DOCTRINAL AND STRATEGIC PROBLEMS OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF AUSTRALIA, 1945-1962

J.D. PLAYFORD

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

October 1962
This thesis is based entirely on my original work.

J. D. Playford

J.D. Playford

**ERRATA**

Page 4, line 3; delete "opportunities" substitute "opportunists".
Page 12, line 8; delete "Conference" substitute "Executive meeting".
Page 83, line 9; delete "to" substitute "the".
Page 155, line 20; delete "herioc" substitute "heroic".
Page 184, line 8; delete "in" substitute "on".
Page 267, line 19; delete "1956" substitute "1957".
Page 382, line 1; delete "principle" substitute "principal".
Page 408, line 10; delete "extent" substitute "extend".
In writing this thesis my object has been to discuss the development of the strategy and doctrine of the Communist Party of Australia from 1945 to the present day. I have been especially interested in showing that the formulation of strategies and the periodical modifications of doctrine were affected by the Party's problems in Australian politics. While being fully aware of the Party's attachment to the Soviet Union (and more recently Communist China), and to the ideas and influence of the international Communist movement, my main concern has been to examine it as part of the Australian political system, the demands of which it constantly tries to reconcile with the necessity of acting out the international Communist line.

Having adopted this emphasis, I have not made a detailed examination of such topics as the mechanics of the Party's internal organisation, its social composition, its electoral performance, or its specific policies e.g. on foreign affairs, for their own sake. These subjects have been treated in so far as they are relevant to the central theme. Similarly, the doctrinal problems of the Party have been discussed in terms of their formulation by Australian leaders such as Sharkey and Dixon, rather than in the light of European debates on Marxist–Leninist theory. This is
justified to the extent that a great deal of the theoretical discussion and influence in the Australian Party has been limited to the interpretations supplied by this handful of leaders.

In the context of Australian politics, the Communist Party must be considered an integral part of the Labor movement: it regards itself as the real spokesman and defender of the working class; its greatest strength lies in the trade union movement; and its political and industrial activities naturally bring it into closest contact and rivalry with the Australian Labor Party. For this reason I have found it necessary to discuss in some detail developments in the Australian Labor movement as a whole, such as the Labor Party split of 1954–55 and trade union politics in the 1950s. The emphasis I have given to the Communist Party's role in trade union affairs is determined by the fact that the Party's main concern throughout the post-war period has been to defend its trade union positions. At the same time, its efforts to explore the possibilities of a farmer–worker alliance, and its use of front organisations to make contact with middle class groups, have been dealt with where they become important.

Since the Party does not make correspondence, unpublished sources and membership records available, I have been forced to rely primarily upon the Party press, personal interviews with Communists and ex-Communists and information from non-Party sources. Both the monthly theoretical journal, Communist Review, and the weekly (previously bi-weekly) Tribune were used extensively while the Guardians were
used to follow local Party events in Victoria and Queensland. The importance of the Communist press in providing a means of contact between the leadership and the rank-and-file has meant that it reveals a great deal of the Party's internal affairs, particularly during periods of crisis. At the same time, however, it should be noted that Tribune's coverage of industrial affairs leaves much to be desired, especially when dealing with Communist reverses, and that this deficiency cannot be made good by using the pro-Grouper News-Weekly. As a result, many non-Party sources have been used to fill in the details of trade union politics. The pamphlet collections referred to in the bibliography and the Departmental Newspaper Service (Political Science Department, Institute of Advanced Studies, Australian National University) have also been used extensively. Although they were used in conjunction with the sources discussed above, Government periodicals were not very fruitful; the exceptions were the Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates and several Royal Commissions relating to Communism and listed in the bibliography.

The research for this thesis was carried out in the course of a three-year scholarship in the Department of Political Science at the Institute of Advanced Studies, Australian National University, between July 1959 and October 1962. My debt to the guidance of the late Professor L.C. Webb is considerable. I should like to thank my supervisors, Dr D.W. Rawson and Dr B.D. Graham, for their encouragement and advice. I am also grateful to Mr R.S. Parker,
Professor G. Sawyer, Dr. I.A.H. Turner and Dr R.A. Gollan, all of whom made helpful suggestions. The object of this thesis was discussed with a number of Communists but I shall not refer to them in footnotes. Finally, my thanks are due to the Librarians at the Institute of Advanced Studies, Australian National University (Mr A.L.G. McDonald and Mr J.J. Graneek), the Archivist at the Institute of Advanced Studies, Australian National University (Mr B.D. Shields), the Librarian of the National Library (Mr H.L. White), and Mrs E. Martin, who typed this thesis.

J.D. Playford

20 October 1962.
Chapter One

The Australian Communist Party was founded on 30 October 1920. It remained a small, relatively powerless group until the late thirties when its membership grew and its control of certain trade unions was established. Having been banned in 1940, it enthusiastically supported the Australian war effort after the Soviet Union's entry into the war and gained in popularity. After 1947, however, its pursuit of 'adventurist' strategies, involving particularly the fomenting of industrial strikes for political ends, together with the repercussions of the Cold War, lost it a great deal of its former support.

Chapter Two

Within the trade union movement, the Communists were able to gain acceptance easily in those unions which had militant traditions but to gain access to the more conservative unions they had to pay respect to the importance of the arbitration system. During the late thirties and early forties they gained executive control in most of the main transport, mining and heavy industry unions but they lost support in the late forties because of their reckless political policies.
Chapter Three

Non-Labor parties have in this century made extensive use of the anti-Communist bogey in election campaigns, and have been particularly adept in suggesting that as Moscow controls the Communist Party so the latter controls the A.L.P. The A.L.P. has been sensitive to this charge and has defended itself by displaying an anti-Communism almost as intense as that of its opponents. Unlike some European Social-Democratic parties, the A.L.P. has never been an enthusiastic defender of civil liberties and the Communist Party could not expect a strong defence in the regime of civil liberties in Australia.

PART TWO

Chapter Four

In 1950 the Liberal-Country Party Government, led by R.G. Menzies, introduced a bill to ban the Communist Party; although J.B. Chifley, the Labor leader, disliked the measure, the Federal Parliamentary Labor Party decided not to oppose it. The bill was passed but was later disallowed by the High Court. The Government obtained a double dissolution of both houses of Parliament and fought the subsequent election campaign on the anti-Communist issue; having been returned to office, it held a referendum to decide whether the Commonwealth Constitution should be amended to permit the banning of the Communist Party. The referendum proposal was defeated by a narrow majority; its rejection was due partly to the campaign which Chifley's successor as Labor leader, Dr H.V. Evatt, had waged against the proposed ban.
Chapter Five

From 1950 onwards the Communist Party readjusted its strategies, changing over from an 'adventurist' policy to a united front policy. Its leaders, L.L. Sharkey and R. Dixon, revived the doctrine that the Party's first task was to defeat reaction (embodied in the Menzies Government) and that, to achieve that end, it had to make common cause with the progressive and traditionalist elements in the A.L.P. at both the industrial and political levels. Once the Labor Party had taken power, they suggested, its right wing would lose support and the party as a whole would become more progressive; eventually it would fuse with the Communist Party and institute People's Power in Australia.

Chapter Six

Between 1950 and 1953, the Communists lost control of many trade unions to the A.L.P. Industrial Groups, organisations attached to the Labor Party and aimed at combatting Communist influence in the trade union movement. The Groups were strongly backed by the 'Movement', an organisation of Roman Catholics directed by B.A. Santamaria with the approval of the Catholic hierarchy. In defence, the Communists developed their united front strategy with great caution, taking care not to take conspicuous action which would be resented by the mass of traditionalist A.L.P. unionists. This approach did not prevent the Groupers from gaining control of such unions as the F.I.A. and the F.C.U., but it was effective in keeping them out of the more militant unions, such as the Miners' Federation and the W.W.F.
PART THREE

Chapter Seven

The Labor Party split in 1955 following Dr Evatt's attack on the influence of Santamaria's 'Movement' within the A.L.P.; Anti-Communist Labor Parties were formed, first in Victoria and later in Tasmania, South Australia and Western Australia. In New South Wales, however, most of the right-wing and Grouper elements remained within the A.L.P. and sought to prevent the party as a whole from moving to the Left, the direction indicated by the radical foreign policy decisions taken at the A.L.P.'s Hobart Conference of March 1955.

The Communists were disturbed by the implications of the split; on the one hand they were frightened that the Anti-Communist Labor Parties might obtain mass support and become Christian Democratic or even neo-fascist parties; on the other hand they were frightened that the right wing remaining within the A.L.P. might force Dr Evatt to reunify the party on the basis of anti-Communist and anti-Socialist policies.

In the trade union movement, the united front began steadily to repulse the Groupers from some of the unions they had captured earlier.

The Communist Party also considered the possibility of establishing an alliance between the working class and the small middle farmers, who they believed shared a common interest in fighting capitalism.
Chapter Eight

Khruschov's denunciation of the errors of the Stalinist era, such as the cult of the individual and excessive rigidity in political organisation, sparked off a dispute within the Communist Party of Australia. A number of 'revisionists', as they were called, suggested that the Australian Party needed to relax its organisational discipline and envisage more flexible strategies if it were to take sufficient account of the possibility of a peaceful transition to Socialism. Sharkey and Dixon stood firm by the principles of democratic centralism and forced the revisionists to leave the Party—but their arguments remained unanswered.

In party politics, the Anti-Communist Labor Parties had become Democratic Labor Parties (D.L.P.s) and came more and more to resemble Catholic Centre parties in outlook. Within the A.L.P., some were in favour of negotiating with the D.L.P., if only to secure an agreement to exchange preference votes in elections. Partly through this concern, the A.L.P. began opposing the practice of unity tickets (between Communist, militant and A.L.P. unionists) in trade union elections. In fact, however, the united front held together in the trade union movement, although it was no longer making much headway against the Grouper and right-wing forces.

Chapter Nine

In February 1960 Dr Evatt resigned as Labor leader to be replaced by A.A. Calwell. Even before this change of leadership, the
A.L.P's attitude towards unity tickets was hardening; in 1961 the party made determined efforts to enforce the ban on unity tickets which had been declared by the 1957 Federal Conference and reaffirmed on later occasions. This campaign intensified the tension within the A.L.P. between a left wing, led by the Victorian State Executive, and the right wing, led by the New South Wales State Executive. The Communists, in commenting on this tension, distinguished three groups; a clerical right wing which sympathised with the D.L.P., a traditional right wing anxious to stop the practice of unity tickets to improve the party's electoral prospects, and a rather weak left wing. They nevertheless claimed that the united front should be continued.

In trade union politics, however, the united front was beginning to break up with the result that the Communists and their militant allies lost control of several important unions, including the A.E.U.

The Communist Party, having survived the revisionist defection, also adjusted itself to the switchover in late 1961 from a pro-Chinese to a pro-Soviet position in international Communist affairs. Its membership was still small (possibly over 6,000) and its following was significant only amongst certain sections of the working class.
## CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>PART ONE</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ONE</td>
<td>HISTORICAL INTRODUCTION – BEGINNINGS TO 1950</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TWO</td>
<td>THE EXTENSION OF COMMUNIST INFLUENCE IN THE AUSTRALIAN TRADE UNION MOVEMENT BEFORE 1950</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THREE</td>
<td>ANTI-COMMUNISM IN AUSTRALIA BEFORE 1950</td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>PART TWO</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FOUR</td>
<td>THE ATTEMPT TO BAN THE COMMUNIST PARTY, 1950–1951</td>
<td>155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FIVE</td>
<td>THE COMMUNIST PARTY READJUSTS ITS STRATEGIES</td>
<td>189</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SIX</td>
<td>BATTLE IN THE TRADE UNIONS</td>
<td>215</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>PART THREE</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEVEN</td>
<td>THE COMMUNIST PARTY’S REACTION TO THE LABOR PARTY SPLIT, 1954–1956</td>
<td>244</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NINE</td>
<td>THE COMMUNIST PARTY REAFFIRMS ITS IDENTITY AS THE A.L.P. MOVES TO THE RIGHT</td>
<td>345</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>PART FOUR</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TEN</td>
<td>CONCLUSION</td>
<td>401</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDIX</td>
<td></td>
<td>413</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIBLIOGRAPHY</td>
<td></td>
<td>436</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## ABBREVIATIONS

### OFFICIAL DOCUMENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>C.L.R.</td>
<td>Commonwealth Law Reports</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C.P.D.</td>
<td>Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### NEWSPAPERS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>S.M.H.</td>
<td>Sydney Morning Herald</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### NEWSPAPER PUBLICATIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A.L.R.</td>
<td>Argus Law Reports</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### ORGANISATIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A.C.T.U.</td>
<td>Australian Council of Trade Unions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A.E.U.</td>
<td>Amalgamated Engineering Union</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A.L.P.</td>
<td>Australian Labor Party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A.P.C.</td>
<td>Australian Peace Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A.R.U.</td>
<td>Australian Railways' Union</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A.S.L.F.</td>
<td>Australian Student Labor Federation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A.W.U.</td>
<td>Australian Workers' Union</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B.W.I.U.</td>
<td>Building Workers' Industrial Union</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C.P.S.U.</td>
<td>Communist Party of the Soviet Union</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D.L.P.</td>
<td>Democratic Labor Party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E.Y.L.</td>
<td>Eureka Youth League</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F.C.U.</td>
<td>Federated Clerks' Union</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F.I.A.</td>
<td>Federated Ironworkers' Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I.C.F.T.U.</td>
<td>International Confederation of Free Trade Unions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I.W.W.</td>
<td>Industrial Workers of the World</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N.C.C.</td>
<td>National Civic Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N.H.A.</td>
<td>New Housewives' Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q.L.P.</td>
<td>Queensland Labor Party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R.S.L.</td>
<td>Returned Servicemen's League</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W.F.T.U.</td>
<td>World Federation of Trade Unions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W.W.F.</td>
<td>Waterside Workers' Federation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
PART ONE
CHAPTER ONE
HISTORICAL INTRODUCTION - BEGINNINGS TO 1950

The Australian Communist Party, formed on 30 October 1920, began outside the main institutions of the Labor movement in this country, the Australian Labor Party (A.L.P.) and the trade unions. For the first decade of its existence it remained a small isolated group, highly vulnerable and relatively uninfluential. In the thirties its membership began to increase and its cadres made some inroads into the trade union movement but it was still not an organisation to be reckoned with. Sympathy for the Russian cause during the latter part of World War II resulted in an important degree of public sympathy and tolerance for the Party, and from this period onwards its influence within most of the major trade unions became considerable. But the post-war years again found the Party's support on the wane, its hold in the trade unions challenged and its right to exist as a legal political body being questioned. With such a history, it is not surprising that the major problem facing the Communist leaders has been, and remains, that of accounting for the continued smallness of their Party and for its failure to become the party of the 'masses' in Australian politics. To appreciate how this problem has affected thinking within the Communist Party, one has not only to consider its doctrinal difficulties (which, largely because of the sudden shifts in the Soviet 'line',
are legion) but also the attempts which the leaders have made to sustain historical myths which add an aura of significance to the Party's ups and downs. To see the development of the Australian Labor movement through Communist eyes is to see the evils of reformism and economism at work amongst a proletariat which has not yet come to appreciate either its real interests or its historical mission.

The Communist's view of history deserves attention not only because it affords an example of the difficulties of applying Leninist-Stalinist dogmas to Australian conditions but also because in many cases the Communists have come close to a sound appreciation of the factors which have inhibited their influence. In one sense, it is true to say that the Communists know why history has worked against them in Australia, just as it is true to say that they believe that nevertheless basic economic factors are gradually creating a situation in which history will work for them. The mixture of realism and fantasy which one encounters in the writings of L.L. Sharkey, E.W. Campbell and others reflects clearly the intellectual difficulties which have always beset Communism in Australia.

**The Labor movement, 1890-1920**

Along with Labor historians, Communist writers claim that the great strike wave of 1890-94 was the first generalised conflict between Capital and Labour in Australian history. According to the
Communists, the workers' defeat in this struggle taught them that, to meet the employers on their own ground, they had to organise politically as well as industrially, and that the trade union organisation could never alone uphold their interests in a direct clash with the Right. For this reason, the workers founded the Labor Party. But because the workers were indifferent to Socialism, and because the Socialists left the new party in despair, Labor became a liberal bourgeois party, concerned with the piece-meal pursuit of concessions for the workers (reformism) and committed, as a party within the legal framework of the bourgeois State, to administer (when in power) in the interests of the capitalist class. The Communist account goes on to claim that the Labor Party, being liberal bourgeois in character, was able to attract support from a wide range of sources, from the small farmers and businessmen as well as pastoral, industrial and clerical workers. But there were bound to be tensions between such disparate elements. Campbell has noted that struggles such as those within the Labor Party of New South Wales before World War I are rooted in the contradiction between the middle class character and outlook of the Labor Party and its mass basis in the trade union movement. Periodically, the membership, expressing an instinctive desire to free the movement of bourgeois influences and to bring it onto the correct path, have revolted against the leadership. However, chiefly owing to the absence of Socialist
understanding, these struggles in the past have not succeeded. They have usually ended with the replacement of one set of opportunities by another.\textsuperscript{1}

Whether such tensions could ever be exploited to attract the masses to a genuinely Socialist party would depend on whether capitalism became firmly established in Australia. Lenin, writing in 1913, held out the hope that 'when Australia is finally developed and consolidated as an independent capitalist State, the conditions of the workers will change, as also will the Liberal Labor Party, which will make way for a Socialist Labor Party.'\textsuperscript{2}

The Communist thesis becomes least plausible when it attempts to establish a 'contradiction' between the interests of the workers and the 'middle classes' and to suggest that this contradiction will enable a Socialist party, when Australian capitalism has fully developed, to supplant the Labor Party as the mass party of the Left. In fact, the evidence suggests that from its beginnings the Labor Party has been based on a number of socio-economic groups (wage earners, salaried workers, small businessmen, and some small farmers), that these groups co-existed in the Labor Party without a great deal of trouble, and that the trade unionists, apart from


their concern with better wages and working conditions, were not especially under the influence of radical or Socialist ideas. The Labor Party's reformism appears to have been acceptable to most of the interests which gave it electoral support, and Socialist or syndicalist theories of politics and class action found support only in certain mining and working-class communities. The presence of a large Irish Roman Catholic element in the working class was another factor ensuring its non-revolutionary character.

The A.L.P's reformism and lack of doctrine helped it to establish a broad electoral appeal in the first decade of this century, when it expanded rapidly through the pastoral and small farming electorates in the countryside and the lower middle-class electorates in the cities. By the end of 1912, Labor was in power at the Federal level and in four out of the six States. The legislative achievements of the Fisher Government in Federal politics; of the Scaddan Government in Western Australia; of the McGowan-Holman Government in New South Wales, and of the Labor ministries in South Australia and Tasmania gave their supporters adequate proof that reforms for the underprivileged could be obtained within the framework of the liberal democratic state – in short, that reformism could produce the goods. Socialism, under such circumstances, could hardly attract 'interested' support from any important group in the electorate.
The First World War placed the Labor Party under considerable strain and to some extent damaged its prestige and political effectiveness. The main newspapers exaggerated the significance of the activities of the Syndicalists (especially members of the Industrial Workers of the World - I.W.W.) within the trade unions and were especially hostile towards the strikers in the industrial disputes of 1917. Such attacks affected the A.L.P's popularity considerably, but the worst damage was inflicted by the split in the party during the conscription debate. When in 1916, W.M. Hughes, the Prime Minister, tried to introduce conscription he failed not only to prevent his policy being defeated in a referendum but also to save his party being split on the issue. Along with Holman and other prominent figures, he left the A.L.P. to form National Labor Parties, which later merged with the Liberals to form the Nationalist Party. Their exit did little to radicalise the A.L.P. (indeed it emerged from the war rather less adventurous and more subject to Irish Catholic influence than hitherto) but effectively deprived it of power and office. The Queensland Labor ministry was the only Labor administration to survive the war period. There was a slight upsurge of radicalism in Sydney and Melbourne after the war, which was partly responsible for the adoption of the famous Socialisation objective by the 1921 A.L.P. Federal Conference. But this objective, accepted by the rank and file without enthusiasm, and ignored thereafter by Labor politicians, remained a vague symbol during the
twenties. In the post-war period, also, trade union membership continued to increase under the stimulus of compulsory arbitration, but the unionists thus recruited were often conservative or apolitical. 3

Thus, between 1890 and 1920, at a time when the European Social-Democratic movement was undergoing significant doctrinal and organisational stresses, the Australian Labor movement remained solidly reformist and negative in doctrine. Given such a contrast, it is not surprising that the convulsions in the European Left which produced the Communist Parties of France, Germany, Italy and Belgium found no counterpart here. The ill-feeling between the pastoral workers and the graziers, and between the urban workers and their employers in Australia was nothing compared to the tensions which separated the industrial proletariat from the capitalists of Western Europe. The European Social-Democrats were heirs to a century of revolutions, repression and intense class bitterness. Hardened by their long struggle to gain political and industrial rights, European urban workers were for the most part militant and open to the influence of revolutionary theories.

Doctrinal controversy, almost non-existent in the A.L.P., was of the utmost importance in the European Social-Democratic parties.

The basic cleavage within them arose from different approaches to the idea of revolution. The revisionists (such as Eduard Bernstein) held that the socialist transformation of society could be achieved within the bourgeois order and that a Socialist party, in order to gain mass electoral support, had to be a loose, decentralised body capable of enclosing as many socio-economic groups as possible. On the other hand, the orthodox Marxists (such as Karl Kautsky and Rosa Luxemburg) maintained that a violent revolution was inevitable before the proletariat could assume power since the bourgeoisie would never surrender their privileges peacefully. Thus, they believed that a Socialist party, while it could and should participate in the politics of the bourgeois State, should at the same time be prepared to face the possibility of repression. Moreover, its organisational structure should be such that it could act quickly and effectively in the event of a revolutionary situation developing. For both contingencies a highly centralised and tightly disciplined organisation was essential.

The division within the West European Social-Democratic parties over different approaches to the idea of revolution and, in consequence, organisational structure, can be roughly compared to the dispute between the Mensheviks and the Bolsheviks in Tsarist Russia. Before 1914 the revisionists in France and Germany were gaining the upper hand in the Western European dispute. However, the orthodox Marxists increased their influence during the First World
War, partly because of the social dislocation of the war period and partly because of the impact of the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia.

Under the influence of the Communist International, the orthodox Marxist wings of the West European Social-Democratic parties became increasingly militant and aggressive in the immediate post-war years. The German Communists soon emerged as powerful rivals to the Social-Democrats; a majority of the French Socialist Congress at Tours in 1920 decided to form a Communist Party, whereupon a minority reformed a new Socialist group. The new Communist Parties were the historical successors to the old orthodox Marxist wings of the pre-war Social-Democratic parties and their power in the new situation derived not only from their militancy and their tight organisation but from the backing of the Soviet Union, the new citadel of orthodoxy. Set against this background, the formation of the Australian Communist Party in October 1920 did not seem particularly significant — it could so easily have been just another adventure in Socialist sectarianism.

The Communist Party in the inter-war period

Sharkey has distinguished five broad periods in the growth of Australian Communism during the twenties and thirties. In the first, between 1920 and 1923, the leadership was mainly concerned with the task of welding into a unified whole the various Socialist, revolutionary and anarcho-syndicalist elements which had joined the
Party. At the same time, an effort was made to place the Party in contact with the A.L.P. and the trade unions, as part of the strategy of gaining access to the masses. The second period, from 1924 to 1929, was an unsuccessful one, according to Sharkey. A phase of economic stability strengthened the reformist elements in the Labor Party, and these used their influence to close A.L.P. and union organisations to Communist infiltration. Instead of meeting this challenge, the Communist leaders (especially J. Kavanagh and J. Ryan) also stressed the need for the Communists to keep themselves separate from the A.L.P. and discouraged Party members from accepting trade union office unless the members of the union concerned were in favour of Communism. Kavanagh refused to follow the line laid down by the Comintern in 1928 of waging war on the reformists and of making a concerted bid for leadership of the masses. Pointing out that Moscow was 15,000 miles away and that it did not understand Australian conditions, Kavanagh and his colleagues stood their ground until they were removed (as right-wing deviationists) from the Party's Central Committee in December 1929. H. Moxon became the new General Secretary but he was expelled from the Party in 1931 and replaced by J.B. Miles, whose ally L.L. Sharkey took over the Presidency in the same year.

The third period (a rather confused episode between 1930 and 1934) was ushered in by the new leadership's determined intervention in the industrial disputes of the depression period. The Party
helped the miners to combat lock-outs, organised the unemployed, and helped resist the Premiers' Plan and the New Guard movement. But in conformity with the anti-reformist line, it refused to co-operate with the Labor Party in such 'struggles'. This, as Sharkey admitted, reduced its chances of attracting a considerable mass following, although its own membership did increase during the depression. In particular, in Sharkey's view, the Party erred in not joining with movements inspired by 'Langism', such as the protests against the Premiers' Plan and the Labor Army which J.T. Lang (the Labor Premier of New South Wales, 1930-32) formed to resist the New Guard. Looking back on these years, Sharkey argued that the Party correctly criticised Lang but that it did not sufficiently develop proposals of its own, aiming at carrying the mass movement beyond Lang, did not develop united front tactics sufficiently with the masses supporting Lang, did not link itself with and become an integral part of this mass movement....

Another opportunity for the Party to establish contact with the 'masses' came in the fourth period, that of the Popular Front and the struggle against War and Fascism (1935-39). In line with the directives of the Seventh Congress of the Comintern (1935), Australian Communists sought to work more closely with the A.L.P. and the reformist trade unions (although they continued to oppose Lang's break-away Labor group in New South Wales). They directed their strategy

---

to appealing beyond the workers to the 'small farmers' and the 'middle class' groups which appear frequently in the Communist writings of this period. The Party's membership continued to grow, and for the first time it became important in Victoria and Queensland. But despite its efforts to establish a united front of all anti-fascists (who were not very numerous or powerful in Australia in any case) the A.L.P. redoubled its efforts to close its ranks against the Communists. Its 1937 Federal Conference passed a resolution forbidding Labor Party branches or members from associating with Communists in united front activities.\(^5\) The fifth period began in September 1939 when the Communist Party, in keeping with the new Moscow line, opposed the war against Germany as one waged for imperialist purposes. In 1940 the Menzies Government banned the Party on the grounds that it was subverting the war effort, but after June 1941, following the invasion of the Soviet Union by Germany, the Australian Communists threw themselves behind the war effort. The Curtin Labor Government raised the ban on their Party in the following year.

Sharkey outlined this view of his Party's first two decades shortly afterwards in An Outline History of the Australian Communist Party (1944). Perhaps his main purpose was to justify

the policy of co-operating with the Labor Party which the Communists were then pursuing, but he was also concerned to explain why the Party had failed to attract mass support in the inter-war years. Part of his explanation was that the Labor Party's reformist leadership, as well as the reformist leaderships of the trade unions, had systematically sought to isolate the masses from contact with the Communists, but he also placed some of the blame on certain Communist leaders themselves, such as Kavanagh in the late twenties and Moxon in the early thirties. However, he was really evading the central issues. Two questions are involved here. The first concerns the importance of its Russian connection in determining the prospects of the Australian Communist Party; to what extent did the strategies, and the frequent changes of line, directed by the Comintern create difficulties for the Party in Australia? Further, was the organisational mechanism of democratic centralism suited to the tasks of the Party, particularly those of establishing and maintaining contact with the working class, the small farmers and the middle class? The second broad question is whether an Australian radical party which was not so organised and which had no connection with Russia could really, given the conditions of the twenties and thirties, have taken over the electoral following of the A.L.P. and become the new mass party of the Left.

Let us consider the last of these questions first. It is doubtful whether a new radical party, unhampered by foreign connections,
could have constituted a serious threat to the Labor Party before World War II. Although Labor remained in power in Queensland throughout the inter-war years (except for the 1930–32 term), and although Labor ministries did hold office for some periods in most of the other States, it is nevertheless true to say that the A.L.P. throughout this period was virtually a party of opposition, and that as such it was able to retain the loyalty of discontented groups which might otherwise have looked further Left for representation. At the Federal level Labor was in power only in the term 1929–31 during the whole period from 1917 to 1941. Except during the worst years of the depression, moreover, the trade unions remained fairly content with the treatment they received through the system of compulsory arbitration. Only in the more militant unions, such as those representing miners and transport workers, was there much support for a more radical brand of politics than that provided by the A.L.P. In fact the worst depression years (1930–34) were the only ones in which the rise of a new left-wing party was at all a possibility; and indeed it is possible to imagine that the support which centred on J.T. Lang in New South Wales could have gone, under different circumstances, to a party of the social-democratic variety. Finally, despite the New Guard, fascism was never an immediate social danger in Australia and only intellectuals and militant trade unionists were seriously concerned about its rise in Europe. In France and Belgium, on the other hand, the popular fronts which were
formed to combat fascism provided the Communist Parties in those countries with their first important opportunity to win away mass support from the Social-Democrats.

There is no doubt that the Australian Communist Party's links with the Soviet Union seriously hampered its political activity. Its foreign connection earned it the reputation of being a subversive organisation (which it enhanced by its talk of revolution) and of being a foreign agency. The rapidity with which the Australian Communists fell into line with directives from Moscow, especially in 1935 and in 1939, increased the impression that it was in fact acting under instructions from the Comintern. At the same time, the Party's ability to assess Australian conditions correctly and to formulate strategies appropriate to them was weakened by its surprising dependence on Soviet doctrine. The orthodox Marxism of pre-war days had been difficult enough to apply to situations outside Western Europe but Leninist-Stalinist dogmas were even more so. Since the Communist Party in Australia remained a small party, relatively isolated from its own society, it tended to become more rigid in its acceptance of Soviet direction and showed little of the subtlety evident in the way the larger European parties implemented Soviet directives.
Democratic centralism and the Australian Communist Party

In addition, democratic centralism, which the Party had adopted as a method of organisation in the middle twenties, provided further obstacles to Party growth during the inter-war period (and in subsequent years). Under democratic centralism the basic unit of the organisation is the factory or locality cell, which meets at least weekly. Since the late thirties Party cells have become known as branches. Factory cells were a relatively new form of organisation when they appeared in the twenties. Unlike the Social-Democratic-type branches, they organise the workers at their places of work thus making contact between members easier and more intimate. Locality cells, designed for housewives, farmers, intellectuals, self-employed members and so forth, are akin to a half-way house between the factory cell and the Social-Democratic-type branch.

Cells are not allowed to communicate and work with each other as are A.L.P. branches but are connected by a series of vertical links to higher organs of the Party. Thus cells can only make contact with one another through the medium of the next higher organ, the section, which is composed of delegates from the various cells. Cell delegates to the sections have a dual responsibility both to their

cell members and to the section. Sections, in turn, can only communicate with each other through their delegates at the district level. The districts elect delegates to the State conferences and both of these bodies send delegates to the supreme Party organ, the National Congress, which met annually in the twenties but has been held approximately every three years since the early thirties. At each level below the National Congress the various organs elect committees and executives.

National Congress elects the Central Committee which meets three or four times every year. From its members the Central Committee elects the Political Committee, which meets weekly and is in charge of the Party's day-to-day activities and the Central Control Commission which, although it receives little publicity, possesses a considerable amount of power on matters of discipline, security and finance. The Central Committee is also in charge of the various committees (Women's, Medical, Arts and Sciences and so forth) which cater for professional or social groups. However, it is the Political Committee which elects the most important body in the Party, the Secretariat, comprising the General Secretary (the key post), the President and, since the mid-forties, two other members. The Party's Constitution does not make any specific provision for either the Secretariat or the positions of General Secretary and President.

The advantages of the cell system over the branch system are obvious. The leadership's existence is not dependent upon the
support of strong regional blocks. Furthermore, power is vested at the top whereas in the A.L.P. it is situated at the regional or district level. Consequently, the Party can manoeuvre rapidly in any given situation. Alterations in the composition of the leadership are decided by the leaders themselves and approval is invariably given by the National Congress, many of whose delegates are full-time Party functionaries who could be dismissed by the leadership and all of whom are as near to being completely reliable as the system can ensure.

Thus, the leadership is secure and virtually self-perpetuating unless old age, illness or doctrinal heresy intervenes. There have been remarkably few changes in the top leadership of the Communist Party since 1931 when J.B. Miles and L.L. Sharkey took over the two leading positions. Sharkey was then in his early thirties and Miles in his early forties. Comparatively young men of promise and proven reliability can be rapidly promoted to leading positions under this method of organisation and the average age of Party functionaries has, in most periods, been low compared with officials in other political parties.

Miles retired as General Secretary on the grounds of ill-health at the 1948 National Congress and was succeeded by Sharkey. R. Dixon, who had been Assistant General Secretary since 1937 moved up at the same time to become President while J.C. Henry of Queensland filled the newly created position of Organising Secretary (Tribune, 12 May 1948).
Another advantage of democratic centralism is that it can effectively resolve divisions within the Communist Party and thereby ensure doctrinal unity. At all levels the decisions of higher organs are binding on lower Party organs. The vertical link form of organisation prevents dissent in one cell spreading to other cells. Moreover, sections can be contaminated only by way of cell delegates but these have already been selected on the grounds of proven reliability and the degree of reliability increases the higher the organ involved. Thus, the leadership can intervene with remarkable effectiveness as soon as dissent is detected within the Party.

As with Social-Democratic-type branches, cells are suitable for discussion meetings and, to a lesser extent, electoral activity. However, an important advantage of the cell system over the branch system is that it enables a Communist Party to convert itself into a clandestine body at a moment's notice. This was dramatically shown during World War II in Europe when the Communist Parties, particularly those of France and Belgium, quickly went underground while the Social-Democratic underground movements took a considerable time to organise themselves after the arrest of their leaderships. Thus, the cell system is both an excellent form of organisation for action (especially revolutionary action) and an effective form of insurance against the possibility of repression.

Democratic centralism also ensures that the leadership does not completely lose contact with the rank and file of the Party since
the leaders at each level not only have to carry out the instructions of the leadership but they also have to inform the leadership of the response which the directives receive. At the lower levels in particular strenuous efforts are made to convince doubting members of the correctness of the leadership's decisions. In addition, for several months before each National Congress relatively frank discussion on the Draft Resolution (prepared by the leadership) occurs at all levels. In practice, however, the democratic content of democratic centralism tends to break down, least of all in the larger West European Parties where a feed-back of ideas from the rank and file does take place. On the other hand, smaller organisations such as the Australian Party are subject to an excessive degree of centralisation, which in turn enhances the already dominant role of the leadership. In all Communist Parties the leadership not only controls the organisational apparatus but it also regulates the degree to which discussion in the Party operates.

The disadvantage of the cell system is that it is difficult to adapt to the needs of a mass party. When the French and Italian Communist Parties attempted to expand they relied more on locality cells than on factory cells. But these two Parties were already mass parties before the cell system was applied to them: they grew, to a large extent, in spite of and not because of democratic centralism. The Australian Party, on the other hand, was initially a small organisation and its prospects of expansion were handicapped by the
cell system. In spite of this factor the cell system does at least ensure that membership losses will be minimised in a period when the Party is either stagnant or declining. However, although the European Parties had lost a considerable amount of their initial support by the late twenties, the factors which enabled them to expand in the thirties were either completely absent or of considerably less importance in Australia. Since the Australian Party was small from the outset it has always found itself in a vicious circle: miniscule because there was no social basis for its growth and its smallness in turn leading to an excessively centralised and inflexible organisation with a leadership whose sensitivity to changes in the international line was well-known among Communists the world over. In addition, some members, seeing the Party as the vanguard of the most class-conscious section of the working class, have not in fact wished to see a mass organisation develop. The isolation of the Party within Australian society has reinforced the sensitivity of the leadership to minor changes in the international line. In interpreting the line, they have never taken sufficient account of the economic and social conditions existing at any given time in Australia itself.

The Communist Party during World War II

Until June 1941, when the Soviet Union was invaded by Germany, the Australian Party was opposed to what it described as an
'imperialist war'. It was declared an illegal body by the Menzies Government in 1940 and although legality was not restored to the Party by the Curtin Labor Government until December 1942, it operated quite openly after the entry of the Soviet Union into the war. The heroic feats of the Red Army led many Australians to shed their previous antipathy towards the Party which lost its reputation as a subversive body. In fact, its new popularity enabled the Communist Party to depict as subversive those groups opposed to an all-out war effort. During the war, 4,000 Communists served in the armed forces, a very high proportion of total Party membership as compared with other political parties. 'One out of every 5 A.C.P. members joined the Services, although Party membership is largely recruited from industrial workers, including women, called upon to do the job of production.' Sharkey reported in 1945 that twelve members, or more than one quarter, of the Central Committee were ex-servicemen of either World Wars I or II.

The war situation gave the Party an important opportunity to make a bid for mass membership; for the first time, the Russian connection became a positive advantage. The Party's Thirteenth

---

8 Ibid., 16 October 1945. For a complete list of Communists killed and decorated during World War II, see ibid., 15 November 1946.
9 Ibid., 16 October 1945.
10 Ibid., 10 July 1945.
National Congress, held in March 1943, declared that its objective was to establish an anti-fascist national front, the most decisive feature of which would be 'the alliance between the working class on the one hand, and the working farmers and the mass of middle class people of the towns, who together form the majority of the population, on the other.'\textsuperscript{11} In declaring its support for the Curtin Labor Government, the Party also appears to have hoped that at last history was working for its cause, that the Labor Party would provide the conditions for the final stage of capitalism in Australia. The 1943 National Congress stated that the Curtin Government 'represents most clearly the historic role of the Labor Party — the development of Australia as a unified, independent, capitalist nation.'\textsuperscript{12} The new confidence which pervaded the Party during this period encouraged it to entertain electoral ambitions which would have been completely unrealistic in pre-war days.

The Party's leadership was in the hands of dependable, tough and capable men. Many of the leaders, including Sharkey, had spent some time training in Moscow and, unlike the leaders in the twenties, Sharkey and Miles were completely reliable in the implementation of changes in the international line. Indeed, Sharkey had been wholeheartedly behind the 1935–39 line in spite of being a leftist by

\textsuperscript{11} Sharkey, \textit{op. cit.}, p.62.
\textsuperscript{12} \textit{Ibid.}, p.59.
nature. Sharkey had also served on the Executive Committee of the Comintern between 1935 and 1943, when it was dissolved. That Sharkey was determined had been shown in 1929 when, along with only H. Moxon of the Central Committee members, he gained Moscow's backing and succeeded in defeating the existing right-wing leadership of the Party. The great majority of full-time Party functionaries came from industrial working-class backgrounds although there was a sprinkling of middle-class intellectuals such as Ralph Gibson and later E.F. Hill. Both Sharkey and Miles had held official positions in small trade unions in the twenties.

Party membership grew rapidly during the 'People's War' (1941-45). In 1940 it stood at only 4,000, but between only May and December 1942 it increased from 7,200 to 16,000 and by March 1943 had reached 20,000, after which the rate of growth declined considerably. The membership reached a peak of 22,052 in December 1944, but dropped afterwards. A high proportion of the members resided in New South Wales - 9,000 out of 20,000 in 1944. Some success was even recorded among farmers, 300 of whom joined the Party between

June and December 1942. Of the 11,000 Communists resident in New South Wales in 1945, 1,500 lived in 'country areas' as compared with only 200 in 1943. J.W. Bailes, the Party's agrarian leader and a prominent poultry farmer, began to broadcast extensively over New South Wales country stations in this period.

During the war the administrative expenses of the Party were not high and at the same time dues and donations kept on increasing. In May 1943 the Newsletter Printery along with the well-known sporting paper, the Newsletter, was purchased. The impressive Marx House in George Street, Sydney, was bought for £30,500 in 1944 to serve as Party headquarters. In the final year of the war it was reported that the Party was spending £50 a week on the 'Voice of the People' radio session alone.

Nevertheless, in spite of the fact that membership duties were not particularly onerous during the war, members began to drift out of the Party, especially after the establishment of the Second Front in Europe in 1944. Many of these members of short duration had joined the Party out of a vague sympathy for the Red Army at Stalingrad and were later repelled by the fact that Party membership

---

16 Ibid., February 1943, p. 3.
17 Tribune, 19 July 1945.
19 Tribune, 18 January 1945.
entailed all aspects of life being influenced by Communist ideology. That a high turnover of members existed is revealed by the disclosure that between 1 July and 31 December 1944 3,500 new members were recruited, yet the total membership increased by only 2,052 between March 1943 and December 1944. These resignations were countered to some extent by the amalgamation of the Communist Party with the State Labor Party of New South Wales in 1944. However, a majority of the State Labor Party's membership, estimated at 10,000 in 1943, could not have joined the Communist Party. After the establishment of the State Labor Party in 1940, following the intervention of the Federal Executive of the Labor Party (which had dismissed the left-wing New South Wales A.L.P. Executive), its leadership had been in the hands of Party members and sympathisers who had infiltrated the New South Wales A.L.P. in the late thirties. These leaders transferred to the Communist Party in 1944 and five of them were elected to the Party's Central Committee. Shortly after the amalgamation of the two parties, the Communist Party of

20 Loc. cit.
23 Sydney Morning Herald, 29 November 1943.
24 Loc. cit.
Australia, as it was then known, changed its name to the Australian Communist Party, in order to underline its Australian and patriotic nature.  

The circulation of the Party press reached impressive figures in the mid-forties. Sales of the dull theoretical monthly Communist Review reached 20,000 in 1945, while those of the Melbourne Guardian stood at 18,000 in the same year as compared with a circulation of 10,000 in 1939. As the 1939 circulation of Tribune, read mainly in New South Wales, was exactly double that of the Guardian, it is reasonable to assume that its circulation was between 35,000 and 40,000 in 1945. Tribune's readership included many left-wing A.L.P. members who admired its vitality as compared with the prosaic A.L.P. papers, while occasionally one of them would contribute an article. Tribune's literary pages included contributions from such well-known Communist writers as Katharine Susannah Prichard, Jean Devanny, George Farwell and Archer Russell. Cartoonists George Finey

---

25 The name of the Party reverted to its pre-1944 form at the 1951 National Congress.
27 Tribune, 3 July 1945.
29 Ibid.
and Will Mahoney, both of whom were dismissed from the Daily Telegraph in 1944 for refusing to draw anti-Labor cartoons, also appeared regularly.

Party pamphlet sales were also impressive during the war. For many years the Party had laid great stress on the publication of cheap and attractively produced pamphlets as a valuable propaganda medium. Between September 1941 and February 1945 the sales of the Australian editions of The Socialist Sixth of the World and Soviet Strength, both by the Dean of Canterbury, were 210,000 and 75,000 respectively. Even the sales of The Communist Manifesto stood at 16,000 over the same period. By 1946 Len Fox’s Guilty Men and a Party programme pamphlet entitled Vote Yes for Homes and Jobs had sold 64,000 and 70,000 copies respectively.

Before the war, Communist candidates at Federal and State Elections had seldom recorded more than a few hundred votes each but the pattern changed completely during the war. In 1943, 15 Communists contested House of Representatives seats at the Federal Election and polled 80,427 votes. A considerable number of candidates polled between 4,000 and 8,000 votes and in the Queensland seat of Herbert, F. W. Paterson recorded the highest vote, 20,629, which represented

31 Ibid., 13 March 1945.
32 Ibid., 15 February 1945.
33 Ibid., 25 June 1946.
34.19 per cent of the valid votes cast. The increase in Communist electoral support was, however, translated into success on only one occasion. F.W. Paterson represented Bowen, which formed part of the Federal electorate of Herbert, in the Queensland Legislative Assembly between 1944 and 1950. Although a barrister and a former Rhodes Scholar, Paterson had a particularly strong personal following in Bowen where many waterside workers, small sugar farmers and sugar cane cutters were to be found. An excellent local member, he became one of the most effective back-benchers in State politics in subsequent years. Notwithstanding his personal popularity he held the seat only on a minority vote against Labor and Country Party opponents in 1944 and 1947 because of the 'first-past-the-post' system of voting used in Queensland State Elections. However, in 1949, under the Labor Government's redistribution of electorates, the seat of Bowen was abolished and it was widely believed that such action had been taken to ensure Paterson's exit from Parliament. 34 Whatever the reason, Paterson would have had considerable difficulty in retaining the seat during the peak of anti-Communism in Australia.

One of the principal factors contributing to the electoral failure of the Party during the war was that its strength was pocketed even in the electorates in which its support was relatively high. These pockets of power were to be found in highly integrated mining

34 Ibid., 12 October 1949.
and urban working-class areas but Party support did not show any tendency to spread outwards into rural and middle-class areas. This disability disappeared to some extent at the local government electoral level, particularly on the coalfields where some impressive gains were recorded. F.W. Paterson was Australia's first Communist Alderman: he served on the Townsville City Council from 1939 until 1944 when he was succeeded by another Party member. Idris Williams of the Miners' Federation was elected to the Wonthaggi Council in 1944, and in December of that year, at the New South Wales local government elections, 18 Communists were successful. Five of these Councillors were elected to the eight-member Kearsley Shire Council, which became the first (and only) Communist-controlled Council in Australia. Furthermore, both the nine-member Cessnock Municipal Council and the nine-member Lake Macquarie Shire Council each contained three Communists.

The membership and electoral gains of the Communist Party during the war were, however, unimpressive in comparison with the remarkable growth of the French and Italian Parties in the same period. At least part of the disparity can be explained by the fact that the sympathy towards the Red Army and the Soviet Union that existed in

---

35 Guardian, 7 July 1944.
36 Ibid., 8 September 1944.
37 S.M.H., 22 July 1946; Tribune, 13 December 1946.
Australia was but a pale reflection of the Resistance Movements in Europe in which Communists played a leading role.

The Communist Party after World War II

Encouraged by the amount of support their Party had attracted during the war years, the Communist leaders in 1945 were almost certainly considering the possibility of contesting elections not only as a means of advancing the Party's viewpoint but with the object of electing members to Parliament. That this was their policy was indicated by several things - the loosening of the Party organisation; a renewed attempt to establish links with the A.L.P.; the important use of various front organisations as means of influencing the progressive sections of the middle class; the increased emphasis on the need for a daily Party newspaper in the immediate post-war years. The Communist leadership appears to have reasoned that at last the workers were close to a realisation that the Labor Party did not represent their true interests and that they would turn in their true representative, the Communist Party.

The organisational adjustments of this period strongly suggest that this was their policy. During the latter stages of the war locality branches had for a time become more important than workplace branches. Indeed, the Draft Resolution issued before the 1945 National Congress had recommended that factory branches should be
replaced by locality branches. At the Congress, however, Miles admitted that the Draft Resolution had been based on 'wrong views' and the recommendation was defeated. This sudden change can be partly explained by the fact that attacks had been launched in 1945 by Communists all over the world against Browder, the Secretary of the Party in the United States of America and his 'class-collaborationist' views. Although the Australian Party was thinking in terms of securing representation in Parliament, it was still acutely responsive to shifts in the international line.

Browder had been the most notable exponent of a trend which existed in all Western Parties during the war whereby references to Socialism were minimised and emphasis placed on the need for anti-fascist unity. Although the Australian Party never officially subscribed to the extreme position adopted by Browder it did give his views 'widespread publicity'. However, immediately Browder's views came under heavy attack from European Communists, the Australian Party repudiated 'Browderism'. Its main virtue was said to have been 'in not going so far as its overseas colleagues, and in having

38 A.B., 'The Teheran Period', Arma, 1948, p.30. In 1944 there were 1,500 branches in Australia (Len Donald, Why You Should Join the Communist Party, Sydney, 1944, p.12).
39 J.B. Miles, Jobs, Freedom, Progress, Sydney, 1945, p.16.
41 Tribune, 28 June 1945.
"got out from under" more quickly." Sharkey admitted that some members had advocated the deletion of all references to Socialism in the Party press while others had wanted 'to throw Marx out of the Marx School'. Miles likewise drew attention to the presence of 'tailism' in the Party which took the form of unconditional support for the A.L.P. during elections and even the view that Communists who had been nominated for 'the forthcoming Federal Elections should be withdrawn. Browder's most prominent Australian supporter, E. Thornton of the Federated Ironworkers' Association, was removed from the Political Committee of the Party and reinstated only after he had renounced 'Browderism'.

