details of Steward and Piesse's recommendations are not available. However, we do know from Brookes that they rejected the idea of two, equal and complementary wings, preferring instead to have a central, professional organisation which would conscript unpaid assistance as it was required. It seems unlikely that the Australian Protective League was ever formed, and that, instead, the professionals carried the day with the formation of the Commonwealth Investigation Branch, under Major H.E. Jones. Jones proved to be sympathetic to the activities of secret volunteer armies but they were never, as far as we know, incorporated into the Investigation Branch itself.

The Australian Protective League was not concerned only with Catholics and Laborites. Its object, the committee agreed, was 'to detect and suppress all attempts to subvert by unlawful means, by conspiracy or otherwise, the

46. Brookes MS 1924/17/32-33.
47. Brookes to Urquart, L., 28 June 1919, MS 1924/1/6219, p. 78. Brookes tells Urquart that he has learned that the business is to be set up on quite different lines from those he had advocated, and that neither he nor Urquart nor the Loyalty League will be asked to participate. But cf. Brookes to Sen. G. Pearce, Pearce Papers NLA MS 1927/1574-5 in which, 30 years later, Brookes asks Pearce whether he recalls the committee which 'drew up two recommendations on a Loyalty League Committee issue? You approved of the one drawn up by Steward and Piesse, but agreed to submit Urquart's and mine to Cabinet, which adopted ours?' Presumably Cabinet 'adopted' the plan, but it was never implemented. If Brookes had been the founder of a new, intelligence service within Pearce's department, he would be behaving rather oddly by asking Pearce if he recalled the operation.
49. Moore, 'Send Lawyers, guns and money', p. 347.
Neither here, not elsewhere, did the committee envisage any role for government. The activities of the organisation, both observational and repressive, were to be instigated by the organisation itself - a dual function which Brookes' term 'vigilante', given its etymology, well conveys. But sedition was not a concept which the committee sought to define very exactly. Strikes, sectarian dictatorships, communism and protests were all comprehended by the document, but they were eluded to in the most periphrastic fashion (such as bringing 'contempt upon the laws of the realm', or attempting 'to hinder, embarrass or retard His Majesty's subjects in the pursuit of their lawful occupations'). The object was not to define the new secret service's responsibilities, but to endow it with an unlimited authority to do whatever was deemed necessary to protect and enforce conservative values and practices in 'Australia'.

The committee may have been unable to define its targets any more precisely because it believed that the enemies of their 'Australia' were, by definition, elusive. A conservative lineage which had once concerned itself only with Irish nationalists had opened the casement on a whole range of un-'Australian' associations and conspiracies. Yet the term 'conspiracy theory' is a little misleading. It was not simply that conservatives believed that various forces might conspire together to achieve national ruin. Under pressure, conservatives found it appropriate to cease altogether to discriminate between various groups in political or cultural opposition to themselves. The fact that Catholics were active in the Labour movement, that communists had been active in some unions, that links existed between Sinn Fein and Germany - these were indications, neither of the diversity of society, nor of factions within the Labour movement, but of a broad, amorphous Otherness. It seemed to such conservatives that vague, alien forces were at work to destabilise the authentic Australian culture.

50. Brookes, MS 1924/17/2.

51. Ibid.
4. The Intersubjectivity of Dissent

The belief that various hostile forces have entered into a conspiracy is not far removed from the perception that various suspect elements have taken on a single, malevolent identity. As we saw in the rhetoric which informed the Mallee-Wimmera mobilisation of the White Army, Catholics, Langites, communists and the unemployed were scarcely distinguished from each other. More familiar is the conservative habit of condemning unwelcome reform or protest as 'communist' or 'communist inspired', as though thinking and often liberal-minded people are mere puppets of a faceless and elusive communist master.

An example of this phenomenon, at its least reflective, occurred in the letter written by 'Monsoon Mike' which was quoted in Chapter One. In a letter to The Bulletin in early 1931, this correspondent had argued for the abolition of the dole, the creation of work camps for the 'parasites', and the installation of Monash as a dictator. He concluded:

Of course it all sounds very impracticable but it is getting to be high time that the plain everyday Australian staged some sort of a definite protest if he does not really want to become the rickshaw-man for Cutthroatski's bosses. 'Monash or Mungana?' would make a good motto for a Fascist movement.¹

Here, 'the plain everyday Australian' stands in place of the citizen. Identified as marginal are a series of undesirables who, as the argument progresses, are transmuted one into the other. There are the unemployed and their families, the Bolsheviks (Cutthroatski), the yellow peril (associated with rickshaw-man) and the allegedly corrupt Labor Party (Mungana). It is not simply that these enemies of

right-thinking are ranged on the same side. They share a common moral ectoplasm. It is as though the discord in Australia is due to the Mungana phantom in his divers manifestations. This is the logic of marginalisation at its most extreme and least democratic. The consequence is a legitimation of fascism.

With that quotation we have returned to 1931, and the immediate circumstances which produced and legitimated the White Army. One of the reasons for having to undertake a study of the White Army's ideology in so elaborate a fashion is that the White Army itself is a silent organisation. It has said so little of itself, that its few utterances can be interpreted accurately only if their tradition and context are first identified. As we've seen, the legitimations and motives of those rural members who mobilised in March 1931 were scarcely articulated. They prepared, not for argument, but for action. However a sense of their implicit legitimations can be gained from a study of a parallel New South Wales movement, which was mobilised at exactly the same time, and which was widely publicised in Victoria. This was the secessionist Riverina Movement. Being both public and on Lang's own territory, the Riverina Movement was more advanced, both in its organisation and in the degree to which it articulated legitimations for resisting Lang outside the democratic process.

The movement was launched on 28 February 1931 at a great rally of farmers, graziers, businessmen and tradesmen. It was an indication of the movement's masonic, anti-Irish connections, that its leader should be styled Charles Hardy, 'the Cromwell of Riverina'. They rallied, as the newspapers reported, 10,000 strong on the banks of the Murrumbidgee at Wagga.² It was an episode drawn

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² The rally was common fare in Victorian country newspapers the following week. Most appear to have drawn their information from the Argus, 2 March 1931.
straight from the Australian legend; no place could have sounded more authentically Australia, no gathering have seemed more indigenous, more beyond politics. But in orthodox Australia, to be Australian was to be Anglo-Celtic Australian; as the press photos showed, the flag that flew on the Murrumbidgee that day was the Union Jack.3

The meeting declared that it had done with politicians - both with the Country Party and with Lang. But there was no doubt that the rally had the support of the dominant culture; the local RSL provided a guard for the platform, and a special squad of police attended in case, it was said, Labor supporters attempted to disrupt the meeting.4 But at this early stage, the Riverina Movement had only its rhetoric; it had no detailed programme. The assembly represented not so much an articulated alternative as an angry certainty that legitimacy was on their side. In the face of Country Party impotence, Lang was leading the country into chaos. The Riverina Movement, simply because of its cultural standing, was sure that it could provide legitimacy and salvation. As one spokesperson later wrote:

The road along which we have been travelling leads to disintegration with possible reconstruction in sections, some of which undoubtedly favour the Russian ideal of government. The Riverina Movement points the way to a return to British ideals and the welding of Australia into a genuine nation.5

3. Photograph, Sydney Morning Herald, 2 March 1931, p. 10, See also 28 February 1931.
4. Argus, loc. cit. The Labour Ballarat Mail recognised the political complexion of the movement, calling its policy of secession 'Sedition' (9 March 1931).
The Riverina Movement joined the conservative chorus of opposition to Lang's economic policies, but it promoted no detailed economic policies of its own, other than insisting that overseas debts be honoured. The movement was simply one more manifestation of the spirit of militant 'citizenship' which marked the determination of Labor's opponents to do what the shambling parliamentary opposition seemed incapable of doing: remove Labor from office. Indeed, the Riverina Movement received expressions of solidarity from both the New Guard and the All for Australia League. The Movement threatened to secede from New South Wales, thereby liberating the people of Riverina from Lang's control, freeing them to lead Australia back - to recall the previous writer - to 'British ideals', uniting Australia into a 'genuine nation'.

The logic of this mobilised conservatism was based on a simple dialectic. The level of tolerable marginal non-conformity was low. Instead, there was a tendency to declare individuals and social groups as either part of the centre, part of the 'genuine nation' or categorise them as alien. For conservatism during the Depression there was a tendency to regard social forces as either loyal and civilised (Hellenic), or to see them as Barbaric, as 'the enemy within the gates.' The two sides of the dialectic can be variously categorised in the following way:

6. Campbell, The Rallying Point, pp. 44-5. In March 1931, A.J. Gibson the president of the Sydney AFAL wrote to the Riverina Movement leader, saying, 'The state of affairs which is rising throughout Australia is making it ... opportune for the various organisations having common aims to meet in conference ...' (Herald, 7 March 1931, p. 1).
At the Wagga rally, the operation of this dialectic was hardly under way. The complaint was said simply to be that the needs of the country were being ignored by the Sydney government. Taxes were too high, and unless they were reduced by 31 March, Riverina would secede. If taxes were reduced, then, said Hardy, Riverina would remain loyal to the government. But by the end of the month, Hardy was speaking in terms which actually questioned the legitimacy of both the state and Commonwealth governments:

The Riverina is awake, words have given place to strong organisation ... we are not, and never will be revolutionists, but we are men and women who seek constitutionally to prevent more repudiation, more neglect of the country for the sake of the city stomach, more Mungana, more political dishonesty.

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By this time, the movement was talking of the breakdown of government in New South Wales creating 'a condition of national emergency'. 'If such a breakdown should occur', stated an official movement announcement, 'the Riverina Provincial Council elected by group areas, will be prepared to undertake immediately the orderly self-government of Riverina.\(^9\)

'Revolutionist' in its own estimation or not, by the middle of the year the movement had outgrown its inaugural guise of a colourful pressure group calling for tax reform. By June a spokesperson was declaring:

> We appear to have lost confidence in our own Government and, worse still, in our system of Government, we are to a great extent frightened by our Governments because we have not enough control over them at the ballot box.\(^10\)

The combined effect of these statements is now a familiar one. Throughout the West, right-wing populist movements were claiming to embody the authentic national spirit, and were denouncing social-democratic parties and the system of parliamentary democracy which enabled their election. Yet, there is in the rhetoric of the Riverina Movement a kind of naive innocence. Few of its spokespersons appear to have had any idea of an alternative system or policy. Because their world-view turned on a simple opposition of good and evil, Hellenic and Barbaric (even Ernest Scott once wrote, 'there are only two sides when things are brought to an issue. It is always either this or that.'),\(^11\) it seemed obvious that

9. Ibid.


order and prosperity would be restored once the right sort of chaps were returned to power. It really was as simple as that.

One is convinced that if we had honorable men at the head of our Governments and honorable men in places of importance, honorable leaders in Australia, they could by their inspiration and by their example sweep away unemployment without the slightest difficulty.¹²

This redemptive theory of economic recovery was very attractive. If one were unwilling to accept the larrikin economics of Lang, and unable to make sense of the radically unfamiliar proto-Keynesianism of Theodore, there was little else a cautious person could believe in. What such people did believe in, what the War had been fought for, what the protestant catechism insisted on, was the absolute opposition of good and evil. For conservatives, the good was the familiar. Recovery was not to be achieved (as the liberals thought) by examining and modifying theories and mechanisms which had broken down. To the conservative mind, theories and mechanisms were less manipulable than this, indeed they were thought of as principles and institutions - altogether a more permanent arrangement. No, the problem was not with the institutions, but with the dishonor (the sin, if you like) which had infected them.

The conservative dialectic entailed not only the idea that all the forces of order, redemption and sanity were united in essence, but also the implicit belief that the forces of chaos and damnation were similarly interconnected. Those who are not for us and of us are of the Devil's Party: Lang, Bolsheviks, Huns, Catholics, the unemployed, economic collapse, inflation, repudiation, 'Grow More

¹² The Ouyen Mail, 4 March 1931, p. 1.
Wheat', and Labour. Like Temptation itself, they shared a common source - and a common remedy. Faith, loyalty and vigilance.

The unemployed are central to our vision of the Depression. We recall it as a time in which people suffered, an era which people 'lived through' or 'survived'. But central though they be to our shared historical memory of the period, the unemployed were marginalised by their contemporaries. It was not the 'times' which were 'cruel', but the attitudes of those who remained in work.

Unemployed people forfeited their class membership. They became members of a new grouping, a class defined by its having no relationship with the means of production. If you didn't have a job, then you didn't belong. This ostracism was not only symbolic; the unemployed were physically cast out by eviction, by poverty and by a relief system which forced many to walk the country roads, or work in humiliating work gangs at rates well under the award.13 Thousands of unemployed, principally men, left their families to go 'on the wallaby', moving from one country town to the next in order to qualify for food coupons and relief work. Sometimes entire families were forced to take to the bush, living in tents or humpies, on the edge of highways, railway lines, and townships - or on the edge of the state itself, at the swelling unemployed camp across the Murray at Mildura.14

When the city closed people out, both warmth and shelter could be created in the bush. And while stealing was a serious offence in the city, there was a degree of pilfering which was tolerated (or perhaps impossible to control) in the country.