That the Party was contemplating expansion in 1945 was indicated by the fact that the proceedings of the National Congress in that year were amplified to non-delegates outside the Sydney Town Hall. In addition, a financial statement covering the period 1 January 1943

43 Communist Review, August 1945, p.570.
44 Miles, op. cit., p.15.
45 See articles by Thornton in the Guardian, 11 February 1944, 17 March 1944.
47 Communist Review, September 1945, p.592.
to 30 June 1945 was publicly issued after the 1945 Congress. The statement disclosed that receipts amounted to approximately £56,000 of which £20,000 came from membership dues. The latter figure, however, seems to be an extreme under-estimate since there was an entrance fee of two shillings and dues of sixpence a week in 1944 for those earning above £2.10.0. a week while for members earning less the respective figures were sixpence and threepence a week.

As the average yearly membership during the period under review was about 20,000 and after taking into account the relatively high turnover of membership it would appear either that the statement was consciously presented incorrectly or that a high proportion of members were unfinancial. Whatever the explanation it is unlikely that funds came from overseas during this period. Sharkey stated that 'Every penny raised by the A.C.P. comes from Australian workers, farmers and intellectuals.' Undoubtedly, Party members subscribed generously and continuously and although many anti-Communists believed funds did in fact come from the Soviet Union, the Royal Tribune, 16 August 1945.

On the expenditure side, wages accounted for approximately £9,000 and radio and publicity approximately £9,300 (loc. cit.)

Len Donald, op. cit., p.12.

The infant Australian Party did however receive financial assistance from the Soviet Union in the twenties.

Tribune, 25 June 1946.

E.g., News-Weekly, 2 October 1946.
Commission on Communism in Victoria (1949-50) reported that there was 'no evidence of funds coming from overseas.' A second financial statement, covering the period 1 July 1945 to 31 March 1948 was also issued publicly by the Party: it disclosed that receipts had fallen to £48,000. Since then detailed financial statements have not been released.

However, even when the Communist Party was most open about its activities, it did not release lists of the members of various Party committees. The British Party, on the other hand, has always made such information available to the public. In 1945 there were 35 members on the Central Committee of the Australian Party.

During the war the Party made strenuous efforts to gain affiliation with the Labor Party while retaining its organisational independence but all attempts, whether at the Federal or State

55 Tribune, 24 July 1948.
56 See the incomplete list of Central Committee members in ibid., 16 August 1945.
57 Miles, op. cit., p.16. Since 1945 the size of the Central Committee has increased and it has been recently estimated at approximately 50 (Nation, 1 July 1961).
level, were unsuccessful. Nevertheless, a number of left-wing A.L.P. trade union officials favoured the Party's proposals. The Party leadership hoped for 'something more than a United Front' and looked forward in vague terms to the eventual merger of the two parties in one united Socialist party. The only occasion at which any important degree of unity was achieved occurred during the 'Powers' Referendum (1944) when the committee which campaigned for a 'Yes' vote in New South Wales consisted of delegates from the Labor Party, the Communist Party and the Labor Council. Sharkey stated that co-operation 'reached the highest level yet recorded', but the defeat of the Referendum proposals has been attributed to the unfavourable reaction of the anti-Communist section of the 'floating vote'. Until the Cold War really got under way, the Labor Party in New South Wales, in contrast with the strongly anti-Communist Victorian A.L.P., held a somewhat ambivalent view of the Communist Party, perhaps because it was still preoccupied to some extent with

---

59 S.M.H., 29 January 1944, 2 June 1944.
60 Tribune, 8 June 1944.
62 In addition to the two Party delegates (N. Jeffery and H.B. Chandler) on the six-man committee, one of the Labor Council representatives (T. Wright) was also a Communist.
63 Communist Review, October 1944, p.336.
64 News-Weekly, 3 April 1946.
fighting the remnants of J.T. Lang's influence and also because the anti-Communist 'Movement' was weaker in New South Wales than in Victoria. The official organ of the Labor Party in New South Wales stated in 1945 that the Communist Party was not 'a political menace' and went on to refer to the Soviet Union as 'the only Socialist nation'.

At no time during this period did the Communist Party consider the A.L.P. to be a Socialist party which reflected the workers' 'true interests'. The Party's Political Committee stated:

The Labor Party is a non-socialist, liberal worker and middle-class party concerned with striving to reform the capitalist system.

The Communist Party is a socialist party of the workers....

Anticipating an increased membership, the Party leaders began to lay ambitious plans for a daily newspaper in 1945, even though it was estimated that the circulation of the then bi-weekly Tribune would have to reach at least 100,000 before it would be possible to convert it into a daily. In March 1945 it was reported that a

65 Standard, 5 May 1945.
66 Tribune, 9 August 1946.
67 Ibid., 19 October 1945. Tribune was converted from a weekly into a bi-weekly in March 1945.
daily Tribune could be expected 'soon', and in the following year the People's Printing and Publishing Society Ltd, one of whose objects was to bring out a daily Party newspaper, was formed.

The post-war front organisations

The front organisations of the Party were particularly active in the mid-forties. They enabled the Party to make contacts with non-Communist progressives, helped to prevent it becoming isolated in Australian society, and made it possible for the Party to influence sections of the community which the Party by itself could not reach.

Front organisations were invariably set up on Party initiative and were not the result of the taking over of existing organisations. They were created to promote some particular object, such as friendship with the Soviet Union, or to unite a professional group, such as writers, or to mobilise a particular section of the community, such as youth or women. Their membership included Party members, sympathisers, and idealists as well as those who, while they were aware that the organisational control of the fronts was in the hands of the Communists, nevertheless believed that the objects of the organisations were worthwhile. Usually the key positions of secretary and/or organiser were held by Communists while the relatively nominal positions of Chairman and/or President were held by eminent

68 Ibid., 6 March 1945.
69 Ibid., 1 October 1946. See also ibid., 9 July 1947.
non-Communists thus providing the fronts with an outward appearance of respectability. Communist 'fractions' within the fronts ensured that their activities did not conflict with the Party line.

The principal fronts in the immediate post-war period were the Eureka Youth League (E.Y.L.), the Australian Student Labor Federation (A.S.L.F.), the New Housewives' Association (N.H.A.), and the Australia-Russia Society (known in Victoria as Australia-Soviet House).

The E.Y.L. had been established in 1941 and was the successor to the Young Communist League and the League of Young Democrats. Catering for youth between the ages of 14 and 30, it achieved considerable popularity with young workers in Melbourne and Sydney since, at the time, it was one of the few bodies to provide recreational activities (especially dances and sporting functions) for this particular group. Brian Fitzpatrick remarked in 1944 that within the Labor movement 'only the Communist Party...has bothered to go in for systematic cultivation of the interests of young people, industrial, political, cultural, recreational.'

Although the E.Y.L. was not organisationally bound to the Communist Party, its National Secretary has always been a member of the Central Committee of the Party. Some years after the war the

---

70 Annals of the A.C.P.
Party's Political Committee issued a revealing statement on the
Communist Party's relations with the E.Y.L.:

The League is not a Communist Party organisation, nor
is it affiliated to the Communist Party. The League, because
it is a working class Socialist body, is the organisation which
stands closest to the Communist Party and regards the Party as
the highest form of class organisation of the working class.

The League draws its ideological guidance from the Commu­
nist Party and its Program, while retaining complete
organisational freedom and independence.72

The A.S.L.F. was founded in 194073 and from the outset dominated
by the Melbourne and Sydney University Labor Clubs which in turn were
dominated by a group of exceedingly able Communist student leaders,74
most of whom were ex-servicemen. Melbourne was the stronghold of
Communist student influence after the war and at its peak the
Melbourne University Party branch had 120 members while the Labor
Club in the same University numbered 400.75 Melbourne University
students have always been more liberal and internationally-minded
than their Sydney counterparts and Communism never exerted such a
strong appeal in Sydney. The influence of Melbourne University

72
Tribune, 12 March 1952.

73
For a brief history of A.S.L.F., see article by Roger Coates in
Communist Review, February 1953.

74
The most prominent Melbourne University Communist students were
Ian Turner, Stephen Murray-Smith, K.D. Gott and Noel Ebbels. A high
percentage of the immediate post-war students attracted to Communism
have since left the Party.

75
Barcan, op. cit., p. 7.
Communist students in the National Union of Australian University Students between 1945 and 1949 was extremely strong. 76

The N.H.A. was set up in New South Wales in 1946. Two years later a Victorian Branch was formed following a decision of the Victorian Housewives' Association that Communists, who had become influential in several Melbourne suburban branches, could not remain members. 77 At no time, however, did either the N.H.A. or Mrs Jessie Street's United Associations of Women, in which Communists were active, represent a threat to the well-entrenched Housewives' Association.

During the war a number of eminent Australians sponsored organisations such as Medical Aid to Russia, Sheepskins for Russia, Australia–Soviet House 78 and the Australian–Soviet Friendship League (which changed its name to the Australia–Russia Society in 1946). 79 Mrs Street was the first President of the Australia–Russia Society but was succeeded after a few months by Professor R.M. Crawford. The Society's Organising Secretary, Miss Jean Ferguson, was a Communist.

---

77 News-Weekly, 13 October 1948.
78 For a list of Australian–Soviet Friendship League sponsors, see Freedom, 4 December 1943. See also Australia–Soviet House, Melbourne, 1948.
79 For a brief survey of these organisations, see the article by Miss Jean Ferguson in Friendship, Summer 1960.
Most of the well-known Australian fronts were affiliated with international front organisations, e.g., the E.Y.L. with the World Federation of Democratic Youth; the A.S.L.F. (and the National Union of Australian University Students) with the International Union of Students; and the N.H.A. with the Women's International Democratic Federation. These international fronts periodically held World Congresses in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe to which the Australian fronts sent delegations.

In addition, some of the cultural bodies set up by the Communists achieved some success in the mid-forties, notably the New Theatre, the Studio of Realist Art and the Realist Film Association. At the time many leading non-Communist cultural figures were sympathetic towards the Soviet Union. The first two issues of the social realist Australian New Writing, which was published by the Communist Party, sold over 20,000 copies each. William Dobell, W.E. Pidgeon and Hal Missingham exhibited their paintings at a Party Art Exhibition; Peter Finch entertained at a Marx School concert; and Wilfred

81 Tribune, 15 February 1945.
82 Ibid., 26 June 1945.
83 Ibid., 18 January 1945.
Thomas of the A.B.C. appeared in a Tribune Carnival. Most of these non-Party progressives soon lost their war-time enthusiasm and the writers were the only cultural group to retain strong Communist influence until the end of the decade. A number of vigorous young Communist writers, notably Frank Hardy, Judah Waten and Eric Lambert joined well-established Communist writers such as Katharine Susannah Prichard, Jean Devanny and William Hatfield.

Although the general climate of opinion created by the Cold War led to the decline of the fronts, the strong stand adopted by the Labor Party was also of considerable importance since it prevented the fronts making any real headway among the A.L.P's left wing. However, the falling away of the memberships of the fronts in the late forties did not appear to trouble the Party leadership unduly. Such an attitude is understandable since the tough post-1947 International line meant that trade union affairs more than ever occupied most of the Party's activity.

The Communist Party in the 1946 Federal Election

The Party approached the 1946 Federal Election in an optimistic mood. The 1943 vote had been impressive and it was expected that the war-time enthusiasm for the Soviet Union would be converted into

---

84 Ibid., 24 August 1945.
85 See Chapter Three.
post-war Communist electoral support. The electoral successes registered by the French and Italian Parties in 1945 and early 1946 reinforced such expectations, while the Australian Party was at the peak of its power in the trade unions. Although the leadership did not expect a bloc of Communist candidates to be elected, at least a few successes were anticipated. J.B. Miles had declared at the 1945 Congress: 'We are going to see to it that Communists go to Canberra.'

It was hoped that a small Communist parliamentary group would eventually become a viable alternative Left to the A.L.P. within the party system at the parliamentary level. The Communist Party based its hopes for mass backing on the assumption that the workers were beginning to realise that the Labor Party had been trying to serve two masters — the bourgeoisie and the proletariat.

In the 1946 election, 14 Communists stood for House of Representatives seats: five in New South Wales; four in Victoria; two in South Australia; two in Queensland and one in Western Australia. Ten of these seats were urban working-class seats, one a farming seat and one an urban Liberal Party stronghold (Kooyong). The two remaining seats (both in Queensland) both contained urban working-class strongholds, although one was held by the A.L.P. and the other

---

86 Tribune, 14 August 1945.
87 The seat of Kooyong was often contested by the Party since it provided an opportunity to attack the sitting member, R.G. Menzies, on his home ground.
by the Country Party. The occupations of the Communist candidates were: Party functionaries - seven; trade union officials - three; layers - two; doctor - one; and farmer - one. In subsequent elections the proportion of Party functionaries remained fairly constant but the proportions of middle-class members of the professions and trade union officials declined and increased respectively.

The 14 candidates polled 64,811 votes but were all defeated. After making allowance for such factors as the position of the candidates on the ballot paper, changes in the size of electorates and the number of candidates, it is clear that the Communists did not poll as well as in 1943. For example, the Party vote fell in Herbert from 20,629 to 9,404, in Newcastle from 7,271 to 4,616, in Kooyong from 6,402 to 5,134 and in Perth 3,639 to 2,004. The A.L.P. vote also declined by comparison with its 1943 peak. The highest Communist vote was polled in Herbert where it constituted 15.58 per cent of the valid votes. Surprisingly, the figure in Kooyong was 6.42 per cent. In seven other seats, all of them urban working-class seats, the vote exceeded six per cent, but only in one of these did the vote exceed nine per cent (Hindmarsh - 10.08 per cent).

The Party's disappointing performance showed that its wartime popularity was on the wane. Public opinion was turning against it; the Cold War (a continuation of the pre-war hostility towards the Soviet Union) was becoming more and more intense; the Catholic hierarchy was redoubling its anti-Communist campaign; and Party
membership was declining. Membership fell from 16,280 in 1945 to 13,450 in 1946 and 12,108 in 1947. Furthermore, the Party was in acute financial difficulties because the trend of membership had been inaccurately predicted and over-budgeting had occurred at a time when income was falling sharply. Party newspaper circulation was also declining: between 1945 and 1948 sales of both Tribune and Communist Review declined by 2,000, Tribune was losing £100 an issue by 1948, and two of the Party's three Sydney bookshops had been forced to close.  

Publicly, the leadership attributed the Party's electoral setback in 1946 to the fact that many of its supporters did not fully understand the preferential voting system. R. Dixon claimed that many who would otherwise have voted Communist voted instead for the A.L.P. 'from fear of a Menzies-Fadden Government.' This claim could not have been serious, for remarkably few Labor Party preferences have gone to Communist candidates in the post-war Senate.

---

89 A.B., op. cit., p.32.
90 Loc. cit. Tribune's losses were subsidised by the Newsletter's profits. For a statement on the profitability of the Newsletter, see Tribune, 18 January 1945.
91 Ibid., 8 October 1946. Subsequent electoral reverses were explained away in a similar fashion (see ibid., 9 May 1947, and Communist Review, January 1950).
elections. The A.L.P. has invariably placed Communist candidates last on its official 'how-to-vote' cards. On the other hand, if the Communist Party had been assured of A.L.P. preferences, its electoral prospects would have improved considerably. As it was, the principal reason for the poor performance of the Party was the solidarity of the Labor Party vote.

The Party worked for the re-election of the Federal Labor Government in 1946, but there were few instances of formal co-operation between the two parties at the branch level. In contrast to the Australian Party, the British Party advocated an all-party 'National Government' in 1945, but this was probably due to the fact that Britain had been governed by a National Government during the war whereas in Australia a Labor Government had been in power. Moreover, Communists participated in a number of post-war coalition governments in Europe until 1947.

The Sharkey-Pollitt controversy

In late 1947 another change occurred in the international Communist line following the formation of the Cominform, although there had been signs of it some time before. Both the Western and Communist blocs had been growing further and further apart since

---

92 Occasionally, Communist preferences enabled the A.L.P. to retain or capture Federal and State seats.
93 *Tribune*, 24 September 1946.
1945. The newly created Cominform declared that the world was divided into only two camps, the 'peace-loving, democratic' bloc led by the Soviet Union, and the 'imperialist' bloc led by the United States. In its view there could be no third way; Labor Governments were firmly placed in the 'imperialist' bloc, and as a result came under increasingly heavy fire from the Communists as the tough line was implemented. As usual the Australian Party was quick to change and its concern with the implementation of the line led to public disagreement between the British and Australian Parties in 1948. This took the form of a series of strongly worded letters between Sharkey and the British Party Secretary, Harry Pollitt. The main issue in dispute was the British Party's alleged failure to follow the new line and Sharkey stated that British Party policy towards the British Labour Government did not change appreciably in late 1947 and 1948. Previously, in October 1947 Sharkey had criticized Pollitt's view that Britain was in a period of transition to Socialism. In the 1948 letters (which began in March and were not released until August), Sharkey accused the British leaders of supporting the 'class collaborationist' policies of the Attlee Government, particularly the latter's export drive.

which involved supporting the Marshall Plan. According to Sharkey these views were nothing less than 'Browderism applied to British conditions' which had 'reinforced social-democratic illusions among the masses.'

The British leaders rejected Sharkey's criticism but evaded the central issues by introducing extraneous material such as the Browderist views once held by Thornton. Eventually, the outcome of the dispute was that the British Party announced a sharp break with its previous policy and instructed its members to step up resistance to the Attlee Government's 'offensive' against the workers' living standards and also to press for wage increases and oppose Anglo-American co-operation.

Although News-Weekly compared Sharkey's role in the affair to that of the French Communist Jacques Duclos who had attacked Browder in 1945 and claimed that the Cominform could not act directly against the British Party since this would evoke nationalist Communist resistance, it seems clear that Sharkey did not in fact act on Cominform instructions but rather that he was concerned with doctrinal purity and that, since he was basically an ultra leftist, the

96 Ibid., 14 August 1948.
97 Loc. cit.
99 Ibid., 25 August 1948.
tough international line appealed to him personally more than the 1941–45 line. It is also possible that Sharkey's interest in the British Party was at least partly motivated by a desire to see the Australian Party displace the British Party as unofficial adviser to the Indian Communist Party. In one of his letters Sharkey accused Pollitt of possessing 'an incorrect understanding of the present-day manoeuvres of British imperialism in relation to the Colonial Revolution.'\textsuperscript{100} The British Party had been advocating that former British colonial territories should remain in the British Commonwealth while the Australians, in accordance with the new line, had been pressing for the complete independence of these territories.

At the Indian Communist Party Congress in February 1948, the Indian Party Secretary, P.C. Joshi, who, according to Sharkey (a fraternal delegate at the Congress) represented the 'opportunistic trend...which was largely influenced by the revisionism of Pollitt and Palme Dutt', was defeated by the leader of the left-wing faction, B.T. Ranadive. Sharkey's visit to India, however, assumed significant since, in the views of a number of historians specialising in Asian Communist Parties, his talks with Malayan Communist leaders en route to and returning from Calcutta were connected with the

\textsuperscript{100} \textit{Tribune}, 30 October 1948.
outbreak of the Malayan guerilla war in June 1948. However, at the time a number of Asian Parties were involved in civil wars and an intermediary between the Cominform and the Malayan Communists was completely unnecessary and, even if one had existed, he would probably have been a Chinese Communist or a World Federation of Trade Unions functionary. Sharkey supported the Malayan Communists in their 'struggle for national independence' but added that it was 'a matter for the Malayan themselves' as to whether they should start an insurrection and decide on its timing and conduct.102

Another indication of the acute sensitivity of the Australian Party in endorsing the new international line was its volte-face over Yugoslavia, which, although previously regarded as the model People's Democracy, was expelled from the Cominform in 1948. Immediately, the Australian Party denounced the Yugoslav leaders,103 but the only repercussion of the episode was the split in the small League for Democracy in Greece where the Communist majority expelled the President, Colonel A.W. Sheppard, and the Chairman, W.K. Fisher, for adopting a pro-Tito stand.104


102 Tribune, 14 August 1948.

103 Ibid., 17 July 1948, 7 August 1948.

After the war the Communist Party was not thought of as a patriotic organisation by large numbers of Australians and it quickly regained its pre-war reputation as an 'alien' body. However, the Party's leaders have never seen the Party as being controlled by a foreign power. Sharkey has claimed that the existence of Socialism in the Soviet Union at once establishes 'a community of interest' between Australian Communists and the Soviet Union:

Neither the Australian, nor any other Communist Party needs orders from Moscow. It is a question of studying the philosophy, the economic and political teaching of Marxism, and applying them to Australian problems.

He continued:

There is no question of subservience to a foreign power, but of workers of different countries pursuing...a similar or identical policy, because their common starting point is the struggle for Socialism and the application of Marxist principles to the great national and international questions as they arise.

The Australian Communist Party has no relations, official or otherwise, with the Soviet Government, nor did we ever have such relations.105

Sharkey, however, fails to distinguish between defending the Soviet Union against the sweeping attacks of anti-Socialists and the Australian Party's uncritical justification of all Soviet actions and policies.

At the domestic level the tough post-1947 line obliged the Party to stress its independence and to increase attacks on the

Labor Party. In addition, Australian nationalism became an important feature of Communist policy (in contrast to the stress on internationalism in the thirties) and the Party represented itself as the sole defender of Australian independence against the threat of United States domination. At the 1948 National Congress E.W. Campbell warned that the Federal Government's policy would lead to Australia being 'deprived of the last shred of national independence by the millionaire bankers of Wall Street.'


By the end of 1947 the optimism of the war years had disappeared. The establishment of the Cominform and the Soviet Union's refusal either to withdraw her armies from Eastern Europe or to settle for a tolerant peace treaty with Germany had resulted in a turn of feeling against her — and the Communist Parties in Western Countries suffered accordingly. Moreover, the rapidity with which the Australian Communist Party fell in with the changed Russian line revived the impression that it was no better than a foreign agency. Its attempts to exploit its trade union connections for political ends, particularly by excessive use of the strike weapon, did not improve matters. The change was startling. In 1945 the Party had stood a good chance

---

107 *Communist Review*, July 1948, p. 196.
of considerably extending its electoral base and of breaking through
to the parliamentary level in Australian politics; two years later
it found itself as isolated and as vulnerable as it had ever been
during the thirties. And yet its leaders persisted with strategies
which could only aggravate the position.

There was an air of recklessness about the way in which the Party
burned its bridges with the Labor Party. At the 1948 Congress,
Sharkey declared that the Party should not devote 'all our time and
ergy' towards the re-election of Labor Governments and at the same
time called for 'the maximum independent activity' on the part of
the Party.\footnote{Sharkey, op. cit., p.20.} Relations between the A.L.P. and the Communist Party
had been growing steadily worse since the great Communist-led strikes
began in 1945. Many A.L.P. leaders felt that they had been launched
to embarrass Labor Governments.\footnote{These suggestions were denied by Sharkey in \textit{Tribune}, 28 February 1947.}
Very few pieces of Labor legis­
lation received Party approval.\footnote{Exceptions being the N.S.W. Government's introduction of the
40-hour week and Chifley's attempt to nationalise the banks and
establish a national health scheme.} In the field of foreign affairs
the Communists since 1945 had harshly criticized the policies of
Dr H.V. Evatt, the Minister for External Affairs. As early as June
1945 Evatt was alleged to have 'moved to the Right of such Tory and
jingos organs as the London Observer and the Daily Mail. In the following year he was accused of intriguing against the Soviet Union, and the attacks continued until the Labor Government's defeat in 1949.

The period between 1947 and 1950 was characterised by the Party's failure to distinguish between the various wings of the A.L.P. The Australian Party stated that 'as the Rightwing of the Labor Party becomes more discredited, the more the ruling class relied on the Leftwing to keep the masses in check...and hold back the movement towards Socialism....in some conditions, the pseudo-Leftwing of Social Democracy can prove to be even more dangerous than the Right.' No attempt was made to drive a wedge between the Groupers and the middle-of-the-road reformists in the A.L.P. and the trade unions. By thus neglecting to exploit the divisions which troubled the A.L.P. and the trade union movement, the Australian Communists ensured not only their continued isolation within the Labor movement but the continued presence on their Right of a united Labor Party, still assured of the allegiance of those very social groups to which the Communists were anxious to appeal.

\[111\] Tribune, 14 June 1945.
\[112\] Ibid., 25 May 1946.
\[113\] See, e.g., ibid., 17 September 1946, 20 October 1948, 16 November 1949.
\[114\] Ibid., 14 August 1948.
During the period of the tough international line, Party membership remained fairly stable; in 1949 it was about 12,500.\footnote{115} A £40,000 Fighting Fund was launched by the Party in 1949 with the object, \textit{inter alia}, of establishing a daily newspaper,\footnote{116} but, although the Fund was successful, G.H. Prescott admitted that \textit{Tribune} sales had declined 'considerably' over the previous few years and sales would have to be increased before a daily could be considered.\footnote{117} The Party's electoral support also declined. In the New South Wales State electorates of Balmain, Bulli and Lakemba the Communist vote at the 1944, 1947 and 1950 elections respectively was: 5,186, 4,016, 4,668; 1,662, 2,174, 1,785; 1,063, 1,422, 678. At the 1947 New South Wales local government elections the results went heavily against the Party and all five Communists on the Kearsley Shire Council were defeated. Moreover, the mass unemployment anticipated by the Party had not arrived. Sharkey had predicted in 1946 an economic depression 'more severe than the prolonged crisis which broke out in 1929',\footnote{118} and he continued to make similar predictions.\footnote{119}

\footnote{115}{\textit{Alan Barcan}, \textit{loc. cit.}}
\footnote{116}{\textit{Tribune}, 5 March 1949.}
\footnote{117}{\textit{Communist Review}, September 1949, p.267.}
\footnote{118}{\textit{Tribune}, 22 February 1946.}
\footnote{119}{\textit{Ibid.}, 21 January 1947, 5 January 1949, 22 June 1949. In Sharkey's favour, it must be recalled that an economic depression during this period was predicted by a number of academic economists and a number of A.L.P. members.
The Communist vote in the 1949 Federal Election

By the 1949 Federal Election the Party's attitude towards the Labor Party had become extremely unfavourable. R. Dixon declared that 'Only in minor details' did the Liberal and Country Parties differ from the A.L.P.: 'It is an illusion to believe that the Labour Party is a lesser evil'. Sharkey wrote that although a Labor Government was to be preferred to a non-Labor Government 'We cannot say that it is beneficial to elect the Labour Party candidates'. He also alleged that Chifley, Calwell and McKenna were 'the main instrument of the capitalists in their struggle against the... working class'. Immediately before the Federal Election Tribune declared: 'A sober analysis of Labor Party and 'Liberal'–Country Party policies shows only differences of degree, with the Menzies–Fadden clique more blatantly pro-fascist, pro-banker, pro-monopoly and pro-war.' This paper also stated that whichever of the major political parties was successful 'the Australian workers...will have to counter fascist-like onslaughts against their rights to speak, to organise, to strike, to defend their living standards'.

---

120 Communist Review, April 1949, p.109.
121 Ibid., p.113.
122 Ibid., p.113.
123 Tribune, 24 August 1949.
124 Ibid., 7 December 1949.
125 Ibid., 10 December 1949.
More communists contested the 1949 Federal Election than the previous election because of the emphasis placed on the Party's independent role in the Labor movement. All 35 candidates who contested House of Representatives seats lost their deposits and the total Communist vote was only 40,941. The highest vote recorded was 3,729 (9.58 per cent of the valid votes) in the New South Wales coalfields seat of Hunter. Although the Party certainly realised that it had no chance of success candidates were nominated because elections provide an excellent opportunity to present the views of the Party to the public.

The 1949 Communist Senate vote of 87,958 was, surprisingly, the highest ever recorded by the Party. In Victoria, where the Communist team gained the vital first place on the ballot paper, 41,476 votes were polled, while in New South Wales, where the Party was much stronger, only 26,677 votes were polled. The lower vote in New South Wales can be largely attributed to the Communist team's having been placed fourth on the ballot paper. However, at least this enables us to assume that the number of unintentional Communist votes in New South Wales was not abnormally high whereas in Victoria the reverse was certainly the case.

Since Communists did not contest all the House of Representatives seats the Communist Senate vote in New South Wales makes it possible

---

125 Communists did not contest the Senate in either 1943 or 1946.
to gain a good impression of the regional distribution of Communist votes.

**COMMUNIST SENATE VOTE, N.S.W., 1949***.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>C.P. Vote Percentage Range,**</th>
<th>Number of Federal Electorates</th>
<th>Number of Electorates held by A.L.P.</th>
<th>Liberal Party</th>
<th>Country Party</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-1</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-2</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-3</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Represented 1.70 per cent of valid votes.

** As percentage of valid votes.

The picture that emerges from the above table is that the Party is strongest in seats held comfortably by the A.L.P. In fact, the geographical distribution of Communist votes is strikingly similar to that of the Labor Party. The Party is weakest in farming seats (and seats containing large country towns), and it is strongest in mining and urban working-class seats. The three divisions (corresponding to House of Representatives electorates) in which Communists polled over 3 per cent of the valid votes were West Sydney (3.98), Cunningham (4.44) and Hunter (7.51), the two last-named divisions containing strong mining settlements. However, in these three seats we find pockets of Communist strength:

That the Communist vote in East Sydney (2.86 per cent) was lower than in West Sydney can be explained to some extent by the fact that the Labor M.H.R. for West Sydney, D. Minogue, was on the Right of the A.L.P. whereas East Sydney's E.J. Ward was on the Left of the A.L.P. Ward's liberal-anarchist streak appealed to potential Communist voters.
the subdivision of Darlinghurst (6.61) in West Sydney; the sub-
divisions of Woonoona (6.44), Keira (6.06) and Thirroul (6.01) in
Cunningham; and the subdivisions of Kurri Kurri (12.49), Weston
(9.06), West Wallsend (8.94), and Cessnock (8.92) in Hunter. More-
over, within the division of Darling (where the Communist vote
represented 2.40 per cent of the votes), the Communist vote rose as
high as 4.32 and 3.60 per cent, in the subdivisions of Broken Hill
South and Broken Hill North respectively.

The low Communist vote in the countryside indicates that the
Party devotes too much of its time attempting to woo small farmers
and farm labourers. The Party continues to think of Australian small
farmers as the equivalent to the European peasantry but this group
cannot be compared to the depressed peasantries of Europe. The
latter have enabled Radical parties, including the European Communist
parties in France and Italy, to expand outside the cities. At the
turn of the century the Australian small farmers did have some
radical potential which took the form of demands for State credit,
marketing boards and so forth, but once these demands had been met,
y they became increasingly conservative and, to some extent, came to
support the Country Party. The small farmers may be considered as
sharing many values with the urban middle class and the Party is
acting unrealistically in continuing to claim that Socialism will be
introduced in Australia by the 'workers-farmer alliance'.

127

This pamphlet, the Party's Agrarian Programme, was careful to point
out that small farmers would not lose their land.
At the close of the forties the Communist Party found itself once more isolated and exposed at the Left fringe of the Australian Party system. Its support for the Soviet Union's foreign policy, its obedience of Cominform directives and, within Australia, its unqualified attacks on the A.L.P. had left it without friends. What influence it retained was the product of its continued hold on the militant trade unions, but here again its failure to hold the coal-miners on strike beyond August 1949 constituted an industrial defeat of the first magnitude. Furthermore, in the context of the rising wave of anti-Communism isolation meant extreme vulnerability. Given the public mood of late 1949, and the return to power of the non-Labor parties, it could only be a matter of time before serious attempts were made to impose legal sanctions on the Communist Party. This was the Party's problem in Australian society. But its internal problems were equally pressing; Sharkey was now faced with the extremely difficult task of pretending that, in shunning opportunities to invite mass support and in provoking the hostility of the A.L.P., the Party was pursuing the correct strategy in terms of Australian conditions. Although he continued to talk of the impending revolutionary crisis, and of the victory of Socialism on a world scale, it was becoming increasingly obvious that it was fanciful to count on revolution in Australia. But the leaders continued to whistle in the dark. Objective conditions, they believed, would change, and until this occurred, the Party must retain its integrity and prevent
the rank and file from losing heart. Something of this mood was expressed by R. Dixon after the disappointing performance of the Communist candidates at the 1946 Federal Election:

    It is a very difficult matter for a new political party to break through the existing parliamentary political machine ...which the people traditionally vote for. In the past many new parties have attempted to break through...but failed. We will succeed because we are much more than a parliamentary party and do not depend upon election successes for our existence.128

128 Tribune, 8 October 1940.
Only amongst trade unionists has the Communist Party establi­shed an important following in Australia. Why was this so? Part of the answer lies in the policies adopted by the Party in its relations with various trade unions, and part of it lies in the character of the trade union movement itself. But a further question arises. As we shall see the extension of Communist influence in the trade unions has always been checked, and firmly checked, within certain limits. It is important to determine why such limits exist and what effect they have on the Communist Party in the field of industrial relations. The significance of this subject is at once apparent. As we have noted, the Communist Party is isolated and exposed within Australian society; one of its defences is its tight, centralised organisation, which would permit it to move underground in the event of repression; another is its connection with the trade union movement, its one real access to institutional power in the Australian State. This chapter deals with the nature and implications of that connection up to and including the great coal strike of 1949.

Trade unionists and the State

At the turn of the century the Australian economy was still heavily dependent on the export markets provided by the United
Kingdom. Wool, minerals, and various pastoral products were Australia's main export commodities; local manufacturing was still confined to such fields as food processing, furniture making, garment manufacture, and machinery repairing. The working class in the main cities was composed of labourers in small concerns, where the master-servant relationship was usually a personal one. Only the pastoral workers, the miners and workers connected with certain parts of the transport system (the railways, the wharves, the coastal shipping services) were used to thinking of themselves as a class in conflict with the capitalists, at home and abroad.

The early Australian trade unions (such as the Friendly Society of Carpenters and Joiners, founded in 1845, and the Amalgamated Society of Engineers, established in 1852) were essentially craft unions, concerned with negotiating for better wages and conditions but without resort to violent strike action. After the gold rushes, which left the colonies with a healthy labour market, wage levels were generally higher than their English equivalents, with the result that the workers concentrated mainly on obtaining better conditions and terms of work. The era of militant unionism was ushered in with the formation in the seventies and eighties of the Amalgamated Miners' Association, of seamen's unions in Sydney and Melbourne, of the waterside workers' unions, and of the Amalgamated Shearers' Union (a forerunner of the Australian Workers' Union). By the late eighties many of these were organised on an inter-state
basis and had been instrumental in forming Trades Halls or Trades and Labor Councils in the main cities. Their militancy derived partly from their size (the A.M.A. had 13,000 members in 1886, and the Amalgamated Shearers' Union had 22,500 in 1889), which gave them a feeling of strength and solidarity in their relations with the employers; partly from the fact that many of their members had been drawn from overseas labouring communities with militant traditions (this was particularly true of the miners); and partly from their contacts with working-class movements in the United Kingdom, France and the United States.

Before 1890 the unions, whether craft or militant, had been reasonably successful in obtaining concessions from the employer groups and from the State legislatures, but between 1890 and 1894 there occurred a series of strikes and lock-outs which had all the appearance of an all-out clash between Labour and Capital in Australia. As such, it accentuated the militancy of the larger unions (except, significantly, the A.W.U.) and prompted the mass of craft unionists to take part in establishing the political Labor Parties and to demand a more orderly and equitable method of settling industrial disputes. Within twenty years of the great strikes a complicated conciliation and arbitration system had been erected in the various States, capped by the Commonwealth Conciliation and Arbitration Court. Most disputes were now settled within the framework of this system, which also became the means of adjusting wage
rates in accordance with various estimates of cost-of-living scales. In the process, trade unionists became reconciled to the settlement of grievances within the legal framework thus provided, with the result that the various industrial courts and wage boards became important instruments of social control while continuing to serve as regulatory agencies. The innate reformism of the craft unionists found its institutional expression as much in the arbitration system as in the Labor Party.

Australian Socialists appreciated this fact from the outset, but many of them hoped that the coming of large manufacturing industries would alter the character of working-class politics. However, the expansion of Australian secondary production in the last five decades has not produced the changes which were expected. The growth of iron, steel and textile manufacturing in particular has led to the establishment of many large concerns (in 1957–58 there were 1,689 factories employing over 100 workers each) and to the creation of several industrial complexes (such as Port Kembla, Wollongong and Newcastle), in which a true industrial proletariat now exists. However, the protective tariffs of the inter-war period have had the effect of helping to maintain the small manufacturing sector which survived from the nineteenth century. Thus, in 1957–58, fully 21,000 of the 54,000 factories in Australia were employing under four workers apiece.¹

The expansion of the workforce occasioned by industrial growth has been contained within the institutional structure established before the First World War. The first effect of the arbitration system was to encourage the proliferation of trade unions (their number trebled between 1906 and 1921), but since the early twenties the trend has been towards rationalisation, with like unions merging to provide more efficient representation of their members. By 1959 there were 369 unions, with 1,851,000 members, as compared with 354 unions (with 791,000 members) in 1935, and 382 (with 703,000 members) in 1921.\(^2\) Satisfaction with the arbitration system has been widespread (except during the depression period) with the result that the unions have come to include a higher proportion of the working class than any other western country; 44.7 per cent of the total of adult employees in Australia had been unionised by 1935, and this proportion has now reached a level of between 58 and 59 per cent.\(^3\) Throughout this period the machinery of arbitration has been continually refined to cope with the growth of the unions and the increased complexity of industrial relations. Had the arbitration system proved unable to adjust itself to the changing circumstances, the trade unions might have reverted to the methods of free bargaining which were used

\(^2\) Figures (which allow for interstate duplication) from ibid., p.464; 1936, p.569; 1922, p.853.

\(^3\) Figures from ibid., 1960, p.465; 1936, p.571.
during the nineteenth century. The result would probably have been a drastic reduction in the number of unions, an improvement in their organisational efficiency, and an increased militancy amongst trade unionists in general. But because the arbitration system persisted (despite the stresses of the depression period) most unions have remained comfortably reformist in their outlook, easy-going in their organisational methods, and anti-radical (if not anti-Labor) in their politics. The Australian Council of Trade Unions (A.C.T.U.), established in 1927, has remained a loosely organised association of the unions, reflecting more the character of the smaller and craft unions than that of the larger unions.

The traditionally militant unions, such as those representing the various groups of transport workers, the watersiders and the miners, were joined in the inter-war period by a new group of radical unions representing the workers of the large factories. In the thirties, for example, the Federated Ironworkers' Association, the Sheet Metal Workers' Union and the Amalgamated Engineering Union came to the fore.

Communist strategies and the trade unions

The Communists, in their policy towards the trade unions, were forever coming up against the limits which the arbitration system created for them. While it was possible for them to exercise some influence in the affairs of the militant unions, they found it virtually impossible to make much headway in the smaller craft unions
and in the hierarchial conservative unions such as the A.W.U. An
awareness of this difficulty probably informed Sharkey's statement
that:

The function of Arbitrationist legalism is to prevent strike
struggles and to enforce the acceptance, by law, of a low
standard of living. It will at once be seen that Arbitration
is detrimental to the development of the class struggle and
class consciousness and of that genuine and fundamental
solidarity and perfected organisation necessary to the revo­

Campbell, taking the same line, depicted the arbitration system as
'a liberal capitalist and not a working class measure.'\footnote{Loc. cit.} Sharkey
went even further in describing it as a means of keeping the workers
'eternally shackled to the capitalist class'.\footnote{L.L. Sharkey, The Trade Unions, Revised ed., Sydney, 1959, p.20.}

In their relations with the trade unions, the Communists
observed two general principles. One was to identify themselves
with the traditions associated with the militant unions, the other
was to work within the arbitration system where they had achieved
union leadership - but only as a means to the end of weaning the
unions away from that system in the long run. In keeping with the
first of these principles, the Communist Party has stressed the
importance of the strike tradition in industrial relations, while
at the same time pointing out that the strike weapon should be used for political as well as economic purposes. To quote again from Sharkey:

Despite arbitration and reformism, the Australian trade union movement has a tremendous record of strike struggles and great fighting traditions.

The Communists must base themselves on these traditions, popularise them...showing that it was these struggles, and not arbitration court decisions, that really established the living conditions of the Australian masses.\(^7\)

But Sharkey was also aware of the need for ruse and contrivance:

until the majority of unionists are convinced of the real damage done to the working class under the arbitration system, communists have to represent their unions in the various tribunals set up by this legislation. In this way they avoid losing contact with the masses.\(^8\)

From the outset, then, the Communists set themselves to work within the existing trade union structure (and to accept the arbitration system for tactical purposes) rather than embarking on the alternative course of forming their own trade unions on specifically Communist lines. Having gained access to the existing trade unions, however, the Communists then faced the problem of deciding to what lengths their acceptance of trade union customs, especially in the matter of strikes for economic purposes and of settling disputes peacefully and legally, was to be carried. By

\(^7\) Ibid., p.22.
\(^8\) Ibid., p.21.
accepting these customs they were in fact helping to sanctify the institutions they were committed to break down, and admitting the separation of their policy in trade unions from their policy as a revolutionary party. The conflict of aims here has never been resolved. While the Communist leaders have been anxious to extend their Party's hold over the unions, they have also been concerned to use this hold to further the Party's general strategy within the party system. Hence their recurring emphasis on the need to regard the strike weapon as a political weapon, that is, as a means of increasing the workers' awareness of their revolutionary role in society. Sharkey, having deplored the widespread vogue of 'economism' (a preoccupation with wages and work conditions) amongst unionists, went on to point out:

Political strikes are a higher form of struggle than economic strikes. Such strikes challenge the Government, the State, the rule of the capitalist class. One of our chief trade union tasks is the politicisation of strikes. 9

These two aims are not strictly compatible. There has always been a tension between the Party's policy of infiltrating the trade unions and that of using its trade union influence to 'politicise' strikes.

Communism in the trade unions during the inter-war period

A few of the Communist Party's early leaders, notably J. Garden and J. Howie of the New South Wales Labor Council, were prominent

9 Ibid., p.30.
in the trade union movement but most of its leaders after the mid-twenties were drawn from outside the ranks of senior trade union officialdom. It was not until the thirties that Communists were again to attain key posts in large unions and strong bases in several important industries were acquired. During this decade many of the Party's younger members became active trade union cadres. In many ways, the Party at this period was turned into an organisation of militant trade unionists.

Communists were elected to the following positions in the thirties: W. Orr, General Secretary of the Miners' Federation (1933); C. Nelson, President of the Miners' Federation (1934); Dr Lloyd Ross, Secretary of the New South Wales Branch of the Australian Railways' Union (A.R.U.) (1935); T. Wright, Secretary of the New South Wales Branch of the Sheet Metal Workers' Union (1936); J. Healy, General Secretary of the Waterside Workers' Federation (W.W.F.) (1937); E. Thornton, National Secretary of the Federated Ironworkers' Association (F.I.A.) (1937); T. Garland, Secretary of the South Australian Branch of the Gas Employees' Union (1937); and D. Thomson, Secretary of the Building Trades Federation in Victoria (1938).

Several of these unions already had an established tradition of militant strike action before the Communists took over their leadership, but several of the new unions were introduced to militant industrial politics by the Communists. The Communist trade union leaders were mostly young, energetic and able men and they were able to infuse new
ideas and policies into a movement which had been partly demoralised and weakened by the depression. The officials whom the Communists replaced were mainly old and tired reformists, whereas their Communist successors were easily able to identify themselves with a tradition of unionist militancy which dated from the days of the I.W.W. and the One Big Union. In addition, their task of winning and maintaining control was made easy by the lack of interest which many unionists displayed in union affairs. As Dr Lloyd Ross has written:

Communists attend meetings regularly, they are eager to take office, they are ready to take the thankless job of shop steward, and they are tireless in raising industrial issues. Disciplined by their creed and their party, they conquer personal ambition, put aside jealousies, and follow a carefully prepared plan in every meeting they attend.10

Thus, one should not overestimate the difficulty in actually gaining trade union positions in this period. Once having achieved power, the Communists, through their ability to obtain concrete concessions, gained the support of a large section of the members of their unions, although most of these were (and would remain) A.L.P. supporters during elections. The majority of members of the governing bodies of unions with Communist secretaries were Labor Party supporters but most of them approved of the militant industrial stand adopted by the Communists.

Having established important positions in the unions, the Communists could have proceeded to establish breakaway unions in certain industries. In fact, such a strategy was attempted in only one case, when the Pastoral Workers' Industrial Union broke away from the A.W.U. in the early thirties. The Communists in the A.W.U. found that the union's right-wing leadership was determined to crush left-wing opposition and, since the international line of the period stressed the Party's independence and sanctioned attacks on the 'social-fascists', an attempt to form an alternative (and Communist-controlled) pastoral workers' union was attempted. The experiment failed and was not repeated, not only because the Party line softened in the mid-thirties but also because it became doubly clear that any breakaway union would suffer gravely if it were not recognised by the Arbitration Court. With this exception, therefore, the Communists chose to work within the existing union framework in the hope that their militant attitudes would belie their acceptance of reformist practice.

Communists in the trade unions during World War II

During World War II, the Communists consolidated the victories of the thirties and made heavy gains in many other unions. Until the Soviet Union entered the war in 1941, Communists were opposed to the war effort and continued to press for increased wages even if such a policy involved frequent strikes (as indeed it did on the coalfields in 1940). Communist industrial policy between 1939 and
1941 was neatly summed up by Thornton when he stated that his
union, the F.I.A., had
deliberately and in a planned way been involved in more
strikes than other unions in the last few years. These were
not just the sporadic strikes that are typical of the
coalfields, but planned strikes, because we made strikes out
business.11

These strikes led A.W. Fadden, the Acting Prime Minister, to admit
that he would prefer even Hitler to 'Union Leftists'.12 Yet because
a considerable number of trade unionists felt that the war was both
remote and unreal, the Party's opposition to the 'phony war' did
not result in a setback to its industrial strength. Moreover, the
presence of a non-Labor Federal Government merely accentuated this
feeling among unionists.

After the German invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941,
however, the Party's industrial policy changed completely and
Communists began to advocate industrial conscription, wage-pegging,
overtime, the suppression of strikes and the extension of compulsory
military service. As Sharkey stated in 1942:

Increased production, efficiency, continuity of work,
were now as important as strikes in other phases of develop­
ment. This constituted the new forms of the class struggle.13

11 E. Thornton, Trade Unions and the War, Sydney, 1942, p.12.
12 News, Adelaide, 10 February 1941.
13 Sharkey, op. cit., p.43.
R. Dixon declared that even the objective of Socialism was to be 'completely subordinated to the winning of the war.' When the Party was declared legal again in 1942, the Communists undertook, in the words of Dr H.V. Evatt, the Attorney-General, 'to do all in their power to assist in the effectual prosecution of the war' and to 'do their utmost to promote harmony in industry, to minimise absenteeism, stoppages, strikes or other hold-ups.' From the industrial standpoint, the Party was fortunate in that the great majority of trade unionists whole-heartedly supported the war between 1941 and 1945, particularly after the entry of Japan and the Soviet Union into the war and the formation of the Curtin Labor Government, although Trotskyites and Lang Labor supporters continued to press for militant industrial action.

Between 1939 and 1945 Communists were elected to the following important trade union positions: E.V. Elliott, Federal Secretary of the Seamen's Union (1940); J.R. Hughes, Secretary of the New South Wales Branch of the Federated Clerks' Union (F.C.U.) (1942); and E.J. Rowe was elected to the three-member Commonwealth Council of the Amalgamated Engineering Union (A.E.U.) in 1943. In addition, Communist strength was consolidated in the F.I.A., the W.W.F., and the Seamen's Union. The F.I.A., in particular, expanded its

---

14 S.H.H., 9 August 1943.
15 Ibid., 18 December 1942.
membership considerably during the war because of the rapid industrialisation of the Australian economy and became one of the principal trade unions (catering mainly for unskilled and semi-skilled workers). Together with the A.E.U., in which the Communists gained many leading positions, the F.I.A. dominated the Metal Trades Federation, established in 1943. There is not space here to list all the Party's advances in the trade union movement, but it is worthy of note that the Communists established themselves in two well-known middle-class unions, the New South Wales Teachers' Federation and Actors' Equity. Throughout the war the Party suffered only one important reverse. This occurred when Dr Lloyd Ross resigned from its membership in 1940 and successfully resisted all subsequent attempts to displace him from his post as Secretary of the New South Wales Branch of the A.R.U. The situation in the Miners' Federation at the same time provides an interesting contrast; a Communist, W. Orr, was its General Secretary on the outbreak of war, and when he retired through ill health in 1940 his place was taken by a Labor man, G.W.S. Grant. Grant, however, co-operated with the Communist officials of the Federation, and when C. Nelson, one of the Communist officials, resigned his Party membership in 1940, he was succeeded at the next election held shortly afterwards by another Communist, H.C. Wells.

Apart from unconditionally supporting the war effort, Communist union officials sought to amalgamate a number of closely related unions into large industrial unions. Most of these attempts were
unsuccessful although the Munition Workers' Union was finally merged with the F.I.A. The main resistance to these amalgamation moves came from right-wing and Catholic trade unionists, who were deeply hostile to Communism and whose views were reflected in Freedom (the forerunner of News-Weekly). Freedom maintained that one of the main points of Communist industrial policy was

Amalgamation of as many unions into as few groups as possible, so as to facilitate, when ready, The General Strike, as a prelude to, Bloody Revolution! 16

Those Communists who held key posts in the trade unions were not only frequently consulted by the Federal Government on industrial matters but some of them were appointed as members of governmental agencies; for example, in 1942 J. Healy and E.C. Roach of the W.W.F. became members of the Stevedoring Industry Commission and in the same year E.V. Elliott of the Seamen's Union joined the Maritime Industry Commission. Close co-operation also developed during the war between the Communists and a considerable number of leading traditionalist 17

16 Freedom, 2 January 1946.
17 The term 'traditionalist' is used to distinguish middle-of-the-road reformist trade unionists from (a) the Communists and the militants who agree with them on industrial as well as many political issues, and (b) the newly-emerging 'Movement' men and other right-wing unionists who were later to become enthusiastic supporters of the post-war Industrial groups. The former group are opposed to the arbitration system and regard the strike weapon as an important means of securing gains for the unions, while the latter group believe quite the reverse. Those trade unionists who fit into neither category are the traditionalists whose distinguishing characteristics
unionists, many of whom believed that a united front of all working-class political parties was desirable. The traditionalists with such views were mainly to be found in New South Wales. In Victoria, on the other hand, the A.L.P. declared in 1943 that if an official of an affiliated union opposed a Labor Party candidate at a Federal, State or local government election then the union to which he belonged was to be disaffiliated. In the other States, however, Communist-controlled unions remained affiliated with the Labor Party. It was not possible for Communists to represent such unions at A.L.P. Conferences but militant A.L.P. members were always chosen for this role. These were never sufficiently numerous to constitute an important voting bloc. During elections Communist-controlled unions distributed funds both to the Labor Party and the Communist Party, usually in the proportions of three to two respectively.

As we have seen, the two major periods of Communist expansion in the unions (1935-39 and 1942-45) were those in which the Party's political strategy did not involve extensive use of the strike weapon

17 (continued)
are that they are A.L.P. supporters who are mistrustful of the political wing of the Labor Party and that their attitude to both the arbitration system and strikes is not clear-cut but rather pragmatic.

18


Disaffiliated unions in Victoria soon included the A.R.U., the F.I.A., the B.W.I.U. and the Seamen's Union. This group were subsequently joined by the F.C.U.

19

See, e.g., Tribune, 20 August 1946.
for political ends (except for a few cases, such as the Waterside Workers' refusal to load pig-iron for Japan in 1938). This enabled the Party's trade union cadres to exploit economic strikes and the rituals of winning concessions through the arbitration system without hindrance from the Central Committee. The united front of the anti-fascist period and the national front of the wartime period were both political strategies suited to the maximum Communist penetration in the trade union field. Had the national front strategy been projected well into the post-war period, and had the Party's relatively high wartime popularity been maintained, this penetration might well have become deeper and wider. Instead, conditions changed radically; the workers' enthusiasm for the war effort was succeeded by their frustration with their living standards in the post-war inflation; the development of the Cold War obliged the Australian Communists once more to reorient their strategy; anti-Communist feeling became increasingly intense. Under the impact of these conditions, the Communists' trade union policy changed from one of penetration to one of exploitation for political purposes.

Communism in the trade unions after World War II

Communist power in the trade unions reached its peak in 1945. An American observer has remarked:

The Communist party, through its trade-union power, emerged from the war as a force in economic and political thinking
in Australia unknown in any other country of the English-speaking world.\textsuperscript{20}

He also estimated that Communist-controlled unions in 1945 had a membership of about 275,000 out of a total of 1,200,000 Australian trade unionists.\textsuperscript{21} Communist-controlled unions did in fact cover every basic industry at the Federal level (with the exception of the A.W.U., whose right-wing leadership effectively if somewhat crudely prevented the Communists making any headway in the union\textsuperscript{22}). However, in spite of the fact that the Communists and their militant allies were the strongest group in the trade unions, they were never as strong as has been suggested subsequently.\textsuperscript{23} Moreover, their power was not accurately reflected at either the A.C.T.U. Congress in 1945 or in the State Trades and Labor Councils mainly because the


\textsuperscript{21} \textit{Loc. cit.}

\textsuperscript{22} For a description of the methods whereby the A.W.U's Federal leadership dismissed the militant N.S.W. Executive of the union in 1944, see \textit{Communist Review}, December 1944\textsuperscript{30}. Some years later the A.W.U. officially excluded Communists from holding any position in the union (\textit{News-Weekly}, 9 February 1949).

\textsuperscript{23} See Tom Truman, \textit{Catholic Action and Politics}, Melbourne, 1959, p. 149, and B.A. Santamaria, \textit{Catholics in the Fight Against Communism}, roneoed, 1956. Santamaria estimated that there were 'at least half a million' members of Communist-controlled unions while Truman makes wildly exaggerated claims as to Communist strength in the State Trades and Labor Councils.
delegate selection methods adopted by these bodies strongly favoured small right-wing and traditionalist-controlled craft unions. The A.C.T.U. as well as the important New South Wales Labor Council and the Melbourne Trades Hall Council remained under the control of the officials of these small craft unions.

It was only in Queensland that the Communists controlled a State Trades and Labor Council. Communist control in this case was made safe for some time by the defection of a number of right-wing unions, notably the A.W.U., in the mid-forties. Communists also controlled the Newcastle Trades Hall Council, the Illawarra Trades and Labor Council and a number of other provincial Councils in Queensland and Victoria. However, one must remember that there was much common ground in this period between the Communists and their militant allies and a considerable number of traditionalists.

These groups together constituted a majority — on most issues — at both the 1943 and the 1945 A.C.T.U. Congresses. The former Congress had decided by 130 votes to 120 to press for a 'united front of all working-class bodies for a hundred per cent war effort.'

Although the alliance of Communists, militants and some traditionalists was able to push through the 1945 Congress a number of motions

---

24 *Tribune*, 8 November 1946. See also the figures cited by a Communist, L. Maxwell, relating to the Melbourne Trades Hall delegate representation as reported in *News-Weekly*, 26 May 1948.

strongly favoured by the Party, including the election of Thornton as A.C.T.U. delegate to the international trade union conference in Paris from which emerged the World Federation of Trade Unions (W.F.T.U.)\(^{26}\), it cannot be argued, as Tom Truman has done, that the Communists 'captured' the Congress.\(^{27}\) Communist delegates were in a decided minority but the general mood favoured their kind of approach on many issues. Moreover, middle-of-the-road reformists and right-wing officials dominated the Interstate Executive of the A.C.T.U. The Left miscalculated in not opposing to re-election of P.J. Clarey to the A.C.T.U. Presidency, for it was Clarey who later was largely responsible for the anti-Communist policy adopted by the Interstate Executive after the war. In 1945 the Left had a reasonable chance, had it so desired, of removing him from his position.

Nevertheless, Thornton termed the Congress 'the greatest...ever held'\(^{28}\) and the Communists were particularly pleased that two important amendments were made to the A.C.T.U. Constitution. The first related to the procedure of electing the Interstate Executive, ten of whose fourteen members were previously chosen by the five State

\(^{26}\) For a description of the important part played by Thornton in the formation of the W.F.T.U., see Betty Wallace, World Labour Comes of Age, London, 1945, pp.22–3, 102, 104–5, 107, 144.

\(^{27}\) Tom Truman, loc. cit. For denials of Communist control of the A.C.T.U. Congress in 1945, see Tribune, 14 June 1945; Cecil H. Sharpley, op. cit., p.67; Lloyd Ross, op. cit., p.218.

\(^{28}\) Tribune, 14 June 1945.
Trades and Labor Councils while the remaining four were selected by Congress itself. Under the amendment each State Trades and Labor Council would elect only one member of the Executive and the remainder would all be chosen by Congress. Such a change was obviously to the benefit of the Communists, and of the five additional Executive members chosen by the 1945 Congress, three were Communists, one a militant ally and one a traditionalist. However, the majority of State Trades and Labor Councils refused to ratify the change, an action which infuriated the Communists since a number of unions not affiliated with and antagonistic towards the A.C.T.U., such as the A.W.U., were affiliated with the State Trades and Labor Councils and thus able to have some say in the determination of A.C.T.U. policy. The Communists were also disgruntled by the fact that a number of Communist-controlled provincial Trades and Labor Councils representing more trade unionists than the Hobart Trades and Labor Council did not possess any voice in the determination of the A.C.T.U. Interstate Executive's composition. The second constitutional amendment whereby A.C.T.U. Congress decisions would be binding on State Branches was ratified by the branches in spite of strong right-wing opposition to such a move.

Following the end of the war, there was a wave of strikes, many of which involved Communist-controlled unions and were carried out in defiance of A.C.T.U. policy. Since Labor Governments were in power at the Federal level and in most of the States, these disputes
led right-wing and many moderate A.L.P. leaders to feel that they were primarily directed against the Labor Party. However, in this period, the rank-and-file of many unions were eager for more direct action in view of the fact that wages, which had been pegged during the war, were now depreciating in a steep inflationary wave. The Communists made no attempt to calm down the discontented workers and welcomed the return to strike methods. Even in 1945 H.C. Wells of the Miners' Federation could state:

We are not going to rely on arbitration - we are going to rely on the labor movement and our own strength, initiative and ability and the justice of our claims to gain our objectives in the future.  

To separate the political and industrial factors which produced these strikes would be well-nigh impossible, but it would seem that the disputes were largely the outcome of industrial grievances. Sharkey claimed they sprang from 'deep-rooted economic causes' while even News-Weekly admitted that the Victorian transport strike in 1946 had undeniable economic causes.

Communist trade union officials also performed an important role, often neglected by their opponents for obvious reasons, in the historic campaign for a 40-hour week. This campaign was condemned

29 Ibid., 14 September 1945.
30 Ibid., 28 February 1947.
31 News-Weekly, 23 October 1946.
by right-wing trade unionists and was not encouraged either by the 
A.C.T.U. Interstate Executive or by the various Labor Governments. 
It was largely the unceasing pressure from the Communists and their 
militant allies which led the New South Wales Labor Government in 
the first place to grant the shorter working week to State Govern-
ment workers, after which the Commonwealth Arbitration Court followed 
suit.

Until late 1947 the strikes in Communist-controlled unions 
were remarkably successful. All of them, apart from two to be 
examined shortly, were primarily economic in origin and had widespread 
support from the rank-and-file. Sir Charles Lowe stated in 1950 that 
there is much evidence to show that the strikers have at 
times secured substantial gains by their action, and these 
gains in their turn have added greatly to the prestige of 
Communist union officials and consolidated the power of the 
C.P. and these officials in the unions.32

He also noted that these officials were anxious, for political 
motives, to retain their positions should a revolutionary situation 
arise:

I think the proper conclusion from the evidence before 
me is that where strikes have occurred under Communist 
leadership or influence, the purpose has been really, in 
the first place, to gain the advantages sought in the men's 
demands. I think, however, that the leaders of the C.P. at 
any rate have never lost sight of what they consider are the 

32 Report of Royal Commission Inquiring into the origins, aims, objects 
and funds of the Communist Party in Victoria and other related matters, 
p.97.
further advantages of giving training to the strikers, in concerted action against the employers and of striking one further blow at the capitalist system.\textsuperscript{33}

Yet in spite of the successes arising out of a liberal use of the strike weapon, at least some leading Communist trade unionists were disturbed at the length of the major strikes which had not sufficiently strengthened the class-consciousness of the workers, depleted union funds and in fact demoralised the rank-and-file.

In 1947 Thornton remarked:

\begin{quote}
there is too great a reliance on the strike weapon in the narrow way, and there seems to be an idea in the organisation that the strike and only the strike wins gains for us.

This is a fallacy which must be eradicated from our thinking.

It is true that the strike weapon is a very important one and we must preserve our right to use it at all costs. But we must lay more emphasis than we have done on wider methods of winning our demands, which can supplement, if never replace, strike action...\textsuperscript{34}
\end{quote}

Most of the industries affected by the 1945-47 strikes had a long history of labour disturbances stretching back into the nineteenth century. The Communists, in one sense, were the inheritors of a tradition of direct action rather than its initiators. Moreover, the strikes in Australia were not as serious either in frequency or duration as those in the United States (where Communist influence was noticeably less) in the same period. An American

\textsuperscript{33} Loc. cit.

\textsuperscript{34} Tribune, 22 April 1947.
an economist has stated that a 'detailed examination of strike data indicates that Communist leadership has probably not had a significant influence upon the incidence or pattern of strikes in Australia'.

During the two years after 1945, Communist-controlled unions led two overtly political strikes. One directed against a foreign government and possessing widespread trade union support was successful, the other directed against the Federal Government and failing to secure widespread support was a dismal failure. In 1945, immediately hostilities broke out between the Dutch and Indonesian Nationalists in the Netherlands East Indies, the W.W.F. and the Seamen's Union refused to unload or load Dutch ships in Australian ports. The boycott was opposed by the New South Wales Labor Council, News-Weekly and the Interstate Executive of the A.C.T.U. On the other hand, it was tolerated by the Federal Government and the great majority of traditionalist trade union officials (but not those on the Right) came around to its acceptance in time. Many trade unionists had been unimpressed by the remaining evidence of Dutch rule which they had seen in Indonesia during World War II and

36 Tribune, 29 May 1948.
37 Freedom, 20 March 1946.
it was this widespread rank-and-file support which enabled the W.W.F. and the Seamen's Union to continue the ban until 1948 without isolating themselves from other unions. 

Tribune described the boycott as 'the largest and most famous of its kind in world history.' Communist Party support for Asian independence movements was in this case reinforced by the fact that many Indonesian Communists, interned in West New Guinea before World War II, had been transferred to Australia during the war and established close contact with Australian Communists.

The second Communist-led political strike, the attempted boycott of the Woomera Rocket Range in 1947, attracted very little non-Communist support and the unions involved (principally the B.W.I.U. and the Painters' Union) were effectively isolated. They capitulated in the face of the Federal Government's Approved Defence Projects.

---

38 Tribune, 29 May 1948. In December 1948, following renewed Dutch military action, the ban was reimposed until 1949.

39 These two unions were supported by progressive middle-class bodies such as the Australia-Indonesia Association (dominated by the Communists) and the front organisations. On the other hand, the W.W.F. leadership came in for some criticism within the union itself and the pro-Indonesian attitude of the leadership, together with the formation of an Industrial Group in the union, led to the defeat of the Communists and militant officials of the Sydney Branch in 1946. These officials, however, were returned to power in 1947.

40 Tribune, 29 May 1948.

41 Sardjono, Secretary of the Indonesian Communist Party from 1946 to 1948 was the leader of the Free Indonesia Committee in Brisbane during the war.
Act (1947) which provided for heavy fines and long terms of imprisonment. Many trade unionists felt that the Communists were simply following the Soviet Union in its desire not to see the Western nations record rocket and missile successes while others maintained that the boycott, although legitimate, was not worth so much agitation.

**Catholic Action in trade union affairs**

It was practically inevitable that Communist penetration of the trade unions would provoke counter movements, both within and without the trade union movement. The Chifley Labor Government, as Professor Crisp has shown, was unwilling to use the power of the State to check the Communist advance. This reluctance stemmed partly from the fear of many Labor leaders that an open anti-Communist campaign in the unions would increase the divisions within the Labor Party and the Labor movement, and partly from the fear that such a campaign would increase anti-Communist hysteria amongst the people as a whole. Chifley is said to have argued that it was for the trade unionists themselves to deal with the Communists. Within the trade union movement, there were two broad centres of resistance to Communist influence; the established union leaderships of the more conservative

---


43 Ibid., p.356.
and craft unions (who felt their positions were being threatened by the Communists) and those Catholic unionists connected with Catholic Action. As opinion became less favourable to the Communists in the post-war period, these two groups were emboldened to move over to the offensive. Their early successes were few and far between, but by the end of the decade the tide was running firmly in their favour.

The 'Movement', an organ of Catholic Action, had been formed in 1942 to fight Communism in the trade unions. Its members were prominent after the war in the formation of the A.L.P. Industrial Groups, tightly-knit organisations designed to match the activities of Communist Party factory branches in trade union affairs. Groups were established in New South Wales in 1945, in Victoria in 1946, and in South Australia and Queensland in 1947. Especially when they came under the virtual control of the 'Movement's' militants, they soon proved themselves to be disciplined and effective in attacking the

---


46 The first Secretary of the A.L.P. Industrial Group in N.S.W. was Harry Jensen, subsequently Lord Mayor of Sydney.
Communists' positions. Naturally, the Party responded to the challenge immediately; as early as 1945 one of its pamphlets, based on privately circulated 'Movement' documents which had come its way, took stock of the situation, and in 1946 Tribune was stressing that the 'Movement' should be criticised solely on political rather than sectarian grounds. Opposition to the 'Movement' at this early stage, and again in the early fifties, came also from certain amongst the traditionalist trade unionists.

In 1947 the Victorian A.L.P. decided to expel any member who opposed or worked against a Group-endorsed candidate in a union ballot. The Groups in New South Wales also decided in the same year that it was no longer even necessary to be a Labor Party supporter (as had previously been the case) to belong to a Group. Victoria, on the other hand, stipulated that A.L.P. membership was essential for Group membership. Apart from their discipline and energy, the Groups' principal vote-winning asset was their official connection with the Labor Party, the traditional political party of the great mass of trade unionists. Possession of the title A.L.P. Industrial

47 Catholic Action at Work, Melbourne, 1945. By 1946, 50,000 copies of the pamphlet had been sold (Tribune, 26 February 1946).

48 Tribune, 23 August 1946.


50 Ian Campbell, op. cit., p.61.
Groups enabled their supporters to depict union ballots as contests between the Labor and Communist Parties. However, few successes, and these in small unions (not all of which were previously Communist-controlled), were recorded by the Groups in the immediate post-war years, although they did control the Sydney Branch of the W.W.F. in 1946–47. This failure to make headway reflected the fact that the Cold War had not yet fully arrived and the Communists were still firmly in control of the organisational machinery of many important unions; the members of the Communist-controlled unions were generally satisfied with their leadership and did not take much notice of the anti-Communists' complaints.

Communist representation at the 1947 A.C.T.U. Congress was about the same strength as at the 1945 Congress but most of the motions supported by the Communists in 1947 were rejected decisively. The divisions made it clear that the traditionalists who had voted with the Communists in 1945 were now siding with the Grouper and 'Movement' delegates. The Grouper-traditionalist combination was to remain dominant until the 1955 Congress. While the Communists held their ground in a number of important unions, notably the F.C.U. and the F.I.A., the Party continued to win executive positions in certain unions well into 1947. In 1947 the following Communists defeated Labor Party candidates in union ballots and were elected to official positions: W. Parkinson, President of the Southern District of the Miners' Federation; R. Hurd, Secretary of the Western Australian
Branch of the Seamen's Union; C. O'Shea, Secretary of the Victorian
Branch of the Tramways' Union; and A. Wilson joined a fellow-
Communist, E.J. Rowe, on the A.E.U. Commonwealth Council. In addition,
the Communists counter-attacked with some effect; thus, although
they lost control of the Sydney Branch of the W.W.F. in 1946, they
recaptured their executive positions here in 1947. In this year,
also, the Party proved once more its ability to control appointments
in the Miners' Federation; when H.C. Wells, the Federation's General
President, was expelled from the Party and, at the same time, resigned
from the union another Communist, I. Williams, succeeded him within
the Federation. Meanwhile, Communist strength in the B.W.I.U. had
continued to grow; in 1945 G. Frank became Federal Secretary and in
the following year E.W. Bulmer became Federal President. Both men
were Communists.

Communists and the trade unions during the 'adventurist' period

By 1947 the Communists were on the defensive within the trade
union movement, but instead of moderating their policies they
embarked on the extreme strategies dictated by the Cominform's new
tough line, laid down in late 1947. In the years which followed
(the 'adventurist' period) the Communist Party used its trade union
connections to pursue two strategies, on the one hand to 'politically'
industrial strikes (while at the same time ensuring that strikes were
also about industrial issues) and on the other to force certain
militant unions to break off their affiliation with the A.L.P. The
results were generally disastrous; the Party itself dissipated whatever capital of goodwill had been left over from the war period, and it left its trade union cadres, by 1949, exposed and weakened. The Communist Party in Australia is always most vulnerable when it is most revolutionary.

The Queensland railway strike in 1948 was seen by the State Labor Government as a direct challenge to its power. Thus, it introduced drastic strike-bearing Emergency Regulations and the Industrial Law Amendment Act, whose provisions were so far reaching that they were condemned by many traditionalist unionists.52 These measures, coupled with the effect of the differences which arose as the strike wore on, ensured the strike's defeat — although a few minor wage and work condition gains were made. The strike failed basically, however, because of the Labor Government's repressive policies and the fact that the non-militant unions could not be drawn into the dispute.

An even more important case of a Labor Government's opposing Communist-controlled unions was the 1949 coal strike.53 The strike,

51 For a Communist's account of the strike, see Doug Olive, The Queensland Railway Strike February–April 1948, Brisbane, 1948.

52 See criticisms of the methods used to break the strike by J.A. Ferguson, President of the N.S.W. Labor Party, the Standard, and the Catholic Worker in Tribune, 13 March 1948, 31 March 1948.

53 For a Communist's account of the strike, see Edgar Ross, the Coal Front, Sydney, n.d.
which arose out of miners' claims for increased wages, better work
conditions and a 35-hour week, was at first supported by the majority
of the miners. It was opposed not only by the Federal and New
South Wales Governments but also by the A.C.T.U. Interstate Executive,
the press and radio, and, of course, by the non-Labor parties. The
Federal Government introduced the National Emergency (Coal Strike)
Act (1949) under which action was taken to freeze the funds of the
Miners' Federation and of other Communist-controlled unions which had
offered financial assistance; seven Communist and two A.L.P. trade
union officials were fined under the terms of the Act and received
lengthy terms of imprisonment. Communist Party headquarters in Sydney
were also raided (under the Crimes Act) at the same time. Finally,
the Federal Government, abandoning the traditional A.L.P. principle
not to use troops in industrial disputes, sent the Army to work the
open-cut coalfields in New South Wales. The miners, finding them­selves isolated from the rest of the non-militant trade union
movement, also found that the traditionalist and right-wing unions

54 See figures in Tribune, 31 December 1949. There is strong evidence
to suggest that both the 1948 Queensland railway strike and the 1949
coal strike were not Communist-inspired at their inceptions (see the
statement by A.A. Calwell, M.H.H., in ibid., 17 April 1948; News­Weekly, 30 June 1948; and the statement by Dr J.W. Burton, former
Secretary of the Department of External Affairs, in the Australian
Society for the Study of Labour History's Bulletin, May 1962, No. 2,
p.95).

55 For the A.B.C's decision to express only the Federal Government's
viewpoint, see Observer, 23 January 1960.
also opposed the strike because of the unemployment it had created. With opinion swinging against them even within the Federation itself, the predominantly Communist leadership tried to prevent the holding of a ballot on a proposal to return to work; when, after some delays, such a ballot was actually held the miners voted overwhelmingly in favour of ending the dispute. Almost all the demands for which they had struck were subsequently rejected by the Coal Industry Tribunal. 56

The only 'gain' the Communists had achieved through the strike was the resignation of a few militants from the Labor Party, most notably A. Dowling, Secretary of the Newcastle Trades Hall Council, who subsequently joined the Communist Party. Sharkey nevertheless drew some interesting conclusions from the defeat and stated that

One mistake made...was its undue prolongation; it is always right to call off a strike when it is clear that a point of exhaustion may be reached, to preserve unity and conserve the organisation of the workers.

This mistake followed from another, an underestimation of the ability of the rightwing to undermine the struggle of the workers and a belief that reformism can be easily destroyed. 57

Apart from the few important and lengthy 'political' strikes during the 'adventurist' period, the numerous and prolonged industrial strikes of the immediate post-war years were less in evidence in the Communist-controlled unions after 1947. Methods involving

56 For a general outline of the dispute, from Chifley's point of view, see L.F. Crisp, op. cit., pp.361-6.
fewer workers, such as regulation strikes, piecework restriction, overtime bans and the rolling strike were used, thereby preventing rank-and-file demoralisation and at the same time conserving union funds.

The major political strikes of the 'adventurist' period illustrate how vulnerable were the Communist trade union leaders when they implemented extreme policies without the continued support of the unions' rank-and-file. The tough international line of the Party, on which the extreme strike policies had been based, led to conflicts between Communist trade union officials and the full-time Party functionaries. The former were well aware that 'adventurist' behaviour jeopardised their union positions, but the latter were largely concerned with implementing the international line. At the Party's National Congress in 1948 R. Dixon strongly criticised certain Communist trade union officials for wishing to conduct 'purely economic strikes'. Dixon continued: 'We must aim in strike struggles not only to achieve economic gains, but also to draw the masses...to the side of the Communist Party.' Articles attacking economism became more frequent in the Party press. However, the leadership

58 Many of the leading Communist trade union officials, such as E. Thornton, L.J. McPhillips, E.V. Elliott, J. Healy, D. Thomson, E. Ross, I. Williams, E.J. Rowe, J.R. Hughes, T. Wright and A. MacDonald, were members of the Party's Central Committee.

failed to see that the growing importance of factory branches (as distinct from locality branches) since the war was in part responsible for the outbursts of economism mainly because factory branch members tend to identify Party work with their daily lives and concentrate only on those aspects of Party work which were their immediate concern.

The stress laid on the Party's independent role during the 'adventurist' period led to a reconsideration of the affiliation of Communist-controlled unions with the Labor Party. At the Party's 1948 National Congress Sharkey declared:

To affiliate the trade unions to the reformist party obviously strengthens reformist ideology and leads to the belief that the A.L.P. is the true party of the workers. Possibly it was tactically correct on occasions in the past to affiliate some unions, but in the position today when the Labor Party tends ever more in the direction of the camp of the imperialists and ever more clearly embraces the sabotaging role of social democracy, it is clear that we cannot pursue a policy that strengthens the reformist grip over the trade union masses. On the contrary, we must work to separate the masses from the right wing leaders in the trade unions and elsewhere. 60

E. Thornton of the F.I.A. outlined the following policy at the same Congress:

It is time we reconsidered a policy which causes us to finance people who attack us all the time; who attempt to break every strike conducted by affiliated unions. But it is far more important that we should take steps to break with the old tradition that the Labor Party is the only party of the working class, the political wing of the Labor Movement.

60 L.L. Sharkey, For Australia Prosperous and Independent, Sydney, 1948, p.25.
This allegiance to the Labor Party is very much a formal affair anyhow.... Only two members of the A.L.P. are officials of the union. But the Communist Party is in a different relationship with the union. Many officials are members of the Party....

And the general policy of the union. Is that decided in consultation with the leaders of the Labor Party? No! The policy of the Ironworkers' Union is decided in consultation with the leaders of the Communist Party. The great achievements of our Union in the past few years should be credited to the Communist Party. But they are not so credited. Because the Party does not appear as the Communist Party to the members of the union. The achievements of our leadership are credited to individuals and not to the Party.

The same thing in many ways applies to the Waterside Workers' Federation, the Miners' Federation, and the Seamen's Union....

we are proposing in the Ironworkers' Union that political affiliation in the future should be on a voluntary and not an automatic basis.61

Immediately, the F.I.A's National Convention decided that the policy of affiliating all its members with the Labor Party was no longer justified and proposed that affiliation in future should be on a voluntary basis. Members would each pay (unless exempted) a political levy, stating whether they wanted the Labor Party or the Communist Party to receive it; where a member gave no such indication, the levy

61

Communist Review, July 1948, Two years previously Thornton had threatened that the F.I.A. would reconsider its affiliation with the A.L.P. after a strongly worded anti-Communist statement had been made by T.E. Junor, President of the A.L.P. Industrial Groups in N.S.W. (Tribune, 13 September 1946).
would be used at the discretion of the union's National Council. Branches would affiliate with the A.L.P. not on the basis of their full memberships but only on the basis of the proportion of their membership who had specified that the A.L.P. receive their levies. Since the Communist Party's Constitution did not allow unions to become affiliated with the Party, levies specifically ear-marked for the Party were donated to it during State and Federal Elections.

These proposals produced consternation in the A.L.P. which stood to suffer a severe loss of union dues. News-Weekly declared, in somewhat exaggerated terms, that the F.I.A. had 'fired the first shot in the Communist plan to financially crush the A.L.P.... If successful, every other Communist-controlled union will follow suit, and the A.L.P. will be financially ruined.' No such effect was produced. The union's proposal for partial affiliation with the Labor Party was declared invalid by the Arbitration Court and the

---

62 News-Weekly, 16 June 1948. In 1948 the Sydney, Port Kembla, Western N.S.W. and Adelaide Branches of the F.I.A. were affiliated with the A.L.P., whereas the Victorian, Brisbane and Newcastle Branches were not. Thornton's proposal was similar to the situation in Britain where trade unions affiliate with the British Labour Party on the basis of those members who raise no objections to its so doing. In Australia, the A.E.U., which is a branch of the British A.E.U., is the only important union to follow British custom; the others affiliate with the A.L.P. on the basis of their full membership.

63 Loc. cit.

64 Ibid., 1 December 1948.
attempt by the union's South Australian Branch to affiliate with the Labor Party on the basis of 516 of its 2,000 members was rejected by the South Australian A.L.P. 65

The continued offensive of the Industrial Groups, 1948-50

Between 1948 and 1950 the Groups made further gains in the unions as a prelude to their large-scale victories in the early fifties. The Communists and militants lost the Melbourne Branch of the W.W.F. in 1948 and in the following year the Communist Federal officers of the same union had their majorities reduced. The Communist Vice-Presidents of the Southern and Northern Districts of the Miners' Federation were defeated. On the other hand, the Communists still managed to record some successes. In 1948 R.E. Wellard and J. Coull were elected Secretaries of the New South Wales Branch of the Amalgamated Postal Workers' Union and the Victorian Branch of the Liquor Employees' Union respectively and in 1949 A. Buckley became Federal Secretary of the Boilermakers' Society.

It was in the F.C.U. and the F.I.A. that the Groupers provided the most serious threat to the Communists. The existing leadership reacted by victimising and expelling prominent Groupers in these unions 66 and by reorganising union sections and branches when these

65 Ibid., 22 December 1948.
66 See, e.g. ibid., 9 June 1948, 28 July 1948, 11 August 1948, 6 October 1948, 14 December 1949.
came under Group control. Physical violence was used against the Group leader in the F.I.A., L. Short, who severed his ties about this time with his anti-Communist ally in the union, N. Origlass, a Trotskyite. Fraudulent ballots were also employed by Communists in some (though far from all) unions to maintain their positions. A leading ex-Communist, C. Sharpley gave wide publicity to charges of this nature in 1949 but his claims were only partly substantiated by the 1949-50 Royal Commission on Communism in Victoria.

Prior to Sharpley's disclosures a deputation of Victorian Groupers presented a case for Court-controlled ballots to the Federal Conference of the A.L.P. In June 1949 the Federal Labor Government made important amendments to the Arbitration Act whereby a Court-controlled ballot could be ordered if either the executive officers of a union (or a branch thereof) requested it or if, after a complaint had been registered by a union member, it was found that irregularities had occurred in a union-controlled ballot. As was to be expected, the Communists attacked the amendments on the grounds that they were

---

67 See, e.g. ibid., 18 August 1948.
68 Ibid., 11 August 1948.
69 Cecil Sharpley, I Was a Communist Leader, Melbourne, 1949. See also the attacks on Sharpley in Tribune, 23 April 1949, 27 April 1949, 4 May 1949.
70 See Chapter Three.
a prelude to an employers' attack on wages and work conditions. J.D. Blake declared that Communists were not afraid of secret union ballots and referred to the leading right-wing and traditionalist union leaders who had been appointed for life. The Communists fully expected the State to interfere with and 'rig' Court-controlled ballots but they were also aware that, although voting under them would not be compulsory, ballot papers would be posted to all members and it would be easy for the apathetic union members, most of whom were assumed to be anti-Communists, to register a vote. In opposing the legislation, the Communists were joined by the A.W.U., whose leadership feared that Court-controlled ballots would lead to their defeat. On the other hand, the Groupers did not feel that the legislation went far enough since it applied only to those unions registered with the Arbitration Act (thus excluding the B.W.I.U., deregistered in 1948) and fraud had to be detected after a union ballot had taken place. *News-Weekly* suggested that compulsory voting under the direction of State returning officers should operate in all ballots. However, it was in large part the 1949 Chifley Government amendments, together with further

---

75 Ibid., 14 December 1949.
amendments passed by the Menzies Government in 1951, which enabled the Groups to defeat the Communists in a number of important unions in the early fifties.

At the close of the decade the Communists found themselves isolated as a result of the strategies employed during the 'adventurist' period, particularly their attacks on the Labor Party and their use of the strike weapon for overtly political purposes. They completely dominated many Communist-controlled unions and made little attempt to share the leadership on an equitable basis with left-wing A.L.P. members. In addition, no skill was shown in meeting the threat from the Industrial Groups. Communists made no serious attempt to drive a wedge between the 'Movement' men and the traditionalists within and outside the Groups. Indeed, A.L.P. trade union officials and A.L.P. rank-and-file union members were not differentiated but grouped together in one reactionary mass — in spite of Sharkey's warning that Communists should never 'confuse, or lump together, the reformist leaders and the rank and file.'\textsuperscript{76} The trade union movement was, at this stage, divided into two important and widely separated groups, the Communists and their militant allies on the one hand and the Groupers and their traditionalist allies on the other. The traditionalists, unlike the 'Movement' men, possessed no really positive ideas but had joined forces with the 'Movement' out of fear

\textsuperscript{76} Sharkey, \textit{The Trade Unions}, 1959, p.41.
for their positions and because they felt the Communists were out to embarrass Labor Governments. Previously, in the mid-forties three distinct groups had existed in the trade union movement. Throughout the forties a completely independent non-Communist Left had failed to emerge in the trade unions. The non-Communist militants that did exist not only agreed with the Party on industrial issues but on almost all political issues too. Although Communists still held on (if rather precariously in some cases) to their unions, the Court-controlled ballot legislation represented a new threat to their position — moreover, a Federal Government pledged to drive the Party underground had just been elected. In 1950, following a change in the international Communist line, the Party began cautiously to modify its 'adventurist' strategies and to reconsider the united front strategy. But these adjustments came too late. The hey-day of the Groups was about to begin.
CHAPTER THREE
ANTII-COMMUNISM IN AUSTRALIA BEFORE 1950

Having declared its revolutionary intentions from the outset, the Australian Communist Party was soon made the object of heavy legal attacks and of intense hostility on the part of certain social groups. In no other Western country, apart from the United States, has anti-Communism provided such a favourable climate for the imposition of strong legal sanctions on Communist activities. Even during World War II, when the Communists were enjoying relative popularity, there were some interests in Australia who strongly resented their influence and who felt that the Anglo-Saxon powers were mistaken in having joined forces with the Soviet Union against Nazi Germany. These same interests claimed that the British and American forces should have advanced into Eastern Europe and the Balkans in 1945, even at the risk of a clash with the Red Army. The return of the Cold War in 1947 and 1948, saw the tide running strongly against the Party in Australia, especially during the tension generated by the Czechoslovakian crisis of February 1948 and the Berlin airlift of the same year.

Any explanation of the limits to Communist influence in Australia must take into account the extent to which waves of intense anti-Communism have provided governments here with exceptional freedom in employing legal instruments in fighting the Party. Indeed,
in view of the strong feelings which it has aroused at different times, the Party is extraordinarily fortunate to find itself so unhampered in contemporary politics.

Social instability as a source of political tension in Australia

A feeling of insecurity has often characterised Australian political life. The great population movements set in train by the gold-rushes; the rapid settlement of agricultural lands in the last decades of the nineteenth century; the mushroom expansion of the large cities; the widespread strike wave of the period 1890-94; the depression of the early thirties – all these prevented Australian society from settling down, from establishing a firm structure and ordered group relationships. The result was a heightened tension between different sections of the community – between workers and employers, farmers and graziers, townsmen and countrymen, Catholic and Protestant, old residents and migrant groups. The sheer pace of socio-economic development created the impression that the advantages in the final settlement would go to those groups which were most forceful and determined in pressing their claims and defending their interests. Particularly amongst the farmers and working-class groups, there are long traditions of wariness and hostility in social dealings, whether embodied in the attitudes of White Australianism or in the harsh xenophobia of the small country communities. It is not surprising, therefore, that non-British migrant groups have often been treated with suspicion;
this was the experience of the Germans in the late nineteenth century, of the Greeks and Italians in the 1920s, and of the European migrant groups who came here after 1945.

The presence of a large Irish population, composed mainly of working-class people, was undoubtedly a persistent source of friction in Eastern Australia between the period of the gold-rushes and the First World War. Differences in religion between the Irish on the one hand and the Scots and English settlers on the other, were accentuated by differences in outlook on educational questions, and also on the importance of the British connection. The predominantly Anglican and Presbyterian middle class of nineteenth century Australia wanted their society to develop a British, liberal and Protestant identity; the Irish settlers, on the other hand, were more concerned with the national struggle in their homeland, with obtaining better working conditions, and with maintaining their own cultural identity. The tension between these two groups, which may perhaps be regarded as two communities in some periods, rarely found its way to the surface of politics but contributed to the general insecurity and intolerance in public affairs.

From the outset, political liberalism failed to win wide acceptance amongst Australians. It is true that the acceptance of British parliamentary and judicial forms was unqualified, and that the scope of agrarian and labour reforms in the Australian colonies won the applause of British liberals. But it is also the case that
the more abstract liberal traditions, particularly those concerning
the preservation of civil liberties and the right to dissent, were
not well received in a society which had, in some respects, a
pronounced liking for authoritarianism and strict majority rule.
The importance of this difference can be judged if the Australian
and British reactions are compared in such cases as the outbreak of
the Boer War; in England opposition to the war was deplored and
ridiculed, but was tolerated nonetheless; in Australia dissenters
from the pro-war attitude were hounded and persecuted, as were
Holman and Professor Arnold Wood in New South Wales. Australian
liberals of the Deakin tradition were surprisingly intolerant at
times; few of them took a strong line against the Boer War or against
the adoption of compulsory military training before the First World
War. In particular, they were unsystematic and faltering in their
defence of civil liberties. As K.S. Inglis suggested recently,
there is a continuum between the Australian position on questions
of authority and liberty and the totalitarian position.1 Liberalism
would have taken stronger roots in this country had the established
social groups felt more secure and confident in the nineteenth and
early twentieth centuries; but, for the reasons suggested above, they
did not.

Another symptom of insecurity has been the surprising credence given at different times to conspiratorial theories of politics, whether directed against the Left or the Right. Australian conservatives early fell into the habit of blaming working-class unrest and radicalism on the sinister machinations of agitators; from whom are descended the anarchist and syndicalist conspirators at the turn of the century, the Raving Red Socialists of pre-1914 days, and the I.W.W. men of the First World War. The Communist Party was easily assimilated to this pattern, and soon after its formation it was being credited with a whole range of Machiavellian designs. On the other hand, the Australian Left has also exaggerated the role of big business in right-wing politics; graziers were supposed to have deliberately provoked the pastoral strike of 1890 and to have established the Country Party as a tool for their interests; overseas financiers and land companies were alleged to be running Australian governments from behind the scenes; non-Labor Prime Ministers, such as Bruce, were frankly regarded as servile agents of the capitalist class. In some cases the stereotypes have had some basis in reality — which makes them all the more powerful as political symbols.

The anti-liberal aspect of Australian political traditions are most pronounced in country areas, where geographical and cultural isolation have heightened resentments towards cities, urban working-class groups, and radical politicians. The Country Party,
to some extent, embodies in an exaggerated form rather dated
attitudes about city schemers and the conspiratorial Left. Indeed,
an American political scientist has gone so far as to suggest that
the xenophobic, anti-Communist and anti-Semitic statements which
have been made by various Country Party spokesmen gave the impression
that it contained 'all the seeds of a native-Australian, fascist
movement'.

D.H. Lawrence, in his highly impressionistic novel
Kangaroo (1923), depicted what he took to be the elements of authori-
tarian movements on both the Right and the Left. His central figure,
Kangaroo, embodies certain fascist traits which Lawrence may have
attributed to certain military and political figures of the early
twenties. His working-class leader, Willie Struthers, epitomises
the type of autocratic, non-doctrinaire union official who came to
the fore under J.T. Lang's leadership in New South Wales.

The Communist bogey in party warfare

By the First World War, non-Labor politicians had become
accustomed to attacking the Labor Party by suggesting that it was
unduly subject to influence from sinister anarchist and 'alien'
groups, and in the twenties they showed themselves equally adept
in claiming that the A.L.P. was being run by the Communists. The
tactics adopted by the National and Country Parties in the 1925

---

Federal Election provide a convenient example. The Prime Minister, S.M. Bruce, claimed that the 1925 Seamen's strike, led by J. Johnson and Tom Walsh, had been the work of 'foreign-born agitators' and he unsuccessfully attempted to deport both these men. During the election campaign later in the year, Bruce had no compunction in highlighting the issue of 'Law and Order', implying that while the Bruce-Page Coalition could be trusted to deal firmly with revolutionary elements the Labor Party, because of its connection with the Communists, could not be trusted in this respect. A National Federation poster distributed in Melbourne depicted Labor as a donkey ridden by a bewhiskered Bolshevik, who was dangling a carrot in front of its nose. The Communist bogey was also used to great effect during the depression, particularly about the time of the Premiers' Plan and the Lang scare. By this stage, moreover, the A.L.P. itself was becoming extremely sensitive to the charge of 'Bolshevist control' and took great pains to dissociate itself from the Communist Party.

Even after the Second World War, the Liberal and Country Parties were still using such tactics. True to form, the Country Party came first in proposing that the Communist Party should be

---

banned - and waiting with relish for the Labor Government to state that it should not be banned. The Country Party's directness in this context has always been remarkable. In 1941, commenting upon the entry of Soviet Union into the war, A.G. Cameron (Country Party leader, 1939–40) had declared - somewhat prophetically:

From our point of view it does not matter who wins the Russo-German war, because the British Empire is committed to fight the winner.... Let us get very clearly into our heads that whichever side wins we fight.4

At the 1946 Conference of the Country Party (N.S.W.), a motion was passed recommending the banning of the Communist Party5 and A.W. Fadden, the Country Party's leader, stated in his policy speech in the 1946 Federal Election:

The Country Party regards the Australian Communist in the same category as a venomous snake - to be killed before it kills. Therefore, it stands foursquare for declaring the Communist Party an illegal organisation.6

The Country Party's 1949 Federal Platform and Policy advocated the banning of the Communist Party and 'affiliated, associated or substitute associations and organisations.' This has remained Country Party policy ever since.7

---

5 S.M.H., 15 April 1946.
6 Ibid.
7 Ibid.
The Liberal Party did not fall into line with the Country Party on this issue until 1948. At the 1946 Federal Election, the Liberal leader, K.G. Menzies, declared that 'in time of peace we do not propose a ban on the Communist party', and in the following year he made the same point. However, the intensification of the Cold War, the wave of Communist-led strikes and the bank nationalisation issue led Menzies to revise his opinion. In March 1948 he stated that Australian Communists constituted a potential fifth-column in the event of war with the Soviet Union and that they should be treated as 'public enemies':

The day for tolerance has gone and the day has arrived when the people must make up their minds that Communists were the enemies of Australia and the British Empire.

At the same time the Federal Parliamentary Liberal Party resolved that the Communist Party, together with all organisations controlled by Communists (with the notable exception of trade unions) should be banned. Menzies stated that a ban on the Communist Party was henceforth official Liberal Party policy and that 'we are now at war with the Communists because they are clearly disrupting our industries and undermining our nation.' The change in Liberal

---

8 [Herald, 22 June 1946.]
10 [Sun, Melbourne, 13 March 1948.]
11 [Canberra Times, 12 March 1948.]
Party policy was followed by the decision of the Victorian Liberal–Country Party Cabinet to approve legislation banning the Communist Party and other 'subversive organisations' in Victoria. The Liberal Premier, T.T. Hollway, acted cautiously, stating that he did not favour its immediate implementation, partly on the grounds that it would be ineffective unless the Federal Government had taken similar action. At the beginning of 1949 Menzies announced that the issue of banning the Communist Party would feature prominently in the Liberal campaign at the forthcoming Federal Election.

Non-Labor parliamentarians frequently charged that the Federal Government was in some mysterious way controlled from 'Moscow' in the post-war period. The intention here was clearly to encourage the electors to equate the Labor and the Communist Parties. To drive the point home, such politicians often exaggerated the extent of Communist strength and influence. The principal adepts were Country Party members J.P. Abbott and H.L. Anthony, Liberal Party members A.G. Cameron (who had left the Country Party) and E.J. Harrison (the Party's Deputy Leader), and the sole Lang Labor member, J.T. Lang. W.M. Hughes, speaking in 1946, put this point of view in relatively mild language:

12 Sun, Melbourne, 15 April 1948.

To-day, the Labour party is controlled to a great degree by the trade unions, and they, in their turn, are controlled by the Communist executive, which takes its orders from Moscow. The Labour party is controlled to a great degree by the trade unions, and they, in their turn, are controlled by the Communist executive, which takes its orders from Moscow. Another Liberal member, P.C. Spender, referred to the Federal Government as 'The Socialist-Communist Party of Australia'. The non-Labor parties also attempted to equate Communism with Fascism, since the anti-Fascist feeling engendered during the war was still comparatively strong. The annual conference of the N.S.W. Division of the Liberal Party in 1946 declared that the Communist Party was a 'Fascist organisation', whose aim was to establish a 'Fascist totalitarian regime under Russian control'.