13. Eviction of the poor from their rented accommodation and the struggle which developed to end the practice are part of the Labour mythology of the Depression; see Lowenstein, Weevils in the Flour, pp. 394-6, 398, 405, 407. The relief system varied from state to state, and was altered from time to time within states; see Louis and Turner, The Depression of the 1930s, Cassell, North Melbourne, 1968, Chapter 8.

14. Oral tradition. See also Louis and Turner, pp. 113-123.
Certainly there were kindness and free dinners to be had from country people, but there were also suspicion, and the possibility of violence at the hands of police and railway officials who regarded the unemployed as undesirable. Excluded from arbitration, neglected and sometimes opposed by the unions and the ALP, and mistrusted by conservatives, the unemployed were marginalised by a social ethos which had ceased to regard them as 'responsible citizens'.

In the major daily newspapers, the unemployed had become almost invisible as people. There were few accounts of their plight, and no serious debate about how it might alleviated prior to 1932. The unemployed made news only when they staged demonstrations, but even then attention was drawn, not to their demands, but to their conduct. On 17 February 1931, for example, the Melbourne Sun reported on page four that 3,000 unemployed had marched on the city, but that there had been 'no incidents'. The following day, the news closed over them, as the Sun devoted its entire front page to 'Happy Wedding Scenes at St John's Toorak'. Mr Geoffrey Grimwade, a son of one of Melbourne's most prominent business families, had married Miss Lavender Mary Stuart of South Yarra.

So it was that the unemployed found themselves in that most difficult of marginal positions, protesting to assert the very fact of their existence. As Covington Hall expressed it:

_We shall come as you have made us, ragged, lousy, pale and gaunt:_
_You, the House of Have, shall listen to us, the House of Want._

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15. Huelin, _Keep Moving_, Chapter 7; Lowenstein, pp. 208-9; relations between police and unemployed are discussed below.


17. _Sun_ (Melbourne), 18 February 1931, p. 1.

18. Quoted in Wheatley, '"The disinherited of the earth"?', p. 27.
But for every such expression of defiance, there was another of despair. In 'Days of March', J.R. McDougall wrote of the monotony and endurance of life on the road as winter approached. At the end of this, the final stanza, it is clear the new lot is more 'real' than the lost, former life which has become dissolved in sentimentality:

Gray days of March, gray days of March,
  There's winter in the blood;
The leaves are beaten from the larch,
  The rivers moan in flood.
We stumble through the weary miles,
  Our golden days are o'ver;
The loves that came to us with smiles
  Shall come to us no more.  

By 1931, and for the following three or four years at least, the public face of the unemployed - perhaps because it was the only face they were allowed seemed very militant. Conservatives and some leading churchmen were concerned that the unemployed were on the brink of communism. Certainly communists, working through the Unemployed Workers Movement (UWM) saw the unemployed as being susceptible to communist ideas. But the effect of the UWM was that it organised dispossessed people, and gave them the courage to believe in their right to be seen and heard. Unjust and brutal though their treatment was at the hands of colonial capitalism, the unemployed as a mass did not cry out for a new economic order. They did not advocate communism. They did not demand possession of the factories - they simply demanded their right to work in them. Their radicalism consisted in their refusal to be bullied by law and the police, and


20. e.g. Bishop of Armidale in Argus, 10 July 1931. The conservative attitude is discussed in greater detail below.
their insistence that they had a right to participate in decision making. Nadia Wheatley, a Labour historian who argues that the unemployed were, in fact, 'radical', finds that 'By demanding full work at award wages or a basic dole wage, the unemployed asserted that they were workers with a right to an ordinary economic existence, and not charity bums.' In the end, Wheatley has good reason to characterise this stand as radical; in the intensely conservative society of the '30s, it was.

Ted Hammond, who was on the roads for most of the Depression in Victoria and southern New South Wales, says that most unemployed men were too busy keeping body and soul together to be worried by politics. 'All we could think about,' he says, 'was where the next meal was coming from and when things would get better. O yes, we talked about politics. There was a lot of time for talking - we talked about a lot of things. But mainly people just worried about getting by.'

Noel Counihan recalls that unemployed speakers would sometimes gain permission from a shopkeeper to address crowds from the verandah roof above a shop. But, he says, the police would arrive in no time. They would -

    rush upstairs and attack with truncheons, one or two speakers were knocked on to the pavement below ... Of course all this violence was causing concern among the shopkeepers, because the police would ride their horses along the footpath and smash the ordinary citizenry into shop windows.

22. Wheatley, p. 28.
23. Nevertheless, even Wheatley finds that 'Obviously a vast number of unemployed, probably even a majority, took no part in any protest.'
In this account, Counihan has picked up the three categories of unemployed, police and citizens, categories which recur in the following Sydney Morning Herald report of another demonstration. The paper felt no need to disguise the fact that the violence was initiated by the police. There was simply no question, in the paper's world view, that the unemployed march was a culturally illegitimate event which had to be stopped. To the 'citizens' it was a spectacle to be watched from the sidelines.

RIOT AT PERTH
Serious Collision with Police
VIOLENT STREET FIGHTING

PERTH, Friday.

Several arrests were made and eight persons were treated at Perth Hospital as a result of a violent clash between unemployed and police outside the Treasury building in St. George's Terrace this afternoon.

The police were forced to draw batons and charge the crowd repeatedly to disperse them. The unemployed used stones and pieces of wood in retaliation.

It was found necessary to employ over 60 police and troopers before the riot was stopped. Many thousands of citizens watched the conflict from the roadsides and from the windows of business houses. 25

As Drew Cottle has shown, this attitude to the unemployed was even more extreme among some of the well-to-do. Wealthy conservatives tended to regard the unemployed as an unwelcome element which had simply sprung up, and were in no mood to assist them. The city council of the exclusive Sydney suburb of Woolahra sponsored such traditional causes as the Eastern Suburbs Day Nursery,

25. SMH, 7 March 1931, p. 15.
the Royal Hospital for Women and the Benevolent Society, and it permitted the Red Cross and the RSL to conduct street collections. But the council five times refused permission for the Paddington Relief Committee to conduct street collections on behalf of the unemployed.26

P. Monteney parodied the disdain with which the wealthy viewed those out of work in a poem in which a young public schoolgirl and her mother pass an unemployed soldier in the street. The girl asks:

Mamma, I'm sure that man must cadge.
Why does he wear a soldier's badge?

To which Mamma replies,

Yes it's a shame the men you meet,
They shouldn't allow them in the street.27

This view of the unemployed as indolent and therefore unworthy produced the 1931 equivalent of dole-bludger rhetoric. While The Bulletin dramatised the middle-class taxpayer, stripped to his underpants, as the victim of Labor's economics,28 demands were made that the unemployed should be forced to work for their pitiful dole. Tramps, beggars and street corner loungers became the targets of non-Labor cartoonists, especially as the UWM's opposition to the work-for-the-dole schemes mounted. Indolence became a moral ill of which the unemployed stood accused.29

28. Bulletin covers, 1930: 13 August, 10 September, 1 October, 24 December; 1931: 4 February etc.
As Table Talk put it, the unemployed were expecting to be paid the dole 'without giving a single groat's return'. It argued, along with the following cartoon, that the unemployed ought to be made to work for the dole for the sake of their dignity. 'Surely he who lives on sustenance and refuses the work of his hands,' it pronounced, 'is ... despicable. Australia is too poor to be generous, too shrewd to encourage "poling".'

![Cartoon: Work or Sustenance?](image_url)

'Unemployed citizen' - even today that phrase has an oxymoronic ring to it, as though concepts from disparate rhetorics have been yoked together. Marx dates the association of 'unemployment' with social irresponsibility from the Industrial Revolution. He argues that the new capitalist (employing) class could not afford a section of the potential work force being seen to survive without working. When the agricultural tenants were turned off their traditional lands by the great English landowners, they became, he says, 'a mass which was free in a double sense, free from the old relations of clientship, bondage and servitude, and

30. Table Talk, 26 February 1931.
secondly free of all belongings and possessions.\textsuperscript{31} It is a matter of historical record, says Marx, that these liberated masses attempted to live by begging, vagabondage and robbery. However, they were coerced from this road into the factories 'by gallows, stocks and whippings.' Thus wage labour was established as the norm for people who needed to gain their daily sustenance by physical exertion. Increasingly, says Marx, it became the view that vagabonds and beggars, like thieves, were no longer participating in the social order. To be unemployed came to be abnormal. And to be abnormal is only a step away from being mad.

The Reason-Madness nexus', says Foucault, 'constitutes for Western culture one of the dimensions of its originality.\textsuperscript{32} In the West, madness has become 'unbearable to reason',\textsuperscript{33} an intolerable alternative against which reason and sanity define themselves, but which they cannot bear to confront. For Foucault, reason's fear is that it is a fragile constraint on a kind of great collective unreason - 'for which nothing is exactly responsible, but which involves everyone in a kind of secret complicity.'\textsuperscript{34} The scandal of madness shows those who value reason how close to animality the fall into unreason may bring them. In Australia, it would be a little far-fetched to argue that self-consciously reasonable people have been secretly terrified by the possibility of their own insanity, but it is not too much to claim that such people have feared the potential instability of their national culture. Grounded in such fears is the Yahoo-imagery used by the disdainful Wesley boy describing the working-class soiling of his school. Similarly fearful was the colonial liberal concern with promoting literature and the arts as

\textsuperscript{31} Marx, \textit{Gundrisse}, Allen Lane, 1973, p. 507.


\textsuperscript{33} Ibid., p. 228.

\textsuperscript{34} Ibid., p. 13.
humanising and reasonable influences upon the unlettered masses. As the young Walter Murdoch told a meeting of the Melbourne Literary Society in 1907, 'The nobility of a nation does not depend merely on its literature or on its art or on its culture; the nobility of a nation may be gauged by the extent to which these things are had by all.'

Without the civilizing influence of British culture, it was feared that the vernacular population was all too defenceless against the forces of chaos and unreason. The mere existence in Australia of such miniscule revolutionary


36. Richard White has commented on the recurrence of the image of communism as a 'disease' which threatens the 'health' of the nation, and draws the apparently obvious conclusion that this image is a metaphor from modern clinical medicine. Measures designed to protect Australia from alien contamination might be thought of, says White, as having been conceived as the 'inoculation of Australia'. It is, he suggests, a metaphor which was given added cultural validity by the scourge of the Spanish influenza epidemic and by the general fear in Australia of the introduction of foreign diseases. (R. White, Inventing Australia, 1981, pp. 140-1). There is obviously some truth in White's analysis, but the image of communism as a disease is more complex than a simple parallel with physical illness. As Susan Sontag points out, the use of illness as a metaphor for moral and political decay is as old as Homer (S. Sontag, Illness as Metaphor, 1983, p. 47). Shakespeare, she notes, uses many variations on the standard idea of an infection in the 'body politic' (p. 76). (Incidentally, Sontag suggests that the near-total historical amnesia to the 1918-19 flu pandemic discounts its use as a popular metaphor (p. 74).) My own view is that the expression, the 'disease of communism', does not draw on a purely pathological metaphor, but often on older, entrenched notions of disease as a partly spiritual or cognitive affliction. In Shakespeare it occurred in a culture which regarded disease as the product of the simultaneously physical and spiritual 'imbalance of humours'. Potentially influential in protestant Australia was the New Testament equation of disease with sin, for which cures of faith were both physically and spiritually cleansing. Today, a modern mythology which associates cancer with repressed stress or anger (Sontag, p. 27) is one of many signs of the enduring belief in the connection between mental and physical health. Indeed Bruno Bettelheim has argued that Freud is widely misunderstood precisely because his description of psychic disturbances as 'illnesses' is not commonly recognised as metaphoric (Bettelheim, Freud and Man's Soul, 1984, p. 39). And in fact, in common parlance, it is not unusual to hear people, ideas or practices which are considered crazy or immoral described as sick. In the 1920s and early 30s, communism, Keynesianism and Irish nationalism were just such diseases.
organisations as the IWW and Sinn Fein was, therefore, a matter for deep concern. In a condescendingly instructive Sydney University extension lecture, delivered in 1929, Sir Henry Braddon praised the good works and wisdom of the tiny elite who, in the name of 'citizenship' keep the system functioning. By contrast, he said:

the weird notions of the communist are outside the scope of rational thought. Apparently the Communist's main desire is to wreck society, in the hope of securing something for himself in the scramble. His idea seems to be to place in charge of the nation's affairs the unskilled, untrained proletariat, and to displace the specially trained men possessing varied expert qualifications.\(^{37}\)

Although it is rarely spelled out, the conservative belief is that communism is, literally, a mental disorder - a failure of perception and of moral sensibility. It is a way of seeing so marginal, so far removed from the conservative standard of objective truth that, in Sir Henry Braddon's words, it is 'weird', 'outside the scope of rational thought', a 'desire ... to wreck society'.