In addition non-Labor parliamentarians, both Federal and State, repeatedly claimed that left-wing members of the Labor Party and ex-Communists were secret members of the Communist Party. In 1947 J.F. Abbott alleged that an ex-Communist, J.N. Rawling, who contributed a series of anti-Communist articles to News-Weekly some months afterwards, was still a Communist, and he also suggested that Dr E.P. Dark, an A.L.P. member, was a Communist. J.T. Lang

---

15 S.M.H., 5 May 1948. See also the statement by H.L. Anthony, M.H.R., cited in Tribune, 14 April 1948.
16 Freedom, 26 June 1946.
alleged that D.A. Mountjoy, a member of the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Executive (and a brother of a prominent Western Australian Communist, H. Mountjoy), had 'definite leanings towards the Communist party.' Referring to Dr Lloyd Ross, another ex-Communist, Lang maintained that although Ross 'claims to have recanted' this was just 'part of the Communist technique.' State parliamentarians, such as the Victorian Liberal M.L.A., F.L. Edmunds, were equally suspicious. Edmunds specialised in making ludicrous charges against the History Department in the University of Melbourne and teachers in State schools which led the Premier, T.T. Hollway, to order an investigation into the political beliefs of all teachers employed by the Victorian Education Department.

Undoubtedly, the constant repetition of such claims did have some effect on public opinion in the late forties. On one occasion, however, a Liberal M.H.R., H.E. Holt, placed the Communist issue in a different perspective:

I never like to exaggerate the significance of the Communists in Australia, because I have always believed that there was but fractional support for them among the people.

---

20 Loc. cit.
21 Age, 23 March 1948.
Anti-Communism, like anti-clericalism, can easily be converted from guarded hostility to hysteria, and the political effects of the conversion have often proved extremely dangerous. Important sections of the Australian community are particularly suggestible on the Communist issue, and are quickly inflamed if they are told that the Communist Party, through its hold on the trade union movement, is working through the Labor Party to bring about revolution. When anti-Communist hysteria does develop in Australia, the Communists find themselves in an unusually difficult position—especially since, for reasons we shall discuss in the following section, the Labor Party is usually ill-disposed to offer them much protection.

The A.L.P. and Communism

The Labor Party in Australia, by comparison with the British Labour Party, the French Socialist Party and other European Social-Democratic parties, has been reluctant to resist attempts to ban or legally restrict the activities of Communists, even when such attempts threaten important civil liberties. The latter parties are wary of anti-Communist campaigns because these can so easily turn into attacks on their own left-wing (and predominantly Marxist) groups, and because legal action against the Communist Party will usually entail some erosion of the regime of civil liberties. Further, the Socialists of France and Belgium, for example, are still imbued with the old tradition of 'No enemies on the Left!' and are therefore disinclined to countenance the repression of an organisation
which they regard as a genuine institution of the working class and
which they feel would become extremely dangerous were it to be
driven underground. Such considerations do weigh within the Australian
Labor Party, but they seldom determine its policies. Why is this so?

First, as previously mentioned, the constant use of the
'Bolshevik bogey' by the non-Labor parties since the early twenties
as a means of politically embarrassing the Labor Party had made it
extremely sensitive to the Communist issue. The leadership of the
Labor Party had no wish to be associated in any way with the Commu-
nist Party and many of its leaders denied that the Communist Party
was even part of the Labor movement (for many years Labor leaders
have mistakenly equated the A.L.P. and the Australian Labor
movement).

Second, the Labor Party was non-doctrinaire and pragmatic to a
much greater degree than the British Labour Party and the West
European Social-Democratic parties, and hence less ready to defend
the Communist Party on ideological grounds. J.T. Lang is a prime
example of this aspect of the A.L.P. Like the Communists he was
adept at the art of political manipulation but he loathed the
Communists on the grounds that not only did they manipulate but they
also used ideology and read books. Lang was the first Labor
politician to organise effectively against the Communists (largely
out of self-interest) and the attitudes to be found in his polemics
against the Communists have influenced later generations of Labor
leaders. It should also be noted that during the twenties and thirties Lang was considered to be on the left of the A.L.P.

Third, there was the fear of many traditionalist Labor Party union officials that the Communists would replace them, a fear also to be found amongst their British and West European counterparts. During the forties this fear led many of them in Australia to join forces with anti-Communist Catholics and establish the A.L.P. Industrial Groups.

Fourth, the anti-Communism of the Roman Catholic Church was important because the great majority of Catholics supported the A.L.P. and Catholics were well represented among the party's leadership. For many years the Catholic Church had condemned the Communist Party not only because of its attitude to religion but also because it recommended the social ownership of a high proportion of private property. The Spanish Civil War (1936–39), during which the Papacy supported Franco, resulted in the Catholic Church devoting much more attention to Communism and virtually beginning an anti-Communist crusade. There was also a fundamental division between Catholics and Socialists within the A.L.P. with the former advocating 'social justice', a vague concept which, though critical of laissez-faire capitalism, stresses the importance of retaining private property. With the decline in importance of the Irish problem and the movement of some Catholics (hitherto predominantly a working-class group) into the middle class, particularly after
World War II, the Catholic Church became more 'patriotic' and its ties with the A.L.P. became looser.

During World War II, although the Catholic hierarchy refrained from openly criticising the wartime alliance with the Soviet Union, they were known to be cool towards its existence. However, predominantly Catholic papers, such as Freedom (which was influenced by Archbishop Mannix) openly condemned the alliance. In the post-war period, the Catholic Church's anti-Communism became even stronger and in 1947 the Australian Catholic Bishops stated:

The imminent danger facing this country is that the Communist party will use the power it has gained over a large part of the trade union movement to overthrow the machinery of Government, to seize political power for itself, and to achieve the ends of Communism – the destruction of political, social and religious freedom....

This is not a dream or nightmare conjured up by some fevered brain. It is not the concoction of some merely political opponent of Communism or of some enemy of the trade union movement.... To resist Communism...is to secure Australia not only from the dictatorship of the extreme Left, but to remove the cause which breeds the violence of the extreme Right.23

During 1948 Monsignor Fulton Sheen, described by News-Weekly as 'the leading authority on Communism in the United States',24 and Cardinal Spellman of New York both toured Australia and devoted much of their time to attacking Communism in the trade unions. Finally, the trial

of Hungary's Cardinal Mindszenty in 1949, raised Catholic anti-Communism to an even greater intensity.

As a result of all these factors the A.L.P., during World War II but particularly in the post-war period, set about taking even greater precautions to seal the party against Communist infiltration. The Left doctrinaire elements within the Labor Party were excluded (or they resigned) and A.L.P. attacks on the front organisations of the Communist Party were launched. The Labor Party's Federal Conference in 1945 pledged the party to campaign against Communism - although it opposed the idea that the Communist Party should be banned. At the same time the Federal President ruled that A.L.P. members could not officially represent the party on platforms alongside members of the Communist Party, and the 1946 conference of the N.S.W. Branch of the Labor Party declared the Communist Party to be its 'permanent foe'. The A.L.P's Federal Conference two years later claimed that the Australian Communists, acting on Soviet directives, were seeking to destroy democratic institutions, retard economic progress and slow down defence

25 S.M.H., 29 November 1945.
26 L.F. Crisp, The Australian Federal Labour Party 1901-1951, London, 1955, p.178. It was made clear that the ruling was not designed to prevent A.L.P. members attending A.C.T.U. Congresses.
27 Tribune, 18 June 1946.
preparations. However, it must be stressed that the A.L.P's attitude towards the Communist Party varied from State to State with the toughest line being taken in Victoria and Queensland. One of the most vocal anti-Communists in the Labor Party was J.J. Maloney, Australian Minister to the Soviet Union between 1943 and 1946, who was described by R. Dixon as 'Australia's chief anti-Soviet crusader and slanderer.' Upon his return to Australia he stated that the Soviet Union was under a dictatorship 'more severe' than Germany under Hitler. Maloney's views were attacked by W. Slater, Victorian Labor M.L.A. and Australian Minister to the Soviet Union before Maloney, and Professor R.M. Crawford, a former First Secretary at the Australian Legation in Moscow.

Nevertheless, the Labor Party did not advocate the banning of the Communist Party after World War II, although a few branches did so at the N.S.W. Labor Party's Conference in 1948 and

---

30 Tribune, 4 June 1946.
32 Reply to Maloney: The Real Facts About Russia, Melbourne, n.d.
34 S.M.H., 16 June 1948.
Senator D. Grant proposed a ban during the 1949 Coal Strike.\footnote{Sun, Sydney, 25 July 1949.}

\textit{News-Weekly} opposed such a move on the grounds that

the Party would go underground, be publicly martyred, would
win a lot of support from liberal humanitarians, and would
flourish accordingly. They were banned once before and it
didn't work.\footnote{News-Weekly, 2 July 1947.}

Occasionally, Labor politicians would take a leaf out of their
opponent's book and attempt to identify the Liberal and Country
Parties with the Communist Party. In 1947 the Minister for the Army,
C. Chambers, alleged that the Communists were 'more closely allied
with the Liberal party and the Australian Country party than they
are with the Labor party.'\footnote{C.P.D., Vol. 190 (21 February 1947), p.109. This attitude still persists: in 1961 the \textit{Australian Worker}, organ of the A.W.U., claimed that Liberal and Country Party members had 'forged secret links with
the Red stooges to injure the Labor Party' (cited in \textit{Tribune},
6 December 1961) while Labor Senator A.M. Benn alleged that three
Liberal and two Country Party Federal parliamentarians were members

Many Labor politicians also followed
their non-Labor opponents in equating Communism and Fascism. Chifley
asserted that Communism in the Soviet Union was a 'brand of fascism',\footnote{Ibid., Vol. 198 (2 September 1948), p.67.}
and \textit{News-Weekly}, very close to the A.L.P. until 1954, referred to
the 'Fascist doctrines' of Communism and claimed that the Communist
Party was 'the refuge of...Marxist Nazis.'\footnote{News-Weekly, 19 March 1952.}
In the post-war period a number of Socialists in the Labor Party were expelled on charges of Communist membership or sympathies. In some cases dual membership was clearly an established fact but in others, particularly in Victoria and Queensland, 'many believe that there have been instances in which the charge of Communist was directed against members who were too independent of the established party hierarchy.' Anti-Communists in the A.L.P. who maintained close ties with *News-Weekly* maintained that Communism, not capitalism, was 'The Enemy' and frequently equated liberals and Socialists with the Communists. 'Movement' parliamentarians, such as S. M. Keon, M.L.A., in Victoria, were as reckless as the Liberal M.L.A., F.L. Edmunds in branding dissenters as 'Communists'. Amongst those expelled from the A.L.P. were the historian Brian Fitzpatrick, Mrs E. Johnston, Secretary of the South Australian Branch of the F.C.U., B.J. Milliss, Senior Vice-President of the Macquarie District Assembly of the party, and Ivo Barrett, Vigilance Officer of the Sydney Branch of the W.W.F. Milliss subsequently joined the

40 Louise Overacker, *op.cit.*, p.166.
41 *Argus*, 12 July 1944.
42 *Freedom*, 23 May 1945. Mrs Johnston was almost certainly a member of the Communist Party.
43 *Tribune*, 24 December 1946.
Communist Party and the Charter of the Katoomba Branch of the A.L.P., in which he (and Dr E.P. Dark) had been active, was withdrawn by the New South Wales Executive of the Labor Party.  

The strong stand taken by the Labor Party against the Communist front organisations contributed towards their decline in the late forties. After about 1948 the fronts were not able to make any real headway amongst left-wing A.L.P. members following the imposition of a series of bans on them by the Labor Party. In 1941 the A.L.P's Federal Executive had declared the Australia-Soviet Friendship League to be dominated by the Communists and ruled that none of its members could belong to the League or any other Communist-dominated body. During and immediately after World War II this ruling was frequently ignored although the Labor Party in Victoria was quite strict in its enforcement. The E.Y.L. was declared out of bounds for A.L.P. members in New South Wales and Western Australia in the early post-war years and in 1948 the New South Wales A.L.P. banned the Australia-Russia Society, whereupon its President, Clive Evatt, M.L.A.,

46 S.M.H., 10 March 1947.
47 L.F. Crisp, loc. cit.
resigned from the organisation. A former President, Mrs J. Street, resigned from the Labor Party so as to remain a member of the Society. Sanctions were not applied against all the A.L.P. members who remained in the fronts, partly because the A.L.P., unlike the British Labour Party, did not publish a list of proscribed front organisations, and partly because the various State Branches of the A.L.P. were not consistent in banning the well-known fronts.

Thus, as the end of the decade approached, the Labor Party, the only political party to which the Communist Party could look to for protection or to act as a buffer, became increasingly anti-Communist. It made strenuous attempts to keep the two working-class parties quite separate at all levels of political activity.

The question of civil liberties

In Western countries during periods of intense anti-Communism, the main defence of Communist Parties has usually been the machinery

---

50 S.M.H., 28 August 1948, 1 September 1948.
51 News-Weekly, 19 January 1949. In 1946 Mrs Street had been informed by the Labor Party in New South Wales that she could continue as the then President of the Society since it was not covered by the Federal Executive's ruling of 1941 (S.M.H., 13 July 1946). Mrs (later Lady) Street, who was the wife of a New South Wales Supreme Court judge, had unsuccessfully contested the 1943 and 1946 Federal Elections as an A.L.P. candidate. The New South Wales A.L.P. also banned the N.H.A. (ibid., 10 August 1948) and the Sydney University Labor Club (ibid., 26 September 1949). The Victorian A.L.P. banned the N.H.A. in 1949 (News-Weekly, 26 January 1949).
52 For example, Senator F. Ward remained as President of the Australia-Russia Society in South Australia.
of civil liberties built up in previous decades. In Australia the
defence of such liberties has not been a major concern for any party.
Observers of varying political beliefs have testified to this aspect
of Australian society. Professor Crisp has remarked that 'Australia
has not an unblemished record in the field of civil liberties.' 53
Brian Fitzpatrick has commented that 'all parliamentary parties
contributed, over a number of years, to serious modification of the
Australian democratic system in a retrogressive direction', 54 while
Douglas McCallum has written: 'Most Australians could not care less
about the liberties of others, at home or abroad.' 55

It is generally accepted that the deterioration set in during
World War I with the War Precautions Acts, the conscription issue
and the Unlawful Association Act of 1916 (under which the I.W.W.
was outlawed). 56 But the general trend may be observed before World
War I, particularly during the introduction of compulsory military
training. In the inter-war period, civil liberties were at a
discount and books, films and radio broadcasts were frequently

53  L.F. Crisp, The Parliamentary Government of the Commonwealth of
54  Brian Fitzpatrick, The Australian People 1788-1945, 2nd ed.,
Melbourne, 1951, p.243.
55  Douglas McCallum, 'The State of Liberty', in Peter Coleman (ed.),
56  Brian Fitzpatrick, 'Australian Labour and Australian Liberty. 1.
The Record', Outlook, March 1959.
censored. However, the great majority of Australians were not disturbed at these developments and it was left mainly to small groups of intellectuals and to Brian Fitzpatrick's Australian Council for Civil Liberties (founded in 1936) to protest - in some cases, be it added, successfully.

We have already noted the weakness of the liberal tradition in Australian life. At the parliamentary level, unfortunately, it has been at its weakest. The first Federal Parliament was elected during the patriotic fervour engendered by the Boer War, and ever since 'disloyalty' and 'nonconformity' have become powerful instruments of political abuse. The defeats of the conscription referenda during World War I and of the referendum to ban the Communist Party in 1951 could perhaps be cited as evidence that a concern for civil liberties and dissent has persisted despite the surface signs. But in all three cases the results were affected by other important issues; what is significant is that they were not defeated by large majorities. Perhaps the matter may be summarised by saying that, when they are called to declare themselves on a specific issue concerning civil liberties, a majority of Australians will usually decide for tolerance - but this tolerance has not found significant and continued expression in the party system itself.

In a society susceptible to anti-Communist hysteria and perfunctory in its protection of civil liberties, anti-Communist pressure groups can exercise a disproportionate degree of influence.
An extremely strong stand against Communism was adopted after World War II by the Returned Servicemen's League (R.S.L.). Communists (of whom 4,000 had served in World War II) began to play an active part in the R.S.L. after the war, not with the aim of turning the organisation into a Communist front but simply in order to neutralise it politically, since the Party feared that it would again become (as in the inter-war period) a right-wing, anti-Communist pressure group. The League's leadership, mainly well-known non-Labor personalities, immediately took strong action against those of its members whom it considered Communists. Many left-wing Socialists came into this category. In 1946 the Victorian Branch of the R.S.L. decided that Communists could no longer retain League membership. In contrast, the New South Wales Branch at first refused to exclude members on political grounds but by 1948 the views of its leadership had changed and the State Executive banned Communists from membership.

---

57 Tribune, 16 October 1945.
58 In 1948 the New South Wales A.L.P. organ, the Standard, declared that any R.S.L. member who 'talks about any progressive reform...is branded as a Communist fellow-traveller.' (cited in ibid., 21 July 1948).
59 News-Weekly, 7 August 1946.
60 Tribune, 16 August 1946.
61 Age, 13 May 1948.
appealed to the courts, but the League's decision was eventually upheld. At the Federal Conference of the R.S.L. in 1948 the League became anti-Communist with a vengeance; motions were passed that the Communist Party be banned, Communists removed from the Commonwealth Public Service and executive positions in trade unions, and foreign-born Communists deported from Australia. By 1950 the League's official organ was declaring:

If America bans a Red, then Australia should ban him too.... Australia should be getting tougher, and the tougher it is with Communists the better returned men will like it.

Developments in the second largest ex-servicemen's organisation, the Legion of Ex-Servicemen and Women, followed a similar course. Its 1946 Federal Conference debarred Communists and 'Communist sympathisers' from holding executive positions and the next Federal Conference banned 'Communists' from membership in the Legion. The Victorian Branch, at first, did not strictly enforce this decision and it was completely ignored by the Queensland Branch which had been controlled by Communists and left-wing Socialists since 1945. The

---

63 Age, 27 October 1948.
64 Mufti, July 1950.
65 Tribune, 5 March 1946.
Queensland Branch was expelled by the Federal Executive of the Legion in 1949. A number of the smaller ex-servicemen's associations also banned Communists from membership.

Relatively small, extreme right-wing groups found willing listeners during the post-war years. The Sane Democracy League was mainly concerned with inserting anti-Labor advertisements in the press. The more active People's Union, formed in 1945, also published anti-Labor advertisements referring to the 'Communist-Socialist' Federal Government and it became particularly active during the bank nationalisation crisis. The Victorian affiliate of People's Union was the Victorian League of Rights whose Director, Eric D. Butler, was a prominent Douglas Crediter and member of Melbourne's Anglican Synod as well as Australia's leading anti-Semite.

67 Tribune, 19 February 1949.
69 The League's Secretary, B.C. Doig, subsequently became a Liberal M.L.A. in New South Wales.
70 The leaders of People's Union were A.G. Hebblewhite who had been a U.A.P. candidate at the 1943 Federal Election, and T.C. McGillick, a former leading Communist in South Australia.
71 For details of Butler's activities, see Nation, 26 September 1959; Observer, 1 October 1960, 26 November 1960; Bulletin, 7 October 1961, 16 June 1962. In his writings Butler alludes to the strong Jewish element in the leadership of the Communist Party but, in fact, very few Jews have held leading positions in the Party. Notable amongst the exceptions are Sam, Laurie and Eric Aarons, Harry Gould and Harry Stein. For a considerable time a number of Melbourne Jewish refugees from Fascism contributed generously to the Party.
Butler acquired an enviable degree of respectability and was called upon to address Rotary Clubs, Anglican groups and Liberal Party branch meetings. He also contributed a regular column to the Argus. A more 'respectable' anti-Communist group was the Australian Constitutional League in Melbourne, founded in 1944, whose first secretary was J. Somerville Smith. Smith, however, soon resigned and was succeeded by Colonel N.A. McArthur. In Sydney, the Political Research Society Ltd was formed in 1945 to conduct research into and to fight Communism. J.A. McCallum, later a Liberal Senator, opposed the organisation and stated that its conclusions on Communism had been reached before any research had been carried out. The Society was also condemned by the New South Wales Labor Council and F.D. Kelly.

In 1951 Butler claimed that the Victorian League of Rights had persuaded the Postmaster-General, H.L. Anthony, to prevent a well-known academic continuing as an A.B.C. news-commentator (See article by Clive Turnbull in Argus, 2 June 1951). In 1959, after an address by Butler, Melbourne Anglican Synod passed a strongly-worded anti-Communist motion. For his address, see Eric D. Butler, The Real Communist Challenge to Christianity, Melbourne, n.d.

In 1944 J. Somerville Smith was a member of the U.A.P. He later joined the A.L.P. for a time and in 1961 was imprisoned for libelling a number of leading politicians.

Guardian, 7 July 1944.

S.M.H., 16 May 1945, 25 May 1945. The Society's officers were: President - J. Cassidy (Vice-President of the N.S.W. Division of the Liberal Party); Vice-President - J.P. Abbott, M.H.R.; Research Officer - W.C. Wentworth (later to become a Liberal M.H.R.); and Librarian - Brian Doyle (Associate Editor of the Catholic Weekly).

Tribune, 22 May 1945.
the President of the A.L.P. in New South Wales, who claimed that its purpose was to conduct 'heresy hunting in the manner of the notorious Dies Committee of America'.\footnote{Ibid., 29 May 1945.} News-Weekly was yet another critic on the grounds that the Society opposed all strikes, irrespective of origin or motive.\footnote{News-Weekly, 15 May 1945.} A similar organisation in Sydney was the Citizens' Rights Committee,\footnote{The Committee's Chairman was D.P. Macdonald, a non-Labor Independent M.L.A. and the Vice-Chairman was Dr F. Louat, formerly prominent in the U.A.P.} formed in 1946 and termed by News-Weekly 'a stooge organisation for the Liberal Party'.\footnote{News-Weekly, 29 May 1946.} In fact, both these bodies disappeared when the Liberal Party adopted a stronger anti-Communist position. Largely on the initiative of the Lord Mayor of Brisbane the Freedom League was formed in Queensland in 1949.\footnote{Ibid., 17 August 1949.} News-Weekly feared that it 'could easily develop into Fascism'.\footnote{Ibid., 31 August 1949.} Most of the Freedom League's leaders were non-Labor political leaders and prominent clergymen although the Catholic Archbishop of Brisbane hastened to withdraw his support.

The entry into Australia of a large number of Central-East Europeans after the war strengthened the anti-Communist elements in
the community, but since few were proficient in English they made little impact within the anti-Communist groups at the time. The arrival of these anti-Communist immigrants was viewed by the Communist Party with alarm. Since 1947 it had been the unofficial practice of the Federal Government not to allow into Australia prospective migrants who are members of European Communist Parties or hold views sympathetic to Communism.

The press also played an important role in intensifying anti-Communist feeling. During World War II the Bulletin, widely read in country areas, had continued to attack not only Australian Communism, but also the Soviet Union. The Sydney Morning Herald ran numerous

---

83 In the fifties, the anti-Communist migrants established their own anti-Communist organisations. In 1957 the right-wing Anti-Bolshevik Bloc of Nations was formed and two years later the more moderate Assembly of Captive European Nations was set up. Sir Wilfred Kent-Hughes, M.H.R., E.A. Willis, M.L.A., Senator J.G. Gorton and Senator F.P. McManus have associated themselves with the former while W.C. Wentworth, M.H.R. has allied himself with the latter. Numerous other New Australian anti-Communist groups also emerged, including the United Council of Migrants from Communist Dominated Europe (formed in Sydney in 1952), the Russian Anti-Communist Centre (formed in Sydney in 1953) and the Committee of Nations from Behind the Iron Curtain (formed in Melbourne in 1953).

84 When pressed on this matter in 1949, A.A. Calwell, the Minister for Immigration, strongly implied that security checks designed to exclude Communists were strictly applied by the Australian Military Intelligence officers who conducted the political and security examinations (C.P.D., Vol. 202 (16 June 1949), p.1103).

articles attacking the Australian Communist Party. As the Cold War developed in the post-war period the press in general increasingly distorted or exaggerated almost everything related to Communism or Communist Parties.

The intensification of anti-Communist feeling was accompanied by the occasional use of violence, often with the open assistance of R.S.L. branches, at Communist Party meetings. R.S.L. members attacked a Party meeting in Shepparton, Victoria, in 1948, with such violence that the Secretary of the Victorian A.L.P., D. Lovegrove, referred to this and similar episodes as 'disgraceful outbreaks of hooliganism.'

In 1949 Dr H.J.P. McMeekin, Communist candidate at the Cobar By-Election had to seek police protection during a meeting in Bourke in which a Communist was admitted to hospital with severe concussion.

---

86 See, e.g. S.M.H., 19 July 1943, 20 July 1943, 21 July 1943, 22 July 1943, 14 August 1943. In 1945 the same paper declared: 'Communism in Australia has reached a stage where its potential to destroy the social and economic structure...has become a real danger.' (ibid., 19 January 1945). Some years later a leading article described how the Communist Party in Australia 'Plans Revolution' (ibid., 15 July 1948). News-Weekly went even further with frequent references to the 'good supply' of 'military rifles and ammunition' which the Party was alleged to possess in preparation for a revolution (News-Weekly 10 March 1948).

87 Tribune, 6 April 1949.

88 S.M.H., 10 March 1949. See also the description of violence used at a meeting addressed by W.E. Gollan at the 1949 Federal Election in Tribune, 26 November 1949.
A.A. Calwell, M.H.R., stated that the incident savoured of 'New Guard violence'.

Legal action against the Communist Party before 1950

The Chifley Labor Government was undoubtedly disturbed after World War II by the way in which the Communist Party, in keeping with its post-1947 tough line, kept exploiting strikes for political purposes. Such strikes not only hampered industrial recovery but also gave some substance to the suggestion that the Labor Party was too compromised with the Communist Party to deal with it firmly. It was not surprising, then, to find the Federal Government, and several of the State governments, using their legal powers to curb Communist activities in the late forties. In 1949 the Federal Government had introduced important amendments to the Conciliation and Arbitration Act and passed the National Emergency (Coal Strike) Act. The latter Act, in particular, gave the State unusually strong powers to deal with the 1949 coal strike and established a precedent with disturbing implications. In addition, the Chifley Government, following the visit to Australia of the British M.I.5 chief, Sir Percy Sillitoe, established the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation in March 1949. Its main object was to prevent

---

Ibid., 23 April 1949. In the late forties, moreover, the Communist Party and the front organisations found it difficult to hire halls for meetings (see, e.g. John Rodgers, Report on the Soviet Union, Melbourne, 1949).
Communist espionage and to keep check on the Party's activities. With the change of government in December 1949, the Labor Party's attitude to the Security Service began to change and charges were made that it had been converted into an anti-Labor as well as anti-Communist organisation. When it was first established, however, the organisation had been vigorously condemned by E.J. Harrison, the Deputy Leader of the Liberal Party, who asserted that 'Australians are subjected to more prying and more extensive snooping tactics than possibly are the Russians.' He continued:

> Things have come to a pretty pass when the Government establishes a security service...to compile dossiers that may subsequently be used to embarrass people.... These moves are the forerunners of a political police force - a gestapo, the O.G. P.U. of Soviet Russia and the like.  

The Chifley Government also made use of legislation passed by previous non-Labor administrations to deal with subversive activities. Under the Crimes Act three leading Communists were prosecuted in the late forties on the charge of promoting 'feelings of ill-will and hostility between different classes of His Majesty's subjects so as to endanger the peace, order or good government of the Commonwealth.' (Section 24A(1)). In October 1948 Gilbert Burns, a

---

90 For details relating to this body, see Brian Fitzpatrick, The Australian Commonwealth: A Picture of the Community 1901-1955, Melbourne, 1956, pp.129-44, 249-57.


92 For details of all three cases, see the Australian Council for Civil Liberties' pamphlet, A Public Remonstrance, Melbourne, 1950.
member of the Party's Queensland State Committee, was sentenced to six months' imprisonment arising out of a reply which he had given to a question at a public meeting. The questioner had asked what the Party's stand would be in the event of a war between the Soviet Union and the Western Powers. Burns had replied:

If Australia was involved in such a war it would be between Soviet Russia and American and British imperialism. We would oppose that war, we would fight on the side of Soviet Russia.94

Immediately after Burns' statement had been released to the press, R. Dixon declared that it did not reflect the views of the Party's Central Committee:

The Australian Communist Party will in all circumstances defend the independence of Australia against any and every threat to enslave us.... We are convinced that Soviet Russia in no way, now or in the future, threatens our country.95

During the trial, Burns' counsel also said that the statement did not represent Party policy. 96

The second (and most important) trial involved Sharkey97 who was found guilty in October 1949 and sentenced to three years' imprisonment for suggesting that

93 The questioner was Bruce Wight who, in the following year, was elected Liberal M.H.R. for Lilley.

94 Cited in A Public Remonstrance, p.5.

95 Tribune, 18 September 1948.

96 Ibid., 16 October 1948.

If Soviet forces in pursuit of aggressors entered Australia, Australian workers would welcome them. Australian workers would welcome Soviet forces pursuing aggressors as the workers welcomed them throughout Europe when the Red troops liberated the people from the power of the Nazis.... Invasion of Australia by forces of the Soviet Union seems very remote and hypothetical to me. I believe the Soviet Union will go to war only if she is attacked, and if she is attacked I do not see Australia being invaded by Soviet troops. The job of Communists is to struggle to prevent war.... The Communist Party also wants to bring the working class to power, but if Fascists in Australia use force to prevent the workers gaining that power Communists will advise the workers to meet force with force. 98

Statements made by the trial judge, Mr Justice Dwyer, during pronouncement of sentence were inconsistent with statements made relating to the conduct of the trial by the Federal Attorney-General, Dr H.V. Evatt, and the Crown Prosecutor during the trial, W.R. Dovey. Evatt had remarked: 'The fact that the accused was a member of the Communist party would not put him in a better or worse position.' 99

Dovey declared that the trial 'was not a prosecution against Communism or a Communist, but against a private citizen...the fact that Sharkey was General Secretary of the Communist Party was of no importance.' 100 Yet, the trial judge, Mr Justice Dwyer, stated:

The lamentable fact is that you occupy a position in which you, and others associated with you, exercise an evil and disproportionate influence over the life of the country.... Your words...were the result of a revised, careful and

98 Cited in A Public Remonstrance, p.6.
100 Herald, 20 June 1949.
deliberate predetermination to effect a malign and traitorous purpose. That purpose was to present and recommend a policy invoking disloyalty to Australia, so as to excite disaffection.\textsuperscript{101}

On the same occasion he also told Sharkey:

\begin{quote}
You spoke on behalf of yourself and on behalf of the Communist Party. What you said, therefore, had a significance and a possible influence far greater than if you had spoken merely as a simple citizen.\textsuperscript{102}
\end{quote}

Sharkey appealed against his sentence to the Court of Criminal Appeal which decided that his sentence was too severe and accordingly reduced the term of imprisonment to eighteen months.\textsuperscript{103} It is possible that Sharkey's sentence would have been more lenient had he not adopted a Dimitrov-like stand in the dock, but such behaviour was consistent with the view expressed in a Party pamphlet:

\begin{quote}
Our tactics in the public proceedings of the law court are not tactics of defence but of attack. Without clinging to legal formalities, the Communist must use the trial as a means of bringing his indictment against the dominant capitalist regime and courageously voicing the view of the party.\textsuperscript{104}
\end{quote}

In the third case, K.M. Healy, Chairman of the Party's Western Australian State Committee was acquitted in November 1949 for making the following statement:

\textsuperscript{101} \textit{Age}, 18 October 1949.
\textsuperscript{102} \textit{Tribune}, 22 October 1949.
\textsuperscript{103} \textit{Ibid.}, 1 March 1950.
\textsuperscript{104} Cited in Report of Royal Commission Inquiring into...the Communist Party in Victoria and other related matters, p.6.
Communists in Western Australia will give whole-hearted approval to the statement of the party's general secretary... that should the Soviet Army ever find it necessary to pursue an imperialist aggressor to Australia's soil they would be welcomed by Australian workers.

While such an eventuality as regards Australia seems exceedingly remote, the reported statement of Mr. Sharkey, following those by M. Thorez of France, and Mr. Togliatti, of Italy, is a warning to Wall Street and their fellow monopolists who are preparing for a third world war which is not only directed against the Soviet Union and the people's democracies, but aims at the destruction of the national independence of all countries, including Australia.¹⁰⁵

Healy's lenient treatment is probably explained by the fact that the Communist Party was comparatively weak in relatively non-industrialised Western Australia, a State also isolated from the Eastern States which were more aware of the 'Communist menace'. Yet the different outcomes of the three cases were remarkable. Burns' statement was much more forthright than Sharkey's and lacked all the latter's qualifications; and yet Burns received a milder sentence. In addition, Burns had maintained that Communists would 'fight' on the side of the Soviet Union whereas Sharkey had merely stated that 'Australian workers would welcome Soviet forces'.¹⁰⁶ Healy, on the other hand, was acquitted for expressing 'whole-hearted approval' of Sharkey's statement but as the Western Australian Crown Prosecutor remarked, Healy went 'much further',¹⁰⁷ than Sharkey since the latter had not

¹⁰⁵ Cited in A Public Remonstrance, p.7.
¹⁰⁶ My italics.
¹⁰⁷ Tribune, 7 December 1949.
accused 'Wall Street' and 'fellow imperialists' of preparing for World War III. Not only did the Courts stretch the interpretation of the Crimes Act in the Burns and Sharkey cases but even if their statements were seditious, justice was unevenly meted out.

However, it is clear that the prosecutions were primarily political attacks on the Communist Party. As Professor P.H. Partridge remarked:

there was nothing unusual or particularly dangerous in what Sharkey said.... We can only conclude that the charge was brought in this instance because Sharkey was general secretary of the Communist Party and because the present administration does not dare ignore the present outcry for the suppression of the Communist Party.... A large number of statements which are made every day in the course of political controversy would conform to Mr Justice Dwyer's description of Sharkey's statement as 'calculated to promote ill-will and hostility between different groups'.

The sedition trials were also condemned by Professor W. Friedmann, Professor of International Law at the University of Melbourne, who drew attention to the fact that British, French and Italian Communists had not been prosecuted under the sedition laws of their respective countries for similar statements. Some years later J.H. Wootten, who acted as counsel for the Industrial Groups in many Court cases, declared that 'it could not be seriously maintained that the statements by Sharkey...were a real threat to the security

108 S.M.H., 3 November 1949.
109 Tribune, 7 January 1950.
of the country.' He concluded that the Federal Labor Government had 'merely...sought political advantage' by the prosecutions.\footnote{110} The three Communists could not have been given a fair and reasonable trial during a period when anti-Communism was approaching its climax and the Labor Party caring less and less about civil liberties.

The stop-work protest meetings called by the Communists and militants in the trade unions after Sharkey's sentence had been imposed were not a success. Party strategies during the 'adventurist' period had isolated the Communists and their allies in the Labor movement and it was only in some of the Communist-controlled unions that any response was forthcoming. Even on the New South Wales coalfields no major stoppage occurred. The Sydney Branch of the W.W.F. was the only branch to implement the union's Federal Executive decision to stop work in protest: the Brisbane, Melbourne, Hobart and Newcastle branches refused to endorse the directive.\footnote{111} The New South Wales Labor Council advised trade unionists not to call stop-work meetings. Although the Mosman Branch of the A.L.P. protested against Sharkey's sentence, it was rebuffed by the party's New South Wales Secretary.\footnote{112} The various Release Sharkey Committees

\footnote{110} \textit{Voice}, November 1953.
\footnote{111} \textit{News-Weekly}, 30 March 1949.
\footnote{112} \textit{Sun}, Melbourne, 28 March 1949.
set up were comprised mainly of progressive and Communist middle-class intellectuals and trade unionists.

Communists in the Public Service and semi-Government agencies suffered from discrimination during the late forties. In June 1949 A.W. Rudkin was dismissed from C.S.I.R. and another employee of the same institution, Dr T.R. Kaiser, met the same fate in September 1949 after participating in a demonstration outside Australia House in London protesting against the Federal Government's handling of the coal strike.\footnote{Returning to Australia, Kaiser could find employment only as a telegraph linesman whereupon he took up an academic appointment in Britain.}

J.T. Lang alleged that C.S.I.R. was strongly infiltrated with Communists.\footnote{C.P.D. Vol. 200 (2 December 1948), pp.3953–6. See also J.T. Lang's two booklets, Communism in Australia, Sydney, n.d., and Communism is Treason, Sydney, n.d.} As a result of a speech by the Chairman of C.S.I.R., Sir David Rivett, advocating free trade in scientific knowledge, A.G. Cameron declared that 'the proper thing to do with...Rivett would be to relieve him of his duties.'\footnote{C.P.D., Vol. 198 (30 September 1948), p.1045.} The Federal Government capitulated to these attacks on C.S.I.R. and they re-organised the body in March 1949 and at the same time required its employees, only a handful of whom were Communists, to take the oath of allegiance. The new Chairman, I. Clunies-Ross, warned
employees not to participate in 'controversial political issues.' In 1947 A.W. Fadden, the Leader of the Country Party, alleged that the Commonwealth Public Service was 'white-anted with Communist sympathisers and practitioners'.

Following the defection in 1949 from the Communist Party of Cecil Sharpley, a member of the Party's Victorian Committee, the Victorian Government established a Royal Commission to inquire whether the Party advocated the overthrow of Government by force, whether the Party had used fraudulent practices in trade union ballots, whether the Party attempted to disrupt production and essential services and a number of related matters. A Victorian Supreme Court Judge, Sir Charles Lowe, who had formerly been a Patron of Australia-Soviet House was appointed Royal Commissioner and the

116 Tribune, 14 September 1949.
119 During the proceedings one witness, John Rodgers, Director of Australia-Soviet House (and a son of A.S. Rodgers, a Nationalist Minister in the Hughes Ministry, 1920-23), referred to Lowe's war-time patronage of the House, to which the Commissioner replied: 'I am not going to allow that....when the war was finished my patronage was withdrawn...any attempt to suggest that I ever had any sympathy with any Communist aspirations is something entirely devoid of foundation and I am not going to sit here and hear such nonsense.' (Herald, 10 August 1949).
Commission sat from June 1949 until March 1950. In October, it was described by the Leader of the Labor Party in Victoria, John Cain, as 'a reckless waste of public money', while the Opposition Leader, J.G.B. McDonald, declared that it had 'achieved little or nothing of value'. On the other hand the Royal Commission had strong support from the 'Movement's' State parliamentarians, particularly S.M. Keon. The 'expert' witnesses on Communism called by the Senior Counsel assisting the Commission were a mixed-bag of anti-Communists: J.N. Rawling, who had left the Party in 1939; another ex-Communist, T.C. McGillick of the People's Union; and M.H. Ellis, a Bulletin journalist and the author of two tendentious books on Communism in Australia. The more recent of these attempted to prove that the Labor Party was 'Moscow-controlled' and that ex-Communists in the A.L.P., such as Dr Lloyd Ross, J.A. Ferguson, R.A. King and J.A. Beasley were still part of the 'Communist plot'. One witness, Noble Kerby, even alleged that the former conservative Lord Mayor of Melbourne, Sir Thomas Nettlefold, was a 'fellow-traveller'. Sharpley himself alleged that J.E. Bennett, editor of the Melbourne

---

120 Argus, 20 October 1949.
121 Herald, 10 August 1949.
123 Herald, 25 August 1949.
Trades Hall Council organ, Labor Call, and endorsed A.L.P. candidate for the Federal seat of La Trobe, was a Communist. The Secretary of the A.L.P. electoral campaign committee in La Trobe remarked that the charge was 'hardly in accord with the violent attacks on Bennett circulated throughout the electorate by the Communist Party'.  

However, in view of the Labor Party's sensitivity to the charge of being associated with Communism in any way, Bennett had his endorsement for La Trobe withdrawn before the Federal Election. Sharpley's allegations relating to A.R. Wallis, a Commonwealth Conciliation Commissioner, and S. Merrifield, Victorian Labor M.L.A., were found to be incorrect. 

In contrast to the many reckless statements made before the Commission, Sir Charles Lowe's report proved to be moderate and balanced. His main conclusions were: (1) Until 1943 the Communist Party had been affiliated with the Comintern but since then there was 'no evidence to show control from abroad but generally the policy of the A.C.P. is in harmony with that of the C.P. elsewhere'; (2) The Party 'is prepared to use any means to achieve what it thinks to be a desirable object, so long as it regards the means as fitting and the result as not on the whole disadvantageous' (the same could

---

124 Ibid., 7 July 1949.

125 Report of Royal Commission Inquiring into...the Communist Party in Victoria and other related matters, pp.101-2.
be said, with some reservations, of all political parties); (3) The Party's funds 'come from various local sources and there is no evidence of funds coming from overseas'; (4) The Party 'seeks to overthrow representative and democratic institutions as we know them, when a revolutionary situation arrives. In the meantime it is willing to make use of these institutions in order to further its own aims'; (5) 'In a period when there was a ban to its operation it carried on, as far as it could, its usual activities and it has made preparations to meet any revival of those conditions'; (6) 'There are a number of instances...of the A.C.P. or members of it using violence, intimidation and fraudulent practices to achieve their aim, but of the allegations of the fraudulent 'rigging' of ballots only one is completely established, though there are circumstances of suspicion in regard to most of the others'; and (7) The Party has 'dislocated, disrupted or retarded industrial production, but claims that this effect was only a concomitant to the struggle to obtain better conditions for the workers.'126

As to Sharples' credibility as a witness, Sir Charles Lowe stated:

in cross-examination there was much to make one doubt parts of his evidence, and there is much otherwise against him ....there were occasions...in his cross-examination when his statements were shown to be unreliable, and in his published articles there were some exaggerations and mistatements.

126 Ibid., pp. 104-7.
Lastly his role was akin to that of an informer on those he had for years associated with, and for his disclosures to the Press he had been paid at a rate which must have seemed to him munificent.

The credibility of such a witness is heavily suspect, and had it not been for unexpected corroboration of his evidence at a number of points, I should have been inclined not to act on it at all.\textsuperscript{127}

The findings of the Royal Commissioner disappointed those anti-Communists who hoped for sensational revelations. No evidence was brought to light which suggested that the Party's activities constituted a clear and present danger. Sir Charles Lowe's Report was not acted upon by the Victorian Government, probably because on the day before it was published, the Menzies Government introduced the Communist Party Dissolution Bill into Federal Parliament. Nevertheless, the Royal Commission was a significant portent of what was to come later and it pointed towards more oppressive moves by the State.

It did succeed, however, in uniting the Communist Party during a period when because of strong anti-Communist feeling and the Party's isolation from Australian society, the membership had become dispirited. The only really cheerful piece of news for the Party in the late forties was the Communist victory in China in 1949 which led Snarkey to comment: 'They've got Sharpley, but we've got Shanghai.'\textsuperscript{128}

\textsuperscript{127}Ibid., p.7. For Sharpley's comment on this statement see Cecil H. Sharpley, \textit{op. cit.}, pp.130-5.
\textsuperscript{128}Alan Barcan, \textit{op. cit.}, p.7.
Communism, together with bank nationalisation and petrol rationing was one of the principal issues at the 1949 Federal Election. The Liberal and Country Parties laid great stress on the 'menace of Communism' and Chifley's difficulties in ending the coal strike. Fadden, in his policy speech, stated that the Country Party stood for banning the Communist Party, preventing Communists from holding official positions in the trade unions or being employed in the Commonwealth Public Service. He also declared the objectives of the Labor Party and the Communist Party were identical. Later, he said that if the Labor Government were re-elected 'the Hammer and Sickle' would become 'the coat of arms of Australia'. Menzies' policy speech stated that the Liberal Party also stood for banning the Communist Party and debarring Communists from official positions in trade unions and employment in the Commonwealth Public Service. He condemned Communists as 'unscrupulous opponents of religion, of civilised government, of law and order, of national security'. Throughout the campaign Chifley referred to Communism as a

129 S.M.H., 8 November 1949.
130 Ibid., 27 November 1949.
131 Ibid., 11 November 1949. It is interesting that Menzies listed first Communism's attitude to religion. This was probably calculated to capture some of the hitherto Catholic A.L.P. vote and it is widely believed that the Queensland Catholic hierarchy's opposition to the A.L.P. was responsible in part for the strong swing against the A.L.P. in that State.
'side-issue' and a 'bogy'. The result of the election was a decisive Liberal-Country Party victory and although stalwart anti-Communists such as J.P. Abbott retired and J.T. Lang was defeated their places were filled by W.C. Wentworth (Liberal) and a group of 'Movement' Labor Party parliamentarians from Victoria, notably S.M. Keon, J.M. Mullens and W.M. Bourke. Hearing the electorate's verdict Chifley wrote to a friend that

the constant barrage over the radio and in the press, whereby the Opposition succeeded in linking Communism with Socialism and Socialism with the Labour Party, and so creating a fear complex in the minds of a percentage of the middle class vote, was the outstanding reason for the Government's defeat.133

Indeed, it was ironical that the Labor Government, which had adopted such a strong attitude to the Communists during 1946-49 should have been defeated in an election in which the coal strike and Communism featured prominently. But it had found it impossible to outdo the Liberal and Country Parties in denouncing Communism.

By the close of the decade the Party had lost many of the advantages it had held in the immediate post-war years by the strategies of the 'adventurist' period and, of course, the repercussions of the Cold War. It was isolated in the Labor movement and had lost much of its previous political support. In a period when Australians had been drifting to the Right and the demands for social reform

132 Ibid., 6 October 1949, 15 October 1949.
133 L.F. Crisp, Ben Chifley, p.374.
diminishing, the Party had shifted to a more militant Left position. In a community which has never had a strong tradition of civil liberties it was extremely vulnerable and already under strong attack from all the major political parties and the State. Anti-Communist feeling was nearing its peak and a Federal Government pledged to ban the Party had just been returned to power. The Party was disturbed at what the future had to offer and anxiously began to seek friends by modifying its 'adventurist' strategies. However, for the Party, worse was still to come.
PART TWO
CHAPTER FOUR

MOVES TO BAN THE COMMUNIST PARTY, 1950-1951

The period of 1945-49 had seen the Communist Party acting out the fantasy of a revolutionary movement, apparently certain of potential mass support, pursuing militant industrial strategies. In the process, its resources of public goodwill and trade union power had been seriously depleted, and it entered the decade of the fifties in an extremely vulnerable and exposed position. In 1950, the Menzies-Fadden Government brought in a bill to declare the Party illegal; the A.L.P., unwilling to commit itself against the ban, refused to use its Senate majority to ensure the bill's defeat; the bill, duly enacted, was declared unconstitutional by the High Court. Having fought and won the 1951 Federal Election on the issue of anti-Communism, the Menzies Government next submitted to referendum a proposal for banning the Party. This time the A.L.P., now under the leadership of Dr H.V. Evatt following Chifley's death, came out clearly against the depreciation of civil liberties involved in the proposed ban. The referendum proposal was defeated - but by a disturbingly narrow margin. The Communist Party, exhausted and uncertain, cautiously began adjusting its strategies to the harsh exigencies of politics in the fifties.

Its ordeal had not been herioc, and the defeat of the referendum had not been a triumphant occasion. If anything,
anti-Communist feeling had been whipped up to a new pitch, and the A.L.P., which had been most unhappy playing the role of St George for civil liberties, redoubled its efforts to isolate the Communists within the Labor movement. The Industrial Groups' militants, who had gained in influence through the crisis, were now strong enough to demand attention, and in late 1951 they reached an agreement with Dr Evatt about anti-Communist policies. The international situation had taken a decided turn for the worse; the Korean War, the spread of McCarthyism in the United States, and the uncompromising and hostile Soviet policies of the late Stalinist era made things difficult for Communist Parties in Western countries. The Australian Communists, their confidence at a low ebb, were more concerned with questions of survival than with the strategies of revolutionism.

In the period 1950–54, therefore, the attempt to ban the Party is of the utmost importance. Our first concern must be to deal with the crisis precipitated by the Communist Party Dissolution Bill of 1950.

The attempt to ban the Party by legislation

There had been several previous attempts to ban revolutionary organisations by legislation. During the First World War, the High Court had held that in time of war the Commonwealth Constitution permitted the Federal Government to intern any person whose actions
were considered to be detrimental to the war effort\(^1\) and the decision was followed in the Second World War.\(^2\) The I.W.W. was declared illegal under the Unlawful Associations Act (1916) which was directed mainly against organisations advocating the destruction of property or whose activities were considered harmful to the war effort. The validity of this legislation, however, was not judicially tested. Nor, when the Communist Party was banned in 1940 under the National Security (Subversive Associations) Regulations (1940), did it attempt to challenge the decision in the courts. In addition, during the inter-war period, various non-Labor Federal Governments had made attempts to ban the Party in a rather circuitious way under the Crimes Act. This Act, originally passed in 1914, was substantially strengthened in 1920, 1926 and 1932 to deal with Communists in particular. The 1920 amendments, introduced by the Hughes Government, made sedition an indictable offence (Sections 24A–D). A seditionist was defined as any person who promoted 'feelings of ill-will and hostility between different classes of His Majesty's subjects so as to endanger the peace, order or good government of the Commonwealth' (Section 24A(g)). Proceedings could be instituted against any person who wrote, printed, uttered or published 'seditious words' (Section 24D). In 1926 the Bruce-Page

\(^1\) Lloyd v. Wallach (1915), 20 C.L.R., pp.299–314.

\(^2\) Ex parte Walsh (1942), A.L.R., pp.359–61.
Government added further amendments to the effect that any organisation which advocated sedition could be declared an 'unlawful association' (Section 30A(1)). Professor Sawer has declared that the 1926 amendments were 'aimed chiefly' at the Communist Party.3

In further amending the Crimes Act in 1932, the Lyons Government wished to provide ways of declaring an association unlawful without resort to trial by jury. Under the 1926 amendments, trial by jury could be demanded and it was felt that jurors could not always be relied upon to be sufficiently anti-Communist to convict those charged with sedition. Thus, Section 30A (AA) was introduced in 1932, under which the Federal Attorney-General could apply to the High Court or a Supreme Court, sitting without a jury, to decide whether or not an organisation was an unlawful association as defined in Section 30A (1). If the Court decided against any organisation then the latter, in law, became an unlawful association.

In 1932 the Lyons Government instituted proceedings, under Section 30D of the Crimes Act, against F.H. Devanny, the publisher of the Workers' Weekly, the official organ of the Communist Party, for soliciting funds for an anti-war committee which the Government termed an 'unlawful association'. The prosecuting counsel alleged

that the funds solicited by Devanny were for the Communist Party which, it asserted, controlled the anti-war committee. Devanny was sentenced to six month's imprisonment but the High Court subsequently upheld his appeal. A majority of the High Court judges stated that it was not illegal to raise money to oppose the threat of war but they were not obliged, and did not comment on the question whether the Communist Party was an unlawful association under the Crimes Act. Thus, the Devanny case was not a satisfactory test of the Act as a weapon against the Communist Party. Indeed, it would appear that the Attorney-General at the time, Sir John Latham, was not particularly enthusiastic about sanctioning the prosecution; not only had the charge been made against an individual but Devanny had been prosecuted under the 1926 amendments rather than those of 1932.

Even more stringent amendments to the Crimes Act were proposed in 1935 and 1937. In both years, proceedings against the Friends of the Soviet Union were undertaken but on each occasion the proposed amendments and prosecutions were withdrawn following vigorous protest from middle-class intellectuals, the militant wing of the trade union movement and, of course, the Communist Party.

For details, see Leicester Webb, *Communism and Democracy in Australia*, pp.19-20.

In 1949 the Crimes Act was effectively used against two of the three leading Communists charged with sedition and several references to its utility were made during the parliamentary debates on the Communist Party Dissolution Bill in 1950. Many Labor Party politicians maintained that the Crimes Act was an adequate means of curbing the Communist Party, should its activities endanger the security and good government of Australia.  

In keeping with promises made during the 1949 Election, Menzies took steps early in 1950 to have the Communist Party declared illegal. He faced a choice of means. Either he could use the Crimes Act — roughly in the same way that the Truman Government had employed the Smith Act (1940) to prosecute leaders of the Communist Party of the United States in 1949 — or he could introduce legislation to ban the Party. Resort to the Crimes Act would have several disadvantages. The procedures which it embodied offered 

---

6 Leicester Webb, op. cit., p.25.

7 In the United States, under its Federal system of government, the Federal legislature cannot introduce legislation banning a political party but, as in the case of the Smith Act, it can legislate to the effect that certain offences, such as conspiring to advocate the forceful and violent overthrow of the government, are unlawful. In 1949 eleven leading Communists were charged under the Smith Act. The decision in the case of these individuals carried implications that the American Communist Party would probably be treated as an illegal organisation in subsequent prosecutions. It is important to note that it was left to a judge and a jury to determine whether or not the activities of the eleven Communists came under the legislation.
the Communists important avenues of legal redress; under the 1926 amendments trial by jury would be required (and Menzies may not have been certain that Australian juries would always be anti-Communist\(^8\)) while under Section 30A (AA) (the 1932 amendment) the High Court or Supreme Court would have to decide whether or not a particular organisation should be deemed an unlawful association, and even this would have required the presentation of detailed evidence. Under the circumstances, Menzies preferred a measure which would not only declare the Communist Party to be subversive but also dissolve it. One way of obtaining this result would have been to persuade the six State Governments to pass acts banning the Communist Party,\(^9\) but in 1950 there were Labor Governments in power in Queensland, New South Wales and Tasmania, and these would have been most reluctant to fall in with such a scheme. Even had the non-Labor Governments of Victoria, South Australia and Western Australia passed such legislation on their own account, there would have been nothing to stop subsequent Labor administrations from repealing the acts in question.

---

\(^8\) During the debate on the Communist Party Dissolution Bill Menzies was firmly opposed to the trial by jury of any organisation or individual declared under the proposed legislation, (C.P.D., Vol. 208 (20 June 1950), pp.4562-3).

\(^9\) It should be noted that during the First and Second World Wars the Federal Government had general powers, under the defence power of the Commonwealth Constitution, to deal with subversive organisations but that in time of peace its authority in this respect was much more restricted.
Federal legislation banning the Communist Party was the course finally chosen. On 27 April 1950 Menzies introduced the Communist Party Dissolution Bill, whose preamble declared that the Communist Party was engaged in activities of a 'treasonable or subversive nature', such as espionage and sabotage, as well as in activities 'designed to bring about the overthrow or dislocation' of the Australian system of government. The Bill proposed to dissolve the party and 'affiliated' bodies, whose property would pass into the hands of the Commonwealth. Party members and 'other persons who are communists' would be disqualified from employment by the Commonwealth and from holding executive positions in those trade unions whose members were engaged in a vital industry. The names of suspect organisations and individuals would be published in the Commonwealth Gazette and it would be up to those named to establish that they were not Communists or (in the case of organisations) Communist-controlled. A 'declared' organisation or person could appeal to a judge of the High Court but there was no provision for trial by a jury. A 'communist' was defined as any person who supported or advocated 'the objectives, policies, teachings, principles or practices of communism, as expounded by Marx and Lenin', and the legislation, as applied to organisations or individuals, was made retrospective to 10 May 1948,
the last day of the 15th National Congress of the Communist Party.

In explaining the Bill's purpose to the House of Representatives, Menzies justified the proposed dissolution of the Communist Party as a measure necessary for Australia's defence interests. The Cold War, he suggested, obliged the Western countries to take security precautions which would not normally have been contemplated in peacetime. He depicted the Communist Party as a sinister fifth column, prepared for sabotage and disruption.

We would not have tolerated a fifth column in Australia from 1939 to 1945. We, certainly, do not propose to tolerate one in 1950, at a time when militant communism, checked for the time being in Western Europe, is moving east and southeast to carry out its plans to put down democracy and to usher in the revolution. Coal-mining, iron and steel, engineering, transport, building and power are key industries....it would be an act of criminal folly to leave revolutionary Communists in key positions in those industries so that with all their smallness of numbers they may achieve destructive results which five army corps could hardly hope to achieve.

The spotlight now turned to the Labor Party, whose position was extremely difficult. The A.L.P. had never been seriously concerned to protect the Communist Party, and the Chifley Government, indeed,

---

10 'A Bill for an Act To provide for the Dissolution of the Australian Communist Party and of other Communist Organizations, to disqualify Communists from holding certain Offices, and for purposes connected therewith', The Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia, House of Representatives, Bills Introduced, Session 1950–51, Vol.1, pp.73–84.


was said to have valued the Crimes Act as a means of dealing with recalcitrant Communist leaders. On the other hand, the A.L.P. had not been forced seriously to consider the question of outlawing the Communist Party until its own anti-Communists, particularly those associated with the 'Movement' and the Industrial Groups, began urging such a step after 1945. The Federal A.L.P. Conference of 1948 had declared against a ban, but the fact that the matter had been given significant attention at this level was ominous in itself. By 1950 the anti-Communists within the A.L.P. were more articulate and self-confident than ever, and the gap between them and the traditionalists and left-wing members had become wide and deep. In fact, Labor's anti-Communists would probably have agreed heartily with Menzies' view of the Communist Party, and they probably favoured the Dissolution Bill without any reservations. Chifley, who was personally opposed to the proposed ban, had to plan his course of action with great care. His task would have been simpler had the A.L.P. been in a minority in both the Senate and the House, for then it might have been possible for it to have opposed the Bill tongue-in-cheek. But Labor's Senate majority gave it the power to check the Bill — and thus could provide Menzies with a pretext for obtaining a double dissolution and for fighting the subsequent

13 See statements by Dr H.V. Evatt in ibid., pp.2286-7.
election on the issue of anti-Communism. Such a course would have imposed great strains on the A.L.P. itself, and perhaps even have divided it. It was not surprising, therefore, that Labor refused to block the Bill. The Communist Party was learning two lessons; the first, that the A.L.P. could not be relied upon to stand firm on questions of civil liberties at the cost of electoral advantage; the second, that Communism in Australia could not depend on mass support in a crisis.

After a period of confusion, the Federal Labor Party began its tactical retreat. In May 1950 it decided not to oppose the Bill's provisions for banning the Communist Party (on the grounds that the Government had received an electoral mandate to execute such a ban) while putting forward amendments designed to soften the Bill in certain respects, especially with regard to the 'onus of proof' clauses. The Government pressed its advantage, accepting some of the proposed changes but rejecting the most important amendments. The Labor Party tried to use its Senate majority to secure their adoption with the result that the Bill was shuttled back and forth between the two chambers, with neither side willing to give way. An impasse was developing. Unless Labor dropped its remaining amendments, it was clear that Menzies would go to the country despite

15 Ibid., p.387.
16 Ibid., p.388.
the fact that the ban proposal had not been in dispute. Labor's parliamentarian party began to weaken; at one caucus meeting, 18 members out of 59 voted for dropping the amendments. 17 Finally, with feeling running high, the A.L.P. Federal Executive met in October and voted (by eight votes to four) that the parliamentary party should be instructed to let the Bill through. 18 The Bill was passed on 19 October.

Before another week was out, the Communist Party and ten Communist-dominated unions had asked the High Court to consider the question of the Act's legality. 19 Dr H.V. Evatt, the Labor Party's deputy leader, agreed to act as counsel for one of the unions, the Waterside Workers' Federation. A new phase in the crisis was beginning.

The Double Dissolution

Evatt's decision to take part in the High Court proceedings produced contrasting reactions within the A.L.P. It was welcomed by those who had seen in the Bill both an attack on civil liberties and a means of persecuting, not just the Communist Party, but any

17 Ibid., p.390.
18 Ibid., p.395; S.M.H., 17 October 1950. Professor Crisp has stated that the decision was 'almost certainly' ultra vires of the 1948 Federal Conference decision (L.F. Crisp, The Australian Federal Labour Party 1901-1951, p.180).
19 S.M.H., 24 October 1950.
association or person with left-wing views. Several remarks made by the Government's leaders left the impression that the latter fear was justified. A.W. Fadden, the Country Party leader and Deputy Prime Minister, had said in November 1949 that the objectives of the Communist and Labor parties were identical. Menzies himself, during the debates on the Dissolution Bill, had suggested that it would be 'easy' to 'declare' a Labor Senator (presumably Senator W. Morrow) and that 'at least' one Labor M.H.R. 'might escape only by the skin of his teeth.' Although the Bill had now been passed, Chifley still remained opposed to it along with the A.C.T.U. executive, several left-wing Labor members and groups of middle-class liberals. On the other hand, Evatt's decision to go before the High Court was bitterly resented by the A.L.P's anti-Communist members and supporters, who accepted the new Act in its entirety. The Victorian A.L.P., in particular, took him to task for his action. Already the lines of cleavage which were to lead to the 1955 split had appeared.

20 Ibid., 8 November 1949.
22 L.F. Crisp, Ben Chifley, p.395.
23 See, e.g., the four pamphlets published in Melbourne in 1950 by the Australian Council for Civil Liberties: A Bill for a Police State, The Amended Bill for a Police State, Some Opinions from Outside the Parliament, and The Unnecessary Police State Bill.
From the evidence we have, it would appear that the Communists were by this stage fully resigned to being outlawed and having to organise themselves as an underground organisation. This possibility had been seriously envisaged since 1948, when the Liberal Party had first decided that it would proceed to ban the Communist Party if returned to power at the Federal level. Many Communist records were either destroyed or dispersed at about this time; in 1950 Sir Charles Lowe reported

all the Communist evidence I have had agrees that the Party records in Victoria were destroyed when the Party feared in 1948 that it would be declared illegal or its premises raided and its property seized.25

Towards the end of 1949, Marx House in George Street, Sydney, was sold26 and less impressive Party headquarters in Market Street acquired. The Party press in Melbourne and Australia–Soviet House were also sold about the same time.27 The well-known Communist author, Frank Hardy, has written that when he visited the Party's Melbourne headquarters in 1950 all he found was 'the telephone girl, a table and a chair.... The Party was apparently preparing for illegality.'28 In late 1950 and early 1951 the Communist Review

25 Report of Royal Commission Inquiring into...Communism in Victoria and other related matters, p.43.
26 S.M.H., 12 December 1949.
did not appear and an illegal monthly *Review* was given a trial run. 29

Although preparations for illegality were expensive and time-consuming, particularly during a period when membership was declining, the Party treated the task with the utmost seriousness. There was the added difficulty that Sharkey was in gaol until December 1950. Special care was taken to see the membership was consolidated and purified. Contrary to the assertions of some anti-Communists that the Party welcomed the prospect of going underground and thereby gaining the sympathy of progressives and liberals, it did not welcome the prospect. The previous period of illegality (1940-42) had presented the Party with many difficulties: a number of Central Committee members had deserted their posts, the Western Australian organisation had virtually ceased to exist and the power of the Central Committee had been usurped by the New South Wales State Committee. 30 Before the Party had been declared illegal in June 1940 it had made some preparations but the difficulties of maintaining a clandestine organisation intact had been

---

29 The 111th issue of the *Communist Review* is dated November 1950 and the 112th issue did not appear until April 1951. There were four issues of the illegal *Review* (December 1950-March 1951), published by the Henry Lawson Press, Eurunderee, N.S.W. Eurunderee is a tiny settlement in the Central Tablelands (Shire of Cudgegong) where Henry Lawson spent his childhood.

clearly evident. Sharkey later commented on this episode in the following terms:

the ban hampered the work of the Party....the Communist Party has no desire for illegal conditions of work. An open legal Party has greater opportunity for growth and mass contact than an illegal one. The Communist Party only works illegally when there is no alternative course open to it.... 31

The Party was aware of its isolation and lack of widespread outside sympathy, particularly after the A.L.P. had given way during the parliamentary debates on the Communist Party Dissolution Bill. Its insecurity was accentuated by the outbreak of the Korean War in June 1950 which led many Australians to believe that ruthless action against the Party was urgently required. The moderate and right-wing unions had failed to protest over the imprisonment of Sharkey in the early part of 1950 and, although most opposition to the Dissolution Bill came from these unions, it was not sufficient to reassure the Party. There was a disheartening response to the nation-wide 24-hour strike called by Communist and militant-controlled unions in June to protest against the Bill. 32 The A.W.U. and a number of other right-wing unions had favoured passing the Bill in its original form. This was an extreme position; most of the important reformist-led unions as

31 Ibid., p.51.
32 S.M.H., 5 June 1950.
well as the Interstate Executive of the A.C.T.U. held that the Bill, without the insertion of all the amendments proposed by the A.L.P., would be contrary to the interests of the trade union movement. 33 However, only the Communist and militant-controlled unions went to the length of opposing the Bill's central proposal - for dissolving the Communist Party.

The Communist Party was really involved in two situations, each with its own strategic difficulties. On the one hand, as we have seen, it was preparing for a period of clandestine activity, with all the difficulties in communication, solidarity and industrial action which that would have involved. On the other hand, it had to cope with the developing crisis which the Bill's enactment had set in train. It was quick to scrap what remained of its adventurist strategies, and to implement the more moderate policies made possible by the softening of the international line in late 1950. (This was probably due to Russian fears that the Korean War would spread and that the Communist Parties in Western countries could prevent this happening by desisting from provocative action). The Australian Communists, painfully aware of their isolation, began a fresh search for allies amongst middle-class intellectuals and left-wing A.L.P. members. The language of the Popular Front of 1935-39 and of the National United Front of 1941-45 came back into vogue; 'united front

33 Ibid., 25 June 1950.
from below' became the new slogan. But these adjustments were in the nature of insurance policies; the real question was whether or not the High Court would declare the Dissolution Act invalid.

The High Court, on 9 March 1951, declared that the Act was unconstitutional and that it constituted an unwarrantable interference with property rights and civil liberties. Six of the seven judges (Sir John Latham, the Chief Justice, alone dissenting) declared the Act wholly invalid. The majority of the judges maintained that the Communist Party could not, in time of peace, be dissolved and Communists barred from trade union and Public Service positions under the defence power of the Constitution. They did not consider the Korean War to be a major war placing Australia on a war footing. Latham, C.J., on the other hand, stated that the Commonwealth Parliament could itself decide whether a political party constituted a threat to the nation's security and constitutional government — whether in time of peace or war. It is false to suggest, as Colin Clark has done, that the allegedly bad drafting of the Act had anything to do with its being declared invalid. The drafting of the Bill, in either its original or amended form, was of no importance as to the outcome of the High Court decision. The basic problem lay not in the drafting but in the essential principle,

namely, that the Parliament and the Executive, not the Courts, presumed to make the decision as to whether the Communist Party was a seditious organisation or a menace to the defence of the country. The Commonwealth had no power to deal with the Communist Party merely because it was an association. General control of associations belongs under our Constitution exclusively to the State Parliaments. Hence, the Commonwealth could deal with the Party only because of its alleged seditious or anti-defence qualities. The High Court said that in peacetime only the Courts could judge whether a particular person or association has the factual attributes attracting Federal power; it held, for the first time, that the decisions on internment giving power of conclusive decision to the Executive (and any inference from those decisions as to dissolution of associations) were restricted to time of 'hot' war.

Checked at this point, the Government tried another approach. When Labor's Senate majority refused to accept the Commonwealth Bank Bill Menzies sought and secured a double dissolution on 19 March. The date for the subsequent election was given as 28 April. From the opening shots of the campaign, Menzies and Fadden made it clear that for them the central issue at stake was not the Bank Bill but their proposal to ban the Communist Party. They set their theme that the Australian Communists were a subversive and disruptive group against the background of the Korean War and the general international tension. Menzies stated that if his
Government were re-elected he would propose a constitutional amendment enabling the Federal Parliament to declare the Communist Party illegal. On the other hand, the A.L.P. attempted to divert attention away from the anti-Communist issue and concentrated on the Government's failure to cope with the problem of inflation and the threatened retrenchments in the Commonwealth Public Service. As early as October 1950 Chifley had written that an election fought on the provisions of the Dissolution Act would result in the Labor Party losing seats and proposed that the A.L.P. make inflation the key issue. 36

The results produced few surprises. Labor held its ground surprisingly well, and it succeeded in winning five seats from the Government. But it was unable to prevent the Government achieving its main objective, a Senate majority. Nor was it able to prevent its vote from falling significantly in a number of urban electorates; in fact, its losses might have been heavier but for the fact that in country areas it was reaping the benefit of resentment against the Government's wool income levy. This factor was probably the main reason for Labor's having won four of its five new seats. 37 Chifley commented: 'The 'Commo' stuff...worked very well for our opponents.' 38

36 L.F. Crisp, op. cit., p.394.
37 Ibid., p.409.
38 Loc. cit.
The Communist Party's vote increased significantly; it is quite probable that many left-wing Labor members and trade unionists had felt the need to express their disapproval of the Government's action by voting Communist. In 1949 the Communist Party's 35 House of Representatives' candidates had polled 40,941 votes whereas in 1951 27 candidates polled 45,759 votes. In almost all the electorates contested by the Party in both elections the Communist vote rose sharply. The Party's percentage of the valid votes increased from 3.48 to 8.41 per cent in Cook, from 3.54 to 10.05 per cent in Gellibrand, and from 5.01 to 10.45 per cent in West Sydney. The Party's senate vote rose slightly from 87,958 in 1949 to 93,561, but this rise should not be treated too seriously since 61,713 of these votes were polled in New South Wales where the Party was fortunate enough to gain first place on the ballot paper. Nevertheless, the increase in the Communist vote was small compensation for the fact that the Menzies Government was once again in the political saddle, but this time with a Senate majority.

Menzies' next move was to request the six State Governments to transfer to the Commonwealth the powers necessary to declare the Communist Party illegal. Although the non-Labor Governments of Victoria, South Australia and Western Australia were prepared to

39 The preferences of Communist candidates were decisive in two seats - Leichhardt and Perth - where they enabled the sitting A.L.P. members to be re-elected.
accede to the request, the New South Wales and Queensland Labor Governments refused to do so.\footnote{Leicester Webb, \textit{op. cit.}, p.43.} In the following month the Menzies Government introduced the Constitution Alteration (Powers to Deal with Communists and Communism) Bill for a referendum to be held on 22 September 1951 asking the electorate to grant to the Federal parliament wide powers to deal with the Communists and the Communist Party, and so that the Communist Party Dissolution Act could be re-enacted. Under the provisions of the Constitution, the Government's proposals would have to receive the support of not only the majority of the electors but a majority in a majority of the six States before they could proceed to ban the Communist Party. Only four referenda had been successful previously, but the Government was confident that anti-Communist feeling was running high enough for it to carry the day.

The anti-Communist referendum

Before and during the referendum, the divisions within the A.L.P. continued to grow. While the party's Federal Executive decided to oppose the referendum proposals, the latter were favoured by the Victorian Central Executive of the A.L.P.\footnote{S.M.H., 6 July 1951.} The party's leader, J.B. Chifley, had died in June 1951 but the opposition to the
Government's proposals was energetically conducted by the new leader, Dr Evatt. While Evatt and many A.L.P. politicians did not neglect the civil liberties aspect of the referendum, the Labor Party's general strategy was again to make inflation the key issue. The Communist Party drew attention to the threat to civil liberties and claimed that Australia was perilously close to Fascism. As Sharkey remarked: 'Essentially, Menzies sets out to fascise the country'.

But the Communist Party also saw the need to play up other issues and its propaganda included references not only to inflation and to the threat of conscription, but also on the dangers of Australia's signing of the Japanese Peace Treaty. The Labor Party, realising that the Government was passing through an unpopular stage, set out to make the referendum a test of the Government's general popularity, rather than a straight poll on the proposed ban. Indeed, in view of its traditional lack of concern with civil liberties issues, it is difficult to see what else it could have done. However, its campaign was hindered by 'Movement' members of the Federal parliament who refused to participate in the campaign and made their support for the Government's proposals obvious. In addition, a considerable number of Federal and, more important, State Labor politicians failed to give Evatt enthusiastic support.

---

42 *Communist Review*, September 1951, p.899.
Members of the Communist Party were advised by Sharkey that 'the united front from below must be made a living reality' if the referendum were to be defeated. They were also urged to set up 'No' committees embracing not only Communists but also A.L.P. members and non-Party persons, though the non-Communist members of these committees were not to be subjected to any pressure to accept the Party's overall objectives. However, the Party came up against some difficulties since some of its members found difficulty in accepting the new strategy and were ill disposed towards working with non-Communists. Warnings were issued against 'sectarianism'.

During this period the Party was also taking a very active part in the peace campaign and a number of branches were advised not to devote all their attention to the referendum's defeat. Although the 'No' committees were relatively successful in a number of Communist and militant-controlled trade unions, their widespread establishment was prevented by the Labor Party's placing a ban on its members participating in them. The ban was quite rigidly enforced, particularly in Victoria. Nevertheless, in spite of

44 Tribune, 18 July 1951.
45 Loc. cit.
46 Loc. cit.
47 Ibid., 8 August 1951.
48 Ibid., 25 July 1951, 22 August 1951.
49 Age, 18 August 1951.
these obstacles, Tribune subsequently claimed that 'a wide unity of action was established between the Communists and the ALP members in the unions and factories.'

The Communist Party, alarmed at the prospect of a ban, spent a large amount of money during the referendum campaign. In Sydney alone five million leaflets and 140,000 posters were distributed. In addition, a £40,000 Referendum Fund was established. Professor Webb has estimated that approximately half the total 'No' expenditure came from the Communist Party, front organisations and Communist-controlled unions. Although a Liberal M.H.R., D.R. Berry, subsequently alleged that the Party had given £12,000 to the A.L.P. to fight the referendum, the two parties conducted quite separate campaigns.

On the initiative of the Communist Party a new front organisation, the Democratic Rights Council, was established to meet the threat to the Party's legality. Almost all the Council's

---

50 Tribune, 26 September 1951.
51 Ibid., 19 September 1951.
52 Ibid., 8 August 1951.
53 Leicester Webb, op. cit., p.142.
55 In fact, the Democratic Rights Council succeeded the Committee for the Defence of Democratic Liberties, set up in Sydney in 1949 (see Tribune, 21 September 1949).
secretaries and organisers in the various States were Communists, although a number of non-Communists, particularly clergymen active in the Australian Peace Council, held some of the presidencies and vice-presidencies. The Council was banned to Labor Party members by the Queensland and Victorian Branches of the A.L.P., 56 whereupon the New South Wales Branch and the Federal Executive followed suit. 57

The role of liberal academics and a section of the Protestant clergy was of some significance in eventually turning public opinion against the Government's proposals. 58 Even a section of the Liberal Party, particularly its university student members, were in favour of the 'No' case. 59 Many of these persons were disturbed by the fact that if the referendum were to be passed then the wide and vague definition given to a 'communist' under the Dissolution Act could not be subsequently whittled down. There was no built-in process of reducing the ambit of the definition and it would have been left to the Government to interpret the Act's provisions as it thought fit. 60

57 Ibid., 4 October 1950.
59 Ibid., pp.80-1, 86-7.
60 On the other hand, had the High Court upheld the validity of the Dissolution Bill, the wide definition of a 'communist' could have been reduced by subsequent amendments.
The referendum poll, held on 22 September 1951, produced a close result. The Government's proposals were defeated by 2,370,009 votes to 2,317,927, a margin of 52,082. In three of the six States, majorities were recorded against the proposal. The negative result solved the Communist Party's immediate problem of avoiding a ban, but it left it to come to terms with the uncomfortable fact that nearly half the electorate had favoured the procedures laid down by the Government. It is possible that some people who voted against the proposals favoured banning the Communist Party under somewhat different terms. It is even more probable that only a small minority of Australians thought of the referendum in the context of a threat to civil liberties since the referendum had been successfully turned by the A.L.P. into something like an election campaign and previous referenda had been almost invariably defeated when the Opposition adopted such an approach. Professor Webb has suggested that it was possible the referendum's rejection was due to 'the unpopularity of the Menzies Government and not to uneasiness over the Act itself.' Even Tribune considered that the 'real meaning' of the result was 'a notice by the people calling for the resignation of the Menzies Government.' On the other hand, it must be recalled that while Gallup polls had shown that 80 per cent

---

62 Tribune, 26 September 1951.
of those interviewed in June 1951 favoured banning the Communist Party, the percentage in favour had fallen to 73 in August and to only 53 in September.\textsuperscript{63}

If the referendum had been carried and the Party outlawed its prospects would have been sombre in comparison with its position in 1940. In 1951 the Party was under much greater pressure from the State. During the illegal period of 1940–42, in spite of a number of arrests and raids on its offices and bookshops, the Party had maintained its organisation, held meetings, and contested elections (its candidates standing as Independents) with some degree of success.\textsuperscript{64} It had also retained its hold in the trade union movement without much hindrance. In the early fifties, however, although the exclusion of Communists from the Commonwealth Public Service would not have worried the Party unduly their exclusion from executive positions in the trade unions would have drastically reduced the Party's influence in the one organised section of the community where its presence was still of considerable importance. Anti-Communism was much stronger in 1951 than in 1940 and the results of the 'adventurist' strategies had left it with all too few allies.

\textsuperscript{63} Leicester Webb, \textit{op. cit.}, pp.132-3.

\textsuperscript{64} \textit{Ibid.}, pp.7-8.
In spite of the revitalisation and consolidation of the Party and its fronts which resulted from the assaults by the State, and in spite of the limited contacts made with left-wing rank-and-file members of the A.L.P., the defeat of the referendum proposals did not increase the Party's security. The Korean War was still being fought; anti-Communism was at an extremely high level; and, apart from the Communists, only liberals, left-wing A.L.P. members and independent Socialists were very concerned about preserving the Party's legality. The weak mechanism of civil liberties protection still left it in a dangerously vulnerable position.

In the early fifties, indeed, the Party existed in a virtual state of siege. During the debate on the Communist Party Dissolution Bill in 1950, W.F. Burns, the publisher of Tribune, was charged under the Crimes Act with publishing seditious words relating to the Korean War. The Party was opposed to the intervention of the United Nations in the war and its viewpoint was summed up in a Tribune editorial: 'Not a man, not a ship, not a plane, not a gun for the aggressive, imperialist wars in Korea and Malaya.' Burns was sentenced to nine months' imprisonment for advocating, in the words of the magistrate who pronounced sentence, 'non-support of the Government in relation

---

65 The articles in which the alleged seditious words were included appeared in Tribune, 1 July 1950, 5 July 1950, 12 July 1950.
66 Ibid., 1 July 1950.
to an actual war' which was intended 'to promote in the minds of people a feeling of hostility to the Government.' Burns appealed against the sentence and was given, considering the strong anti-Communist feeling prevalent in the community, a remarkably fair hearing by Judge Berne of the New South Wales District Court who even went so far as to claim that the Menzies Government was 'vindictively pursuing' Burns. However, following Judge Berne's removal from the court of the Crown Prosecutor on the grounds of disrespectful behaviour, the New South Wales Supreme Court ordered that the appeal be heard instead before Judge Lloyd who upheld the conviction but reduced the sentence to six months' imprisonment.

Almost one year after the referendum's defeat, security police raided Tribune office and the home of one of its journalists on the grounds that the journalist concerned, Rex Chiplin, had written an article nine months previously giving details of an unpublished draft Australian–United States treaty. In the meantime R.G. Casey, the Minister for External Affairs, had referred to a 'nest of

---

67 Ibid., 19 August 1950.
68 Ibid., 15 February 1951.
69 Ibid., 12 April 1951.
70 Guardian, 12 April 1951.
71 S.M.H., 29 August 1952.
72 Chiplin's article appeared in Tribune, 14 November 1951.
traitors' in his department who had leaked details of the draft treaty to Chiplin. The security raids, however, did not result in any charges being laid against either Chiplin or Tribune.

In July 1953 security police again raided Tribune offices as well as the headquarters of the Communist Party and a number of private homes from all of which a large quantity of documents were seized. The official pretext for these raids was an innocuous article on the British Royal Family which had appeared in the Communist Review. Subsequently, three leading Communists, who were the journal's printers, were prosecuted under the Crimes Act for printing seditious words. The prosecution was strongly condemned by many non-Communists. One political columnist commented: 'I find it hard to treat seriously the idea that the Communist Review article had anything to do with the raid on Communist premises in Sydney.' The magistrate before whom the case was heard dismissed the charges.

---

74 For further details, see Rex Chiplin, Where is the 'Nest of Traitors'?, Sydney, 1952. During the Royal Commission on Espionage (1954-55) it was disclosed that the External Affairs officer who had provided Chiplin with a copy of the draft treaty had in fact 'planted' it with the approval of the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation (Report of the Royal Commission on Espionage, Sydney, 1955, p.205).
75 The article concerned, 'The Democratic Monarchy' (by 'R.C.') appeared in Communist Review, June 1953.
76 Tribune, 5 August 1953.
77 'Onlooker' in the Sun-Herald, 26 July 1953.
78 Tribune, 23 September 1953.
It is almost certain that the security raids had been carried out to obtain Party documents.

Throughout the period, Federal parliamentarians continued to make wildly exaggerated claims as to the strength of the Communists in Australia and frequent denunciations of Communist and non-Communist progressives were made. A Communist academic, Dr R.E.B. Makinson, was denounced by W.C. Wentworth as having conducted 'a campaign of treason.' Wentworth later attacked Bishop Burgmann and a number of Australian National University academics and stated that their views and those of Tribune showed a 'remarkable parallelism' in relation to the Indo-China War. Both the Australian National University and the Commonwealth Literary Fund were frequently charged with being under strong Communist influence, particularly by Liberal members Wentworth and H.B.S. Gullett and Labor 'Movement' members S.M. Keon and J.M. Mullens. Inevitably, a considerable number of progressives were labelled as 'Communists'; for example, in 1952, Wentworth alleged that the novelist Kylie Tennant, a non-Communist, was 'very actively connected' with the Communist Party.

79 C.P.D., Vol.217 (5 and 6 June 1952), p.1621. See also the reply to Wentworth by Sir Charles Bickerton Blackburn, Chancellor of Sydney University (S.M.H., 7 June 1952).


81 See e.g., S.M.H., 29 August 1952.

Moreover, not only were a number of Communists denied visas to enter the United States but some liberal non-Communist academics found themselves in the same situation, for example, Professors Marcus Oliphant and C.P. Fitzgerald.\(^8^3\) A Communist research scholar at the Australian National University, P.M. Worsley, was excluded from New Guinea because of his political views.\(^8^4\) An ex-Communist, H.W. Maley, Deputy Technical Superintendent of Trans-Australia Airlines, was refused entry into the United States, whereupon he was dismissed from his position.\(^8^5\) A number of persons active in the Australian Peace Council were also dismissed from their positions.\(^8^6\)

Finally, the Communist Party's security was not increased because of the A.L.P's failure to endorse the cause of civil liberties during the attempt to ban the Party. If anything, the position of the Communists became worse as the Labor Party began to drift to the Right. For a short time after the defeat of the referendum proposals the anti-Groupers in the A.L.P. were in the ascendancy. The 'Movement' parliamentarians who had refused to participate in the campaign were

\(^{8^3}\) For Professor Fitzgerald's case, see *News-Weekly*, 27 January 1954.

\(^{8^4}\) *Tribune*, 27 August 1952.

\(^{8^5}\) *Australian News Review*, June 1952.

\(^{8^6}\) For the case of Dr P.R. James, a member of the staff of the Heidelberg Repatriation Hospital, see *Argus*, 31 May 1950, and for the case of Mrs R. Guiterman, a member of the staff of the Sydney Church of England Girls' Grammar School, see *Liberty*, 3 April 1951. Neither of these persons was a Communist.
condemned but, on Evatt's recommendation for leniency, they were not disciplined. The 'Movement' paper, News-Weekly, which had strongly supported the referendum proposals, was banned to A.L.P. members, but the ban was later removed. The anti-Grouper ascendancy was short-lived and the Groupers quickly began to make important gains. The Labor Party began an all-out drive to rid the unions of Communist officials. The New South Wales Branch of the A.L.P. came under the control of the Groups (and the A.W.U.) in 1952. It was also significant that the Labor candidates who had consistently spoken out against the attempt to ban the Communist Party had their majorities reduced appreciably at the 1951 New South Wales State Election, held after the referendum. On the whole, the divisions within the Labor Party after the referendum were wider than in 1950. The Menzies Government's attempt to outlaw the Communist Party had polarised tensions within the A.L.P., thus providing ex post facto justification for Chifley's prophetic comment, made when the Dissolution Bill was first introduced in April 1950, that it was 'a political measure aimed at splitting the Labour Movement.'

---

87 Leicester Webb, op. cit., p.165.
88 S.M.H., 21 November 1951.
89 Louise Overacker, op. cit., p.325.
90 L.F. Crisp, op. cit., p.386. By the 'Labour Movement', Chifley meant the Labor Party.
CHAPTER FIVE
THE COMMUNIST PARTY READJUSTS ITS STRATEGIES

Although the attempt to ban the Communist Party had failed, the Communist leaders were far from reassured. Just as the collapse of the 1949 coal strike had revealed the limits of their power within the trade union structure, so the ordeal of 1950 and 1951 had shown that their Party could not expect the A.L.P. to take a strong stand on an issue of civil liberties. Fortunately for them, a 'softening' of the international Communist line made it possible for them to readjust the Party's strategies in order to repair the damage of the adventurist period. The Australian Communists now set out to strengthen their position in the trade unions, to re-establish contact with the left wing of the A.L.P. and to win the sympathy of progressive middle-class groups. Until 1949, the Party acted as if a revolutionary situation had been created; between 1951 and 1954 its main concerns were to reduce its isolation in Australian society and to build up its organisation against the eventuality of repression.

Strategies for survival

As we have noted in the preceding chapter, the Communist leaders roughed in the outlines of new policies during the height of the 1950-51 crisis, but it was at the Party's 16th National Congress of August 1951 that the adjusted strategies were clearly
foreshadowed. A programme adopted on this occasion declared that
Socialism would be achieved in Australia through parliamentary
and peaceful means and that

Australia will...find her own path to People's Democracy
and Socialism in accord with her own historical conditions,
her own level of economic, political and cultural develop-
ment and political institutions and forms of organisation.¹

The doctrinal setting for the new strategies was worked out by
Sharkey, Dixon, Blake and others in a series of articles published
in the Tribune and the Communist Review. Sharkey's 'The Labour
Party Crisis', published in the Communist Review of August 1952,
was the most influential of these. He and the other leaders accepted
the view of Australian history formulated during the earlier united
front periods, but sought to show that the events of the post-war
years pointed inevitably to the advent of People's Democracy in
Australia. Their story had a deceptive simplicity. Immediately
after the war, the Chifley Government had enjoyed great popularity,
not only because it had led Australia in the anti-fascist struggle
but because the post-war boom had reinforced the illusion that the
development of Australian capitalism would also produce considerable
benefits for the workers. Partial disillusionment came when the
Chifley administration proved unable to check the inflation which
developed in the late forties, and the Menzies-Fadden coalition

¹ Australia's Path to Socialism: Program of the Communist Party
ministry was voted to power in the 1949 Election. The stage was now set for the politics of the fifties. Menzies committed Australia to be an agent of United States imperialism, and accordingly adopted a policy of war preparations and hostility towards the Communist countries. But the cost of rearmament aggravated the difficulties of Australian capitalism, with the result that an economic crisis of the first magnitude had begun. Discontent amongst the masses, claimed Sharkey, had now reached the point where the return to power of the Labor Party was only a matter of time. However, since the Labor Party's right-wing leadership had also accepted the policy of serving American interests, the masses would soon turn from the new Labor Government and endorse the policies of peace and progress advocated by the Communist Party. The way would then be open for the formation of a truly Socialist party, and for the institution of People's Power.

In developing this line, the Communists used several striking symbols. Few of their articles were devoted to seriously discussing the class composition and character of the Liberal and Country Parties, but from the Tribune cartoons by McClintock and Reade emerged 'Menzies', the epitome of the Australian Right. 'Menzies' the symbol was given the corpulence, the sagging jowls, the slit eyes and the weak mouth of Eisenstein's early villains. In his cartoon adventures, he revealed all the qualities expected of his role - servility to the United States, callousness in his dealings
with the people, arrogance, fear of the Left, moral cowardice and corruption. 'Menzies' was the Right in Communist mythology; an article reproducing J.D. Blake's comments on the general political situation in 1953 was headed, 'Menzies—Labour Party—Communist Party', as if all three were comparable. One of the banners for Sydney's May Day celebrations in 1953 showed 'Menzies' as a 'YANKEE PUPPET' being manipulated by an American monopolist, complete with cigar, monocle and ten-gallon hat.²

The crude oversimplifications involved in the making of 'Menzies' contrasted with the care given by the Communist leaders to the analysis of the various tensions within the Labor Party. Although they continued to draw attention to the efforts of the Groupers to undermine reformist leaders within the party and the trade union movement,³ they placed most importance on the traditional cleavage between Left and Right within the A.L.P. On occasions they wrote of this cleavage dividing politicians from the rank-and-file, or reformists from progressives, or right-wing leaders from their followers, but they were agreed that, whatever form it took, it would reappear in the near future. Sharkey claimed that Labor's return to power would be the prelude for the final disillusionment of the masses, who would at last see their leadership for the

² Tribune, 22 April 1953.
liberal-bourgeois politicians they were. They agreed with Menzies, he pointed out, in supporting the pro-American policy of war preparations.

The ALP leaders do not repudiate the [Government's] anti-Sovietism and rearmament programme but, in its essentials, support it. They support the policy of transforming Australia into a dependency of Wall Street imperialism.... Independence, in fact, is sacrificed to US imperialism in order...to defend monopoly capitalism against the spread of world socialism....

Sharkey depicted the A.L.P's leadership as trying to serve two masters, the workers and the middle class, and as usually favouring the interests of the latter when these clashed with those of the workers. Even amongst the workers, he claimed, it preferred to base itself on the highly skilled, 'the "aristocracy of Labour", who look to a continuous improvement of their economic position through the growth of capitalist industry and a policy of reforms within the capitalist system.' As a result, the A.L.P. had become 'the second party of capitalism, part of the two-party system of controlling the masses, an essential part of the capitalist set up'.

Given this situation, claimed the Communist leaders, the Communist Party had several important strategic opportunities. In the first place, it had to strengthen the left wing of the Labor Party against the right-wing leadership. Objective conditions

---

were highly favourable for the success of this approach; again in terms of Sharkey's analysis, 'the basis of reformism is contracting as the economic crisis grows'.

Capitalism's crisis is advancing rapidly. The old basis of reforms, upon which the rightwing based its manoeuvres, will be undermined as the crisis develops. An 'orthodox' Labour Government acting on the present capitalist basis, in succession to Menzies, can only, as Lenin taught, make clear to the masses the limitations of Labour Governments. It would serve to finally expose rightwing policy. Labour Governments have no answer to capitalist decay, to the general crisis of capitalism, to the warmongering policies of the monopolists.

...Our criticism must lay bare the nature of reformism, its role as defender of capitalism, its many connections with the bourgeoisie, lack of principle and rejection of Marxism-Leninism, which means rejection of the socialist objective of the working class.

At the tactical level, the Communists were required to blur the edges between their membership and that of the A.L.P. or, in Dixon's words, to 'spare no effort to overcome the differences with members of the Labor Party and non-Party workers in the factories and unions.' The object here was to reach agreement on specific economic and social issues even while there was disagreement on general matters; unity of action to achieve

---

6 Ibid., p.17.
7 Ibid., pp.22-3.
8 Tribune, 12 December 1951.
limited objectives would lay the foundations for common policies. Sharkey declared:

It is a question for us of setting out consciously to foster a leftwing in the Labor Party, to encourage all the incipient revolts expressing themselves in the Labor Party.  

But he and the other writers were careful to stress that the object was to alter the balance of power within the Labor Party without splitting it, to curb the present leadership without driving them into opposition. The assumption here was that a premature split, precipitated over irrelevant issues, would do more harm than good; only when the masses were completely disillusioned with the reformism and class-collaborationism of their leadership would they be in a position to alter the A.L.P's policies fundamentally.

To hasten this process, the Communist Party had to secure popular acceptance of a progressive policy with international peace as its prime objective. It should therefore oppose war preparations and propaganda against Communist countries; advocate the ending of the American connection and the adoption by Australia of the principle of peaceful co-existence; declare for the expenditure of public funds on housing, education, social welfare and general economic development. This, Sharkey admitted, was not a socialist

---

9 Ibid., 18 June 1952.
programme, 'but one that could be implemented by a progressive ALP Government.'\(^1\) It was such a policy, moreover, on which the left wing of the Labor Party could base its criticism of the right-wing leadership and on which the Communist workers could establish liaison with their allies inside the A.L.P. This was the rationale of the 'united front from below' strategy which the Communists were now to put into operation. Sharkey hoped that it would find its first expression in united action for the overthrow of the Menzies Government but that, once this had been achieved, it would next express itself in a radicalisation of the Labor Party and the overthrow of the Evatt leadership. The ground would then be laid for the formation of a 'united workers' party' through the fusion of the Communist Party and the A.L.P., and for the adoption of 'Marxist scientific socialist principles' by the new party.\(^2\)

We shall deal with the Communist Party's trade union policies in the next chapter. Our concern here is with its attempt to win acceptance for the basic principles of its 'progressive', or peace policy. For this purpose, the Party had few resources in the way of respectable front organisations; most of them had been left with depleted resources and tattered reputations after the exigencies

\(^{11}\) L.L. Sharkey, The Labour Party Crisis, p.21.  
\(^{12}\) Ibid., p.22. See also article by Sharkey in Communist Review, July 1952.
of the adventurist period. The Australia–Russia Society (whose name had been changed to the Australian–Soviet Friendship Society in 1953) remained small as did the A.S.L.F. and the N.H.A. (which had become known as the Union of Australian Women in 1950). The E.Y.L. remained a pale shadow of its former self. The Australia–China Society, founded in 1951, had failed to get off the ground.

As a result, the Party concentrated most of its hopes on the peace movement which, as early as 1949, had been described by J.D. Blake as 'the keynote of the whole work of our Party in the present conditions'.

The Australian Peace Council (A.P.C.) was formed in Melbourne in 1949 and it became the Australian section of the Communist-dominated World Peace Council (which emerged from the World Committee of Partisans for Peace, established in Paris in April 1949). The leading men in the A.P.C. were mainly middle-class, non-Communist figures, including several Protestant clergymen.

---

13 Tribune, 1 October 1949.
14 Ibid., 10 September 1949.
15 For a full list of the original members of the A.P.C., see News–Weekly, 14 June 1950. An A.P.C. leader, Rev. A.D. Brand, stated that only seven per cent of the Council's foundation members were Communists (Tribune, 30 August 1950).
However, at the organisation level the influence of the Communists was clearly evident; Ian Turner, a Communist, was appointed the first National Organising Secretary and he was succeeded by another Communist, Alec Robertson. Many of the non-Communist leaders tended to be vague and sentimental but the Communists knew what they wanted. In any case, the non-Communist 'progressives' associated with the A.P.C. agreed, on the whole, with the Communists as to the sources of the threat to peace, and the origins of both the Cold War and the Korean War. Thus, there was no need for the Communist Party to direct the A.P.C.'s activities in a crude manner and J.D. Blake could quite truthfully admit in 1953 that the Party was against 'imposing' its line on the peace movement.