During the Depression, when the sense of social flux and economic uncertainty were extreme, and when conservatives had lost influence over government, there was a tightening of credit - and of tolerance. The margins contracted, and the range of non-conformity tolerated by conservatives became small. From the conservative point of view, society seemed now to contain only two kind of institutions: sanctums and asylums. Beyond the light and reason of their own centres of thought, the conservatives saw, not alternative points of view or economic interests, but dark forces gathering on the margin. Even in the Labour press, cartoons intended to evoke support for the unemployed often

depicted them as a Dantesque crowd of fallen, faceless men. It was all too easy to associate this multitude with the cartoon images of Mannix, Labourites and indolent communists who inhabited the conservatives' nightmare world of criminality and madness. As G.V. Portus complained at the time, a whole range of ideas, ideals and reforms were being denounced as 'communism'. The Trades Hall, the Catholic Church, the unemployed camp, the Labor-held parliament, the unemployed rally - all became marginal asylums, places of unreason where the King's writ held no sway. In political commentary and cartoons, images of anarchists, clowns and madmen became prominent. Table Talk ran a series of full page cartoons throughout 1931 ridiculing 'Ted's Circus', in which Ted Theodore and Jim Scullin were drawn as crazy circus animals and performers attempting impossible or foolhardy acts. 'You and me' were two meek little monkeys, who were bewildered by the chaotic circus in which they found themselves. Lang was depicted as a bank robber stealing the citizens' money, a clown, a mad (diseased) dog, as the false god Baal and as a traitor receiving the Iron Cross before a parade of death's heads in German uniform. Even Caucus was depicted as a gang of masked rapists assaulting the female figure of 'Australia's Credit'.

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38. e.g. Labor Daily, 4 October 1930.
40. e.g. Table Talk, 5, 12, 19 March 1931, p. 9.
42. 'The follies of 1931', Bulletin, 7 January, 1931, cover.
43. Anti-Labor election poster, May 1932, reproduced in Amos, the New Guard, p. 91.
The Menace of Mannix & Co.
Melbourne, 1919

"Apples" of Discord
The Menace of Mannix & Co.

SHOOT THAT MAD DOG

'Could you oblige me with a match?'
Bulletin, 1 May 1919

Anti-Labor election poster, 1932
The Law is not made by the Lang Government, but trodden under foot. Lang, surrounded by communist barbarians, and by the bombs and kindling which are their tools of trade, condemns Individual Effort to be hanged. 21 March 1931, Smith's Weekly.
Corruption, disloyalty, vagrancy, anarchy and unreason became the inter-related attributes of the demi-monde of fallen people who haunt conservative nightmares. Although no one went so far as to place the unemployed firmly in this world, they were seen as vulnerable, being marginal, vagrant and keeping company with communists. The barbaric side of dialectic had come into its own. The citizens faced a struggle for sanity and order with the combined forces of chaos. At such a moment, the very idea of democracy was ludicrous.
5. Sanity and the challenge of democracy

In the struggle against chaos and insanity, a second figure augmented the citizen as the champion of order and authenticity, the person of the digger. The two were not so much separate characters in a national morality play as personifications of essentially the same conservative values, dramatised in slightly different ways.

The sanctification of the soldiers who had been killed in the War ('the Fallen') was well established. But there was also a special status afforded to returned diggers in the country's sense of its own nationhood or manhood. In 1929 for example, Smith's Weekly commented that 'Every year about 2000 members of the A.I.F. go to join their cobbers who were killed in the war.' Accompanying the observation was a large cartoon of diggers climbing a staircase to be greeted by an angelic Mars on the edge of the Battlefield of Heaven. It was called 'The Deathless Army'. The War itself had been sanitised and sanctified in such a way that accounts of the horror were as yet unable to penetrate the home culture. Kenneth Slessor actually contrasted the War to 'other, dirtier wars'. When the great outpouring of war literature occurred in England a decade after the end of the War, Australian opinion leaders wanted nothing to do with it. The Age condemned the new authors, saying, 'They have depicted life in the trenches as much more horrible than it actually was.' The Age endorsed those who 'deplored the tendency of the authors of war books to belittle the men who fought for their country and depict them "as brutes and beasts who lived like pigs and died like dogs."'

2. 'Marching Song,' ibid.
3. 'Slandering the Soldiers', The Age, 4 March 1930, p. 80.
As we have seen, ex-officers were held in high esteem. Indeed, so fundamental was the War experience to Australian society that every male was categorised by it: a man had either gone, or he had not gone. He had either 'served', or 'missed out'. For members of both groups, there were psychological pressures to identify with a new, homefront AIF.

With the outbreak of the Depression, the relevance of the AIF spirit was further reinforced as a political imperative. The threat of the subversive 'enemy within the gates' was joined by the threat posed by the Depression itself which was sometimes represented by cartoonists as a war, even as a war being fought from trenches now manned by incompetent civilian politicians. Or, in a variation of the theme, the Depression was personified as a gross and threatening hun officer, 'General Depression'. Once again, a role for the soldiers was implied if not actually expressed. A more explicit call to action was made by Gerardy in The Bulletin. Accompanied by an illustration of a young soldier striding out with a ghostly digger companion beneath a billowing Australian flag, was the following poem.

RE-UNION

Having marched by pyre and post, having trekked against the blast,
We, a soul-united host, facing doubt from coast to coast,
Hold communion with the past;
Rise and mount and ride again, hillward drawn, in column creeping.
Driving on with spur and rein, breasting through the bearded grain,
Over sunlit pastures leaping ...
Sermon and despoiling pen shall not quench the creed we cherish,
Suffer not your name to perish!


5. Bulletin, 14 January 1931, and see 7 January 1931 above.

In the end it is - and was - unclear to what extent the call to arms issued in such
statements was metaphoric and to what extent it was to be taken literally. But it
is arguable that the formation of the New and Old Guards and the White Army is
an indication that, in the minds of some Australian men, the ambiguity had
already been resolved.

However, the metaphorical status of such calls is certain in one respect. As
Humphrey McQueen has shown, the militia were not simply a mobilisation of the
surviving AIF. McQueen has shown that it was statistically impossible for the
surviving members of the AIF to account for the entire New Guard, and points out
that, in any case, some of the working class men who enlisted returned from the
war with their Labour ideals intact or strengthened. What had happened was that
a national AIF culture had been created with which men principally (though not
exclusively) of non-Labor politics identified. It was a culture through which they
expressed their patriotism, their maleness and their sense of belonging.

This military ethic, which was generally expressed in a kind of militant
sentimentality, became a potent political force when it was linked with the anti-
political, anti-democratic rhetoric which was used to mobilise opposition to the
Labor governments of Lang and Scullin.

One of the more articulate promoters of the conservative digger ethic was
General Brudenell White, a man well-known and respected in both military and
business circles by 1931.

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In a speech to the Ararat Legacy Club in March 1931, White addressed himself to the topical subject of democracy. Before a democracy can function, he said, men must learn the need for 'service, sacrifice, fellowship and unselfishness.' In the AIF, he went on, 'what a man was fit for, he was given the opportunity to become. That is real democracy.' Although there is some evidence to suggest that White actually disapproved of the activities of the White Army, this re-presentation of the 'democratic army' myth before an audience containing ex-soldiers did more to validate the notion of the citizen-digger as guardian of the Australian polity than it did to uphold the right of the elected government to govern. Indeed there is, in the very fact that White felt the need to make such an explanation, the implication that democracy was not, at that moment, functioning legitimately.


10. C.E.W. Bean referred to this speech in order to demonstrate that White had overcome an earlier mistrust of democracy. He 'almost winced at the word', says Bean, until war service caused him to alter his mind. To illustrate this conversion, Bean cited White's statement at Ararat:

   By nature I am opposed to democracy and yet by training and experience I am forced to the view that democracy is right in principle ... I hold the belief strongly that the crooked path by which we are travelling is leading all the while out of the wood. (Bean, p. 184).

But, given that this speech was given at the very time that the White Army was in evidence in the region, it is possible that this reluctant view was expressed primarily to dissuade the ex-soldiers from engaging in vigilanteism, rather than to proclaim democracy for its own sake. This possibility is supported by Major Len Fell who does not believe the rumours that White was involved in the LNS. 'He was a great stickler for the rules', said Fell, 'and he would not have approved of people taking matters into their own hands in this way.' Fell is relying on his own assessment of White's personality, but his claim does appear to make sense of the Ararat speech. It is difficult to see why else White would advocate democracy, if it were, as he says, so contrary to his nature, if not to caution against anarchic ventures.
In December, as the election drew near, White elaborated the characteristics which would validate an elected government. 'Government of the people, by the people, for the people', he said, 'is a very beautiful saying, but it is very difficult to apply.' A government would be legitimate only if it were run by 'men who have character' and who were accustomed to upholding certain 'principles'. These were, to use White's expressions:

The beauty and force of individual effort;
The inexorable law of supply and demand;
The principle of encouraging the man who from the harvest of this year saved something for the next;
The essentially British principle that life and law are sacred;
The vital principle that a contract once entered into cannot be broken. 11

But judged on these principles, Labor was not simply unfit to govern: it was positively illegitimate. Once a government has been elected which embraces socialism (which is antithetical to the beauty and force of individual effort), which advocates nationalisation (thereby contravening the inexorable law of supply and demand), or which, like Lang's, repudiates its overseas debts (thereby breaching the sanctity of contract) and which redistributes taxpayers' money to the needy (thus breaching the principle of encouraging the man who from the harvest of one year saved something for the next), then the legitimacy of the government is in doubt. The ALP has failed to qualify as democratic. But if the elected government has ceased to be democratic, if democracy has been reduced to a 'beautiful saying', then surely men of 'principle' are left with an obligation to find an alternative means of securing legitimate government. With only three and a half weeks left before the federal election, and with no opinion polls to indicate whether Labor still enjoyed majority support, men who thought as White did but

who lacked his scruples against political violence, must have been wondering whether that alternative would be required.

These statements by White of what is essentially an anti-democratic view were part of a more general ideological event which was taking place in rural Victoria. I have suggested that the March mobilisation can be largely attributed to a kind of pre-political paranoia: a fear without a reasonable object, which was expressed in ways conditioned both by the war experience and by an older fear of Catholics. But there were already signs that the paranoia of country people was resolving itself into a more political point of view. As the foregoing discussion has shown, it was an ideology which could be used, both to legitimate political action within the framework of representative democracy, and to legitimate anti-democratic violence should an election have failed to install men of acceptable 'character'. With rumours of a communist rising rife in the Mallee, and with the White Army seeking vigilantes, The Ouyen Mail published the following call to arms, explicitly calling for a mobilisation of a homefront revival of the AIF:

When the Empire and the cause of liberty were endangered by Germany and her allies the flame of patriotism burned brightly and, as one man, the flower of Australian manhood responded to the call for sacrifice. Today the call to battle is against an internal foe. The forces that are making for national dishonor are of a more disintegrating and enslaving nature than those that operated when the Great War shocked the world. Will Australia face them with bravery and determination? The easy pathways that are being advocated as the route to national prosperity are the evil ways of repudiation and trickery. They cannot lead to the goal. The history of the nations of the world makes it clear that sacrifice in the cause of honor is the only safe and certain way to real prosperity. It is eternally true that 'Righteousness exalteth a nation' and none of the subterfuges of Messrs Lang and Theodore can make up for a departure from the narrow way. At heart the Australian people are in favor of facing their difficulties and bravely meeting their obligations,
and if an election were held tomorrow the probabilities are that the repudiationists would be subjected to a debacle such as has seldom been seen in the history of British communities. The plain truth is that the hesitating, cowardly men, who toy with fanciful financial schemes, do not represent Australia.  

In Ouyen it seems the seditious chimera had shown his face, and it was the face of Lang, the face of Theodore. The article was published only two days before the uprising was expected.

As Peter Loveday has shown in detail, anti-party-political and anti-democratic ideas were both prominent and respectable throughout 1931. As Loveday explains, such ideas helped win popular support for the All for Australia League and thereby for the ostensibly non-partisan UAP. But, until the election was actually won, it was by no means clear that the anti-Labor forces would carry the electorate. By early 1931, conservatism had initiated two alternative means to regain government, the AFAL-UAP and the militia. It is wrong to consider them as the choice of moderates and extremists respectively. It was not evident to most anti-Labor citizens that such a clear cut choice would eventually have to be made, for the anti-democratic rhetoric of 1931 expressed an attachment, not to specific tactics for ousting Labor, but to certain legitimating symbols and rhetorical images which the newly militant citizenry found familiar, dynamic and sane.