Not surprisingly, the A.P.C. and its State affiliates were attacked as Communist front organisations by the Liberal and Country Parties. But it was the strong stand adopted by the A.L.P. which prevented the peace movement making much impact on Australian opinion. In 1950 the New South Wales and Victorian Branches of the A.L.P. banned participation in the activities of the A.P.C. to its members and affiliated unions, and this was followed by an Australia-wide

18 Tribune, 16 September 1953.
19 Ibid., 22 February 1950; Labor Call, 10 March 1950.
ban imposed by the party's Federal Executive. Many of the A.L.P. members who disobeyed these directives were expelled, for example, Miss Nell Simpson, Secretary of the New South Wales Peace Committee. Senator W. Morrow, who defied the ban and whose line on the Korean War was similar to that of the Communists, lost his Senate pre-selection in 1952 and was later expelled. A number of delegates selected to attend the Peking Peace Conference in 1951 were also expelled from the Labor Party. The 1951 Federal Conference of the A.L.P. denounced 'so-called Peace Councils' as 'instruments of Soviet Imperialism.' Some years later Dixon admitted that the Labor Party ban on the A.P.C. had seriously impeded the work of the peace movement.

The main activities of the peace movement were the holding of peace conferences and the circulation of peace petitions. The Stockholm Declaration Against Atomic War secured over 200,000

---

21 Tribune, 13 May 1950.
23 S.M.H., 11 April 1953.
signatures but the subsequent Pact of Peace Appeal was signed by only 125,556 Australians. The two largest peace conferences were the Australian Peace Congress in Melbourne in 1950, attended by 10,000 people at its opening session and addressed by the Dean of Canterbury, and the Convention on Peace and War in Sydney in 1953. The latter conference enjoyed a somewhat wider sponsorship than the 1950 Congress but it failed to bring in many new elements, mainly because it was condemned by the Federal Government and banned to A.L.P. members by the New South Wales Executive of the party. Vague resolutions abounded at both conferences but the 1953 meeting refrained from passing severe judgment on the West for creating international tension.

The peace movements succeeded in so far as contact was established with some non-Communist progressives thereby reducing the Party's isolation to some extent, but it failed in that it did not attract to itself many people who did not belong to the Left already, except for some pacifists and the Quakers. It did not

---

27 [Tribune, 15 May 1951. 85,000 of these signatures came from New South Wales. The Declaration was signed by six Labor Senators.]
28 [Ibid., 5 March 1952.]
29 [S.M.H., 26 September 1953.]
30 [Sun, Sydney, 26 August 1953. The A.L.P's Victorian Executive followed suit.]
develop any depth despite the fact that use was made of powerful emotive symbols such as the misery and sufferings of World War II, Hiroshima and the fear of atomic bomb tests. One of the main factors contributing towards the peace movement's failure was its refusal to admit that the Communist bloc could conceivably threaten world peace and its uncritical support for the Communist line on the Korean War. Indeed, peace movement leaders Rev. A.D. Brand and Rev. G.R. van Eerde delivered eulogies in honour of Stalin after the Soviet leader's death.

Other powerful emotive symbols, particularly those bringing out anti-American and anti-Japanese feeling, were used by the Party during this period. The Committee Opposed to the Rearming of Japan, established in 1951, and the Society for the Non-Ratification of the Japanese Peace Treaty, also established in the same year, were mainly organised by the Party although the public leaders, notably Rev. G.R. van Eerde, Dr J.W. Burton and Clive Evatt, M.L.A., were non-Communists. On both these issues – the rearming of Japan

---


33 Tribune, 11 March 1953.

34 Ibid., 17 May 1951.

35 Ibid., 7 November 1951.
and the Japanese peace treaty – the Party discovered it could call on greater public support and it found itself in company with people on the political Right such as W.M. Hughes, M.H.R., A Downer, M.H.R. and Lieut-General Gordon Bennett as well as many textile and light industry manufacturers. The Committee Opposed to the Rearming of Japan quickly collected 100,000 signatures against both Japanese rearmament and the trade clauses of the Japanese Peace Treaty. However, although the A.L.P. was opposed to the Peace Treaty it banned both organisations to its members. In any event, they both disappeared after the Peace Treaty was ratified by the Federal Parliament.

The Communist Party also attempted to exploit anti-American feeling. American cultural penetration was attacked and an Australian Culture Defence Movement established. The anti-American campaign approached its peak during the trial and execution of the Rosenbergs. Save the Rosenberg Committees were set up and appeals for clemency sent to President Eisenhower from a number

---

36 Ibid., 15 November 1952.
37 As a result of the ban Clive Evatt, M.L.A., and A. Thompson, Secretary of the Milk and Ice Carters' Union resigned from the presidency and vice-presidency respectively of the Society for the Non-Ratification of the Japanese Peace Treaty (News-Weekly, 28 May 1952).
38 See, e.g., Rupert Lockwood, America Invades Australia, Sydney, n.d.; Rex Chiplin, This is America, Sydney, 1953.
of prominent clergymen. However, the A.L.P. refused to condemn the United States Government over this issue and the A.C.T.U. Interstate Executive declined to endorse a move calling for clemency. The Rosenberg affair had the additional advantage of enabling the Party to direct attention away from the trials of a number of prominent Jewish Communists in Eastern Europe.

The failure of the peace movement, and of the parallel movements to excite popular resentment against the signing of the Japanese Peace Treaty and against the American alliance in general, robbed the 'united front from below' strategy of much of its content. This made it all the harder for the Communist leaders to keep the cadres and militants to the lines of action dictated by the new approach. The problem of discipline and of Party solidarity, to which we shall now turn, soon became one of the utmost importance.

Problems of solidarity

The changeover to the new strategies was, by all indications, far from smooth. Hardened by the years of the adventurist strategies, many of the Communist Party's cadres and workers were reluctant to fall in with the new line. Their indiscipline took the two usual forms; 'left sectarianism' and 'right opportunism'. Those guilty

41 News-Weekly, 4 February 1953.
of the former offence continued to act as if the Labor Party was, to quote Sharkey, 'a single reactionary mass.' 42 They attacked its leaders without reservation and kept stressing the divergence between the Labor and Communist Parties on general issues while ignoring their common interest in certain fields. Refusing to accept the dictates of the 'united front from below' strategy, they made no serious effort to establish unity of action with the A.L.P's rank and file. In justification of their stand, they pointed out that after the referendum defeat the A.L.P. had appeared to move even further to the Right and that Dr Evatt had come to an agreement with the Groupers about methods of dealing with Communists. On the other hand, those guilty of 'right opportunism' wanted the Communist Party to give unqualified support to the A.L.P's leaders, and to refrain from criticising their policies. They wanted a united front before an agreement about a 'progressive' policy had been obtained within the A.L.P. In September 1951 Dixon wrote in the Tribune that the Communist Party would not, as some members wanted, abandon or modify its criticism of Labor leaders. 43

In particular, the development of the peace campaign presented serious organisational problems for the Communist leaders. In 1950, J.D. Blake condemned those members who considered fighting

42 L.L. Sharkey, The Labour Party Crisis, p.22.
43 Tribune, 5 September 1951.
the attacks on the Party's legality more important than the peace issue. Later he revealed that it took 'some time' for the Party's Central Committee 'to grasp the central position which the struggle for peace must occupy in the activity of the party.' Members were repeatedly reminded that both the peace and the economic issues were inter-related. Sharkey stated that the 'struggle for peace is the struggle for bread.' In the early fifties, with the sharp rise in unemployment, the rejection of margins claims and the cessation of the quarterly cost-of-living adjustments to the basic wage, the Party found difficulty in persuading trade unionists to worry more about peace than bread. Attacks against economism became regular features in *Tribune* and Dixon declared in the *Communist Review* that there was 'a lot of lip-service to the cause of peace, but not enough activity' in the trade unions. He also denied that the 'difficulties' which the Communists were meeting in some trade unions were related to the Party's increased concern with political issues.

---

46 *Tribune*, 21 November 1951.
47 Ibid., 28 June 1951.
The importance of eliminating left sectarian and right opportunistic approaches to the peace movement was particularly important when it appeared likely that the Korean War would become a global war. This led Party members in the peace movement to talk less about the peaceful intentions of the Socialist nations and the aggressive actions of the American imperialists and more about the urgent need for a cease-fire in Korea. But the twin evils were never completely eliminated. Dixon attacked Party members who treated the peace movement as a Party organisation while J.D. Blake berated those who wished to 'submerge' the Party in the peace movement and play down references to Socialism.

As a result of the concerted attacks on the Party, its membership declined alarmingly in the early fifties although those who remained were drawn closer together and the fighting spirit of the organisation was raised. An American observer has estimated that membership fell from 12,000 in 1949 to 6,000 in 1953, but the latter figure is too small compared with the figure of 8,000 given by Alan Barcan for 1955. In 1951, during the height of the moves to ban the Party, a verification campaign was conducted amongst the

---

49 Ibid., January 1953, p.7.
50 Ibid., August 1953, p.227.
51 Herbert E. Weiner, op. cit., p.411.
52 Alan Barcan, op. cit., p.23.
membership to raise the 'fighting quality' of the Party although a warning was issued to branches not to drop inactive members in large numbers.\textsuperscript{53} In the following year (July–September 1952) an all-out attempt was launched to increase the Party's membership; in New South Wales this resulted in the recruitment of 319 new members and a rise of 4,622 in \textit{Tribune} sales.\textsuperscript{54} However, after the immediate threat of illegality had been removed, the membership remained fairly stable until 1954. L. Aarons reported to the Party's 17th National Congress in 1955:

\begin{quote}
Between 1952 and June 1954 there was a small but disturbing decline in Party membership.....only a few new factory branches have been established.

There has been some recruiting, but the number of new members is not sufficient to balance the loss of membership by natural and other causes.\textsuperscript{55}
\end{quote}

On the same occasion, Aarons gave some interesting figures relating to the composition of the Party's membership in New South Wales. 45 per cent were industrial workers, 17 per cent housewives, 14 per cent clerical and professional workers and only 0.8 per cent farmers. Of the industrial workers in the Party, 79 per cent came from the basic industries (building, mining, metal trades and land and sea transport).\textsuperscript{56}

\textsuperscript{53} \textit{Communist Review}, April 1951, p.739.
\textsuperscript{54} \textit{Tribune}, 29 October 1952.
\textsuperscript{55} \textit{Communist Review}, June 1955, p.176.
\textsuperscript{56} \textit{Loc. cit.}
Most of the members who dropped out of the Party in this period were rank-and-file members. None of the leaders defected or resigned but three leading Communist trade union officials were expelled from the Party: A.N. Carruthers, Secretary of the South Australian Branch of the Gas Employees’ Union; R.C. Morgan, former Secretary of the Newcastle Branch of the F.I.A.; and Don Thomson, soon after he had resigned from the Secretaryship of the Victorian Building Trades Federation.

The death of Stalin on 5 March 1953 appears to have made a strong emotional impact on the membership, some of whom had almost believed the Soviet leader to be immortal. Tribune referred to Stalin as 'the greatest man and the dominating figure of our time' and stated that although he never visited Australia he was 'in a very real sense... the greatest Australian.... For he showed how to make a country prosperous, free and great.' Two Australians, E. Thornton and Mrs Street, were present at Stalin’s funeral in Moscow.

57 Tribune, 16 August 1950.
59 Tribune, 24 September 1952. Thomson became a publican but without success. Subsequently he was elected Secretary of the New South Wales Branch of the Administrative and Clerical Officers' Association.
60 Ibid., 9 March 1953.
61 Ibid., 11 March 1953. See also the poems in Stalin’s honour by Joan Clarke, Lloyd Davies and Victor Williams in ibid., 8 April 1953.
62 Ibid., 25 March 1953.
Membership decline was accompanied by a decline in Tribune's position. As a result of the paper's 'heavy loss', it was converted from a bi-weekly to a weekly in 1950: 'The price does not cover its cost of production, and there is no advertising revenue to offset the loss.' During the membership drive its sales rose to 24,708 in September 1952 but the figure had dropped to 23,116 by August 1953. In 1952, J.C. Henry reported that the paper's financial position was so 'serious' (it was losing £120 a week) that the possibility of dispensing with the 12 page lay-out, introduced in 1951, was considered.

Rank-and-file membership consolidation was accompanied by the leadership's consolidation. During Sharkey's absence in gaol (he was released in December 1950), two members of the four-member Secretariat, J.D. Blake and J.C. Henry, had increased their authority at the expense of Dixon and Sharkey. After Sharkey's release, nothing was done at first since both Blake and Henry enjoyed considerable popularity amongst the membership and precipitous action might well have divided the Party at a time when unity was essential. But Sharkey (and Dixon) slowly but surely checked the gains made at their expense. In 1953 Blake admitted that he and Henry had held a

---

63 Ibid., 31 August 1950.
64 Ibid., 2 September 1953.
65 Ibid., 21 May 1952.
'narrow State parochial outlook' which 'for a time caused injury to the unity of the Party and its leadership.' Blake continued:

As a result of ideological struggle...and considerable ideological growth, ably assisted by Comrade Sharkey and Comrade Dixon, it is now a fact...that there is a...deep-going unity in the Secretariat...under the leadership of the leader of our Party, our General Secretary—Comrade Sharkey.

The logical conclusion to these statements came just over a year later. Blake was accused of being preoccupied with the peace campaign, even to the extent of advocating that Communist preferences at the 1951 Federal Election should have gone to 'peace supporters' and not necessarily to A.L.P. candidates. According to the Central Committee this would have 'seriously affected' the Party's relations with A.L.P. members and 'undermined' its efforts to build the united front. Blake was also condemned for having devoted insufficient time to trade union activities and economic issues. Henry was termed an 'anarcho-syndicalist' who had overestimated the militancy of the workers. Both were accused of 'State rightism' and it was admitted that Henry and Blake had been transferred to Sydney in 1949 to break their strong support in Queensland and Victoria respectively. Blake and Henry were also alleged to have been associated with a sympathy for

67 Loc. cit.
68 See the statement of the Central Committee, 'For Party Consolidation', Tribune, 10 March 1954. For Blake and Henry's self-criticism, see loc. cit. and ibid., 17 March 1954.
'national communism', that is, for the determination of Party policy solely with reference to local conditions. Both were removed from the Party's Secretariat and replaced by two reliable supporters of the Sharkey-Dixon line - E.F. Hill and L. Aarons. However, although the Sharkey-Dixon versus Blake-Henry dispute was fought out publicly in purely ideological terms it was a struggle for power as well. Power struggles in the Party are always fought in ideological terms; there is no other arena in an organisation whose leaders claim to be selfless and dedicated men who have made considerable material sacrifices for the sake of the Party.

Another important feature of the Party's internal life was the transferring of the overseas training of functionaries from Moscow to Peking in 1951, the year in which the Australian Party virtually came under the tutelage of the Chinese Party. The Australian Party leadership not only felt attached to the enthusiasm evident in Communist China but realised that China would politically play a predominant role in the Asian Communist movement, of which Australia is, geographically, an integral part.

From the surface signs, then, we obtain the picture of a Party passing through a period of considerable stress. The incidence of

---

69 Alan Barcan, op. cit., p.7.
right opportunism and left sectarianism; the struggle between different leadership groups; the difficulties in carrying out the peace campaign - all reveal that the problems of solidarity created first by the attempt to ban the Party and then by the strategic readjustment had sapped the Party's vitality and inner discipline. On the other hand, the period had proved the value of Sharkey and Dixon as leaders in a crisis, particularly their ability to work out and apply the new strategies and also their ability to win out in the struggle with Blake and Henry. Moreover, the Soviet and Chinese connections boosted confidence amongst the Party's membership. Even if things were moving slowly in Australia they were going well on the world scale.

After the Referendum

In the events of 1952 and 1953, the Senate election of the latter year stood out most clearly. According to Sharkey's analysis, this should have provided the proof that the Menzies-Fadden Government was losing ground rapidly to the Labor Party, and that the latter would take power after the next Federal Election. The actual result was disappointing. The Government lost ground, but it retained its Senate majority without much difficulty although the A.L.P. vote was considerably higher than the combined votes of the Government parties. Sharkey explained Labor's failure to gain even more votes on the grounds that the downward economic swing 'appears to have temporarily stabilised itself' and that Labor's leadership had refused to have
anything to do with the progressive policies of peace and opposition to war preparations. He derived some satisfaction from the increased Communist vote, which rose from 95,561 in 1951 to 140,243 (the increase was largely due to the fact that the Party's candidates had secured first place on the ballot paper in both New South Wales and Victoria). From these figures Sharkey drew new inspiration.

This support will continue to grow as the Menzies Government continues its attack on the working class, and the reactionary nature of the policies of the A.L.P. right wing becomes ever more clearly discerned by the masses, as the crisis of capitalism itself inevitably grows sharper.

All these factors point to the early defeat of the Menzies Government. 71

A few local government successes were also recorded in this period. J.H. King, a Miners' Federation official, was elected to the Lithgow City Council. 72 Eight Communists were successful at the New South Wales local government election in 1953 (as compared with only one in 1950), the most important being the return of T. Wright and R.A. Maxwell to the Sydney City Council. 73 Wright and Maxwell's election was in part due to the fact that they had drawn first place on the ballot paper and also to the fact that a new proportional representation system of voting had been adopted in 1953. From the

72 Tribune, 14 May 1952.
73 S.M.H., 14 December 1953.
outset they were, in the words of the *Sydney Morning Herald*, 'models of decorum', 74 and Wright later admitted that 'we cannot claim to have made any great impact.' 75

What, then, were the Communists' expectations early in 1954? Their confidence was returning. Having survived the attempt to ban its legal activities, the Party had successfully readjusted its strategies to meet the demands of the new period and, despite the failure of the peace movement, it had improved its relations with progressive groups inside the trade union and Labor branch structure. It was, as we shall see in the next chapter, almost holding its own against the Groupers within the trade union movement, and was winning the support of some traditionalists (and A.W.U. members) in opposing them. As for the Party's future, Sharkey could still point with confidence to the prospect he had depicted in 1952; the defeat of Menzies, Labor's return to power, the workers' disillusionment with the new Labor Government's reformist policies, a new move to the Left inside the A.L.P. and finally, the formation of a united People's Party and the institution of People's Democracy in Australia. But the Communists were unprepared for the two major events of the years immediately ahead – the Petrov case, and the split of the A.L.P. along unexpected lines.

74 Ibid., 15 June 1954.
75 *Tribune*, 19 October 1955.
At one level, as we have seen, the Australian Communist Party in the early fifties was concerned to formulate strategies which would reduce its isolation in Australian society and at the same time provide it with the hope that its political action would bring it the support of the masses. At another level, however, it was waging a bitter and hard-fought battle to retain its bridgeheads of power and influence inside the trade union movement. For it was clear, to both the Communists and their enemies, that the Party's only real access to the masses was through those trade unions in which its influence was decisive. Dixon once put the problem in these terms:

The majority of the Australian working class are organised in the trade unions, which are the main mass organisations of the working class. We cannot seriously approach the struggle to win the majority of the working people for People's Power without the trade unions.\footnote{Communist Review, July 1952, pp.201-2.}

We must draw the trade union movement into the general stream of the people's movement. We must prepare the working class to take its place at the head of the struggle for peace and people's power and this is possible only providing we strengthen the work in the unions.\footnote{Communist Review, July 1952, pp.201-2.}

By 1950, after the exhausting and wasteful tactics of the 'adventurist' period, the Communist Party's trade union cadres had been
left disheartened, aware that they were ill-equipped to withstand a powerful attack against their positions. The attack was not long in coming. In 1951 the Menzies Government passed a measure strengthening the power of the Arbitration Court to supervise the conduct of trade union elections, and included in the Communist Party Dissolution Act provisions to enable the State to remove Communists from positions of leadership in the trade unions. Although the latter Act was disallowed by the High Court, the 1951 amendments to the Arbitration Act did strengthen the hand of the State in dealing with entrenched trade union oligarchies. On top of this, the A.L.P. Industrial Groups redoubled their efforts to break the Communists' hold over the key unions.

The Communists saw in these two threats the spearhead of a general offensive from the Right. They set themselves, in the first instance, to fight a determined rearguard action, abandoning those positions which were thinly held and falling back on those in which they were more certain of their ground. The Groupers pressed their initial advantage as far as they could, and even succeeded in shaking the Communists' hold over such traditionally militant unions as the A.R.U. and the F.I.A. But by 1954, the Communists had checked this advance and were building up their strength for a counter-attack, more confident of ultimate success than they had been at any time since the Second World War.
Strategies of defence

The Communists did not overestimate their chances of checking the onslaught on their trade union power. Although they claimed that the deepening economic crisis was making the workers restless, they admitted that it had not yet made them aware that the Government's war policy was mainly responsible for the decline of Australian living standards. Most workers, according to the Communists, were still subject to illusions about the efficacy of reformist and arbitrationist methods of realising demands, and as a result they were unable clearly to perceive the true significance either of the 1951 amendments to the Arbitration Act or of the Groupers' renewed industrial activities. The Communists designed their trade union strategies to meet such difficulties and made their defensive arrangements with a care which contrasted sharply with the recklessness of their operations during the 'adventurist' period. Before we discuss these arrangements, however, we shall first deal with the Communists' reading of the enemy's intentions and their assessment of his resources.

The Bill to amend the Conciliation and Arbitration Act was introduced by the Menzies Government in March 1951. It was intended to strengthen the powers of the Arbitration Court in enforcing the acceptance of industrial awards (heavy penalties for non-acceptance were prescribed) and to smooth the way for unionists who wanted the Court to control ballots for positions in their trade
unions. Applications for court-controlled ballots under the 1949 amendments, put through by the Chifley Government, had usually involved recourse to lengthy and costly legal proceedings; under the 1951 amendments, a court-controlled ballot could be held if it were requested by ten per cent or 500 members (whichever was the less) of a branch, or by ten per cent (or 1,000 members, whichever was the less) of the federal body of a union. Heavy penalties were imposed on unionists who impeded the conduct of court-controlled ballots.

The Communists claimed that the amendments were aimed at helping the Groupers and their allies to displace Communist cadres from positions of influence in the trade unions. At a later date, J.C. Henry suggested that the 'real purpose' of court-controlled ballots had been 'to remove from office genuine workers' leaders and to replace them with men subservient to the reaction'. This object, the Communists claimed, was to be achieved through the different forms of ballot-rigging which the new procedures made possible. Drawing attention to the fact that the ballot papers were to be sent through the post in 'distinctive' envelopes, the Communists alleged that Security men would interfere with genuine papers and fake others to ensure the defeat of Communist or progressive candidates; the counting of votes, it was further suggested, would provide a further means of affecting the ballot. Such claims were

---

Ibid., October 1953, p.295.
repeated throughout 1952 and 1953. Why was the Government going to so much trouble to help the Groupers? Because, claimed the Communists, it wished to use the Groupers in its general policy of reducing the workers' living standards to provide more resources for its war effort in the interests of American imperialism. E.F. Hill drew attention to 'the striving of the bourgeoisie in its battle to impose a war economy, a war plan and a war ideology upon the Australian people.'

And in order to develop the process by which that plan can be operated the whole position of the Arbitration Court has been strengthened, and it has been drawn far more sharply into the battle than in previous periods,...

Although the amending legislation had been opposed in the Federal Parliament by the Labor Party, and although both the A.L.P's Federal Conference of 1951 and the A.C.T.U. Congress of the same year had criticised the amendments, the Communists were not mistaken in estimating that the workers would not resist the changes with much feeling. Their attachment to the arbitration system, it was

---


5 News-Weekly, 2 January 1952. The voting, however, was reported to be extremely close (17 votes to 16) and it appears that the A.W.U. delegates (who had opposed the 1951 amendments to the Arbitration Act) had formed an important part of the majority.
recognised, was too strong for that. This attachment, according to Dixon, had been strengthened by the post-war boom.

Arbitration and conciliation received a big build-up during World War II and immediately after it. In this period the trade union movement, with the militant unions showing the way, forced the employers to make big concessions to the workers - the 40 hour week, increases in the basic wage, margins, women's wages, week-end penalty rates and so on. Although these gains were the result of trade union struggle or pressure, they were invariably conceded through the arbitration courts. The reformists and right-wing labour leaders talked loud and long in praise of arbitration and conciliation.\(^6\)

Only experience, he suggested, would convince the workers that their interests were being attacked through that same Arbitration Court which they had come to regard with such affection.

Although they took some time to appreciate the importance of the Industrial Group movement within the A.L.P., the Communists were aware from an early date of its power within the trade unions. In particular, they recognised the fact that the Groupers had won the sympathies of many amongst the rank-and-file unionists and that the earnestness and moral outlook of Groupist cadres were widely appreciated. Above all, the Groups possessed a great advantage in being the official organisations of the A.L.P. in the unions, which they used to effect by representing election battles between themselves and the Communists as part of a general struggle between the Labor and Communist Parties. Thus, during the 1952 ballot

\(^6\) Communist Review, June 1953, p.164.
in the Victorian Branch of the A.R.U., News-Weekly placed the following interpretation on the rivalry between J.J. Brown, a Communist, and J. Ryan, the Groupers' nominee.

A vote for Mr J. Ryan...is a vote for the Labor Party. Any other issue, such as that J.J. Brown is a great union secretary, is but a decoy to inveigle Labor men to desert their own cause for that of the Kremlin. 7

Dr Evatt strengthened this identification by referring to Communist defeats in the trade unions, 'not as Industrial Group successes, but as Labor Party victories.' 8

In looking for the interests behind the Groups, the Communists were careful not to lay too much blame on the hierarchy of the Roman Catholic Church, partly because they knew that several of the prominent Groupers were Protestants and partly because they were anxious not to reduce their struggle with the Movement to one between Catholics and others. It suited them at this time to suggest that the Industrial Groups were the agents of the capitalists. Thornton claimed with complete confidence:

We know that the Industrial group leaders have been helped to their present position by the Menzies Government and the Federal Arbitration Court, and have been financed by the Australian employers and the United States Government.

We also know that a helping hand has been given to them by Labour Party leaders, including Dr. Evatt. 9

7 News-Weekly, 16 April 1952.
8 Age, 7 August 1953.
For this very reason, the Communists suggested, the Industrial Group leaders would eventually be disowned by the rank-and-file. But there was also need to take account of the fact that their immediate following was extensive. In the same article cited above, Thornton made this distinction:

The A.L.P. Industrial groups, although they contain many honest workers, many good trade unionists, who belong to the groups because of their loyalty to the Labour Party, are, nevertheless, led in the top levels by most unscrupulous people who have caused great damage to the independence and fighting strength of the unions in the last few years. 10

The essential point in the Communist analysis of the industrial situation in the early fifties was that the Industrial Groups and the Government were working together. The Arbitration Court had been empowered to assist the Groupers in widening the range and increasing the pressure of their campaign against the Communists in the trade unions. The danger was that this campaign would do irreparable harm to the freedom and democratic structure of the trade unions before the workers realised the necessity of rallying to the only force which understood their true interests, the Communist Party. To prevent this happening, the Communists set themselves to play a waiting game and give their opponents time to alienate sections of the trade unionists who had formerly been disposed to trust them. The united-front-from-below strategy, as applied in

10 Loc. cit.
the trade union field, was essentially one of caution; Communist cadres were enjoined to refrain from pressing for political strikes, to strive wherever possible to establish common ground between themselves and rank-and-file unionists, and to moderate the attacks on the Groupers until such time as the Groups had been clearly shown to be the agents of American and Australian capitalism. Moderation was to be the keynote of the Communists' revised industrial strategy.

In October 1951, for example, Dixon complained that there had been too great an emphasis placed on political issues in some of the W.W.F. branches and that economic issues needed to be given more attention.

There was a tendency for our people to get out too far in front of the workers. It is most important that we link the economic, the day-to-day issues with the general political questions.... We will not succeed in building a firm united front of the working class unless we do this.\textsuperscript{11}

In fact, there was a sharp decline in strike activity after 1951, especially on the part of Communist-controlled unions. This was partly a result of the new deterrents against strikes provided by the 1951 amendments to the Arbitration Act (which gave the Court powers to impose severe penalties for the non-observance of awards), and it was partly because the Government had shown its willingness to use the Crimes Act to deal with strike leaders, as when it intervened to break the strikes of the Miners' Federation and the W.W.F. in 1951. But it was also because the Communist trade union

\textsuperscript{11} Ibid., October 1951, p.945.
cadres were making a deliberate effort to maintain good relations with the rank-and-file unionists and with the A.C.T.U. leadership. Thus, in mid-1951, the W.W.F. stopped boycotting New Zealand shipping (the New Zealand waterside workers were out on strike at the time) when the A.C.T.U. threatened it with censure.\textsuperscript{12} From 1951 onwards, the Communist-controlled unions were singularly passive in strike action; instead of taking the whole union out, the leadership would organise token strikes by key sections of an industry, more as a demonstration than as a challenge to the employers. Sometimes international considerations obliged them to stage political strikes, as when the W.W.F's leadership tried to prevent arms ships leaving for the Indo-Chinese war theatre in 1954,\textsuperscript{13} but these were discontinued when it became clear that the rank-and-file were not interested.

What is surprising here is that the Communists' trade union strategies were put into effect without much difficulty, apart from the sectarianism amongst some of the militants which we shall discuss later. The inclusion in the Central Committee of so many important trade union leaders, such as Thornton and McPhillips of the F.I.A., Williams and Ross of the Miners' Federation, Healy of the W.W.F., Elliott of the Seamen's Union, Rowe of the A.E.U., Hughes of the

\textsuperscript{12} News-Weekly, 18 July 1951.

\textsuperscript{13} S.M.H., 15 April 1954. For the unsuccessful attempt by the W.W.F. and Seamen's Union leadership to prevent their members loading war supplies for Korea in 1950, see News-Weekly, 30 August 1950.
F.C.U. and Wright of the Sheet Metal Workers' Union, meant that the formulation of the Party's general strategy and of its tactics in the trade union movement would be reconciled and harmonised at the level of the Party's top leadership. Thus, there was little danger of a gap developing between the formulation of the Party's trade union policy and its execution. This situation contrasted with that of the 'adventurist' period when strong disagreement was evident on the Central Committee between the Party functionaries and the trade union leaders.

Aware that their single-minded drive for leadership positions in certain unions had lost them support in the past, the Communists changed their policy. They were now prepared to support for union leadership not only non-Communists who would serve as front figures but traditionalists who had earned the confidence of the ordinary unionists. This approach, which culminated in the practice of 'unity tickets' (in which Communists were bracketed with progressive A.L.P. candidates), was strongly advocated by both Thornton and Dixon. Thornton, who admitted that the Communists' attempt to monopolise executive positions in the F.I.A. (of which he had been the National Secretary) had enabled the Groupers to win control of it, did not mince his words: 'It is not for the Communists to select the type of Labour Party men they will work with; we must be prepared to work with whoever is the spokesman for Labour Party workers.'\(^{14}\) Dixon pointed out that the

\(^{14}\) *Communist Review*, September 1954, p.268.
united front strategy required that the Communists should accept as legitimate trade union leaders anyone, provided he had a following, who was opposed to the industrial groups.

To set out to monopolise the leadership of a union, a shop, job or strike committee, is a denial of the united front.

...the unions in which we are now experiencing the greatest difficulties are those unions where the Communists have monopolised the leadership....15

In some cases, the Communists were prepared to tolerate Groupist leaders who were trusted by the rank-and-file. For example, in the 1954 election in the Melbourne Branch of the W.W.F., the Communists backed a unity ticket which included some of their members alongside A.L.P. and non-party workers, but nevertheless refrained from opposing the sitting President, J.H. Cummins, who was a Grouper. Dixon brought out the implications of this incident: 'To have attempted the elimination of the whole of the Industrial Group candidates would have caused the A.L.P. members and supporters - the majority - to feel they were being denied representation on the Federation Branch leadership.'16 The unity-ticket practice was used in such unions as the W.W.F., the F.I.A., the F.C.U. and the A.R.U. but the Labor Party soon began imposing sanctions on those of its members who co-operated with the Communists. In 1952, for example, the A.L.P.

15 Tribune, 12 December 1951.
expelled J. Young and S. Davis, President and Vice-President respectively of the Sydney Branch of the W.W.F., for allowing their names to appear on a unity ticket opposing Industrial Group candidates.  

At no time do the Communists appear to have considered the possibility of forming their own trade unions, not only because they wished to maintain the broadest possible front with the other unionists but also because they realised that there was no real basis for legal union activity outside the structure of the arbitration system. Their respect for the conventions of Australian unionism is illustrated by their refusal to group their unions into a federation rivalling the A.C.T.U. The opportunity was offered in 1949, when most of the important Western trade union movements had broken away from the Communist-controlled World Federation of Trade Unions. When the A.C.T.U. followed suit at its 1949 Congress, News-Weekly predicted that the Communist-controlled unions would soon be formed into a trade union federation affiliated with the W.F.T.U. But the Communists made no such move, even after the 1951 A.C.T.U. Congress affiliated with the anti-Communist International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, which had been established in December

---

18 Ibid., 21 September 1949.
19 According to Barcan (op. cit., p.30), the decision was taken by 236 votes to 152.
1949 by the organisations which had left the W.F.T.U. Later, in keeping with the united front strategy, several of the Communist-controlled unions, including the Seamen's Union, the Miners' Federation and the W.W.F., broke off their connection with the W.F.T.U's Trade Departments when threatened with expulsion from the A.C.T.U.  

This apparent timidity was coupled with the Communists' caution in attacking the arbitration system before they were certain that the workers' illusions about arbitrationism had been shattered. From 1952 onwards, a few straws in the wind gave cause for hope. Although the 1951 amendments to the Arbitration Act had not much worried the rank-and-file unionists, they became concerned later when a steady rise in prices cut down the value of their real wages, when unemployment began to spread, and when the Arbitration Court proved unsympathetic on several important issues. In the Galvin award of 1952, for example, the Court had rejected the claim of the metal trade unions for increased margins; several other awards refusing additional margins followed, resulting in widespread discontent, and in 1953 the quarterly cost-of-living adjustments to the basic wage were terminated. The fines on those unions which disregarded the Court's decisions did not improve matters. By 1954 Thornton was able to observe, with some justice:

Exasperation with the Arbitration Court is growing rapidly following a string of punitive orders against the trade unions.

Right-wing trade union officials are finding greater and greater difficulty in holding the workers back and in many cases have been forced to give a lead for strike action as the only alternative to being isolated from the workers. The faith in arbitration and in reformism which has for so long affected the majority of the Australian workers, has been shaken by recent events.21

From 1953, the Communists coupled their criticism of the 1951 amendments with specific criticisms of the way in which the arbitration system had blocked the realisation of mass demands. But the fact remains that their main concern between 1951 and 1954 had been to isolate the Groupers within the trade union movement, and to identify them as the enemies of the workers.

Their tactics in this field of action had two objects; one was to drive a wedge between traditionalist trade unionists and the Groupers, and the other was to separate the Group leaders from their mass support. In 1950 E.F. Hill had drawn a line of 'some importance' between 'Mr Monk and his colleagues' and the Group leaders who wished to see a Nazi-like Labour Front in which they would have every claim to be the leaders and in which they might even menace the position of people such as Mr Monk. Consequently, the mass united struggle must take into account this process...and must soberly estimate the differences between the various reformist leaders.23

22 On the latter tactic see Dixon in Tribune, 12 December 1951.
The Groupers, instead of building on their earlier successes, aided the Communists by spreading their attacks indiscriminately and by attempting to defeat not only Communists but also traditionalist leaders whom they considered to be ideologically unreliable or pro-Communist. Wherever a traditionalist or reformist leader was faced with opposition from the Groupers, the Communists gave him their unconditional support. Many of the traditionalists amongst the trade unionists now began to change their minds about the Communists, whom they had treated as enemies in the late forties. It was not simply that the Communists proved to be dependable allies in the struggle against the new enemy, the Groupers, but it was also that the traditionalists were in many cases deeply disturbed by the policies being advocated by the Industrial Groups. In particular, the traditionalists agreed with the Communists in opposing the practice of court-controlled union ballots, partly on principle (as an unjustified intrusion of the State in union affairs) and partly through expediency – for the Communists were not the only group which stood to lose from a secret ballot system. The well-entrenched oligarchy of the A.W.U. broke with the Groupers when the latter threatened to employ the court-controlled ballot provisions within the A.W.U.

Santamaria has ruefully admitted:

Politically, it might have been more 'prudent' to confine attacks on corruption and ballot-rigging to instances in which Communists were involved. The Groups refused to make that type of distinction. Accordingly
many non-Communists, vulnerable to these charges, went into opposition.\textsuperscript{24}

Many traditionalists were also disturbed by the fact that the Groupers were hostile towards the ideas of nationalisation and Socialism, which, although their content had been drained away by the fifties, were still important symbols in the Labor movement. The Groupers had alienated potential supporters by pressing their more extreme demands too early, and the Communists, by holding their fire from time to time, were able to earn the sympathy of many trade unionists who had opposed them in the forties. The Industrial Groups were disconcertingly vigorous in packing union meetings with their supporters; in recommending the banning of the Communist Party; in praising American foreign policy; in attacking such political and industrial traditionalists as J.A. Ferguson, Clyde Cameron, A.A. Calwell, P.J. Kennelly, P.J. Clarey and A.E. Monk; in openly accepting the patronage of the Catholic Social Movement, and in suggesting that the A.L.P. needed to take a tougher line with Communists and progressives generally. Several Labor leaders formed the impression that the Groupers would like to see the A.L.P. become a Christian Democratic Party on the European model. The South Australian Branch of the A.L.P., largely on the initiative of Clyde Cameron, had disbanded the Groups

as early as 1951; the New South Wales and Victorian Branches were under firm Grouper control, but by 1954 the Groupers in these States were finding themselves faced with growing opposition.

The Communists, despite their over-dramatisation of the situation, nevertheless devised strategies which were well-suited to preserving a bridgehead in the trade union movement. Their industrial action in the early fifties was based on the principle of keeping in line with the mass of the trade unionists, even if this meant a qualified acceptance of the arbitration system, the support of non-Communists in trade union elections, and the abandonment of political strikes. In giving way before the Groupers, the Communists calculated that their enemies would over-extend themselves, and that they would attempt to achieve more than their resources would permit. This, then, was the strategy. We shall now study its application.

The course of the battle

Although the battle metaphor has its limitations, it is helpful in many ways to regard the Groupers' campaign against the Communists in the trade unions as an offensive against fortified positions. The disposition of the Communists' forces may be represented as follows. They were solidly entrenched in a number of important unions with long traditions of militant action - the W.W.F., the B.W.I.U., the Boilermakers' Society, the Sheet Metal Workers' Union,

the Seamen's Union, and the Miners' Federation. They were also well-established in a number of small unions, such as the Ship Painters and Dockers' Union, the Hotel Employees' Union (N.S.W.), and the Blacksmiths' Society. Although the position varied from branch to branch in each of these unions, generally speaking their membership respected and trusted the Communists not only as trade union workers but as political radicals. (Although no details have been released about the distribution of the Communist Party's factory branches or cells, indirect evidence suggests that they were most numerous and most effective amongst the well-established militant unions such as the W.W.F., the Miners' Federation and the Seamen's Union). These unions were the fortresses. Immediately beyond them, making up an inner defensive ring, were the Communist-held branches of the A.R.U. (Communists held the Victorian Branch and were strong in the Queensland and Tasmanian Branches), the F.I.A., the A.E.U. and the Amalgamated Postal Workers' Union, in which the Communists' influence had been to a large extent a function of their effectiveness as conventional trade union leaders in the business of winning concessions from the employers and the Arbitration Court. This effectiveness, however, had been placed in question by the Communists' recklessness during the 'adventurist' period. Constituting the outer defensive ring was a medley of craft and white-collar unions which the Communists had penetrated, in many cases, during the Second World War and in which their position had been insecure from the
beginning. (The absence of a good Party cell network in unions such as the F.C.U. added to the difficulties of the Communists during the period of the Grouper offensive). In the period from 1950 to 1954, the Groupers had usually little difficulty in sweeping through these outer defences and in most cases they were able to capture the main positions of the inner defences. In some cases, indeed, they were able to penetrate the branches of the fortress unions; but their advance was checked at this point and, by 1954, they were slowly being forced back again.

Many of the Grouper victories in the unions of the outer defensive ring were recorded in 1950–52, and gave an exaggerated impression of the Communists' weakness within the trade union movement as a whole. In 1952 the Groupers took over control of the North Australian Workers' Union and the New South Wales Teachers' Federation. In the same year, the Grouper-controlled Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and Joiners, set up in opposition to the de-registered (and Communist-controlled) B.W.I.U., won over a considerable number of members from the latter union. Although the Carpenters and Joiners' union was later registered with the Arbitration Court, it still remained smaller than the B.W.I.U. However, the most important union of the outer defensive ring to fall to the Groupers was the F.C.U. in

---

26 Ibid., 26 March 1952, 23 April 1952.

27 Ibid., 1 October 1952.
which the Communists were strong at the Federal and New South Wales and Victorian Branch levels, but not elsewhere. It was a lengthy battle, involving appeals to the Court under the 1949 amendments to the Arbitration Act and court-controlled ballots. The Victorian Branch was the first Branch to be lost by the Communists and militants; finally, in 1952, H.A. Thorne, the militant Federal Secretary and J.R. Hughes, the Communist Secretary of the New South Wales Branch were displaced. 28

In most of the cases discussed above, victory came comparatively easily and, with the exception of the New South Wales Teachers' Federation, finally to the Groupers. In the unions of the inner defensive ring, however, the battles were often long-drawn and bitterly contested. This was especially so in the struggle for control of the F.I.A., which the Communists had controlled at both the Federal level and in all the Branches until 1949. The F.I.A. had a membership of between 30 and 40 thousand. In 1949 the Groupers were able to take over the executive of the F.I.A. Branch in Newcastle, where many steel-workers had been thrown out of employment by the great coal strike, for which they had blamed the Communists. 29 The Communists maintained their position elsewhere in the F.I.A. and E. Thornton, a Communist, defeated L. Short,

29 Ibid., 11 January 1950.
the Grouper candidate, in the ballot for the National Secretaryship. Short alleged that the ballot had been rigged, and applied to the Arbitration Court (under the 1949 amendments) to have Thornton's election declared invalid. A long court battle ensued, during which Short was first expelled from the F.I.A. and then reinstated (by an order of the Arbitration Court). In 1950, Thornton resigned as National Secretary to take up a W.F.T.U. post, and the ballot for his successor resulted in the election of L.J. McPhillips, another Communist. Then, in November 1951, Mr Justice Dunphy announced his findings on the Short case. He declared that Thornton had been re-elected in 1949 with 1,800 forged ballot papers in a poll characterised by 'forgery, fraud and irregularities on a grand scale.'

Short's installation as National Secretary was followed by a total rout of the remaining Communists. Court-controlled ballots saw the Communists ousted from executive positions in the Sydney Metropolitan and Queensland branches of the union, from its National Executive and National Council and finally, at the December 1952 ballot, all the remaining Communist and militant officials were defeated.

---


Another good example of the way in which the Groupers used the amended Arbitration Act to fight the Communists is the case of their victory in the Victorian Branch of the A.R.U. The Groupers' first gain was registered in 1952, when they won control of the Branch's State Council, but were unable to secure the defeat of the Secretary, J.J. Brown, who was a Communist.  

Ian Turner, Vice-President of the Central Council of Railway Shop Committees and a former student leader at Melbourne University, was generally regarded as Brown's successor but he was dismissed in 1953 by the Victorian Railways Commissioners, primarily because he was a Communist. Brown's downfall came in 1954, when he was defeated in the ballot for the Secretaryship and was subsequently refused re-employment on the Victorian Railways. The Groupers' campaign to win control of the three-member Commonwealth Council of the A.E.U. took three years to succeed. In 1952, a Communist, C.G. Hennessy had been elected to the Council to replace an A.L.P. member who had died, but another Communist member, E.J. Rowe, was defeated by a Grouper in a ballot held shortly afterwards. The coup de grâce came in 1954, when a second Grouper defeated A. Wilson, a Communist.

32 Ibid., 3 September 1952.
33 Sun, Melbourne, 25 November 1953.
34 S.M.H., 22 June 1954.
in the election to the Council. The Communist Secretary of the New South Wales Branch of the Amalgamated Postal Workers' Union, R.E. Wellard, was also defeated in 1954.

In most of these cases, the Groupers' victories were based on their skill in exploiting the procedures for court-investigation and court-control of union ballots, in outdoing the Communists in the techniques of stuffing and rigging union meetings and in winning the confidence of traditionalist and A.L.P. unionists who had resented Communist control in the past. The Groupers had the advantage of being the newcomers, the crusaders, and many of their cadres appealed to the rank-and-file by their forthrightness and industry in union work. On the other hand, the Communists were handicapped by the unpopularity they had earned for themselves during the late forties, both by their recklessness in launching strikes and by their ruthlessness in driving for executive positions. This was particularly the case in the F.I.A. Under such circumstances, the Communists' strategy of biding time and working for a united front had little chance of saving the day.

The Communists were also handicapped by indiscipline in the ranks of their own workers. 'Sectarianism' in the Party's trade

---

36 Ibid., 29 September 1954.
union work apparently took several forms; in some cases, Communist cadres continued to apply the principle they had been taught during the 'adventurist' period, namely, that all non-Communist workers except the militants were prey to reactionary illusions. But this did not concern the Communist leaders so much as the sectarianism which led Party workers to ignore the distinction between the leaders of the Industrial Group movement and their rank-and-file followers. Writing in July 1952, Dixon pointed out that the united front strategy required that Communists should work with rank-and-file Groupers when the common objective was an economic one, such as increased margins. He insisted that the 'great majority' of Industrial Group members were not 'corrupt' and 'venal'.

Earlier Dixon had attacked those sectarian who insisted on identifying the Industrial Group movement with Catholic Action, not only because he knew that many of the Groupers were Protestants but also because he did not want the conflict to be drawn on religious lines. 'There can be no genuine united front', he maintained, 'that does not include the Catholic workers.' In 1954, the Party's Central Committee went to the length of drawing up a statement on 'Party Consolidation', the discussion of which was intended to dispel

38 Tribune, 12 December 1951. See also Sharkey in ibid., 24 May 1951.
sectarian illusions. As late as September 1954, however, Thornton could still write:

But sectarianism is a chronic disease. Although few comrades will disagree openly today about the necessity for a proper policy of unity in the trade unions, of unity between the Communist and the A.L.P. workers, many are reluctant, or even opposed, to putting such a policy into operation in their union.

Many of our comrades do not accept in practice the principle of working class unity.39

In their 'fortress' unions, however, the Communists were in a much better position to withstand the Groupers' onslaught. In the first place, Communist Party members were more numerous amongst the rank-and-file of such unions as the W.W.F., the Miners' Federation, the Seamen's Union, the B.W.I.U., the Boilermakers' Society and the Sheet Metal Workers' Union. In the Australian trade union movement only about sixteen unions had over 20,000 members and of these the Communists were firmly entrenched, at the federal level, in five – the A.R.U., the B.W.I.U., the W.W.F., the Sheet Metal Workers' Union and the Miners' Federation. In his report to the 17th Congress in 1955, L. Aarons estimated that of the Party's members engaged in industrial work, 30 per cent were metal workers and 25 per cent maritime workers, and that 79 per cent of the Party's 'proletarian membership' in New South Wales were employed in the 'basic industries – metal, land and sea transport, mining and (sic) building'.40

40 Ibid., June 1955, p.176.
the second place, the proportion of non-Communist militants was higher in these unions than it was in the white-collar and craft unions and, in particular, many of the Catholic workers in these unions were luke-warm in their response to the Groupers' pleas. In the third place, the practice of unity tickets was established in the early stages of the united front strategy in such unions as the W.W.F. and there was apparently much less 'sectarianism' amongst the Communists than in the more vulnerable unions - vulnerable, that is, to the Groupers' attack.

The pattern of the struggle in the 'fortress' unions was therefore one of early Groupers' gains (in 1951 and 1952) and then of a successful Communist counter-attack (in 1953-54). In the Miners' Federation, for example, a Communist-militant alliance lost control of the Central Council in December 1952 and shortly afterwards the Communist Vice-President, W. Parkinson, was defeated in election by a Grouper, G.H. Neilly. These reverses left the General President, I. Williams, as the only Communist on the Federation's three-member Central Executive, and in 1953 Neilly became General Secretary following the death of the former Secretary, G.W.S. Grant, an A.L.P. member. But by this time, the tide had turned in favour of the Communists. Parkinson was elected to take Neilly's place as Vice-President, thus giving the Communists a two-to-one majority

41

S.M.H., 3 February 1953.
on the Executive. This ratio was maintained in 1954; when Williams
died, Parkinson was elected to the Presidency and a militant
J. Comerford, became Vice-President. 42 Grouper influence in the
Miners' Federation was strongest in the Northern (N.S.W.) District
and for a few years, in Queensland. However, the Southern (N.S.W.),
District and the Victorian District remained under strong Communist
control. Communists and militants lost some ground to the Groupers
in the Brisbane Branch of the W.W.F. in 1951 and 1952, but they
recovered their balance in 1953 and 1954. The Communists and their
militant allies regained control of the Melbourne Branch of the
W.W.F. in 1954 after the Grouper Secretary, H.E. Clarke, had been
charged with stealing union funds in the previous years. The
Communists in the Seamen's Union and the Sheet Metal Workers' Union
held firm during this period.

The Communists' losses in the unions of the outer and inner
defensive rings seriously reduced their representation at the A.C.T.U.
Congresses of the early fifties, but they were able to retain control
of the Queensland Trades and Labor Council and the Newcastle Trades
Hall Council.

By mid-1954, then, the Communists had effectively checked the
Groupers' advance against their trade union strongholds. Despite
their initial disadvantages, the Communists had shown themselves

42 Ibid., 19 December 1953, 4 December 1954; Courier-Mail, 17 February
1954.
more adept than their rivals at learning the techniques of the new union warfare and there was every possibility that a Communist counter-offensive might yield results. Sharkey was not being unduly optimistic when he wrote: 'The conditions for success in this struggle are becoming increasingly favourable.'

43

PART THREE
The period 1954 to 1961 forms a unity in Australian politics. Throughout these years the Menzies-Fadden (later Menzies-McEwen) Government appeared to be unassailable in office; following the instability of the early fifties, the economy prospered until the period of unemployment in the years 1960 and 1961; the Labor Party, weakened by the formation of the Anti-Communist Labor Party (later the Democratic Labor Party) in 1955, was given little chance of achieving power. Only after the election of December 1961 was this situation substantially altered.

The Communist strategies of the period are also of a piece, although they were adapted as circumstances altered from year to year. In general, the Party's leaders insisted that the first task was to develop a mass movement aimed at removing Menzies from office; at the same time, they directed the Party's energies towards combatting the Industrial Groups in the industrial field and the Anti-Communist Labor Party in the political field; and they urged the importance in this struggle of maintaining a united front with the A.L.P's forces. Fortunately for the Communists, these general strategies suited the international Communist line, and the Party was able to enjoy the luxury of pursuing strategies required by the local situation without offending its overseas mentors. But this was also a
period of considerable internal stress for the Communist Party; its solidarity in the past had often been a function of its isolation, of its vulnerability in the face of seemingly overwhelming odds, but in the late fifties the application of the united front strategy created the idea amongst some of the Party's members that association with the Labor Party should be carried much further. There were also members during this period who felt that Khruschev's message to the C.P.S.U's 20th Congress of February 1956 had meaning in Australian terms, that the Party's hierarchy had become too rigid in applying Marxism–Leninism in the Australian context, and that the Party's organisation required loosening and reforming.

This chapter deals with the Party's progressive responses to the unfolding of this situation – the Petrov case, the split in the Labor Party, and the victory of the Liberal and Country Parties in the Federal Elections of 1954 and 1955. On the one hand, the Party was doing its best to keep abreast of events and to adjust its strategies accordingly. On the other, it was striving to maintain its relative position in the trade unions while at the same time exploring the possibilities of widening its social basis. Above all, the Party was profoundly disturbed by the trend of events. The emergence of the Anti-Communist Labor Party raised perspectives which alarmed those Communist leaders who knew something of the social power of Christian Democracy in Belgium, France and Italy.
From the Petrov affair to the 1955 election

Early in April 1954, Vladimir Petrov, a member of the Russian Embassy staff at Canberra, asked for and was granted political asylum in Australia. On 13 April, the Government, with the approval of the Opposition, pushed through a special measure under whose terms a Royal Commission on Espionage was later established. Throughout the campaign for the Federal Election of 29 May 1954, the shadow of these events loomed large. Menzies himself did not refer to the affair (he hardly needed to) but many of his followers went to the length of suggesting that prominent Labor figures would be appearing before the Commission and that, if justice were to be done, a strongly anti-Communist administration was required. With his customary felicity, Sir Arthur Fadden, the Country Party leader, pointed out that Menzies would be the 'safest' man to act on the Commission's findings. Country people, in fact, were only too willing to spell out all the implications of the affair; the Farmer and Settler of New South Wales noted that 'Communist scares, when properly used, are almost certain election winners.' There is indeed the possibility that the Petrov


2 Russell H. Barrett, Promises and Performances in Australian Politics 1928-1959, New York, 1959, p.84.

affair, especially in its timing, was partly designed to influence the outcome of the 1954 election and to damage the A.L.P., and it is highly probable that the use of the Communist bogey in the election may have influenced the results.

In the event, the Government was returned to power, although its majority in the House of Representatives was reduced from fifteen seats to seven. The Liberal Party's strength fell from 51 to 47 seats, Labor's increased from 53 to 57, while the Country Party's following remained stable at 17. The Communist Party's vote declined considerably in most electorates which it contested; its 42 candidates polled 53,968 votes as compared with the 45,759 secured by 27 of its candidates in 1951. Its vote fell in 18 of the 23 seats which it fought in both elections. The only significant increase occurred in the blue-ribbon Labor seat of Port Adelaide, but this seat was not contested by the Liberal Party in 1954. In his post-election review, Sharkey showed less interest in this development than in the ease with which the Government had won the contest. This, he suggested, was due to 'the temporary stabilisation of the economy' and to the Labor Party's having adopted an anti-Communist line, which actually worked against it. Sharkey also blamed the Industrial Groups for having reduced the efficiency of Labor's campaign, and he criticised Labor's leaders for not having come out more strongly against the Government's reactionary policies.  

later accused the Government of having used the Petrov Affair 'as an election stunt.... It was intended to promote McCarthyism in Australia and to smear the Communist Party, the Labour Party and other organisations and persons.'

It is important to establish the main outlines of the Communist leaders' view of the situation immediately after the 1954 election. Sharkey, in the article cited above, was certainly thinking in terms of the strategies of the early fifties. There were, however, significant shifts in emphasis; for one thing, Sharkey was now more ready to point out that the essential tension in the A.L.P. was not that between the right-wing leadership and the rank-and-file, but between the Groupers and the rest.

The situation is that more and more the Industrial Groupers are working to turn the A.L.P. into a 100 per cent. party of capitalism, one that will not have any working class flavour about it whatsoever. Can they succeed in doing this? Undoubtedly they can.

Within the A.L.P., he suggested, the Groupers were pitting themselves against 'the older type of liberal-reformist Labour politician.' The Communist Party's role in this struggle was to resist the Groupers, while not neglecting to foster 'the best elements' amongst them.

We must further extend all the time the united front with the Labour Party from top to bottom, with the Labour Council delegates, shop committee members, shop stewards who are Labour Party but not Industrial Group, we must

5 Ibid., November 1954, p.327.
work with these honest people against the Industrial Groupers and win the struggle for a genuine working-class policy.\(^6\)

There is no evidence that Sharkey was thinking at this time about the possibility of a split in the Labor Party; his remarks suggest a belief that the battle ahead would be waged on conventional lines, and that final victory would come once the Industrial Group leaders had been shown up in their true colours as agents of Menzies. In fact, the Communists may not have wanted a split in the Labor Party before the issues had been brought out clearly, for fear that the defecting Grouper leaders may have taken with them a substantial proportion of the rank-and-file. Looking ahead, Sharkey envisaged the isolation of the Group leaders being achieved in the context of a mass struggle against the Menzies Government, whose economic policies, directed as they were to serve the aggressive war interests of the United States, would soon precipitate the economic crisis, and the attacks on the workers' living standards, for which Sharkey had now been waiting for four years.\(^7\)

The events of the next few months must have taken him by surprise. The Royal Commission on Espionage provided little that was new regarding Soviet intelligence operations but its proceedings gave rise to political controversies of the first order. The

\(^6\) Ibid., July 1954, p.197.

\(^7\) Ibid., p.195.
Commission consisted of three judges, chaired by Mr Justice Owen. It met first in Canberra on 17 May for preliminary hearings, and later in Sydney for a number of sessions the first of which began on 16 August. On the basis of documents given it by Petrov, the Royal Commission set itself to discover whether espionage had been conducted in Australia by Soviet diplomatic personnel and, if so, whether any Australian organisations or persons had assisted them. An air of melodrama surrounded it from the outset; anti-Communist organisations had a field day suggesting that at last the sinister connections between Moscow and the Communist Party, and between the Communist Party and the A.L.P., would be revealed. Short, the Federal Secretary of the F.I.A., announced that the documents would reveal the existence of a Red industrial spy-ring plot. The Communist Party itself was prepared to have counsel represent it before the Commission until W.J.V. Windeyer, Q.C., the chief counsel assisting the Commissioners, announced that it would not be involved 'as a political organisation in the spy-ring allegations'. Individual Communists, including several journalists, were mentioned in the Commission's subsequent proceedings, but the man who suffered most harm was one whose name was not associated with any document – Dr H.V. Evatt, the leader of the Federal Labor Party. Throughout

---

8 S.M.H., 28 May 1954.
9 Sun, Sydney, 1 June 1954.
August and September he fought a long battle to obtain permission to appear before the Commission to defend certain members of his staff who had been allegedly connected with certain documents. He eventually succeeded, but already he had become the object of heated criticism within his own party. His allegations that Menzies, Petrov and the Security Service had conspired to injure both the A.L.P. and himself earned him the scorn of the Groupers and News-Weekly. The immediate result of the Petrov Commission, therefore, was to heighten the tension within the Labor Party.

Evatt chose this occasion to act. On 5 October he accused certain Victorian members of the Federal Party (later identified as S.M. Keon, J.M. Mullens and a number of others) of being disloyal to the Labor Party and of being subject to 'outside influence' in the form of the 'Movement'.

10 His attack provoked a press discussion which brought out clearly the extent to which the activities of the Industrial Groups had been directed by B.A. Santamaria, Director of the National Secretariat of Catholic Action; it was also suggested that Archbishop Mannix and other members of the Catholic hierarchy were supporting Santamaria in this role. The forces ranged against Evatt were formidable and for a time the issue seemed in doubt. He was strongly opposed by the Victorian and New South Wales Executives of the A.L.P. (both of which were under strong Grouper influence) and

10 Advertiser, 6 October 1954.
by the leaders of several Group-controlled trade unions, most notably Short of the F.I.A.  

Evatt was backed in the first instance by E.J. Ward and Senator P.J. Kennelly of the Federal Parliamentary Labor Party, by the South Australian Executive, and by most of the trade unions which were not under Grouper control. A decisive factor in tilting the balance in his favour was the support he received from the A.W.U., which had broken with the Groupers in 1953. T. Dougherty, the General Secretary of the A.W.U., immediately endorsed Evatt's suggestion that the 'Movement' was aiming to take over the A.L.P. Both in Victoria and Queensland, also, the A.W.U. formed a powerful element in the pro-Evatt forces. Evatt fanned the resentment against him to a white heat at the end of October, when he questioned (with justice) the authenticity of Document 'J', which the Commission alleged had been drafted by Rupert Lockwood, a Communist journalist. The first tests were now upon Evatt. On 20 October he was able to defeat by 52 votes to 28 a motion put before the caucus of the Federal Parliamentary Labor Party declaring all positions vacant. The first meetings of the A.L.P's Federal Executive called to consider Evatt's charges were held on 27 October and 9 November, but no decision was taken.

---

11 For the charges of the Victorian Executive, see *News-Weekly*, 13 October 1954.

12 *Australian Worker*, 20 October 1954.

13 *S.M.H.*, 27 October 1954.
By November 1954 it was clear that the forces backing Evatt were in the ascendant and it was equally clear that they would press their advantage to the utmost. What would the Groupers and the Movement do? Accept defeat and remain within the party, or leave it and found another party of their own? After a series of adjournments, the A.L.P. Federal Executive finally decided on 3 December that a special conference of the Victorian A.L.P. should be held on 26 February 1955 and ordered the Industrial Groups in Victoria to disband as from 31 December. This decision set in motion an involved struggle inside the Victorian A.L.P., but finally the special conference was held and elected an anti-Grouper Central Executive, sponsored by trade unions who had been critical of the Cain Labor Government in Victoria. The previous executive, however, refused to resign and both it and the 'new' executive sent delegates to the A.L.P.'s Federal Conference at Hobart in March 1955. The Federal Executive then voted by 9 to 3 to admit the delegation from the 'new' executive, whereupon the Conference was boycotted by 17 of the 36 delegates appointed by the various State branches to attend the Conference; most of the 17 were in sympathy with the Groupers. 14

The parting of the ways had come. As early as January News-Weekly had warned that if the Federal Executive continued on its

course (of holding the special conference in Victoria) a second (presumably anti-Communist) Labor Party would be formed, and the decision of the Grouper delegates to boycott the Hobart Conference indicated that such a course was now seriously contemplated. The remaining 19 delegates, unperturbed by this prospect, continued with the conference and passed resolutions instructing all State Branches to withdraw recognition from the Industrial Groups and laying down the bases of a radical foreign policy, including the recognition of Communist China, its admission (along with others) to the United Nations and the withdrawal of Australian troops from Malaya. SEATO and nuclear testing were also criticised. The Groupers were prone to over-emphasise the extent of the change involved, for it was evident that the Labor Party still envisaged co-operation with the United States and Britain in international affairs. Norman Harper aptly described Labor's policy as 'a social democratic approach to world problems with faint overtones of the isolationism of the 'thirties'. Branches were directed to expose 'the international Communist conspiracy against democratic Trade Unionism'. These decisions were later endorsed by

all the State Branches; except in Victoria, where the tension between the rival executives was heightened, differences were smoothed over for the time being. It was widely known, however, that Grouper influence remained strong in the New South Wales and Queensland Branches and in several of the important unions affiliated with the A.L.P. In April 1955, following some criticism of his leadership, Evatt resigned as Leader of the party but was re-elected by 52 votes to 27 at a subsequent caucus meeting. 18

In Victoria a split in the party was unavoidable. The rival executives continued in existence until, in late March, the split extended to the State parliamentary party, 17 of whose members were expelled by the 'new' executive. These voted with the non-Labor Opposition parties on 19 April and brought down the Cain Government. At the subsequent State Election the A.L.P. was decisively defeated although the expelled Groupers (who contested the election as the Coleman-Barry Labor Party) lost all but one of their seats. Nevertheless, the latter polled extremely well, particularly amongst the traditional Catholic Labor element; but this was not surprising since a few weeks previously the Australian Catholic Bishops had come out in support of the Groups, 19 and Archbishop Mannix said that the

18 S.M.H., 19 April 1955.
Labor Party could not expect to secure the Catholic vote because of its attitude towards Communism.  

Immediately the Federal Parliament reassembled in April, the seven Victorian M.H.R's who had also been expelled from the A.L.P. by the 'new' Victorian Executive, formed the Anti-Communist Labor Party. They assailed Evatt as a friend of the Communists and easily outrivalled the Government parties in hanging the Communist label around the Labor Party's neck.

The Communists were deeply affected by the conflict within the A.L.P., and the pace with which the crisis developed took them completely by surprise. Although they had long been aware of the importance of the Industrial Groups in the trade union movement, and although they had talked often in early 1954 about the need to isolate Industrial Group as well as right-wing leaders within the Labor Party, the fact remains that the Communist leaders had framed their strategies on the assumption that the A.L.P. would not split before a Labor Government had come to power. They valued its organisation and its numerous points of contact with 'the masses', and their writings show that they envisaged it evolving, under the stimulus of the united front campaign, from a liberal-bourgeois into a social-democratic party, and from that state to a progressive mass party.

---

20 Advocate, 28 April 1955.
with which the Communist Party could fuse. Within the Labor
movement, the united front strategy had been designed to isolate
and unmask the right-wing and Group leaders - but this object was
to have been achieved without splitting the A.L.P. In the events
of June 1954 to June 1955 three things appear to have particularly
shaken the Communists; the damage done to the A.L.P. by the use of
the Communist bogey in incidents arising out of the Royal Commission's
enquiry; the willingness which Dr Evatt showed to have out his
differences with the Groupers - and with the Roman Catholic hierarchy
in Victoria; and the confidence with which the Groupers contemplated
the prospect of their having to establish a mass party of their own.
It took the Communists some time to recover their doctrinal balance.

Tribune's coverage of the crisis months is marked by tension,
which also reveals itself in the articles which Dixon and Sharkey
wrote for the Communist Review. It is evident that the Communist
leaders were alarmed by several possibilities which they believed
were inherent in the new situation. Their great fear was that the
Groupers would succeed in forming a mass party based on a number of
powerful trade unions and drawing electoral support from the lower
middle class and white collar groups. In particular, they were
anxious that the Groupers' party should not become a Christian Demo-
cratic party, backed officially by the Roman Catholic Church not
only in Victoria but in all Australia. Writing in the Communist
Review shortly after Evatt had made his first accusations about Keon
and Mullens, Dixon complained that the capitalist press had deliberately fostered the impression that Evatt was in fact not only attacking Santamaria and the 'Movement', but also the Catholic Church in general. On the contrary, Dixon claimed, the majority of Catholics in the Labor movement probably supported Evatt.

The divisions among the adherents of the Catholic church are just as marked in the rank and file of the labour movement as in the leadership and probably more so. The Catholic masses cannot be forced to follow political policies that are contrary to their interests.

In view of this any recurrence of religious sectarianism would play into the hands of the class enemy. It would weaken the movement towards working-class unity in which the Catholic workers are participating.\[^{22}\]

In January 1955 Dixon warned cadres that Catholics were numbered amongst 'the most determined and most bitter opponents' of the Groupers and that Communists should therefore avoid 'religious sectarianism',\[^{23}\] but by the time of the Party's 17th Congress in May he had lost much of his cautiousness. In a speech to the delegates he sketched in the part which Santamaria had played in directing both the Catholic Rural Movement and the Groups, pointing out that, as for the latter, 'beyond doubt...they were established at the instance of the Roman Catholic Hierarchy.'\[^{24}\]

\[^{22}\]Communist Review, November 1954, p.326.
\[^{23}\]Tribune, 26 January 1955.
This subject must have kept Dixon awake at nights. He returned to it again in 1956, after the Anti-Communist Labor Party had been established in Victoria. Stating that Catholics constituted 25 per cent of the Australian population, he claimed that the Roman Catholic Church had chosen to work its influence through the Labor Party rather than to form a Christian Democratic party of their own. After the war, a decision had been taken to extend Catholic influence in the Labor Party.

Although there are many non-Catholics in the Industrial Groups, it is now known that the groups were formed on the initiative of the Catholic Hierarchy and that Catholic Action dominates the organisation. Santamaria was the nominee of the Hierarchy to direct the work of the Groups and to capture control of the trade unions and the Labour Party.

Although the Church had used its influence to ensure that Catholics supported the Anti-Communist Labor Party in the 1955 elections, in fact the Catholic vote had been split. Dixon attached great significance to this.

The fact that a majority of Catholics refrained from supporting the Anti-Communist Labour clique is most important and indicates that providing we politically explain the issues involved, avoid religious sectarianism and develop correct United Front activity, many of those who now support the Groups can be won away and the Anti-Labour and anti-working class policies of the Groups will fail.25

Advice of this kind was different from that which Dixon had given earlier. In 1952 and 1953, when dealing with trade union

affairs, he had refused to admit any Catholic direction of the
Industrial Groups at all; now he was prepared to acknowledge that
such direction existed in the hope that Catholic workers would con-
tinue to support the A.L.P. despite Santamaria's directives and that
the example of the Victorian hierarchy would not be emulated else-
where. The importance of the differences of opinion amongst the
Catholic clergy was further stressed in August 1956 by J.R. Hughes,
who claimed that Archbishop Mannix, Santamaria and the Apostolic
Delegate, Archbishop Carboni, were following a policy identical to
that advocated by Cardinal Spellman in the United States, and that
Cardinal Gilroy of New South Wales, 'with the support of a large
section of the bishops, follows the traditional policy of supporting
the Labour Party and working within it to influence and control its
direction and policy.'

But it took the Communist leaders a long
time to grasp the nettle of the Catholic connection with the
Industrial Groups.

The fear that the Groupers might succeed in establishing a mass
party sprang from Communists' early fear that Evatt had forced the

26
Ibid., August 1956, p.261. It is important to recognise the
role of press controversy in bringing before the public the role of
Santamaria's 'Movement' in the A.L.P. and the extent of the divisions
within the Labor Party and the Catholic hierarchy (see, e.g. S.M.H.,
6 October 1954, 7 October 1954). For the views of the then editor
of the Sydney Morning Herald on the ramifications of the 'Movement's'
influence in the A.L.P., see John Douglas Pringle, Australian Accent,
London, 1958, pp.73-95.
crisis to a head without sufficient preparation, and that the Industrial Group leaders, because the issues at stake had not been explained clearly to the rank-and-file, might attract away sufficient mass support to permanently weaken the A.L.P. There is no doubt that the Communists would rather that Evatt had manoeuvred with greater subtlety, striving above all to isolate the Group leaders, whom Dixon and Sharkey insisted on calling a 'small coterie' or a 'small clique'. The time for Evatt to have struck, in their estimation, was when the Group leaders had been revealed for what they were, the crude agents of the Menzies Government, Brigadier Spry's Security Service, and United States imperialism. There is also the possibility that, when the crisis forced the Communists to think concretely about the quality of the Australian Labor movement, they may have thought more than twice about the Groups forming the nucleus for a neo-fascist rather than a Christian Democratic party. They must surely have realised that the Groupers' earlier successes in the trade unions had been due, not only to the backing which they received, allegedly, from the Government and the employers, but also to the response which their ideas evoked amongst some sections of the working class. Always in the background, too, was the memory of the 1951 referendum to ban the Communist Party, in which the liberalism in the Labor movement had been conspicuous by its faintness.

Such fears did not prevent the Communist Party from supporting the Evatt forces wholeheartedly once the battle had actually begun. Evatt became a people's hero overnight; as late as February 1954, E.F. Hill had accused him of being 'concerned with two things, his anxiety to serve big business and his overpowering personal ambition', but by November Dixon was praising him for opposing the Groups.

From the first, the Communists sought to interpret the conflict in ideological terms; Dixon had set the themes well before the Hobart Conference. He argued that the Evatt forces were critical of American foreign policy and particularly of the disabilities which Australia suffered through its ties with the United States, while the Groupers and right-wing Labor leaders supported American interests. Further, while the former stood out against the Government's use of police state methods the latter approved of it. For this reason, he agreed with Evatt's approach; the Groupers, he pointed out, were bent on destroying the A.L.P. and the trade union movement: 'The A.L.P., in its own interests, must get rid of the canker that is destroying it.' As the Labor split became more open, therefore, the Communists supported the Evatt side without question; referring to the decisions taken at the Hobart Conference, for example, Sharkey said that they

---

29 Ibid., November 1954, p.325.
30 Ibid., pp.325-8.
had created 'tremendous possibilities for united front work with Labor Party members.' At the Communist Party's 17th Congress in May, also, several speakers urged that the Labor Party should go ahead with the business of expelling the Groupers, even if the latter did succeed in forming their own party. They admitted that the split would temporarily weaken the A.L.P., and strengthen the forces of reaction, but they went on to argue that the Labor Party would benefit in the long run from ridding itself of the Groupers.

Present in such exhortations was another element - the Communists' anxiety that, now it had begun, the battle against the Groupers should be fought through to complete victory. Two things were necessary here; the first was that the Grouper elements which had already been expelled from the Labor Party in Victoria should be isolated from the Labor movement, stripped of their mass support, and driven over into the camp of 'reaction'; the second was to ensure that those Groupers who remained within the Labor Party in New South Wales and Queensland were expelled and isolated as soon as possible. Sharkey dealt with the first of these considerations at the May Congress:

The 'anti-Communist' Party is a valuable reinforcement for the Menzies reaction; it will be a useful tool for them in

31 Tribune, 11 May 1955.
promoting the Red bogey in future elections, a point of support for their reactionary foreign and domestic policies. That is the anti-working class role which the 'anti-Communist' Party will play, as a bitter enemy of democracy, progress, improved living standards and of the peace movement of the people.

The Groupers must be driven out of the labour movement, to the camp of Menzies, where they belong.33

Dixon drew a further moral when he made the point that the Groupers should be identified as the enemies of the Labor movement as a whole rather than of the Communist Party alone — otherwise the campaign of the Evatt forces would lose all its meaning.

The Industrial Groups which declared that their aim was to fight Communism are revealed as bitter enemies of the working class as a whole. They are not only enemies of the Communist Party, they are not only anti-Communist, they are anti-trade union movement and anti-A.L.P. Anti-Communism from whatever source it emanates, becomes anti-everything that the working class movement stands for.34

There is no doubt that the Communists were uncertain about Evatt's ability to maintain his position against a strong right-wing and Grouper offensive within the A.L.P. The outcome, they feared, might be that the A.L.P. would come under the sway of a violently anti-Communist leadership and that the Communist Party's isolation within the Labor movement might become more complete than ever before.35

33 Ibid., June 1955, p.171. Sharkey later called the Groupers a 'semi-fascist' element (ibid., January 1956, p.3).
34 Ibid., June 1955, p.175.
The events which preceded the Federal Election of December 1955 also gave the Communists grounds for misgivings. In August the pro-Evatt forces in New South Wales suffered a serious reverse. On 13 and 14 August a special conference ordered by the A.L.P. Federal Executive resulted in the election of a new State executive dominated by a mixture of Group and right-wing leaders; one report said that Group supporters had won 29 of the 32 places on the new Executive. In the following month, the report of the Royal Commission on Espionage, which had concluded its hearing, was made public. With reasoning which was not always clear, and with melodramatic virtuosity, the Commissioners claimed that Soviet diplomatic representatives had attempted espionage in Australia but without much success since the formation of the Security Service in 1949. They suggested that Communists and Communist sympathisers would have helped the M.V.D. given the opportunity, that some Communists had 'knowingly' assisted Soviet officials but that the Soviet Union had refrained from 'using the Australian Communist Party, as a Party, for espionage purposes lest exposure should lead to its serious political embarrassment, and possibly, to its outlawry.'

37 S.M.H., 18 August 1955.
Commissioners also found that Sharkey had received 25,000 dollars from M.V.D. funds in October 1953 although the evidence on this point was faulty in some instances. When the decision to form the Commission had been taken in April 1954, the Communist Party feared that it might be used as another method of banning its activities but the early proceedings had made it clear that this was not the purpose of the exercise. The incidents sparked off by the Commission's enquiries had certainly heightened anti-Communist feeling in Australia, and many prominent Communist journalists (such as Chiplin and Lockwood) had been involved in several of the hearings, but the Party as such had not been seriously threatened. The Commissioners, in their final assessment, concluded that 'prosecution of none of the persons whose acts we have considered in our Report would be warranted.'

The possibility that the Government had political purposes in mind when establishing the Commission cannot be excluded. The Security Service could have investigated Petrov's documents and avoided the public identification of agents and methods. In addition, no significant revelations were made by the Commission and, as News-Weekly itself admitted, 'many of the facts were already known'.

---

39 Ibid., p.110.
When the Commission's Report came before the House of Representatives in October 1955, Dr Evatt questioned several of its conclusions, cast doubt on the reliability of the Petrovs' testimony and on the authenticity of several documents, and suggested that Menzies had known of Petrov's defection long before it was actually announced. He concluded his speech with the startling revelation that he had written to V. Molotov, the Soviet Foreign Minister, to obtain his views on the reliability of the evidence brought before the Commission. 43

This was on the 19th. On the 25th, the Prime Minister defended the Commission's findings and launched a bitter personal attack on Dr Evatt, who had already come under strong criticism, even within his own party, for having asked Molotov's opinion about the affair. Dr Evatt, Menzies said, 'for his own purposes, in his own interests and with the enthusiastic support of every Communist in Australia, sought to discredit the judiciary, to subvert the authority of the security organization, to cry down decent and patriotic Australians and to build up the Communist fifth column.' 44 The very next day, Mr Menzies announced that a Federal Election would be held on 10 December, although one was not due until mid-1956. 45 There can be little doubt that this decision was influenced by the Government's desire to

45 Age, 27 October 1955.
exploit to the full the difficulties created for the A.L.P. by Dr Evatt's passionate but injudicious criticism of the Royal Commission's Report.

Within a fortnight the country was involved in the election campaign. The Government parties made the most of the Communist issue and harried Dr Evatt unmercifully, while the Anti-Communist Labor Party, led by R. Joshua and supported openly by Archbishop Mannix, concentrated on extracting every possible implication from the Petrov Affair. It put forward Senate teams in Victoria, Tasmania, South Australia and Western Australia and contested a number of House of Representatives seats in Victoria, Tasmania and South Australia. The election resulted in the Government's increasing its majority in the House from 7 seats to 28. The Liberal Party's representation rose from 47 to 57 and the Country Party's from 17 to 18, while Labor's strength fell to 47. The Anti-Communist Labor Party lost all its House seats and polled only 6.1 per cent of the Senate vote; in Victoria, however, its vote was sufficiently high in the Senate contest to return one member of its ticket. This meant that the position in the Senate, once the newly elected members had taken their seats on 1 July 1956, would be 30 Government members, 28 Labor and 2 Anti-Communist Labor, one of whom had not been required to stand for re-election on this occasion. No one supposed,

---

however, that the two Anti-Communist Labor men would use their balance of power position to embarrass the Government so long as their differences with the A.L.P. remained outstanding. But their party had certainly achieved one of its objectives; News-Weekly exulted that the Anti-Communist Labor vote had 'prevented the national disaster of an Evatt Government....the Communist Party will never rule this nation by remote control, pulling the strings of a puppet Labor Government.'

As for the Communist Party, its vote increased in several working-class and mining electorates. Its 27 candidates for the House election secured 51,001 votes, which compares favourably with the totals obtained at both the 1951 (45,759 votes, 27 candidates) and 1954 (53,968 votes, 42 candidates) elections. The Party's vote increased in 15 of the 24 electorates which it contested in both the 1954 and 1955 polls (bearing in mind, of course, that there had been a redistribution of electorates before the latter contest). Fewer Communist candidates than usual stood in Victoria, where the Anti-Communist Labor Party was most determined in its efforts to weaken the A.L.P's position; the four Communists who did stand in Victoria lost votes, probably because most left-wing electors were anxious to support the A.L.P. against its new enemy. The Communist Party's Senate total, swelled by good votes in New South Wales and Queensland (in both States

the Communist teams obtained first place on the ballot paper), reached the unusually high figure of 162,680, or 3.6 per cent of the valid votes. This figure, however, should not be taken too seriously, for when the preferences of J. Healy, the first nominee on the New South Wales list, were distributed, fully 74 per cent of them went to the third Liberal candidate, and ensured his re-election. The Liberal team was placed second on the ballot paper, suggesting that perhaps two-thirds of the Communists' votes were ones given by electors voting 'straight down' the Senate ballot paper.

Sharkey, however, took the result as an indication that his Party was 'on the eve of breaking through in a big way in the electoral field and polling a mass vote.' In commenting on the Government's victory, he explained that it was due to several factors, including the effects on the A.L.P. of the struggle against the Groupers, the unjust operation of the preferential voting method and the fact the post-war economic boom had continued right up to the election (a whole chapter could be written about Sharkey's use of his extensible 'post-war boom' in explaining election results). Dixon wrote claiming that the Catholic vote had been split, and that the Anti-Communist Labor Party had not been able to command the allegiance of Catholic workers.

\[48\]
Communist Review, January 1956, p.3.

\[49\]
See ibid., pp.3-4 and ibid., April 1956, p.123.

\[50\]
If one reads between Dixon's lines, however, it becomes evident that the Communists had been shaken by the showing of the Anti-Communists in Victoria - and with good reason. They had won about one quarter of the votes in several of the traditional working-class seats, and had polled well elsewhere in the State; amongst the highest Anti-Communist Labor votes were those recorded in Scullin (30.66 per cent), Yarra (27.14 per cent), Melbourne Ports (25.23 per cent), Darebin (25.10 per cent), Wills (24.70 per cent), Ballarat (23.68 per cent) and Melbourne (21.41 per cent). In most of these cases, the candidates were ex-Labor members who had defected to the Anti-Communist Party before the election, but the Melbourne Ports vote was achieved by a newcomer, S.T. Corrigan. These figures were disturbing proof that the new party had begun with a substantial mass following - and amongst the same social groups from which the A.L.P. drew, and the Communists hoped to draw, support.

Looking ahead, Sharkey forecast that the Menzies Government, as economic conditions worsened, would become insecure and vulnerable, and that its defeat would be the main object of the Left. At the same time, he predicted:

The crisis of the Labor Party will continue.

The strategy of the groupers, both within and without the A.L.P., was to effect a crushing defeat on the Party, to convince the leadership that the A.L.P. cannot win in the face of their electoral opposition commanding, as they do, a considerable, mainly Catholic, vote.
They wanted the defeat of Dr Evatt in Hurstville [sic], or his replacement as leader, blaming him for the shambles, and with the assistance of the right-wing of the A.L.P., their own return to the A.L.P. fold on the basis of an extreme right-wing policy.

This danger of a change of leadership and a return to a reactionary, bi-partisan policy with the Menzies Government will represent an acute danger to the workers now the elections are over.51

This statement clearly expresses the Communists' fear that the resistance to Evatt's policies, which had appeared so irresolute in early 1955, was now hardening and that the possibility for a reconciliation between Labor right-wing leaders and the Groupers was now a serious one. Events in New South Wales later in the year confirmed this impression. In June, the A.L.P. Federal Executive met in consultation with a special Federal Conference and decided to dismiss the Party's New South Wales Executive, which was dominated by Groupers, and appointed a new one composed of equal proportions of Groupers and anti-Groupers and uncommitted members. 52 The Victorian pattern was not repeated; instead of splitting away to found their own party, the Groupers chose to accept this decision (though with ill grace) and to continue their fight against Communism and Dr Evatt within the A.L.P. On 29 September, a kindred organisation to the Anti-Communist Labor Party

51 Ibid., January 1956, pp.3-4.
52 S.M.H., 13 June 1955, 14 June 1955.
of Victoria was formed in New South Wales and named the Democratic Labor Party, but its support was extremely limited, mainly because of the stand adopted by the Catholic hierarchy in New South Wales which was anxious to see the right-wing State Labor Government remain in power.

By the spring of 1956, the perspectives opening before the Communist Party were far from heartening. Evatt's attacks on the Groupers had taken the Communists by surprise, but they had pinned their hopes on the possibility that Evatt would have sufficient backing to drive out all right-wing and other reactionary elements from the A.L.P. It was now clear that such an outcome was unlikely. The Communist Party found itself living with the fear that either the Labor Party would reunify, and become more anti-Communist than it had ever been before the crisis of 1954–55, or that the Anti-Communist Labor Party and its associated groups would develop into a mass party of Christian democratic or even neo-fascist potentialities.

United front in the trade unions

The crisis in the Labor Party improved the chances of pushing the Groupers out of several trade union positions they had won in the early fifties. To revert to the battlefield metaphor applied to the industrial field, we may say that the Communists during this period

---

consolidated their position inside the fortress unions, such as the W.W.F. and the Miners' Federation, and that they launched operations to weaken the Groupers' hold on the unions of the inner defensive ring, such as the F.I.A. But the keynote of these operations was the application of the united front; Communist trade union cadres continued the tactics of keeping in line with the mass of the unionists, of not pressing Communist candidates for union posts where good non-Communists were offering, and of isolating the Groupers at every opportunity. Thornton put the approach in these terms: 'We are...for a united leadership which represents all shades of opinion in the union.... We desire no one to be left out, and no one to dominate the union.'

After the Hobart Conference had declared that the Industrial Groups should be disbanded, however, the Communists dropped their earlier habit of tolerating the election of popular Grouper figures such as J.H. Cummins, the President of the Melbourne Branch of the W.W.F. It was now possible to represent such figures as 'anti-Labor' men and to justify excluding Groupers from united front activities.

Even before Evatt's attack on the Groupers, the Communists had formed the opinion that the Groupers' crude attempts to win control of the A.W.U., various Trades and Labor Councils and the A.C.T.U. had alienated large numbers of ordinary non-Communist unionists.

---

54 Tribune, 5 October 1955.
Dixon claimed in September 1954 that 'important sections of the A.L.P. have entered the arena to struggle against the Industrial Groups. This means that in the Trades Union Movement and the A.L.P., the centre grouping has emerged as a more clearly defined force than hitherto.'\textsuperscript{56} There was the possibility that the 'centre grouping' would develop cohesion, and resist Communist as well as Grouper influence. The A.W.U., for example, gave priority to its fight against the Groupers, but as C.T. Oliver, its New South Wales Secretary, pointed out in February 1956, it retained its hostility towards the Communist Party.\textsuperscript{57} The Communists, however, hoped that the 'centre grouping' would fall in with the united front and make common cause with Communist trade unionists in fighting the Groupers. Unity tickets, whose use became widespread in 1954 and 1955, became the symbol of such co-operation in trade union affairs; they provided the means whereby the Groupers were ousted from the Victorian Branch of the A.R.U. (J.J. Brown, a Communist, was elected Assistant Secretary in 1955 and Secretary in 1956),\textsuperscript{58} and were challenged in the F.I.A. The Groupers lost the A.E.U. in 1955 when a militant A.L.P. member, J. Stone, defeated a sitting Group member of the union's Commonwealth Council.\textsuperscript{59} Stone invariably voted with C.G. Hennessy, a Communist,

\textsuperscript{56} Ibid., September 1954, p.261.
\textsuperscript{57} Northern Daily Leader, 3 February 1956; Age, 3 February 1956.
\textsuperscript{59} News-Weekly, 6 April 1955.
against the third member of the Council, J.J. Babbage, a Grouper.

In 1956 Babbage was defeated by a Communist, A. Wilson, who had previously been a Council member. G.H. Neilly, the General Secretary of the Miners' Federation, broke with the Groups after the Labor Party split and developed a working relationship with the Communists in the union; both he and the President, W. Parkinson, a Communist, were re-elected unopposed at the 1956 ballot.

These setbacks weakened the Groupers' position in the A.C.T.U. and the State Trades and Labor Councils. Although they retained control of the unions of the outer defensive ring, and held on to the F.I.A. in the inner defences, their retreat before the 'united front' offensive had caused them great concern. Their attacks on the Communists were failing to make any impression, mainly because the latter were deliberately effacing themselves in union affairs and because they were not using their influence to foment unnecessary industrial disturbances. In the large waterfront strike of early 1956, for example, the Communist leaders of the W.W.F. and the Seamen's Union ended the strike when the A.C.T.U. Executive decided that it had served its purpose. The shifting balance in trade union affairs was clearly shown at the 1955 A.C.T.U. Congress; at the Congresses of 1951

---

60 *Tribune*, 12 December 1956.
and 1953 the main line of cleavage amongst the delegates had been between the Communists and their militant allies on the one hand and the A.L.P. supporters, constituting the majority, on the other. But now the division was threefold – Communists and their allies, A.L.P. traditionalists, and Groupers. The importance of the second or 'centre grouping', to use Dixon's term, soon became clear; the traditionalists' main concern was to counter the Groupers, and in this they were willing to side with the Communists in voting on important issues. Together they voted to pass motions condemning the arbitration system, favouring the recognition of Communist China and opposing the despatch of troops to Malaya. The traditionalists, however, remained firmly in control of the A.C.T.U. Interstate Executive. The Congress rejected a motion that the A.C.T.U. should favour reconciliation between the W.F.T.U. and the I.C.F.T.U., but the A.C.T.U. Executive did not take any action against those Australian trade unionists who attended W.F.T.U. conferences. The Communists were delighted with the results of the Congress, and J. McPhillips was moved to compare it with the last Congress when the Left had been predominant, that of 1945.

---

64 *Tribune*, 12 October 1955.
65 *Communist Review*, November 1955, pp.344-5.
Grouper influence also declined considerably in the New South Wales Labor Council and, to an even greater extent, in the Melbourne Trades Hall Council. The latter body, in 1956, disaffiliated the Grouper-controlled Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and Joiners and advised the union's members to join the unity ticket-controlled B.W.I.U. After the A.L.P. split, A.L.P. union leaders such as J. Stone (A.E.U.), J. Heffernan (organiser, Sheet Metal Workers' Union), and J. Egerton (Secretary, Queensland Branch, Boilermakers' Society) visited Communist countries and, in return, trade union delegations from the Soviet Union and Communist China attended the 1956 May Day celebrations in Australia. During the Queensland pastoral workers' strike in 1955 and 1956, the Queensland Trades and Labor Council gave strong support to the A.W.U. which affiliated with the Council in July 1956.

The success of the united front strategy depended on the extent to which the A.L.P. was willing to accept the practice of unity tickets, and the parallel re-establishment of Communist influence in the trade unions and the Trades and Labor Councils. During the

67 Tribune, 6 June 1956.
68 Ibid., 2 May 1956.
opening battles of Dr Evatt's campaign against the Groupers, unity tickets were openly tolerated, especially in Victoria. The Prime Minister suggested in July 1955 that by using such means to combat the Industrial Groups, Dr Evatt was in fact assisting the Communists. 'These monstrous things deserve to be well known and understood by the public,' he said, 'as it becomes abundantly plain that the association between the Labor Party at Canberra and the general Communist policy is extremely close.' In reply, Dr Evatt said that his object was to prevent the trade union movement from falling under the control of the anti-labor, semi-fascist Santamaria 'clique', and that the Hobart Conference had refused to sponsor the Groups any further because it did not want to interfere with the complete right of self government in trade unions. Shortly afterwards, at an A.L.P. rally in Sydney, Evatt made his point clearer:

Trade-unions must maintain their close integration with the Labour Party.

But the Labour Party must not interfere with the rights of trade-unionists to elect to office the people they want.

It is difficult to know whether Evatt was prepared to countenance a Communist resurgence in the trade union movement as the price of victory over the Industrial Groups, but the fact remained that within the narrow confines of trade union politics the Communists counted

---

70 Age, 27 July 1955.
71 S.M.H., 8 August 1955.
for a great deal. As soon as the resistance to Evatt's policies began to build up inside the A.L.P., efforts were made to set limits to the use of unity tickets. Although in October 1955 the Victorian Executive of the A.L.P. (the 'new' executive) declared that it would not direct Labor members in their trade union activities,72 the New South Wales Executive (Grouper-controlled at the time) in November suspended from A.L.P. membership five unionists who had stood on a unity ticket for an F.I.A. ballot.73 In 1956, the A.L.P. Federal Executive ordered State Branches to expel those of its members who co-operated with Communists in unity tickets.74 These, however, were the first signs that the A.L.P.'s attitude on unity tickets was hardening; throughout 1956 the practice was used in ballots in most of the big unions. Certainly, the Communists were extremely heartened by the results of the united front campaign. Sharkey reported to the Central Committee in late 1955:

The struggle within the A.L.P. and the trade unions, against the groupers and their alliance with the Menzies Government, their McCarthyist politics, resulting in severe blows being dealt the groupers; this is a development of the greatest significance to the labor movement.

It is, in my opinion, a struggle of a higher quality, at a higher stage of development, than the previous struggles, such as those against the Conscriptionists, against the

72 Sun, Melbourne, 8 October 1955.
73 S.M.H., 18 November 1955.
74 Sun, Melbourne, 12 September 1956.
Premiers' Planners, against the Lang dictatorship and the like in the past history of the broad labor movement.\textsuperscript{75}

By 1956, indeed, the Communists were aware that the main chance of putting new life into the campaign against the Groupers in the Labor movement was to maintain the pressure against them in the trade unions. There was even some speculation as to what the Groupers' next move would be; J.R. Hughes raised the possibility that they might try to form a rival trade union federation to the A.C.T.U. and base it on such units as the F.C.U. and the F.I.A.\textsuperscript{76}

It is important to note that politics inside many of the large trade unions had by the mid-fifties become institutionalised to the point where they resembled a two-party system. Seymour Martin Lipset, Martin A. Trow and James S. Coleman, in their study of the internal politics of the International Typographical Union (I.T.U.), in the United States, have shown how its members were divided into two highly formalised groups, each with its own distinct administrative institutions, leadership conventions, and press, and each competing within formal election campaigns for executive office in the union.\textsuperscript{77} Nothing approaching this degree of organisation has yet emerged in Australia,

\textsuperscript{75} Communist Review, November 1955, p.337.

\textsuperscript{76} Ibid., August 1956, p.261.

but it is possible, in dealing with such unions as the W.W.F., the F.I.A. and the Victorian Branch of the A.R.U., to make close comparisons with the work of Lipset and his colleagues on the I.T.U. The crystals for union factions in Australia were the Industrial Groups on the one hand and the Communist work-place cells (or branches) on the other; each would impose strict discipline on its own members, publish roneoed bulletins, and seek to influence as wide a section of the union's membership as possible. Their object was to achieve power within the union, which meant controlling its key governmental positions, particularly the Secretaryship, and the posts of Shop Steward, Shop Committee members, and Labor Council delegates, and which also meant gaining control of the union press (which produced pamphlets and such newspapers as *Common Cause* (Miners' Federation), *The Maritime Worker* (W.W.F.) and *Labor News* (F.I.A.)). Control of a union enabled a faction to win the good opinion of unionists by sound management, by effective representation in arbitration court proceedings, by fruitful informal bargaining with the employers, and by the skilful mixing of propaganda and service. Several of the draft resolutions for the Communist Party's 17th Congress brought out the Communists' approach to the problems of factional politics; L. Aarons, for example, reported on the need for improving the training of cadres for work in factory branches, while L. Donald described how the members of a factory branch should go about

_78_

forming a faction and ultimately winning control of the union. He urged that the branch members should first frame a programme which fitted the needs of the unionists, then publicise it through their branch bulletin and, 'by organised oral explanation to the workers', then secure its adoption by the Shop Committee and by mass meetings of the union's members. 'Thus the branch programme becomes in whole or in part the programme around which the workers are united and organised for action.'