In the previous extract, such ideas were expressed in the sort of wartime/Empire rhetoric which had particular appeal for potential secret army members. But it will be noted that, towards the end of the article, the paper

12.  The Ouyen Mail, 4 March 1931.
claimed that the anti-Labor forces would be sure to win an election if one were held immediately. Furthermore, the article was actually published to coincide with the formation of the Melbourne Citizens' League (as the AFAL then was). But it is unclear whether the reference to an election is simply a rhetorical device, or an expression of support for the democratic process. Certainly the militaristic tenor of the foregoing prose contradicts such an expression. But that these uncertainties and contradictions should exist in so resolute a statement is precisely the point. A militant citizenry was being mobilised, but whether to the barricades or the ballot boxes remained to be shown.

But such ideas were not only being propounded by retired generals at gatherings of the RSL, or by the editors of conservative rural newspapers. They were being aired in the columns of the respectable, metropolitan press and by conservative members of parliament. Table Talk, a popular Melbourne features and Society gossip magazine, hailed the secessionist Riverina Movement as one of the 'great spontaneous uprisings of the people against tyranny.' As political hyperbole goes, that is perhaps not so remarkable a statement. But the magazine went on to question the validity of democracy itself, declaring, 'It is commonly thought that tyranny is the gross misuse of power by an individual, generally a sovereign or a master.' But, the magazine said, 'Democracy is capable of a tyranny which exceeds any individual caprice.' Once again, the preferred alternative is not articulated, but there is perhaps in the use of that trivialising word 'caprice' a hint that a dictatorship of the right kind would be preferable to the present tyrannical democracy. Sure that mere popular election was no indication that a government was representative of the authentic 'people', the magazine went on to ask:


15. Ibid.
Who can honestly assert that Government in Australia represents the mass of people? Who believes that a man like Lang, of New South Wales, was really directed by a public mandate to introduce legislation that makes the State stink in the nostrils of decent men? Such an assertion of the rights of democracy is an outrage on language.\textsuperscript{16}

Senator Sir Hal Colebatch believed that democracy could be made to work, but on his terms. Lang and Theodore, he said, were among 'the real leaders of Communism today'. He went on:

Bismark has said that universal suffrage is the government of the house by the nursery. We shall make that approach true if we adopt the principle that the party that promises most must necessarily be successful at the polls. The Australian people are deserving of a chance to show that they want neither Communism [which they now face under Lang and Theodore] nor Fascism; that they can make democracy work ... If we could remove the danger of a destructive drift into the horrors of Communism we must get back on the straight road, and, inverting Lloyd George's pet phrase, make democracy safe for Australia.\textsuperscript{17}

The Melbourne \textit{Sun} expressed itself with less sophistry. Given the growing 'Red support' for Theodore's policy of reflation, the \textit{Sun} published a parody of the Pauline hymn to Charity in which it seemed to propose abandoning democracy altogether:

Democracy is long-suffering and kind. It never seeks to fix responsibility for outrages on common sense like those perpetrated at Canberra or to mete out justice. It simply pays. Worse still, when a

\textsuperscript{16} \textit{Ibid.}

\textsuperscript{17} H. Colebatch, \textit{Democracy or Disaster}, Sydney, 1931, pp. 7-8. His emphasis.
white elephant has come into being it cannot put an end to him. It must keep on maintaining him - in luxury. There is a good case for cutting the loss on many of these Canberra monstrosities.\textsuperscript{18}

The New Guard went even further. It maintained that 'all parties in the political arena lean to socialism': Labor, because it believed in it, and Nationalist, because it was afraid that without offering a few socialist enticements, it would be unable to win the popular vote. (The New Guard defined as socialist such novelties as income tax, public transport and the post office). It maintained that it was the duty of responsible citizens to take control, and to do away with popular elections:

\begin{quote}
Universal suffrage is rooted deep in the vanity of human nature, and without revolution the 'divine right of the majority' will continue to masquerade as enlightened public opinion.\textsuperscript{19}
\end{quote}

Such indelicate statements of the position did nothing to endear Campbell to the more prudent anti-Labor organisers in Melbourne. But, in essence, the arguments of the All for Australia League were not too distant from those put by Campbell. The difference was that, unlike the flashy Sydney lawyer, the Melbourne directors of anti-Labor politics preferred to regain political power by election, if at all possible.\textsuperscript{20} At the heart of their strategy was the All for Australia League. As

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{18} \textit{Sun}, 14 January 1931, p. 6.
\item \textsuperscript{19} Eric Campbell, 'A Charter of Liberty for Australians', \textit{New Guard}, January 1932, p. 2.
\item \textsuperscript{20} While the AFAL's opposition to Labor was on similar moral grounds to those of the New Guard, its opposition to the conservative parties was motivated by the sense that they had become incapable of ousting Labor. Indeed, in Victoria, the AFAL soon tempered its anti-party rhetoric with the pragmatic acknowledgement that its chief object was the removal of Labor. (T. Matthews, 'The All for Australia', \textit{Labour History}, No. 17, 1970, p. 143).
\end{itemize}
Hart has shown, the AFAL was part of a well-made plan to lure voters from Labor and to revamp the ailing anti-Labor political forces as the ostensibly non-political UAP. But the AFAL participated in, and contributed to, a political rhetoric which was by no means essentially democratic. The point, one way or another, was to prevent Labor winning a second term in Canberra. The strategy which won the day can be outlined in the following way.

In Melbourne, the All for Australia League had been launched in February 1931 as the Citizens' League. The idea had developed among the members of a businessmen's committee which had been established to help Acting Treasurer Lyons to raise the Conversion Loan in December 1930. But after Scullin reinstated the unorthodox Theodore as treasurer, the committee continued to meet at the Collins Street office of J.B. Were and Son, planning ways to remove Labor, in order to restore 'Australia's political integrity and stability.'

Hart has shown that this committee developed close links with the National Union, an organisation of businessmen who financed the Nationalist Party. By the end of 1930, the businessmen had realised that the ossified Nationalist Party had little chance of winning back the swinging voters it had lost to Labor. Early in February, the committee suggested to Lyons that he was the man to form a new

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24. Ibid., p. 43.
government to deliver Australia from Scullin and Theodore and the economic policies which Lyons himself had long resisted.  

As citizens joined the Citizens' League by the thousands, the first serious attempt to oust the Scullin government was mounted. Lyons announced that he would be willing to lead a composite government. The banks, led by the chairman of the Commonwealth Bank (which then functioned also as the Reserve Bank), Sir Robert Gibson, announced that they would not supply funds for Labor's policy of mild reflation. The general manager of the Union Bank of Australia explained the move to his London chairman:

It is likely to prove fatal to the Government plans, and probably to the Government itself ... The general impression is that the present Ministry will succumb to a censure motion after the House meets on 4th March and that Mr. Lyons, the late Treasurer, will head a minority Government supported by the Nationalist party. If so, we may look for an improvement on the vacillating attitude of the present Ministry... 

Although Lyons and a few colleagues crossed the floor, Scullin survived the no-confidence motion. The following day, the Citizens' League announced that it had adopted the name and platform of its Sydney counterpart, the All for Australia League.

On 12 March, Lyons, Fenton, Gabb, Guy and Price officially resigned from the ALP, and the Nationalist and Country Parties announced that they would


27. *Argus*, 5 March 1931, p. 3.
support any cabinet organised by Lyons. That day, the conservative Murdoch Herald ran the headline, 'Mr. Lyons to Lead New Federal Party'. On 17 April, Lyons became leader of the opposition after the committee and the National Union persuaded Latham to step down in his favour. On 18 April, the formation of the United Australia Party was announced, with Lyons as leader. In a matter of days it became clear the Victorian branch of the All for Australia League was backing Lyons and the UAP. In the press, the future prime minister was being promoted as the voice of sanity and honesty, indeed the Murdoch press had been preparing the public for the switch since the beginning of the year. Even the Young Nationalist had singled out Lyons in January as 'advocating a sane policy'.

Support for the AFAL was massive. 320 branches consisting of 80,000 members were established in Victoria in the first 70 working days. On 7 May, the new arrangement was formalised when the parliamentary Nationalist Party transformed itself into the UAP under Lyons, with four other Labor defectors lending an air of bi-partisan unity. By the following year, the UAP was in government, and the AFAL, having done its job, was dissolved.

But to retell this story of the manoeuvring and campaigning which, as Hart has shown in great detail, led to the eventual victory of Lyons is to extract from the plethora of individual anti-Labor initiatives that sequence of ploys which

30. Young Nationalist, Vol. 1, No. 1, January 1931. A leader of the Young Nationalists, R.G. Menzies, was also a member of the original Were committee.
finally won the day. At the time it was by no means obvious that the AFAL was part of the election strategy so clearly discerned in hindsight. As D.R. Hall recalled in 1935, enthusiasm for the AFAL -

seemed to prompt reputable, level-headed citizens to wear their league badges and to display them to one another, and to non-members, in public places on the slightest provocation. The enthusiasm was magnificent - everyone felt that "something ought to be done". Just what that "something" was, nobody knew.32

This combination of enthusiasm and ambiguity of means was characteristic of the dynamic public rhetoric of the AFAL and of the wider anti-Labor discourse with which it was associated. This new, militant anti-Labor rhetoric had equal potential to resolve itself in electoral victory or in political violence. We might be alerted to the less democratic potential of the AFAL by the fact that three figures who were instrumental in the subversion of Lyons, Robert Knox (of the National Union), Kingsley Henderson (original secretary of the Citizen's League) and L.N. Roach (of Bank House) were the same three who, the previous November, had written to Monash 'on behalf of certain gentlemen' urging him to establish himself as dictator.33

One of the recurrent symbols to emerge in the process of creating a renewed, legitimate and socially appealing anti-Labor rhetoric was John Citizen. The following cartoon was published by the Melbourne Herald to coincide with the formation of the Melbourne Citizens' League. John Citizen is depicted, as he was to remain throughout the year, as a bowler hatted man of respectable,


British appearance. (He is the same figure that The Bulletin represented as the taxpayer, stripped to his undergarments.) However, the class and party-political basis of John Citizen's role is obscured by the iconography of the cartoon. It is now clear that the cartoonist's stereotype of a citizen was a male from the white collar middle class. But the cartoon, and the ethic of citizenship generally, traded on one of the myths of Australian urban culture: that the average Australian in matters of right-thinking, is a person of one's own class. So separate are the working class and middle class suburbs in Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane that the residents of one scarcely exist as people for the inhabitants of the other. The fact that John Citizen's persona excludes working people from the legitimate citizenry is simply not acknowledged by the cartoon.34

Cutting Out the Cackle

The Australian Citizens' League will be inaugurated in Melbourne at a great Town Hall meeting on Thursday evening.

Herald, 17 February 1931

34. However, Matthews lists some rare occasions on which the AFAL in New South Wales actually said that its main appeal was to the middle class (op. cit., p. 144n).
The apparently unreflective marginalisation of the working class is reinforced by the obscure iconography of the political turkey. Again, the cartoon behaves as though he represents politicians in general. But while politicians were the butt of much of the discontent of the period, the chief aim of the movement was to get rid of the government: to oust the working class turkeys whose pretensions to government were ridiculous. In the cartoon, the turkey wears a top hat (a standard cartoonist's symbol at the time for the politician-as-buffoon) - and there is a sense in which the top hat is inappropriate, as though the turkey is pretending to a status he does not rightly deserve (as ridiculous, to recall another anti-democrat, as 'a silk hat on a Bradford millionaire'). The Laborites have absurdly tried to fill the role of their betters. But this, as I've said, is the unstated, perhaps even unconscious, premise of the cartoon. The apparently unacknowledged effect of the cartoon is morally to disenfranchise blue collar voters. As citizens, they are simply not in the picture.

There were many other cartoons which repeated the idea of the citizens' taking control to rescue Australia from the chaos or craziness imposed upon it by the politicians.

It's high time they began their work

Table Talk, 19 February 1931
The Australian People Awake
Herald, 5 March 1931

Carried Unanimously
Herald, 10 March 1931
At this point it was not clear that a new, but conventional political party lay at the end of the search for an alternative to the prevailing order. In effect, two separate, parallel campaigns were being waged in the press, one to develop citizenship as the highest moral good, the other to establish Joe Lyons as the personification of sane and responsible politics. John Citizen was not a democratic figure, indeed, in many ways, he represented an impatience with democracy. Nor was he a modern advertising symbol, owned by and identified with the UAP or the AFAL. He was linked with the feeling that politics needed to be purged, by whatever means, of the noxious or crazy Labor/communist interlopers. Just how absolute this determination was, and how closely allied were the spirits of the UAP and the White Army, was demonstrated by the AFAL president, Ernest Turnbull (managing director of British Dominions Films and a former president of the Victorian RSL) in an election speech given at the Melbourne Town Hall. This election, he told the meeting -

is something more than a battle of party against party. It is the battle of the nation against the Theodore-Scullin government which ... has earned the contempt and distrust of all right-thinking people.

The AFAL was founded, said Turnbull, not because the people were tired of all politicians, but because 'the people rebelled against the wicked policies of repudiation and inflation.' Now, he declared, the greatest issue at this election -

is loyalty to King, Country and Empire. The kind of politics that sneers at everything British, that would sacrifice all our most cherished traditions on the altar of Bolshevism ... that finds excuses for the outlaw and the rebel ... does not merit the support of any Australian ...

The spearhead of the unpatriotic sentiments which are flaunted in public today is Communism, a noxious doctrine imported from Russia ... We hope to exterminate Communism not by repression - which should be
avoided as much as possible, though should not be shirked should it become necessary, but by the introduction of sane and stable government.\textsuperscript{35}

That last sentence is syntactically and conceptually the most complex in the speech. In it, Turnbull holds in suspension two possibilities which are not yet resolved: the preferred possibility of exterminating Labor's 'Communism' by the election of a 'sane and stable government', and the less salutory option of using 'repression' which, though undesirable, should not be 'shirked should it become necessary'. The veiled threat of violence is now unmistakable: if the AFAL's strategy proves unsuccessful, then Labor's altar of Bolshevism will have to be stormed - literally stormed - by the citizen-elect themselves.\textsuperscript{36}

For the moment, the anti-Labor middle class rallied under the business and officer elite, their ideology less a series of principles, than an aura of moral rectitude, expressed in the legitimating and marginalising totems and taboos of the conservative dialectic. The dominant mood was full of contradictions: populism, conservatism, bigotry, selfishness and concern. Indeed, political rhetoric is at its most potent when it sounds most resolute and eschews detail. How matters were to be resolved depended upon the outcome of the election. But for as long as Labor remained in power, the option of a mobilised citizenry, armed with guns and batons rather than with ballot papers and propaganda remained an

\textsuperscript{35} Turnbull, Summary of speech given at the Melbourne Town Hall, 2 December 1931. Roneoed pages in AFA pamphlets, National Library.

\textsuperscript{36} John Lonie has shown that, in South Australia, the Citizens' League was both militia and AFAL equivalent. Its leader E.D.A. Bagot was an unabashed fascist of violent temperament and language. (John Lonie, 'Non-Labor in South Australia', Journal of the Historical Society of South Australia, no. 2, 1976).
active element of Australian political life. Meanwhile, beneath the surface, the militia leaders were reworking the conservative dialectic yet once more. In the final chapter, we will see how the ideas of citizenship and civic duty produced a private and unknowable constitution which was to provide the moral basis for a mobilisation of the militamen, should it be required.
CHAPTER SIX

CONSTITUTIONALISM: THE SECRET ARMY’S SECRET LEGITIMATION

'Tout commence en mystique et tout finit en politique' - Charles Peguy

It is not generally recognised that there has been a significant tradition of conservative constitutionalism in Australian history: a tradition legitimising the conservative exercise of power by appeal to what is, in effect, an un-written constitution. In this chapter we will see how the White Army leadership was able to exploit this little understood tradition, both to mislead people about their true intentions, and privately to legitimate their own intervention in the Australian democratic process.

It is the nature of Australian constitutionalism that no full-blown apologia for its position is to be found. The silence is not an unusual one; as the conservative philosopher Roger Scruton points out, 'Conservatism may rarely announce itself in maxims, formulae or aims.' Unlike the rising liberalism of the interregnum, popular conservatism was not given to discursive analysis. It was a faith without a theology: a closed world of eternal verities which were not subject to review. As it happens, constitutionalism was one of the least visible manifestations of conservative sentiment. As an element of popular consciousness it would scarcely merit analysis. But as a private resource of conservative leaders for legitimating anti-democratic activity it must not be overlooked. Of course, the ultimate concern of this chapter is with a specific ideological event in Australian history, but a brief discussion of constitutionalism in general is necessary if the White Army’s use of the idea is to be comprehended as part of a tradition rather than as an isolated trick of language.

The classic debate on national constitutions is that between Edmund Burke and Tom Paine. Burke held that the constitution was embodied in the laws, traditions and structures of the nation itself. He argued that national institutions had evolved through the thousands of tiny adjustments which had been made through history to deal with changing circumstances.

No individual person or single generation could possibly assimilate the range of wisdom and experience comprehended by these inherited arrangements. It followed then that the institutions which had come to constitute the nation were wiser, as it were, than the reasoned criticisms of mere individuals. Thus, to reform or abolish a national institution was to strike at the constitution of the nation itself.2

Paine thought that this was superstitious nonsense. He maintained that there was no objective reality which could rightly be called the English constitution. He argued that a political system legitimated by appeal to some imaginary unwritten constitution simply perpetuated present inequalities. The constitution was not the product of 'tradition', it was a rhetorical deception which elevated one, self-interested view of history to the undeserved status of a moral principle.3 For Paine, the only constitution worthy of the name was a written document. The only valid constitution, he declared, 'has not an ideal, but a real existence; and wherever it cannot be produced in visible form, there is none.'4


4. From The Rights of Man, in Dishman, p. 211.
unwritten constitution was a fantasy concocted by governments to resist democratic change. A written constitution was a sign that democratic power relations had been achieved. Under such circumstances, he believed, 'The constitution of a country is not the act of its government, but of the people constituting a government.'

However, a constitution can never be quite the immutable, clearly understood statement of rights, principles and procedures which Paine believed. Like any other text, it will be subject to interpretation. And the way it is interpreted and implemented will influence the ways in which it is understood in the future. The text will become inseparable from the body of conventions, traditions and ambiguities which it generates. Most of these interpretations, be they judicial or traditional, will apply to the way in which specific provisions of the text are understood. But a written constitution may also acquire a body of conventions which do not relate to specific sections, but which augment the text with procedures and prohibitions which apparently are required if the Act itself is to function.

So the appeal to extra-textual conventions is not unique to political conservatives. Gough Whitlam, for example, made such an appeal when he argued that his dismissal had violated the traditional interpretation of the Constitution Act. Despite its literal wording, said Whitlam, the Act was traditionally understood not to invest the Governor General with the powers of a supreme ruler. It merely invested him with prestige. Whitlam argued that a literal application of the Act was contrary to the intentions of the Constitution's authors, that it was contrary to established practice, and that it was an offence against

5. Ibid.
reason. The implications of Whitlam's last point are very far-reaching. He argued that, since under the constitution of Westminster the Queen has not the power to dismiss an elected government, it was impossible for her to delegate that power to her Governor General. A Labour leader asserting that the constitution of Westminster has, in some way, been transmitted to the Australian polity is something of a rarity. (Although it should be stressed that this point is only implicit in Whitlam's argument: he himself appealed to reason, not to any explicit constitutionalism.) Again, democrats such as Professor Crisp and Andrew Theophanous have argued that the Constitution Act must be read within a convention which defines the text as democratic in its intent, since the text itself contains no clear guarantee of the right to vote. Like Whitlam, they are on the verge of arguing that Australia has a dual constitution: a written and an unwritten. That Labour should find itself arguing such a case is partly due to the silences in the document and partly due to the constitutional nature of the dismissal. But principally it is an indication of the success conservatives have had in redefining the Act in conservative terms, by raising doubts about the degree to which democracy is assumed by the text, and by redefining section 92 in the High Court so that the constitutionality of socialism is now doubtful. It is as though conservatives have managed to have their private constitution written into the Act. This leaves Labour in a most unsatisfactory position, for, as E.P. Thompson points out, reform is ultimately ill-served by constitutionalist


arguments. By its nature, the constitutionalist appeal to tradition and established practice favours conservatism.®

In any case, this role reversal is a recent one. But the conservative use of constitutionalism (like the Labour use of the concept) has generally been implicit rather than expressed. The reason for this departure from the English conservative model is plain enough: the fact that Australia, unlike Britain, has a written constitution makes it rather unwieldy to appeal to some disembodied, ultimate authority which is also called 'the constitution'. But unlike socialism, which is enamoured of its sacred signifiers, conservatism is able to slip from one sacred principle to another, transmuting ideals which have become politically disadvantageous into ideals thought likely to win appeal.

This, according to Miliband, is because conservatism is really only concerned to defend the private enterprise system. However, he says, conservatism often diverts attention from its economic basis by pretending that its chief concern is with some (non-economic) moral purpose which it represents as essential to the health and survival of the nation. Thus, says Miliband, conservatives may appeal to -

freedom, democracy, constitutional government, patriotism, religion, tradition, the national interest, the sanctity of property, financial stability, social reform, law and order, and whatever else may be part of the pot-pourri of conservative ideology at any given time.®

But to describe conservatism thus is still to feel it from the outside. What is obscured by many analyses relying on the concept of hegemony is that conservatism is not simply an ideological sham in which a concern with the defence of economic privilege is disguised by appeal to some abstract principle. Conservatism is a world view in which conservatives themselves passionately believe. And, no matter how pragmatic its current moral principles may appear, all such principles are transmutations of one sacred fundamental: the belief that there is a moral intelligence at the heart of the social order, an intelligence which conservatives unreflectively assume they know inwardly and implicitly. Sometimes it may be appropriate to follow Burke and reify this mystery as 'the constitution', but, as Roger Scruton points out, the belief in a constitution is the belief (as Burke himself recognised) in a sacred national 'essence'.

Because the conservative believes herself to be in empathy with this essence, she assumes that conservative policies are the expression of the innate national (as opposed to merely popular) will. Ultimately, then, conservatism is the guardianship of those sacred cultural mysteries which cannot be explained or encapsulated in any mere theory. They are the motivating genius which informs all healthy social and political life.

Of course, the concept of a deeply valued national essence is not unique to conservatives. Indeed, it could be said that the national essence is the prime goal in the political contest. Those who define the beliefs and conduct which are recognised in the dominant ideology as truly (say) 'American', 'British', 'Soviet', or 'Australian' are those who wield the greatest power in their society. Such a social group is well positioned to marginalise and delegitimate its opposition by accusing them of being 'un-American', 'anti-Soviet' or 'un-Australian' - of being, in short,

10. Scruton, p. 52.
disloyal. The charge does not have to be substantiated: the mere allegation substantiates itself, for to know the mysteries which constitute the national essence is to recognise all that is deviant from, or alien to, that essence. Thus, Mannheim has described conservative constitutionalism (which he calls 'historical conservatism') in the following terms:

[1]t is aware of that irrational realm in the life of the state which cannot be managed by administration ... For the political leader it is not sufficient to possess merely correct knowledge and mastery of certain laws and norms. In addition to those he must possess that inborn instinct, sharpened by long experience, which leads him to the right answer.11

The defence of the imagined constitution is really what conservatism - and the White Army - are all about. All other considerations, including democracy itself, are secondary to the conservative's prime responsibility: the prevention of fundamental change. Roger Scruton frankly explains this responsibility and some of its implications:

A society has its diseased and destructive factions, and with these the conservative is at war ...[The modern statesman] must first seek to rule, and must therefore pursue the power that will enable him to do so. Indeed, for the conservative, power will not be able to mask itself as subordinate to some clear justifying aim - it is not the means to 'social justice', or 'equality', or 'freedom'. It is the power to command and coerce those who would otherwise reform or destroy, and its justification must be found within itself, in an idea of legitimacy or established right.12

It is unusual to find the position stated with such candour. As we have seen, conservatives tend to ignore Scruton's admonitions and seek their legitimacy in 'some clear justifying aim', rather than admitting that their ideology is power. This conservative dislike of theoretical or analytical self-justification has three, related causes. It stems partly from the idea that conservatism is not a theory, but a self-evident grasp of the world which cannot be explained to people who lack the resources to see it for themselves. Partly, the hegemony of liberal democracy makes it difficult to admit, even to oneself, that one is anti-democratic to the point of violence. (Indeed, the great value of Scruton's apologia is that it identifies and criticises the 'bad faith' which prevents most conservatives from recognising the basis of their own opinions.) And partly, the conservative propensity to avoid analytical theorising is a necessary consequence of Burke's point that the wisdom of the constitution is neither to be understood or challenged by mere intellect. Conservatives are not defending an argument - but a mystery.

All of which makes secrecy inevitable. It is not only that conservatives see themselves as the guardians of a mystery which cannot be understood. There is always the probability that sections of the demos will actually misunderstand the basis of certain essential policies. Why? Because, as Burke explains, it is the very unexplainable nature of the national essence which makes it so impregnable to the onslaughts of social critics - however rational. People who are not conservatives, people who follow some lesser light, simply will not be able to see why certain arrangements are for the best.

Hence the practice of withholding information from the electorate on the grounds of 'national security'. 'National security' is the designation placed on the
inner sanctum of the imagined constitution. It is the place of mysteries which only the initiates may glimpse.\textsuperscript{13} Spies become the guardians of national integrity. Thus, in 1918, the Queensland police commissioner urged that the very existence of the projected intelligence organisation, the Australian Protective League, be kept secret:

... the average Australian has an inbred horror of such things as surveillance, informers, espionage or censorship and connects them at once in his historically ill-informed mind with such institutions as ... the "cabinet noir" and the Star Chamber. This instinct of repulsion is a wholly honourable one and it is our misfortune that it is accompanied by a sheep-like tendency on the part of Australian crowds to unthinkingly assent to the vile doctrines of glib-tongued agitators without consideration of results or indeed without any real appreciation of what they are assenting to...\textsuperscript{14}

The security organisation is not simply concerned to uncover espionage, terrorism and the hostile activities of enemy countries. Its priests think of 'national security' not merely as a strategic activity. In their care is the very moral centre of society: a centre which even governments - especially reforming governments - can challenge. Thus we find Herbert Brookes urging Senator Pearce not to reveal the existence of the vigilante wing of the Australia Protective League to the cabinet - because two of the ministers were Catholics. The notion that national security organisations embody the national essence while

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{13} In November 1984, the House of Lords upheld a ban on unions at the British intelligence gathering centre, GCHQ. Employees at the installation had been ordered to surrender their union membership by the Conservative prime minister, Mrs. Thatcher. The Lords upheld the prime minister's ban 'on the grounds of national security', something which, they said, 'only the Government could define and only the Government know how to protect.' (\textit{Guardian}, (London), 23 November, 1984, p. 1).
\item \textsuperscript{14} Brookes Papers, MS 1924/17/21.
\end{itemize}
governments are comparatively ephemeral was nicely expressed by CIA director, William Colby. Asked in the documentary film Allies whether he thought that elements in the Labor Party might weaken the security nexus between Australia and the US, Colby replied that changes of government were just changes which occurred 'on the surface'. The relationship between the intelligence organisation of the two countries was deeper than that, said Mr. Colby, and would remain strong.\textsuperscript{15} In the Coombe Royal Commission, Harvey Barnett, the director-general of ASIO elaborated his sense of being a guardian of the national essence when cross-examined by Ian Barker QC:

'If you criticise ASIO, do you criticise Australia?'
'Yes. I think you do. Yes, I do.'
'And does criticism of ASIO imply some sort of anti-patriotism in the person doing the criticising?'
'Not necessarily. I think in our society it is quite reasonable for people to be critical of a security service and I do not object to that.'
'But nonetheless, an attack on ASIO is an attack on Australia in your view, is that right?'
'Well, an attack on ASIO can be interpreted in certain circumstances, I would suggest, as attacking in some way the fabric of society in this country, yes.'
'It being the central part of that fabric?'
'I believe so, yes.'\textsuperscript{16}

This then is the recurring motif. There are a few who have been charged with stewardship of society's moral essence. Those who ask the wrong questions, or who advocate the wrong changes are flirting with sedition. They have proved

\textsuperscript{15} Allies, directed by Marian Wilkinson.
\textsuperscript{16} D. Marr, The Ivanov Trail, Nelson, Melbourne, 1984, p. 103.
themselves to be mediums of the profane side of the dialectic. We are already well on the way to understanding how this conservatism was exploited in the rhetoric of the White Army. As we've seen, one of the most mystic and secret elements of the sacred side of the conservative dialectic is 'national security'. The agencies of national security, in Harvey Barnett's view, are at the centre of the fabric of society. Secrecy, it seems, is vital to the integrity of the national essence. This thesis is concerned with another secret organisation, the White Army. But the White Army's leaders gave it another, secret name. It was the League of National Security.

The task now is to examine the way in which this tradition has operated in Australia, often 'below the surface', in such a way that it was available to legitimate the White Army. In 1919 the concept occurred in the report of the committee of four set up to advise on the formation of the Australian Protective League. The committee was concerned, it said in this top secret report, with -

the establishment and working of a system of Intelligence and Information for the Commonwealth in relation to all forms of hostile alien activities, internal unrest, treasonable or seditious agitation and anarchical propaganda whether proceeding from Industrial, Sectarian or acknowledged revolutionary sources and to all other matters whatsoever having any bearing upon the known and established Constitution of Australia [\textsuperscript{17}] and the preservation of public peace, tranquility and confidence in the stability of our inherited institutions.

This long sentence bears careful reading. The committee has total faith in the integrity and reliability of the projected organisation. Neither here, nor elsewhere in the committee's reports are any checks or limitations on the League's

powers considered. The faith that those in touch with the sacred side of the
dialectic will function properly is total. This definition of the League's function is
worded to give it the widest possible responsibilities, ranging from 'hostile alien
activities' to 'the preservation of ... confidence in the stability of our inherited
institutions.' Unions and the Catholic Church (referred to as Industrial and
Sectarian sources) are singled out for special attention. But the catch-all phrase,
the phrase for which the rest of the definition is simply an elaboration, provides
that the League shall look 'to all other matters whatsoever having any bearing
upon the known and established Constitution of Australia'. Now clearly, this is not
a reference to the Constitution Act. The expression 'known and established'
overreaches the statute, asserting the objective existence of an implicitly 'known'
constitution beyond. This extract consists of one lengthy sentence containing two
main clauses in apposition. The first, long clause, which ends at the semi-colon in
square brackets, identifies the targets of the League, those allegedly marginal
activities which pose a threat to the 'constitution'. The second clause
complements the first by listing those social goods which the League is to
defend. In effect, the second clause is an elaboration of the committee's notion of
the 'constitution', a notion which includes, significantly, the Burkian idea of 'our
inherited institutions'. But if the League is to defend 'our inherited institutions', it
is reasonable to ask from where they have been inherited - after all, the
federation was a mere eighteen year old. Possibly, there is some idea that the
constitution of England has been passed on to Australia, but I doubt that this is the
issue. There is a sense in which the mere evocation of the 'Australian
constitution', the mere declaration that our inherited institutions exist, is
adequate legitimation in the rhetorical universe of the conversatives. It is as
though there were no need for any detailed philosophical consideration of the
source of the constitution's authority. The act of naming it assures its being.
The deliberations of the Australian Protective League are especially valuable, because they record an occasion on which conservatives gave expression to their most fundamental beliefs about power, in order to legitimate to themselves the secret exercise of power. If they are rhetorical rather than analytical in their attitude to authority and dissent, it is because Australian inter-war conservatism was marked less by its intellectual rigour than by an unselfcritical confidence that it was the world view of people who 'knew'. No analysis should over-emphasise the conceptual elements of constitutionalism (the theology of the faith, as it were) at the expense of the emotional sway of the faith itself. If the conceptual implications of such expressions as 'the known and established Constitution' remained largely unexamined, it is because the chief force of such rhetoric is liturgical: it was a cadenced pronouncement of faith with stirred and affirmed belief rather than demanding intellectual assent.

The emotional power of such a liturgy was exploited by T.E. Ruth, a militant anti-Catholic preacher, and columnist for the Sydney Sunday Sun. While Ruth upheld the essentially British character of the imagined constitution, he appropriated images from radical nationalism to identify Australia as the site on which the constitution was forged:

We should cherish the memory of the Australian pilgrims who blazed the track through the primeval bush; the Australian pioneers who laid the foundations of our cities and our primary industries; the Australian prophets, the makers of our constitution, the instrument of our political liberty; and the Australian prophet statesmen who set in the flag the Union Jack and the stars of the Southern Cross.18

Australian history, he went on, is 'sacred'. To achieve 'wholeness of life', he wrote:

we ought to cultivate a sort of racial recollection. We must keep alive the moral and spiritual qualities that bind together the Britannic family of nations.¹⁹

Ruth was engaged in the perpetual struggle to possess history - to write it in terms which legitimate one's own present. To Ruth, it was axiomatic that to be wholly Australian, to achieve 'wholeness of life' as an Australian, one had to recognise that one was British in an thoroughly Australian fashion. Once again, his use of the word 'constitution' reached beyond the Act to a realm of sacred national precedent. Yet in the end, it is not clear whether Ruth, let alone his readers in the Sunday Sun, would have paused to reflect on the distinction between the constitution of the prophets and the Constitution Act of 1901. The chief impact of such writing was to engender belief of a patriotic kind rather than to provoke a debate on constitutional philosophy. The concept of a sacred, intuitively known constitution was, as it were, available, but it was not examined. Its political colour is clear enough, but its detail is unresolved.

But if the constitution were potent as a private legitimation and as a public liturgical symbol, it was of little use in the give and take of public debate. This limitation soon became evident after a group of Young Nationalists laid claim to the term in 1925, when they formed the Melbourne Constitutional Club. (Branches were formed in Sydney and Brisbane soon after.) The Prime Minister, Stanley Melbourne Bruce, had recommended that young men be brought together 'to create and foster the spirit of citizenship' and 'to preserve constitutional

¹⁹. Ibid., p. 268.
government.20 These rather conservative aims were reflected in the first of the club's 'Official Objects' which was:

To establish, maintain and conduct a Club which will consist of members pledged to loyalty to the Throne and Empire and the maintenance of Constitutional Government.21

But the club attracted young business and professional men who were determined to make it into a vigorous and critical organisation rather than settling for the political boy scout movement which Bruce had envisaged. The club soon manifested the tension between the conservative and liberal strains which was becoming increasingly evident in non-Labour politics. For their part, the conservatives seem to have been unaware of the fact that they used the term 'constitutional!' in a special sense, for when the conservative strain in the club produced a journal called The Constitutionalist, the one article to address itself to the title was a straightforward, and at times critical, layperson's guide to the Constitution Act, by the prominent constitutional lawyer, Sir Robert Garran.22 In any case, after only one edition, The Constitutionalist, with its old-fashioned title and its condescendingly instructive posture, was aborted. Replacing it was the more modern Australian Quarterly which provided a genuinely liberal forum for debate and inquiry, ranging widely across the field of political opinion. The ethic of conservatives who 'knew' was forced to accommodate a more pluralist and more intellectual liberalism which was reasserting itself for the first time since the War. Of course, conservatism did not disappear. It continued to manifest itself in political consciousness, especially in foreign policy. And, in a more complete fashion, it continued to operate 'beneath the surface', informing, among other instruments, the secret armies.

The term constitutional was a wholly subjective one. Despite such apparently fixed prerequisites of constitutionality as being pro-British and being non-communist, the focus of the constitution varied depending on the conservative assessment of the threat posed to established interests by a given novelty. Thus in 1925, campaign strategists for the Nationalist Party gauged that votes could be lost in the federal election if the Labor Party were accused of sedition. To suppress extremist rhetoric among its campaigners, the National Campaign Council issued the following instruction:

Don't impune the loyalty of Labor, which did its bit in the war, the same as the rest of us. In this connection, be careful to differentiate between Labor, which in the main is constitutional, and Communism, which boasts of its intention to destroy the British Empire.23

But what happened when Labor decided to pursue policies independent of Empire, or adopt rhetoric or policies which so threatened conservative interests that the fear of communism was aroused?

By 1930, the claim that Lang was a soviet was everywhere. The Nationalists had campaigned against him in 1927, warning of his 'dictatorship', and his 'Red rule'.24 By 1931, even Smith's Weekly claimed that Lang was attempting to introduce Sovietism to New South Wales.25 The Sydney Morning Herald called Lang's move to introduce compulsory unionism 'Pure Sovietism'.26

23. Fighting Facts for candidates, secretaries, organisers and workers, National Campaign Council, Melbourne, 1925.
wrote a tract, which became the handbook of the White Army, purporting to demonstrate how Lang had become a puppet of the communists. When, in 1932, the ALP expelled all members associated with communist front organisations, Ellis was not impressed. It was, he said, a sign of communist cunning. The ALP was only pretending to be divided. The Party was, in fact, 'instructed by Moscow'. Thus Lang became identified with the barbaric, unconstitutional forces on the profane side of the dialectic. Hugh Adam stated the crisis graphically in the Melbourne Herald:

For years the people of Australia have been warned of the presence in their midst of wreckers who were out to smash the existing system and to replace it with Soviet dictatorship. Today in New South Wales the deliberate process of smashing is going on under our noses. Sovietism and revolution have found their instrument in Lang.

Whether 'wrecking' is used literally or metaphorically ceases to matter. Like the Orangemen of nineteenth-century Melbourne, Adam sees no distinction between threats to his life and threats to his way of life. In a further attack on Lang, the federal conservative politician, T.W. White, demonstrated how minor an economic challenge could provoke the charge of communism:

In New South Wales the Labour Premier refuses to recognise that wages and hours are not more sacrosanct than other costs and prices, and that men are unemployed because they cannot be employed at a profit. Neither Communism nor any of the near-communism of the Lang type can be adopted by a British people.


28. Hugh Adam, 'This is the Mess that Lang Made', lead story, Herald, 7 May 1931.

In the militant anti-Lang movements, the concept of the constitution reappeared to clinch the case against Lang and to legitimate the plans which were being made to be rid of him by non-Parliamentary means. Alderman Lusher, for example, told the Wagga rally of the Riverina Movement:

No part of the Commonwealth was more loyal, law-abiding, and ready to uphold the constitution than Riverina (Cheers) ... The New South Wales Government was not acting constitutionally. Everything was made for Sydney, which was like a large cancerous growth feeding on the rest of the country.\textsuperscript{30}

If Lusher were only questioning the constitutional (in either sense) validity of certain government policies rather than doubting the legitimacy of the government itself, the New Guard went further:

\textit{[T]here is in the Australian people, apart from the gross errors it makes in the choice of its legislators and the fanatic belief in the sacrosanctity of one-man-one-vote; in spite of its over-addiction to good sport and bad politics, a very solid basis of sheer commonsense, a mental stability and humour which has saved it, and will save it, from the madnesses which have suddenly and catastrophically seized on the Latin peoples and the Slavic races in recent European history.}

This racial steadiness is a heritage from the British Stock from which our race springs.\textsuperscript{31}

The legitimacy of government, for the New Guard, was not a consequence of its having been elected. To be constitutional, a government, had not to be merely

\begin{enumerate}
\item Argus, 2 March 1931.
\item Howard Ashton, 'No Revolution, the People and the Law', \textit{New Guard}, October 1931, p. 7.
\end{enumerate}
popular, it had to be embued with the national (which was to say British') essence.

Or, as another New Guard writer put it, rather more mystically:

There are certain forces of nature which cannot be subverted, and whether it be an ocean-tide or a people's will, right will ultimately prevail. And that is why the New Guard was brought into being.\textsuperscript{32}

The marginal riff-raff who voted for Lang simply did not count. The people, the real people were represented by the New Guard ... an instrument of natural forces, which was simply 'brought into being'.

There is no doubt that leading militiamen were fully aware that the word 'constitutional' was the key to legitimating anti-government violence. Eric Campbell recalled that he actually discussed it with the Old Guard:

\textit{The only real stumbling block from a doctrinal point of view was that absurd word 'constitutional' which figured so largely in our discussions with Colonel Macartney. What it really meant none of us really knew. From what I gathered from Macartney the Old Guard would not countenance opposition to any government action that had the veneer of lawful origin, and he waved aside in horror my suggestion that one constitutional authority ... supported the view that there was a 'constitutional right' of revolt in the face of continued bad government.}\textsuperscript{33}

In fact Campbell misrepresents the Old Guard's position. They refused to cooperate with him for the same reasons that they had expelled him from their organisation. He was, as Andrew Moore says, too vulgar, too flashy and too


\textsuperscript{33} Campbell, \textit{The Rallying Point}, p. 168.
indiscreet to command the respect or support of the Old Guard. The Old Guard and the White Army were only prepared to mobilise if all other means of removing Labor failed. Being members of the social and business elite, the soldiers and financiers who backed the secret militia did not want civil violence if it could possibly be avoided. The New Guard, on the other hand, was going out of its way to provoke violence and refused to behave or to shut up. As one senior member of the White Guard said in an interview, 'The New Guard were a bunch of clowns. When they approached us, we wanted nothing to do with them.'

This takes the position of constitutionalism one step further. As Moore says, 'the New Guard's central problem was its lack of support from the ruling class.' Whereas the Old Guard and the White Army both enjoyed the support of the state police forces at the highest level, and had the blessing of the senior levels of the intelligence community, the New Guard, to quote Moore, 'never enjoyed the sanction of the State's repressive apparatus.'

This notion of being an auxiliary to instruments of the State was expressed by an Old Guard leader at a speech in Lismore, a speech which extended the notion of the constitution in a quite ingenious fashion:

I cannot think that we have reached such a pass in the affairs of this country as to warrant the initiation of the doctrine of force. Our aim must be PREPARATION TO STAND BESIDE CONSTITUTED AUTHORITY which has life-long experience in handling the public of this country and NOT one of direction action, which will certainly open

34. A. Moore, 'Send lawyers, guns and money', pp. 212-3, 228-9.
35. Ibid., p. 228.
36. Ibid.
the way to reprisals and possible (sic) to civil war ... The essential difference [between our organisation and the New Guard] is that ours (THE COUNTRY) IS MAINLY FOR THE PURPOSE OF ASSISTING (AS CALLED UPON) THE EXISTING PROPERLY CONSTITUTED AUTHORITIES.

WE HAVE FOUND THAT THE NEW GUARD IS A BODY INCLINED TO TAKE THE INITIATIVE AND INSTITUTE OFFENSIVE ACTION.37

This, of course, takes us back 'beneath the surface' to those instruments of the State which have, as their concern, 'national security'. The Old Guard was not simply declaring itself as an adjunct to the police whether the police force wanted them or not. Moore has shown that Major Jones of the Investigation Branch, elements of the UAP and the New South Wales police combined to plan the mobilisation of the Old Guard shortly before Governor Game intervened by sacking Lang. The Old Guardsmen were to be legitimated by swearing them in as 'Peace Officers' (a position not unlike the Special Constables used in Melbourne during the 1923 Police Strike) under UAP federal legislation entitled the Peace Officers Act 1932. Not only were the militiamen to aid 'constituted authority' against the 'unconstitutional' Lang. The guardsmen were to be constituted, in their own right, under law.

Major Jones's assessment of the intelligence he had received from all states appeared in a report which was distributed to the IB bureau head of each state. The report is little short of a legitimation of the anti-Labor militia, and it uses constitutionalist rhetoric in its most developed form:

37. Military Intelligence, (no file no.) March 1932, AA SP 1141/1/13. Quoted by Moore, p. 287.
The formation of secret bodies in the Commonwealth for the protection of the State against Bolshevism

For some time the air has been full of what has been termed a Fascist or law and order movement for the protection of constitutional Government.

The generally accepted reason for the formation of such bodies was that the activities of the Communist Party in Australia was (sic) such that there was a possibility of this Party, with the aid of the unemployed, plunging the State into a state of disorder; also as a means of protection for constitutional Government this organisation provides a body of men thoroughly organised and capable of being used by the Government at very short notice to protect the State against any domestic violence.

The organisation is not limited to one State, and as considerable secrecy is observed with regard to its activities, great difficulty is experienced in obtaining reliable information. Much of the information contained in the attached memorandum has been obtained through the violation of an oath, knowledge of which may mean the ruination of an individual. As a pledge has been given that the strictest secrecy will be preserved in regard to the matter, I would ask that the security of this document will be amply safeguarded.38

The meaning of this statement, once again, turns on the definition of 'constitutional Government'. As we have seen, conservatives entertained doubts about whether Lang's administration could be considered 'constitutional'. In fact, Jones had no doubt that White Army was fundamentally opposed to the ALP. He

38. CRS A369.
had no doubt that the organisation would act, not only to prevent revolution, but also to prevent any attempt to nationalise, or - as the conservatives would have it - Sovietise, Australian industries. For the LNS had been formed, Jones explained:

for the purpose of supporting established authority to save Australia from any Red Rising or attempt to Sovietise the country.

After reproducing Browne's information about the LNS's manpower and weaponry and his description of the mobilisation procedure, Jones restated a familiar White Army principle:

The constitution provides that the League is purely civil and will act on the defensive only on authoritative command.\(^{39}\)

This sounds very reassuring - very above board. But really this provision could mean anything. Most probably it is framed to prevent ordinary members from taking matters into their own hands. When their 'defensive' services were required, they would receive an 'authoritative command'. The White Army would come to the defence, not of the elected government, but of true government - constitutional government. It would, in short, come to the defence of capital should any elected government attack the system by attempting to nationalise industry - or make other changes judged disloyal, intolerably socialist or soviet.

Jones was not imposing these constitutionalist ideas upon the White Army. They are to be found in the organisation's most sacred artefact, its oath:

\(^{39}\) Ibid.
I pledge my services to assist constitutional authority in the maintenance of law and order, and on such other occasions as it may become necessary for safeguarding of life and property. At such times I will implicitly obey the orders of my superior officers.

And again:

I undertake ... to give such support as lies within my power to the League's policy of assisting lawful authority in the preservation of law, order, and domestic peace in the community.\(^{40}\)

In the case of the LNS, 'lawful authority' needed to mean no more than the police force, of which, it will be remembered, General Blamey was commissioner. This wording certainly misled some rank and file members about the LNS's leaders' potential for anti-government violence. Dr Val Ashburner recalls taking the oath and says that in it, 'I could find nothing contrary to my leftist, democratic, and military obligations'. On being sent a copy of the oath for identification, Dr Ashburner remarked, 'You will notice that it almost specifically precludes anyone from taking part in action, so long as the overall authority is in control. I noticed that at the time and was therefore not frightened of it.'\(^{41}\)

The idea of an unwritten Australian constitution is an awkward fiction to maintain, and since the highly artificial use made of it by the militia leaders, conservatives have had little cause to call upon the concept. The principal constitutional achievement of conservatives in recent years has been to interpolate their constitution into the Constitution Act itself. Section 92 can now be conjured to prevent the socialisation of industries. The Senate can block supply

\(^{40}\) See complete oath in appendix.

\(^{41}\) Val Ashburner to M.J.C., L. 12 October 1981 and 8 March 1983.
to the government. The Governor General can sack a government. With these key areas now under control, the need for constitutionalism is considerably diminished.

However in 1931 and '32, conservatives could not be sure that Scullin would lose the federal election, or that Lang would be sacked. The White Army and its kindred organisations were not geared to assume power in their own right at all costs. Their function was to assist entrenched conservative interests to bring down the Labor governments should more conventional procedures fail. Like similar organisations throughout the West in the '20s and '30s, the White Army's function was to defend the integrity of an imagined national essence from the onslaughts of vulgar democracy and democratic socialism. To this end, like the military and business interests who plotted to overthrow Roosevelt, the leaders of the LNS were guilty of plotting against the elected government in the name of 'defending a private, gold-plated constitution which only they understood'.

42. Archer, The Plot to Seize the White House, p. 175.
When Australians finally went to the polls in December 1931 the choice was simple. They could re-elect the Scullin government, fractured by Lyons' defection and by the departure of the so-called Lang Labor candidates, who stood against members of the ALP. Or they could choose the new United Australia Party, a coalition of Labor defectors, Nationalists and the All For Australia League, under the leadership of Honest Joe Lyons. Sanity, honesty, unity, an end to party politics; after the guilt, the paranoia and the divisions of the Depression, such tags, offering the promise of a new beginning, were irresistible. Lyons won in a landslide.

Happy To Sign

In his policy speech Mr Lyons said the U.A.P. made no rosy promises. It asked for the people’s confidence and would deal with difficult situations as they arise, in the best interests of the people.

The Herald terminated the ambiguous loyalty of John Citizen with this cartoon. No longer depicted as a potential militiaman, John Citizen signs an open cheque in the Bank of Confidence to Joe Lyons. (3 December 1931, p. 8)
Once elected, the UAP proved to be a fairly ineffectual government and its leader gentle, honorable and somewhat simple-minded. But the government's very mediocrity was a source of healing. While it is true that the UAP was simply the conservative party under a new name, it was also a conservative party in which the anachronistic colonial capitalists were no longer dominant. There was room for people able to consider the development of an Australian manufacturing base, room for people who were able to understand and later implement Theodore's style of economics, and room for a limited range of liberal values. Although it retained elements of the old conservative dialectical world view, continuing to trade on a confusion between the ALP and Stalinism, it was, for better or for worse, the starting place of the capitalist consensus economics which were to dominate the growth of the Australian economy for the next 40 years.

The election of 1931 can be seen as a struggle for government between the revamped business party and the divided labour parties. But it should also be seen as a re-negotiation of power within the ruling class. If the impossible had happened, if Labor had won, it would have been, in effect, a signal to the militiamen that they were required. The victory of the UAP, the defeat of Hogan and the sacking of Lang were a vindication of those members of the ruling class who had believed that power could be regained within the parliamentary system, and a vindication of the liberal-pluralist impulse which, as we have observed from time to time throughout this thesis, was also developing within the dominant ideology. The alternative was, quite seriously, civil war.

No matter what they claimed, or even genuinely believed, the militia were not anti-communist. They were anti-ALP. In December 1931, Scullin was ousted. In May 1932, Hogan's government fell. And in the same month, Jack Lang
was sacked. As Moore has demonstrated, the dismissal of Lang, came just in time to avert the fullscale mobilisation of the entire resources of the Old Guard,\(^1\) and the bloodshed and conservative-fascist victory, which would have inevitably have followed. But once the Labor governments had been removed, the armies faded away. In late July, the New South Wales Old Guard held its 'terminating conference' because, it said, 'the danger which threatened this state has been temporarily relieved.'\(^2\) The New Guard began to destroy itself with in-fighting, and shrank into an insignificant club for fascist extremists.\(^3\)

The White Army also collapsed. In September 1932, the White Army's Intelligence Summary observed that, just as the interstate movements were closing down:

We must reluctantly report that items of 'I' [Intelligence] received through our own organisation during the period under review have been almost negligible ... the normal flow of various news items and samples of propaganda etc., which characterised the earlier days of our activities has now, with very few exceptions ceased.

It is most unfortunate that this state of apathy should prevail ... we have done all that is possible from our point of view to encourage a greater interest in the subject but with very few exceptions we have very little or no support from Area leaders.\(^4\)

2. Ibid., p. 378.
3. Amos, New Guard, pp. 93-94.
4. de Groot Papers, Vol. 9, p. 309. See also the Military Intelligence report of August 1932 that 'The various branches of the League are generally dormant'. AA CRS A467 File 42 Bundle 89 (2).
This decline was despite the fact that, as the White Army tried to impress upon its members, the size of the Communist Party had actually increased by a few hundred. Much as leaders of the militia might have yearned to preside over a martial state, their organisations were simply not required. A new generation of businessmen had been return to power.

Hetherington missed the point when he claimed that Blamey would not have involved himself with a right-wing para-military organisation at a time when fascist ideas were enjoying a degree of respectability. The White Army did not exist to satisfy some fundamental urge to play Nazis. Its members' sole function was to recover power, if all else failed, from a Labor Party whose rhetoric and policies had ceased, in the conservative view, to be legitimate.

The rhetorical configurations used to legitimate the anti-Lang and Scullin militia were peculiar to the conservatism of 1931. But they drew on ideological resources and tactical precedents which had evolved over a longer term. Adumbrations of the militia are to be found in Melbourne as early as 1846, while 'armies of the right' acting 'in defence of Empire and Nation' had operated beneath the surface of politics in New South Wales and Victoria since the 1914-15 War.

Most notable was the White Army or Association which developed under Blamey's leadership during the Chifley years, following the Second World War.


6. These have been conveniently summarised in P. James, 'Armies of the Right: In Defence of Empire and Nation', Melbourne Journal of Politics, No. 16, 1984-85, pp.78-101; A. Moore has surveyed militia activity between 1917 and 1952 in 'Send Lawyers, Guns and Money!'

Para-military activity apparently also took place during the period of the Whitlam government. Amid concern about union activities, Lang Hancock was reported to be considering giving support to 'stand-by forces to man essential services'. At the same time, the army confiscated 164 rifles and 11 machine guns from the armoury of an exclusive Melbourne public school, an action which was linked to reports that a right-wing Liberal was training a secret anti-Labor army under the banner 'Save Free Australia'. The New South Wales RSL contributed by offering its services to the state Liberal government as 'a volunteer defence corps' - a force which, reporters were assured, was not being created 'for ulterior motives'.

Had the White Army's leaders given interviews, they would have said the same thing. They were motivated by the highest ideals: by a respect for the values of 'citizenship' and by faith in a national 'constitution'. So were the White Army's members. But the White Army's rhetoric of loyalty denied its own political basis and both legitimated and obscured the potential of the militia for political violence. The cost of that loyalty might all too easily have been the Australian democracy itself.


9. Age, 24 September 1974; Bulletin, 14 September 1974; Sydney Morning Herald, 12, 13, 14 September 1974. The federal Labor attorney general, Lionel Murphy, announced that ASIO had the vigilante organisation under surveillance and indicated that he expected a full and accurate report (Age, 20 September 1974).

APPENDIX

The CONSTITUTION of the LEAGUE OF NATIONAL SECURITY

1. Loyalty to the British Throne.

2. An organisation of citizens for the purpose of assisting constitutional authority in the maintenance of law and order and to act on such occasions as it may become necessary for the safeguarding of life and property.

3. Eligibility for membership
All men of mature age whose integrity is beyond question.

4. General organisation
Three Categories -
'A' Active
'B' Essential services
'C' General support
A member may elect the category to which he desired allotment.

5. Obligations of membership
(a) Prior to conditions as outlined in Para (2)
   (i) To secure suitable candidates for membership;
   (ii) To maintain secrecy with regard to the Constitution, affairs, and members of the organisation.
   (iii) No member will be required to carry out any action which will place him beyond the Civil law at this time in force.
(b) Subsequent to conditions as outlined in Para. 2.
   (i) To be prepared to serve in whatever capacity he has been selected for within the category.
   (ii) To implicitly obey all instructions given to him by higher authority.
(c) At all times
To collect and forward any information which may be of assistance having due regard to the objects of the organisation.

1. CRS A369.

2. As we've seen from the legal opinion of the Victorian Crown Solicitor, there was a conservative view that the common law legitimated militia activity. Eric Campbell shared this view, claiming that the common law provided a 'constitutional right' of revolt in the face of continued bad government. (The Rallying Point, 1965, p. 168). If the draftsman of this Constitution did not intend this interpretation to be available, it is difficult to see why he used the odd expression 'civil law'. Why not just 'law'?
THE OATHS

Reproduced on the following page are the White Army oaths. The original is printed on high quality blue card. Other copies of the oath were obtained by Inspector Browne from a Melbourne metropolitan source, and by the police officer who investigated the mobilisation in the Mallee-Wimmera.

4. CRS A369.
5. PROV, Chief Secretary 1931/A3586.
Oath of Secrecy

(Preliminary oath to be administered prior to the disclosure of any information regarding the Organization):

I do swear by Almighty God that I will not reveal to anyone whatsoever anything that may now be communicated to me.

Oath of Membership (Cat. "A" and "B")

...(name in full)...do hereby and hereon solemnly and sincerely swear allegiance to Our Sovereign Lord the King.

I pledge my services to assist constitutional authority in the maintenance of law and order, and on such other occasions as it may become necessary for the safeguarding of life and property. At such times I will implicitly obey the orders of my superior officers.

I pledge myself to secrecy with regard to the Constitution of the... of... and all its affairs and members which may now or at any future time become known to me. I will never state to any person the fact of its definite existence unless I know that such person has been duly sworn to secrecy. I will never disclose my particular posting in the organization, nor make enquiries as to the posting of any other member.

I take this oath without any reservation or equivocation either mental or otherwise.

SO HELP ME GOD.

Oath of Membership (Cat. "C" only)

...(name in full)...do hereby and hereon solemnly and sincerely swear allegiance to Our Sovereign Lord the King.

I undertake to abide by the Constitution of the... and to give such support as lies within my power to its policy of assisting lawful authority in the preservation of law, order, and domestic peace in the community.

I pledge myself to secrecy with regard to the Constitution of the... and all its affairs and members which may now or at any future time become known to me. I will only discuss its affairs so far as they come within the scope of my particular part in the organization with those whom I know for certain to be duly sworn members of the.......

I take this oath without any reservation or equivocation either mental or otherwise.

SO HELP ME GOD.

Information to be Recorded after Enrolment.

1. Name in full (Block).
2. Private address and 'Phone.
3. Business address and 'Phone.
4. Age.
5. Married or single (M. or S.).
6. Children (number requiring protection).
7. Military service (rank, arm, period).
8. Occupation.
9. Whether can drive car (Y. or N.).
10. Whether can drive motor cycle (Y. or N.).
11. Whether can ride horse. (Y. or N.).
12. Whether car owned (seating capacity).
13. Whether horse transport owned (Details).
14. Whether can send and/or receive Morse.
15. Whether wireless set in house. (Details).

Instructions Regarding Keeping of Documents.

Documents are to be carefully safeguarded at all times from risk of loss. Care should be taken against theft of pocket-book, etc., containing these documents, especially at night. In the event of loss or copy of documents the loss should be immediately reported, so that higher authority may be forewarned. A serious leakage may occur through carelessness, so take adequate steps to ensure that this will not happen as far as you are personally concerned.
Baton charges are made to break up or disperse mobs likely to become hostile or unlawful assemblies where resistance is shown. It is always a notable feature with hostile mob gatherings that the leaders or most aggressive of them are easily distinguished. Careful watch should be made for this section, and the charge made direct at them, once the order is given. Men who make the charge should keep as close into one another as possible, even shoulder to shoulder if enough men can be spared. This is the most essential to save any of the mob breaking through.

It is not necessary to strike down upon the head, but the most effective blow is sideways across the face above the ear. Should a comrade be felled by a blow or slip down, he should be helped at once by the men nearest to him, as to see police fall is a great encouragement to mobs who shout and cheer at this event. The straight left should be given repeatedly, to keep them at a distance so as to get the full blow of the baton, and the right leg forward with each advance made. A charge in most cases is accompanied by stone and missile throwing and an eye should be kept on this. As the worst of the crowd are usually in the foreground when a charge is ordered, all energy should be put into breaking up the first two or three lines. Once they are on the run the rest is far easier, but they should be kept going so as they are scattered in every direction until the cease fire is ordered.

There is always an attempt to snatch the baton from a constable's hand; care should be exercised in this direction. The strap of the baton should be around the wrist and the baton twisted until the strap is tight, but the baton should not be

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6. Collected by Browne, and filed in CRS A369 as a White Army document.
held tight in the hand but just let it swing loosely between the thumb and forefinger - it gives better control over the baton.

Usually when the mobs are showing fight isolated mad rushes occur by some of them. They rush at you and use their stick or whatever they are using for a weapon and strike madly down upon the head. These attacks can easily be countered by quick movements of course - by the left arm being plunged up slanting ways over the head, at the same time leaning the body over the right, then, as the blow is warded off or missed downwards, strike the aggressor with the baton across the face as before stated.

Keeping cool and figuring with determination are the main things to be remembered when actually engaged in the attack. Also remember to keep an eye on windows around where an attack is taking place, as serious damage lies in this direction. Missiles are thrown from well back in a room and unless watch is kept these things go on and are not detected until damage has been done. A constable was killed by a brick thrown in this manner during the 1926 General Strike in London, and too much care cannot be exercised this way.

After a charge has been made and the mobs driven off, sticks, clubs, lead piping and rubber lie about. An examination should be made of some of the things they use, as it comes in handy for future reference.

Never shout at men in the mobs. Save all your wind. Remember they love using the boot. When you get the chance do the same, only don't let it be seen if possible - newspaper men are always knocking about - 'It was not me, Governor' and 'Don't hit me boss' and pleading is always a great stunt when they are on the run. Don't take any notice of this. If a man is seen with a firearm get him at all cost. Keep your head, don't get excited and hit hard and often.
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VII INTERVIEWS

This list of principal interviews indicates present or former occupations and the location at which the interview was held. All took place during late 1981 or 1982.

Mrs. Pat Baer, Toorak
Mr. Jack Blake, communist, Communists and the Labour Movement Conf. 1981
Mr. Thomas Blamey, solicitor, Mt. Eliza
Sir Wilfred Brookes, Collins House company director, Toorak
Mr. Bob Bull, boat-builder, Metung
Mr. Joe Bull, boat-builder, Metung
Mr. John Capp, businessperson, Bairnsdale
Brigadier John Clarebrough, Camberwell
Mr. Arthur Clifford, farmer, Donald
Mr. Arthur Christmas, worker, Bairnsdale
Mrs. Jessie Clarke (nee Brookes), businessperson, South Yarra
Mr. Len Fell, farmer, major, Metung
Mr. Jack Fella, grower, Donald
Mr. Ralph Gibson, communist, Communists and the Labour Movement Conf. 1981
Mr. Ted Hammond, Parkville
Mr. Tom Harley, secretary to Liberal Speaker of House of Reps., Treasury Place
Mr. Harold Hewett, school master, Brighton
Mr. Bob Hodgeson, Lakes Entrance
Mr. Alex Holmes, storekeeper, Wedderburn
Mr. Arthur Kay, Avoca
Mrs. Beryl Kerr, boarding-house keeper, Parkville
Mr. Frederick Knight, president of Taxpayers Assoc., Collins St.
Mr. Alex Larkins, Lakes Entrance
Mr. Gough Letts, editor of Donald Times, Donald
Mr. Archie Macarthur, stock and station agent, Bairnsdale
Prof. Charles Moorhouse, Malvern
Mr. R.L. Stock, Collins House company director, Toorak
Mr. Ian Templeton, Avoca
His Honour, Brigadier General Norman Vickery, Toorak