This, of course, was an idealised picture. What usually happened was that the Groupers and Communists would first organise their tight cores of members within a union, and then work to commit the A.L.P. traditionalists to their cause; in this the Communists, because of their skilful use of unity tickets, were by far the more successful. The pattern would vary according to which faction had won the upper hand; when in power the Groupers would use the union journal to attack and ridicule the Communists while at the same time trying to win over the A.L.P. unionists by moderating their own policy demands; when in opposition they would maintain their integrity as a group and organise constantly for a comeback. The Communists also varied their tactics according to whether they were in power or in opposition. As a two-party system developed along these lines in a union, so its elections became closely fought affairs, characterised by a stability of voting

---

79 Ibid., pp.278-9.
remarkable for such groups. Take for example, the executive elections
for the Victorian Branch of the A.R.U. in June 1956, in a court-
controlled ballot. J.J. Brown, a Communist, was elected State
Secretary by 5,038 votes to his Grouper opponent’s 4,201; note how
closely this division of the votes compares with the votes in the
contests for the Presidency and Vice-Presidency, in which militant
candidates (4,973 votes and 4,933) defeated two Groupers (4,256 votes
and 4,307). 80

There is not space here to discuss at length the two-party
phenomenon in the trade unions, but it may be illustrated with reference
to the Grouper-dominated F.I.A. Although E. Thornton and L.J.
McPhillips had been excluded from the union’s key executive positions
in the early fifties and had become full-time Communist Party function-
aries, 81 they maintained their contacts within the various Branches,
especially with Communist factory branches and with militants. In
August 1954, for example, Thornton addressed a closed meeting of iron-
workers in the Newcastle Trades Hall on his recent visit to China;
the meeting was advertised by a special circular distributed amongst
the local ironworkers and was attended by many described by the press

80 Age, 23 June 1956.
81 McPhillips became the Party’s leading industrial organiser in 1952
(S.M.H., 16 October 1952). Thornton returned from Peking in 1953 and
was refused re-admission to F.I.A. membership (ibid., 13 January 1954);
he subsequently became a Party functionary.
as leftwingers and well-known Communists. The F.I.A. election of December 1955 revealed clearly the extent to which the union's 44,000 members had been grouped into two parties. Both sides conducted a vigorous campaign. The Communists, militants and left-wing A.L.P. members were represented by a Rank-and-File Committee, whose leading lights were Ken McKeon, C. McCaffrey, and N. Martin. They attacked the leadership of the union for being Group-controlled and therefore anti-Labor and anti-Evatt. The 'government party', led by L. Short, the Federal Secretary, claimed that the Rank-and-File Committee was in fact a Communist front, denied that it (the 'government') was disloyal to Evatt, and claimed that its administration was much better than that carried out by Thornton and McPhillips. The 'government' also distributed how-to-vote cards (the Rank-and-File Committee was of course sponsoring a unity ticket) and distributed pamphlets in 14 languages to the F.I.A's 10,000 New Australian members.

In the ballot, just over 23,000 valid votes were registered in the election for the Federal posts and the voting showed a remarkably firm pattern. The detailed results were as follows:

---

83 S.M.H., 21 November 1955.
### Grouper Candidates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Candidate</th>
<th>Votes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>National President</td>
<td>D. Ahearn</td>
<td>15,193</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Secretary</td>
<td>L. Short</td>
<td>14,485</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant National Secretary</td>
<td>H. Hurrell</td>
<td>15,071</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Vice-President</td>
<td>A. Cameron</td>
<td>15,793</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 'Rank-and-File' Candidates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Candidate</th>
<th>Votes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>National President</td>
<td>A. J. Smith</td>
<td>8,179</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Secretary</td>
<td>F.R. Gascoigne</td>
<td>6,642</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant National Secretary</td>
<td>C.T. Douglas</td>
<td>8,292</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Vice-President</td>
<td>C. McCaffrey</td>
<td>7,582</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Both at the Federal level and at the Branch level the Groupers were returned to power with secure majorities. What was most significant about the campaign, however, was that it had established a connection between the Rank-and-File Committee, the 'opposition party', and a mass support which its semi-clandestine organising work had made possible. Its defeat was nevertheless a sobering one, and indicated how far the Communists still were from recovering their former ascendancy in some of the unions in the inner defensive ring.

**The Communist Party explores its agrarian front**

During this period, the Communist Party appears to have devoted most of its resources to united front activities in the trade union field. Its various front organisations, although they were partly designed to excite sympathy for the Party's policies amongst progressive workers, 

---

84 _Age, 7 December 1955._
sections of the middle classes, were relatively quiescent. The E.Y.L.'s decline was attributed by its National Secretary, Charles Bresland, to its having become a 'junior edition' of the Communist Party isolated from the 'youth masses.' Student support continued to fall away; the membership of the Melbourne University Branch of the Party, for example, numbered only 40 in 1956. On the other hand, the peace movement continued to make headway and to draw increasing support from A.L.P. members (although the Hobart Conference had resolved that the ban on A.L.P. members' participating in the movement should be maintained). Dixon had reason to complain that the trade unions had not devoted sufficient attention to 'the struggle for peace.'

In 1954 and 1955, however, the Communist Party did consider the possibility of winning over small farmers of average means to its side. An ambitious agrarian programme was drafted in 1954 and published in the Communist Review; it formed the subject for several articles by

86 Alan Barcan, op. cit., p.7.
87 For the names of leading A.L.P. members, including Dr Evatt, who supported the Assembly for Peace in 1956, see Tribune, 18 July 1956, 12 September 1956.
88 Ibid., March 1955, p.67.
89 Ibid., August 1954, pp.227-33.
J.W. Bailes and J.C. Henry and was approved by the Party’s 17th Congress of May 1955. It was subsequently published in 1956 as a pamphlet. Little attempt was made to carry the platform into action, or to set about organising a farmers-workers alliance, but the debates associated with the programme brought out clearly the Party’s doctrinal problems in a relatively obscure, but nonetheless important, area of its activity. In the programme, it was argued that the cycle of booms and slumps in agricultural prices had weakened the economic basis for small farmers in Australia, many of whom had been driven to bankruptcy and despair.

The farmer’s problem of finding a stable and profitable market for all his produce is indissolubly linked with the worker’s problem of winning a higher living standard.

Both worker and farmer are confronted with a common enemy, monopoly capital, which bars the way to the realisation of their ideals.

Farmers, again according to the programme, were differentiated into small, middle and rich men; while the small and middle farmers were being exploited by monopoly capital, the rich farmer had sufficient economic independence to make common cause with the enemies

90 Ibid., pp.233-6.
91 Ibid., September 1954, pp.263-5.
93 Ibid., p.5.
of his poorer neighbours - the land companies, the proprietary produce trading firms, the banks and absentee landowners. It was with the small and middle farmers, therefore, that the workers would have to ally themselves. In this may be detected the familiar outlines of Stalin's and Lenin's doctrine about the alliance of workers and peasants in conditions of capitalism. Stalin pointed out in the *Foundations of Leninism* (1924) that the working class needed to win as allies and lead the mass of the peasantry; if a bourgeois democratic revolution was to be achieved, then the whole of the peasantry could be mobilised, but for a Socialist revolution the workers would find allies only in the poorest, exploited sections of the peasantry.  

It was patently absurd, however, for the Australian Communists to identify Australian farmers, even the poorest of them, with European peasants. If anything, farmers in Australia share the values of the urban bourgeoisie, particularly in their attachment to the ethics (if not the practice) of individual enterprise and free marketing, and even those who are poor look forward with confidence to improving their socio-economic

---

status and becoming gentry in the long run. Wheat-farmers and dairy-farmers in the twenties and early thirties often put forward radical demands for compulsory produce polls and agricultural banks; in some cases, they gave a leftist tinge to Country Parties, particularly in Victoria. The State Labor Government of Queensland, through its willingness to meet the needs of the small farmers, obtained a widespread agrarian following in the early twenties. But this phase in rural politics has long since passed. The farmers of the prosperous fifties were generally content with the policies pursued by the Liberal-Country Party coalition, provided that the structure of organised marketing and overseas trade agreements (established mainly in the late thirties) was maintained. In so far as they still had grievances they expressed them through the Country Party and the various farmers' associations.

The Communists were concerned in the first instance to radicalise these farm associations, such as the Farmers and Settlers' Association of New South Wales, and the Farmers' Union of Western Australia, to wean them away from the Country Party, and to bring them into alliance with the Communist Party and other progressive organisations. The Agrarian Programme noted that such organisations 'have a fine, early tradition of struggle in defence of their members' interests', but that they had become dominated by the rich farmers and the representatives of monopoly capitalism. J.C. Henry explained the implications of this control:

From this vantage point the rich farmers work to influence farm policy to the advantage of finance capital and rich farmers, and to campaign amongst the farmers and people of the countryside against the working class to keep the working farmers and the working class divided.

The Country Party leaders then betray the interests of their supporters by coalition with the Liberal Party.

The leaders of the Country Party are the representatives of finance capital and of the big landowners in the countryside, and they work through the Country Party and mass farm organisations. The first task for the small and middle farmers, then, was 'to play a far more active role in the affairs of their farm organisations to bring them under real democratic control and rid them of reactionary influence in the leadership.' The Country Party, too, had begun with a radical impulse until it came under the control of big business, whose agents were the Country Party's later leaders. To alter this state of affairs, the small and middle farmers were exhorted not only to regain control of their various organisations but also to insist that the Country Party adopt a progressive policy, broke its alliance with the Liberal Party ('the open and direct representation of the interests of Australian and overseas monopoly capitalism'), and form an alliance with the working class. 'Small farmers should exert their influence to ensure that local branches of the Country Party do not function

---

in isolation, but co-operate with trade unions and other progressive bodies to advance their mutual interests. 98

What part could the Communists play in this transformation of the Country Party? J.W. Bailes pointed out that 'the majority of farmers have a deep-seated hatred of monopoly', resented 'the betrayal of their top leadership' and were ready to be persuaded that an alliance with the workers would be to their interest. 99 They resented the Country Party's alliance with the Liberal Party, and could be shown that the Labor Party's alleged agrarian programme was a sham. They would respond to the policy outlined in the Communist Party's Agrarian Programme, whose main points were closer settlement, debt relief, co-operative schemes, a guaranteed price for produce and organised marketing. J.C. Henry outlined a strategy for bringing the programme before the small and middle farmers (although he, personally, had some doubts about the reliability of the latter); as a first step, the Communist Party's locality branches in the country towns needed to be strengthened; the second step was to establish a mass united front with working people in the country areas, particularly amongst the members of the A.W.U. and the Timber Workers' Union; the third step was to involve the small (others would have added, 'and the middle') farmers in the united front and to help them in radicalising

98 Ibid., pp.16-17.
99 Communist Review, August 1954, p.236.
the Country Party. The Party's Agrarian Commission apparently disagreed with Henry's recommendations on some points of detail, and stressed the necessity for establishing the broadest possible alliance (that is, one including the middle farmers from the outset). The Commission also urged that questions regarding the nationalisation of land should be avoided and persuaded the 17th Congress to direct the incoming Central Committee to organise and supervise the drafting of National and State Rural Workers' Programmes.

This whole episode reveals the difficulty which the Communist Party faced in its effort to widen its social basis beyond the industrial workers of the more militant of the trade unions. At one level it illustrates the theme of isolation which runs right through the Party's history; at another it reveals its doctrinal and strategic rigidity when working in fields outside the trade union movement.

It is important that the Party approached the problem of radicalising the farm associations and the Country Party as if they were comparable in structure and social character to the trade unions and the Labor Party - but it is incredible that it credited itself with any chance of success.

Internal stresses in the Communist Party

Two articles included in the Communist Review of October 1954 highlighted the problems which had arisen for the Party because of its

100 Ibid., September 1954, pp.263-4.
101 Ibid., June 1955, p.186.
united front strategy. Joe Goss warned about the dangers of left sectarianism, particularly in the case of those Communists who persisted in regarding the A.L.P. as virtually the second party of capitalism and in refusing to work with its progressive elements against 'Social Democratic, opportunist leaders and capitalist ideas.' E.W. Campbell suggested, on the other hand, that Communists should not, in eschewing sectarianism, fall into the opposite error of right opportunism by being uncritical in their support of the A.L.P. and its leadership. One often has the impression, in reading such catalogues of error, that there was practically no middle way between sectarianism and opportunism, and that one or other of these deviations had to be tolerated if the Party was to act at all in politics. There is some evidence to suggest, however, that the Communist leaders were never wholehearted in recommending the united front strategy, and that their predeliction for the cut-and-dried issues of the social Fascist and 'adventurist' periods inclined them to turn a blind eye on those guilty of sectarianism. This certainly is the implication of some comments made by J.R. Hughes when writing for the Communist Review in 1956, in which he suggested that Stalin's strategic principle of directing the 'main blow' of the revolutionary forces against Social Democracy (represented by the A.L.P. in the case of Australia)

103 Ibid., pp.310-12.
was not valid given Australian conditions. 'The dogmatic acceptance of Stalin's formula is an example of the tremendous influence of the cult of the individual.' Stalin used the 'main blow' principle to explain the strategies pursued in the Soviet Union after the October Revolution; he wrote that the forces of the Revolution aimed their main blow to achieve 'isolation of the petty-bourgeois democrats, isolation of the parties of the Second International, which constitute the main support of the policy of compromise with imperialism.'

The dangers of right opportunism were greatly increased once the crisis in the A.L.P. had given the impression that the party was moving leftwards under Evatt's leadership. Militant workers who had previously sympathised with the Communist Party now shifted their allegiance to the A.L.P., while some Communists, it would appear, were prepared to give unconditional support to Evatt in his struggle with the Groups. Dixon felt constrained to point out that the A.L.P. remained a reformist party and that its progressive policies, as adopted at the Hobart Conference, needed to be seen alongside the right-wing Labor Governments of New South Wales, Queensland, Tasmania, and Western Australia. He continued:

105 J. Stalin, Problems of Leninism, pp.69–70.
The ferment in the labour movement and the swing towards the left... has resulted in the growth of opportunist illusions among militant workers and also some members of the Communist Party. We have examples of Party members tailing behind the left in the Labour Party... and we have instances of submergence of the Party. We know of militant workers who, instead of joining the Communist Party, have joined the A.L.P., apparently believing that it is now a militant workers' party.106

The problem touched on here was a serious one. Unless the Communist Party could maintain a distinct border with the A.L.P., and preserve the impression that the ideological differences between the two bodies were fundamental, it would stand no chance of attracting mass support. There was the further difficulty of ensuring that the tactical cautiousness dictated by the united front strategy did not foster reformist illusions instead of awakening the workers to the need for revolutionary action. Sharkey complained:

The more progressive attitude adopted by some of the A.L.P. and trade union leadership in recent times has strengthened reformism....

This is the basic reason why masses of workers support Party campaigns, work beside us in the struggle, but as yet do not feel the need to join the Communist Party.107

For all these reasons, the Party was unable to enlarge its membership; Sharkey, indeed, said in December 1956 that the membership had been steadily dwindling in recent years108 while later it was

107 Ibid., December 1956, pp.394-5.
108 Ibid., p.393.
revealed that the circulation of the Party press had fallen by 1,617
issues between October 1955 and October 1956. One remedy for
this situation was organisational reform, and the Party appears to have
paid some attention to this possibility. L. Aarons declared that there
was a need for better trained and informed cadres at the lower levels
in the Party's organisation, and in January 1955 he called for a
'higher ideological level of party education'. He derived some satis­
faction from the fact that for the first half of 1955 all branches would
study the resolutions being submitted to the 17th Congress in May,
and that in the last half they were to study political economy, with
the aid of a textbook written by E.W. Campbell.

Difficulties arising from the situation in Australia were aggra­
vated by the important changes in the international Communist line in
1955 and 1956. The setting for a policy of 'peaceful co-existence' was
established in 1955; the ending of the Korean and Indo-Chinese Wars
in 1953 and 1954 respectively had removed two serious irritants from
the international scene, and the proceedings at the Geneva 'summit
talks' and the Soviet Union's reconciliation with Yugoslavia gave
rise to expectations that Soviet policy was changing very much for
the better. At the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the

109 Ibid., October 1957, p.322.
110 Ibid., September 1954, p.266.
111 Ibid., January 1955, p.17.
Soviet Union in February 1956, Khrushchov denounced Stalin's policies and the man himself. When, after a short delay, the news reached Western countries a fierce controversy began inside all the major Communist Parties; the intellectuals in particular called for an end to 'the cult of the individual' and for the strengthening of 'inner-Party democracy'. The controversy had an effect on the Australian Party. The Communist Review for April 1956 carried an abridged text of Khrushchov's speech, without explanatory comment. In May the Central Committee admitted that the 'cult of the personality' had infected the Party and that it had taken the form of 'exaggerated praise and adulation of individual Party leaders.' It went on to admit that the views of Stalin (and Lysenko) had been uncritically accepted thus causing the 'alienation of some honest Party members and supporters.' Nevertheless, the Central Committee statement concluded, these shortcomings had not led to any 'serious violations of Party principles of organisation.' But these admissions did not satisfy the leadership's critics who were heartened by the return to power of Gomulka in Poland. The Party's Political Committee in July issued a call to 'close the ranks'.

---

113 Tribune, 20 June 1956.
114 Ibid., 25 July 1956.
During these months few of the Party's intellectuals, apart from J. Staples in Sydney who was circulating roneoed material amongst the rank-and-file, were prepared to engage the leadership in a head-on battle and it was left to a few full-time Party functionaries to express publicly the doubts in the minds of many intellectuals.

In August, W.J. Brown deprecated the 'adulation' which had been given to Sharkey and Miles, and in the following month he accused certain Party leaders of 'lack of faith in the Party rank and file' and of holding 'an old, authoritarian type of approach that is alien to the new period.' The leadership was also censured for not informing the membership on the overseas developments relating to the Stalin issue. In addition, Brown declared that the tendency of many Party members to regard the Soviet Union as beyond criticism was 'un-Marxist'.

Paul Mortier wrote that

there are a thousand influences impelling us to belittle the role of the masses and to exaggerate the role of the leaders....

115 See J. Staples, Statement on Attitude of the C.C., C.P.A. to the Stalin Issue, Sydney, 12 July 1956. Staples subsequently issued a roneoed version of the U.S. State Department's text of Khruschov's full speech at the C.P.S.U's 20th Congress. In November, he was expelled from the Communist Party.


117 Ibid., September 1956, p.301.

118 Ibid., p.302.

119 Ibid., October 1956, p.345.
In my view the very handling of the discussions flowing from the 20th Congress revealed this.

In far too few cases did leading comrades, confronted with unexpected and unsolved problems, seek assistance from the rank and file or the masses. On the contrary, the attitude was widely expressed that the rank and file faced with these problems would make shocking blunders.

He continued: 'The idea even became current amongst some good members of the Party that to discuss the cult of the individual was to help the class enemy.'\(^{120}\) Even Sharkey admitted that 'tendencies' towards the 'cult of the individual' existed in the Party, particularly in relation to Miles, Dixon and himself.\(^{121}\)

Nevertheless, despite the leadership's problems with some of the younger functionaries and the intellectuals and despite the danger of right opportunism amongst the trade union cadres, the Party's position in the early days of October 1956 was healthier than at any time since the beginning of the 'adventurist' period in 1947. The Soviet leaders seemed to be taking 'peaceful co-existence' seriously, the Australian Party had regained some of its former strength in the unions, a working relationship had been formed with many left-wing Labor Party members, and there was a good deal of overlap between the immediate programmes of the Communist Party, the A.L.P. and the A.C.T.U. The Party's confidence, however, was to be shaken abruptly by events in Hungary.

\(^{120}\) Ibid., September 1956, p.310.
Khruschov’s statements at the 20th Congress of the C.P.S.U. and the Hungarian insurrection of October 1956 combined in their effect on the Communist Party of Australia. A considerable number of dissidents, who were labelled 'revisionists' by the Party's leaders, left the Party when they found that their views were not being taken seriously by its central bodies. The Party was weakened as a result; its membership declined (especially in Victoria), the sale of its press fell away, its front organisations lost direction. Sharkey and Dixon were able to hold their Party to a surprisingly orthodox line and to preserve solidarity of a sort - but the cost had been high.

Perhaps too high in view of the difficulties which the Party was experiencing in its political and industrial action. Whereas in 1955 Dr Evatt’s campaign to defeat the Industrial Groupers had appeared likely to become a generalised struggle against all right-wing and anti-progressive forces inside the Labor Party, by 1957 it was clear that this would not be so. The split in the Victorian A.L.P. had proved the exception, and other Branches of the Labor Party (except, to some extent, in Queensland) still contained influential right-wing groups. The Anti-Communist Labor Parties of 1955 had meanwhile become the Democratic Labor Parties of 1957,
and were joined in that year by a sister organisation, the Queensland Labor Party. They soon showed that they had sufficient popular support to survive as an electoral (if not a parliamentary) force, and they announced their intention of entering trade union politics with a vengeance, their prime objective being to isolate and then destroy the Communist Party. As a step towards these objectives, they aimed at forcing the A.L.P. to prevent its trade union members from participating in unity tickets with Communists.

The Communist Party soon realised that the situation in the trade union movement was no longer in its favour. In particular, the united front which it had worked so hard to establish began to show signs of breaking down.

The defection of the revisionists

'There is no doubt', admitted Dixon in January 1957, 'that the revelations of the cult of the individual led to much inner-Party discussion and inner-Party struggle.' Subsequent developments indicate that this was, if anything, an understatement. Two in particular of Ahruschov's statements before the 20th Congress had sparked off controversy inside the Australian Party; that the transition to Socialism would differ from country to country, that it 'need not be associated with civil war under all circumstances',

2 Ibid., April 1956, p.114.
and that in the past too much importance had been attached to the Party leader (the 'cult of the individual') and not enough to the role of the Party and the masses and to the role of collective leadership in the Party. With reference to the Australian context, the revisionists appear to have suggested that the Party needed to revise its strategy and doctrine to take account of the possibility that a revolutionary situation might not arise and that the people would be able to take power by peaceful methods, such as electoral success; they also appear to have gone further than this by attacking the Party's leadership for their dogmatism and inflexibility in past situations. Throughout the winter of 1956 criticism of this kind was made within the Party and some concessions were made by the leadership. The tension thus generated, however, was built up to breaking point when the Party adopted the Soviet line in its explanation of the Hungarian uprising of October 1956.

_Tribune_ was quick to describe it as a revolt of 'fascist forces', backed by American imperialists and aimed at restoring the authoritarian regime of pre-war Hungary. On his return from a visit to Peking, Sharkey placed roughly the same interpretation on events when reporting to the Central Committee which in March 1957 published a

---

3 See the statement from _Pravda_ reproduced in _ibid._, May 1956, pp.139-43.
4 _Tribune_, 31 October 1956.
lengthy booklet justifying its standpoint. The revisionists, finding that both their protests against the Party's treating the Hungarian incident as a fascist counter-revolution and their suggestions for more inner-Party democracy were ignored, began leaving the Party. Their defections continued through 1957 and into 1958. Most of them were intellectuals of middle-class background; some later came together in support of *Outlook*, a socialist journal established in 1957, and of Socialist Forums in Melbourne and Sydney. The latter, however, broke up after a few years following disagreement over a number of issues, including their attitude to the peace movement. A few ex-Communists became Trotskyists but the great majority of them joined the A.L.P. and, in Victoria, revitalised the Fabian Society. It would be misleading to isolate any one factor as having 'caused' the exodus of the revisionists from the Party. Certainly the Hungarian affair came as the last straw to many who had been disgruntled by their lack of recognition earlier in 1956, but it would be truer to say that the impact of the 20th Congress set in motion the forces which led to the

---


defections. Nor should the conflict between the older and younger leaders be ignored in this respect; Sharkey, Dixon and Thornton were intellectually uneasy in the doctrinal cross-currents of post-Stalinist Communism; their attitudes had been shaped during the hard industrial struggles, and the depression troubles, of the inter-war years, and even while they sought to reinterpret their strategies in terms of Khrushchov's recent pronouncements, they continued to hope for the sudden economic crisis, the hardening of class divisions, the revolutionary situation, the institution of People's Power. Many of the younger leaders, such as Ian Turner and Stephen Murray-Smith, were more at home in the language of the 20th Congress and more capable of thinking their way through the new situation. One has only to compare the intelligent and lively articles of Outlook with the dull, tortuous features of the Communist Review to become aware of such contrasts.

The reasons for the revisionists' defections (and, in some cases, expulsions) are not as important as the issues they raised within the Party. One of their main complaints had been the lack of inner-Party democracy; an anonymous contributor in Outlook once argued that a number of intellectuals had left the Party not because they were sure that the USSR had done the wrong thing [in Hungary], for the situation had become so complicated that the issues were by no means clearly defined, but because they were sure that the Australian Party was adopting a dogmatic approach and not allowing its members to consider the problems for themselves.10

It would appear that the Party leaders had attempted to smother discussion on the issues raised by the 20th Congress as if they were slight differences of opinion, capable of being settled by vote and by the obedience to majority decisions which the practice of democratic centralism required. The revisionists appear to have taken the line that the issues warranted full and free discussion at all levels in the Party, and to have maintained their objections long after the leaders believed the disputes to have been settled. The restlessness thus engendered continued for some time. In July 1958, for example, Ian Turner was expelled for condemning the execution of Imre Nagy by the Hungarian Government whereupon his close friend Stephen Murray-Smith resigned from the Party. Sharkey, in particular saw in the revisionist dissent a threat to the Party's organisational principles. 'If democratic centralism did not exist', he observed, 'then these comrades perhaps feel they should have a better chance to impose their revisionist, petty-bourgeois-idealist and Browderite views on the Communist Party.' Sharkey's choice of adjectives points to his and Dixon's picture of the revisionists as men affected by reformist and 'petty-bourgeois' ideas that capitalism was evolving towards socialist forms of organisation, and that it would hence be

12 Alan Barcan, op. cit., p.17.
13 Basic Questions of Communist Theory, p.4.
possible for the people to take power and institute the socialist order without resort to revolution. These illusions, they felt, had been created by the lengthy post-war period of prosperity. The revisionists, having left the Party, would adopt an anti-Soviet, anti-Socialist and anti-working class position.14

Doctrinally, the revisionists had most disturbed Sharkey with their claim that the transition to Socialism in Australia could be achieved by peaceful methods, including the gradual extension of the existing public sector of the economy. In strategic terms, they argued that if the Communist Party accepted the possibility of a peaceful transition to Socialism it had to stop contemplating the prospect of violent revolution and make a decisive bid for electoral and parliamentary power,formulating interim 'reformist' policies which would enable it to work in close accord with the A.L.P.
The substance of such interim policies had already been suggested (as it turned out, fruitlessly) in pamphlets written by two Labor theoreticians, Professor H.W. Arndt and Dr John Burton. Professor Arndt had stressed the role which the A.L.P. could play in introducing a more egalitarian tax structure, better social security measures,

and the practice of Keynesian controls in regulating the economy\textsuperscript{15} while Dr Burton had emphasised the necessity for improving the welfare state structure established by the Chifley Government, nationalising further industries, controlling monopolies and checking profiteering.\textsuperscript{16} Australian Communists saw in these two pamphlets a local representation of the 'reformist' ideas advanced in Great Britain by such dissimilar figures as John Maynard Keynes, Professor G.D.H. Cole, John Strachey and Lord Beveridge. They were apprehensive lest the progressive forces in the A.L.P., perhaps in conjunction with the revisionists, might become the dominant group in the Australian Left, attracting away from the Communist Party what little mass support it did enjoy.

Articles appeared in the \textit{Communist Review} attacking Keynesian ideas with unusual determination,\textsuperscript{17} while Sharkey set himself the difficult task of proving that the principles of Marxism-Leninism could still be applied to the problems of a peaceful transition to Socialism. He made his first lengthy reply to the arguments of Burton and Cole in \textit{Socialism in Australia}, published in June 1957; in 'Marxism-Leninism and Economic Crisis', published in the \textit{Communist Review} of July 1958, he carried some of his economic arguments a

\begin{itemize}
\item John Burton, \textit{The Light Glows Brighter}, Sydney, n.d.
\end{itemize}
stage further; but the main defence of his position was contained in his Report to the Party Congress of April 1958. His argument in these places ran as follows. Despite the claims of the 'reformists', the long post-war boom had not shown that Keynesian controls were enabling capitalism to develop without danger of a crisis comparable to that of 1929–33. The boom, as Khruschov had shown at the 20th Congress, was due to several special factors, namely, the expenditure involved in the repair of wartime damage, the re-equipment of industry delayed during the depression years, and the re-armament programmes occasioned by the Korean and Cold Wars. Once these special factors had worked themselves out, however, a further crisis would occur.

It is, of course, not excluded that there may be a temporary revival, that the economic crisis may not develop along a straight line, that palliative measures can have a temporary success, but economic crises remain inevitable under the capitalist regime.

Sharkey argued that Keynes had erred in regarding crises as arising from under-consumption, in turn due to a lack of purchasing-power amongst the consumers. On the contrary, Marx had shown that over-production, inevitable in an economy characterised by an extensive private sector, was the basic cause of crisis and that, as such, it could never be eliminated unless the State controlled

---

18 L.L. Sharkey, Socialism in Australia: Communist View on Democratic Socialism, Sydney, 1957, p.33.
all industries. Capitalism 'continually creates the conditions of a crisis of overproduction.' For this reason, Sharkey claimed, the Communist Party had to retain the strong organisation and solidarity which would enable it to act as the vanguard of the working class in crisis, if not revolutionary, politics. His bitterness towards the revisionists, and his concern about their strategic views, is revealed in the following comment.

Crises and class struggle and unemployed armies now belonged to the crude and untutored past, according to the revisionist wiseacres. Consequently, Marxism-Leninism and the Communist Party were likewise outdated. All that was needed was discussion, debate, a loose Socialist 'association', not a vanguard party, 'because now, don't you see, capitalism has undergone such a drastic change that there is little difference between it and socialism already, today, and it is evolving to socialism in any case'.

G.D.H. Cole, in *World Socialism Restated*, had not only criticised Marx's theory that the development of capitalism would be accompanied by ever-worsening crises but had pointed out that instead of the working class and the capitalist class becoming the dominant classes, in terms of number and power, the twentieth century had seen the rapid growth of the middle class and a parallel transformation of living standards in Western countries. Sharkey professed to find similar views informing Dr Burton's pamphlet, *The Light Glows Brighter*.

---

and he defended Marx's predictions. As if to make this point with reference to Australian conditions, L. Aarons wrote two rather obscure articles for the *Communist Review* on 'Australian Class Structure'. Aarons' big problem was to extend his class of pure capitalists, composing about 1 per cent of the population, and the urban proletariat (numbering about 1,500,000) until they included large sections of the rather amorphous middle classes. He achieved this feat by deciding that each of the main middle-class groups (the farmers, the white-collar workers and (to some extent) the professional groups) was under attraction from the two poles in the class system, capitalists and workers, and that each could therefore be divided into lower, middle and upper strata. The upper strata (top civil servants, army officers and university professors in the case of the white-collar group, and rich farmers) were virtually at one with the capitalist class, while the middle strata (such as the scientists, technicians and teachers of the white-collar group) comprised the servants of the capitalist class, and were thus bound to them materially and ideologically. The lower strata, and the small and middle farmers, constituted potential allies of the working class. Aarons failed to work this analysis through consistently, however, and finished up by distinguishing between four classes, roughly composed as follows:

---

Big bourgeoisie (33,000): monopolists, squattocracy, big capitalists, top civil servants and company executives.

Upper middle class (366,000): middle and small capitalists, rich farmers, such professional people as lawyers and doctors, and another layer of top administrators and executives.

Lower middle class (921,000): middle and small farmers, small businessmen, a further layer of the professional group, and the middle stratum of white-collar workers.

Working class (1,818,000): industrial and rural workers, and the lower stratum of white-collar workers.\textsuperscript{25}

Aarons was not clear on what alignments would arise if an economic crisis developed, but he may have assumed that the upper middle class would cleave to the big bourgeoisie while the lower middle class (perhaps minus the middle stratum of white-collar workers) would become the ally of the working class. He based his figures on occupational groupings given in the 1947 Census but did not explain how the remaining categories of the population fitted into his scheme of things.

The immediate task of the Communist Party in Australia was to develop the class consciousness of the industrial and rural proletariat, which was still prey to arbitrationist and reformist illusions. At the same time, as J.W. Bailes pointed out to the 18th Congress, the Party had also to think of winning as allies the small and middle farmers.\textsuperscript{26} The danger to which Dixon, in particular, drew attention

\textsuperscript{25}\textit{Ibid.}, p.40.

\textsuperscript{26}\textit{Ibid.}, May 1958, pp.220-5.
was that Party members might assume, as had the revisionists, that the peaceful transition to socialism could be achieved other than by means of class struggle.

The idea of peaceful transition to Socialism does not embrace the idea of class peace or class collaboration. In fact the Marxist conception of peaceful advance to Socialism implies great economic and political struggles waged against the capitalist class. The class struggle does not die away but grows and sharpens to the point where the working class and its allies take over political power and expropriate the capitalist class.27

But having given this warning, Dixon and his colleagues were still faced with the difficulty of explaining what lines of action the Communist Party should pursue in the electoral and parliamentary fields. The first essays in this direction were also made at the 18th Congress in April 1958. Dixon claimed that whereas the A.L.P. subordinated everything to its electoral and parliamentary work, such work for the Communist Party was part of the class struggle, serving 'to build working class unity in the struggle against monopoly capital.'28 E.F. Hill argued that since the Australian parliament had become unrepresentative and unduly subject to the influence of monopoly capitalists, the Communists should alert the people to the necessity of electing their own (i.e. Communist and progressive) candidates to parliament. By such means would the 'peaceful transition' be achieved.

27 Ibid., January 1957, p.12.
We contemplate that this Parliament - today remote from the people - will become really representative of the people.... The State will be needed to end the resistance of the holders of power and privilege - it is needed to carry into effect the extension of the already advanced socialisation of production in Australia, as evidenced by the growth of monopoly itself, into socialised ownership.29

The defection of the revisionists also affected the efficiency of the Party's front organisations. A number of those who left the Party had been prominent leaders of several of these organisations. Having resigned (or been expelled), they were replaced by Communists in most cases; thus, in 1958 K.D. Gott was succeeded as Secretary of the Victorian Branch of the Australia-China Society by Mrs M. Zyk; Ian Turner by Les Greenfield as Manager of the Australasian Book Society; and Cecil Holmes by B.J. Milliss as Managing Director of New Dawn Films (distributors of Soviet films). Stephen Murray-Smith also resigned as Organising Secretary of the A.P.C. but the literary journal Overland (founded by the Realist Writers' Group in Melbourne in 1954), of which he was editor, remained in the hands of the revisionists. Communists continued to contribute to Overland despite Rex Chipkin's attack on it in a Tribune review.30 However, after a number of Communist writers objected to the tone of Chipkin's criticism,31 the Party pursued a more conciliatory line towards the journal.

29 Ibid., p.198.  
30 Tribune, 13 May 1959.  
The Hungarian uprising placed the peace movement in a difficult position. The various peace bodies, in which the Communists were influential, quickly condemned the Anglo-French action at Suez but they were slow to adopt a position on Hungary, mainly because of internal differences. The Australian Assembly for Peace opposed the use of force in Hungary; on the other hand, H.G. Clements, Secretary of the Western Australian Peace Council and a non-Communist, praised Tribune for 'the firm straight-forward line taken on happenings in Suez and Hungary.' The South Australian Peace Council opposed the Soviet intervention in Hungary although it added that the 'international position is not clear'. A reluctance to interpret the Hungarian situation adversely affected the Communists' position in the A.S.L.F. which was captured by the Sydney and Melbourne University A.L.P. Clubs in 1957 and disaffiliated from the International Union of Students. The execution of Nagy in 1958 led to protests from a number of progressive middle-class people, most of whom were usually well disposed

32 See World Peace Council statement in ibid., 5 December 1956, in which differences of opinion are admitted.
33 Ibid., 7 November 1956.
34 Ibid., 18 December 1956.
36 See article by Anthony Clunies-Ross in Socialist, May 1957.
towards the Soviet Union, but they continued to participate in the activities of front organisations.

The Communist Party's membership had been steadily declining since the end of the war, but the decline was considerably accelerated by the revisionists' revolt. Barcan has estimated that the membership fell from 8,000 in 1955 to 5,500 or 4,500 in 1958. The higher 1958 figure squares with that indicated by Campbell's estimates (given to the 18th Congress) of Tribune sales per member in each state; if his figures are converted into membership totals they give a national strength of 4,580. The individual totals for each state and centre are as follows (in rounded figures):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New South Wales</td>
<td>2,920</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queensland</td>
<td>960</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Australia</td>
<td>230</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victoria</td>
<td>260</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Australia</td>
<td>240</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tasmania</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Darwin</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>4,580</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Since the Melbourne Guardian's circulation could not have been higher

---

37 See letter from Vance Palmer, C.B. Christesen et al in Age, 10 July 1958, and from Rev. N. St C. Anderson, S.E. Wright et al in S.M.H., 4 July 1958.

38 Alan Barcan, op. cit., pp. 16, 23.

39 Communist Review, May 1958, p.209. These figures are obtained by dividing the circulation totals for Tribune distribution in each State by the numbers of newspapers per member distributed.
than 7,000\textsuperscript{40} and since it sold about \(5\frac{1}{2}\) Tribune and Guardian copies per member, 1,270 members have to be added to the Victorian membership, giving an Australian total of approximately 5,850. Thus, in 1958, one half of the Party's members were concentrated in New South Wales and just under one quarter in Victoria. The smallness of the total membership lends respect for the Party's ability to influence so many workers; the circulation of the Party's newspapers was still over 22,000 in 1958 and the Party polled over 26,000 votes in the election to the House of Representatives in December 1958. It should also be remembered that the Party's influence in such unions as the W.W.F. and the Miners' Federation was essentially a function, not of Communist membership in these unions, but of its standing with large numbers of militant and A.L.P. unionists.

Such speculations offered little comfort to the Party's 18th Congress; by all indices, the Party's influence was shrinking far too rapidly for comfort. The sharp fall in Tribune's circulation figures told their own story; its sales had declined by over one quarter in three years, from 22,428 in 1955 to 16,618 in 1958, by which stage it was losing the Party £200 an issue.\textsuperscript{41}

\textsuperscript{40} Adam Ogston (ibid., October 1957, p.322) gives total circulation figures (i.e. for the Guardian and Tribune) for October 1955 (29,962) and February 1957 (25,703). Cf. Tribune figures cited below.

\textsuperscript{41} Ibid., May 1958, p.209.
The 18th Congress, in so far as it dealt with Party affairs, was partly an occasion for wound-licking and for stocktaking. In his Report to the Congress, Sharkey claimed that the Australian Party had not been as affected by the revisionists' revolt as the Communist Parties of England, France, Italy and the United States had been by their defections. He took pride in the reasons for this difference. The major factor in this was the unity of our leadership, from C.C. to the branch executives, and the solidarity of the rank and file.

Unity of the leadership and of the Party and our strong working class base and composition were the decisive factors.\textsuperscript{42} On both points, Sharkey was probably correct. The leadership (apart from one or two waverers like W.J. Brown) did remain solid between 1956 and 1958, but there remains one question mark - what would have happened had not Blake and Henry been demoted in 1954 and had not Sharkey and Dixon refused to admit young men with middle-class backgrounds from holding executive positions? For in many ways, the exclusion of the revisionists was the exclusion of the men of the forties by the men of the twenties. There may be more than meets the eye to the complaint made by J.R. Hughes that the Party was 'ageing' and that it was 'not maintaining the youthful quality that it should'.\textsuperscript{43} Sharkey's other suggestion, that the Party was well served by its proletarian base, also invites the discussion. It

\textsuperscript{42} 18th Congress, April, 1958, Report of L.L. Sharkey, p.40.
\textsuperscript{43} Communist Review, May 1958, p.218.
may be that the high proportion of intellectuals and middle-class people amongst those who left the Party made it more of a workers' party than it had been hitherto. A report in 1960 placed the proportion of 'industrial workers' in the Party at over 90 per cent, which is certainly larger than that indicated by the figures which Aarons gave the 17th Congress in 1955. Most of the industrial workers in the Party, where they bothered themselves with doctrinal questions, were mainly concerned with their immediate affairs in the trade union field, and took little account of wider speculations about the peaceful transition to Socialism and the cult of the individual. If anything, they probably despised the intellectuals for having made such a fuss about these matters. E. Aarons once reported to the Central Committee:

we are far from having the necessary theoretical level. With the exception of a small core of comrades headed by Comrades Sharkey and Dixon, our theoretical level is not high.

Although by the 18th Congress most of the revisionists had left the Party, their challenge remained to be faced. Was the Communist Party to continue basing its strategies on the assumption that a major economic crisis was looming ahead, or was it to face the hard realities of controlled capitalism and non-revolutionary politics?

46 Ibid., January 1957, p.18.
Was it to retain its doctrinal and organisational rigidity, its narrow dependence on the industrial proletariat, or was it to make a bid for the leadership of a broad progressive front embracing small farmers and middle-class groups? By pretending that these choices were not posed, the Communist leadership was running the risk that the Australian economy, apart from an occasional recession, would continue to prosper, and that the leadership of the Left would be placed, if not on a rejuvenated A.L.P. then on a new Social Democratic party, including amongst its leaders some of the erstwhile revisionists. In either event, it would be difficult to prevent many of the Communist Party's remaining supporters, and perhaps some of its members, from joining such a party. Sharkey told the 18th Congress that revisionism rather than sectarianism remained the Party's chief danger; Dixon had earlier complained that the difficulties of the early fifties had made many Communists afraid to witness their faith in the Party and that they had 'submerged' themselves in united front activity; Hill had warned that 'certain comrades' still sympathised with the revisionists and the Central Committee should 'call upon them to change their position.' The Congress did adopt a new clause (Rule 4, clause e) for the Party's Constitution which set out the

---

49 Ibid., February 1958, p.63.
traditional right of Party members to 'reserve opinions' but also
defining narrowly the circumstances under which that right could be
exercised. L. Aarons, explaining why the stable door was being closed
at that late stage, pointed out:

A Communist who differs upon tactics or some specific
decision has the right to reserve his opinions as set out in
this rule.

It does not extend to those who have abandoned a Communist
standpoint, advocate alien views, and reject Marxism-Leninism. Those who have such a stand should, if they are honest, reserve
their opinions by leaving the Party if they no longer accept
its basic theory, ideology, programme and organisational
structure. 50

Three parties on the Left

In 1957 and 1958 the Democratic Labor Party (D.L.P.) consolidated
its position in the Australian party system. The title, first adopted
by the New South Wales organisation, was accepted in February 1957
by the Tasmanian and South Australian Anti-Communist Labor Parties 51
and later in the year by those in Victoria and Western Australia.
The Victorian, South Australian, Tasmanian and New South Wales parties
held a conference in March 1957 at which they decided that they would

50 Ibid., May 1958, p.207. The text of Rule 4, clause e declares
that it is the right of a Party member 'To reserve opinions or submit
them to a leading body of the Party in case of disagreement with any
Party decision which, in the meantime, must be carried out uncondi-
tionally.' (18th Congress, April, 1958, Constitution of the
Communist Party of Australia, Sydney, n.d., p.8).
oppose the recognition of Communist China, support SEATO, advocate the
retention of court-controlled ballots in trade union elections and,
significantly, that they would not include a socialisation objective
in their platform. The position in Queensland remained obscure
until the winter of 1957, when the Labor Party in the State broke
into two; the crisis arose when the State Labor Government, headed by
V.C. Gair, refused to legislate for certain leave arrangements requested
by the A.L.P's Queensland Executive. Gair's supporters became the
Queensland Labor Party; acting in sympathy with the D.L.P. elsewhere,
while the Executive group, led by J. Duggan, remained the official
A.L.P. Branch in Queensland. The split helped the Liberal and
Country Parties to win the State election of 2 August 1957 and to form
Queensland's first non-Labor administration since 1932; the Queensland
Labor Party (Q.L.P.) managed to hold 11 of its 25 seats, a good showing
under the circumstances.

In Victoria and Queensland the new party retained something of
the character of an A.L.P. splinter group, but in these as in other
States it became clear that the D.L.P. was acquiring its own,
distinctive identity. This was suggested by several observers after
the Victorian State election of 31 May 1958, at which the D.L.P.

---

53 See D.W. Rawson, Australia Votes: The 1958 Federal Election,
increased its vote from the 1955 level of 12.7 per cent to 14.4 per cent. Writing in Outlook, Ian Turner suggested that the regional distribution of the D.L.P's voting strength indicated 'that a substantial proportion of DLP voters are former anti-labour voters' rather than former A.L.P. supporters; he also suggested that the D.L.P. was becoming a 'Catholic Centre Party', with the interesting difference that whereas the Christian Democratic parties of Europe drew their support from rural areas the D.L.P. seemed likely to be based mainly on the towns. Professor Webb said that the Victorian results had strengthened the impression that the D.L.P. was 'no ordinary Labour splinter group' and that, as a centre party, it could be expected to win support from Liberal as well as Labor sources.

With a determination which betrayed their uneasiness, the Communists refused to admit that the D.L.P. was likely to become a Catholic centre party. Sharkey consistently portrayed it as an agent of the Liberal Party, established to divert a portion of Labor's voting strength to the Right, to prevent the election of Labor Governments, to isolate the Communist Party from the masses and to weaken the trade unions. The Party persisted in regarding the D.L.P's supporters


Outlook, September 1958, Vol. 2, No. 5, pp.4-5.


See, for example, Communist Review, September 1958, p.372.
as workers who had been misled by a small clique of unscrupulous leaders.

Great emphasis is needed on the winning to a progressive policy of the workers misled by the Group leaders. These workers are necessarily included in the struggle for a united working class. In this regard a struggle must be waged against all forms of religious sectarianism.\(^5\)

The Communists watched the developments within the A.L.P. with apprehension, still afraid that the right-wing and Grouper elements within its New South Wales branch in particular might foment a revolt against the leadership of Dr Evatt and F.E. Chamberlain, the Federal President, thus paving the way for a reconciliation with the D.L.P., almost certainly on an anti-Communist policy. The A.L.P. Federal Conference at Brisbane in March 1957 gave an appearance of endorsing the progressive policies adopted at Hobart, but in many ways confirmed the impression that the A.L.P. was once more shifting slowly to the Right. Chamberlain's presidential address bore out this contrast; while he dwelt significantly on the words 'Democratic Socialism' and warned that the Groupers still planned to subvert the A.L.P., his remarks could have been uttered by any well-intentioned liberal of the nineteenth century.\(^5\) The Conference reaffirmed the more

---


important of the Hobart decisions, about the necessity for recognising Communist China and for the withdrawal of Australian troops from Malaya, and declared for the substitution of voluntary for compulsory military training, and for the reduction of State interference in trade union affairs (implying the repeal of the 1951 - but not the 1949 - amendments to the Arbitration Act). At the same time, however, it watered down even further the party's weak Socialisation Objective and forbade A.L.P. members to allow their names to appear on tickets for trade union elections alongside the names of members of other parties opposed to the A.L.P. (that is, either Communist or D.L.P.). Sharkey reported to his Party's 18th Congress that the Brisbane Conference had produced encouraging results, and that the Industrial Groups had suffered a reverse in the A.L.P. and the trade unions. The Resolution adopted by the Congress noted that 'strong rightwing elements continue to resist the development of progressive policies and working class unity.' Similarly, while urging later in the year that the Communists should work for the return to power of the Labor Party, Sharkey cautioned his readers:

60 On the unity ticket decision see ibid., p.30.
61 18th Congress, April, 1958, Report of L.L. Sharkey, p.60 (extract from the Resolution adopted by the Congress).
there still remains a powerful rightwing within the A.L.P., composed of such elements as the A.W.U. bureaucracy, together with similar reactionaries in control of other big unions, Grouper remnants and so on....

There is no great ideological unity even among the progressive elements. There exist a dozen and one groupings, alliances, shadings and factions inside the A.L.P. today. 62

In trade union politics, meanwhile, a confused situation was developing. The Communist Party continued working for a united front against the Groupers in the unions but it now found itself fighting on two fronts. On the one hand, the Victorian D.L.P., having been joined by most of the former Groupers, was doing its best to continue the fight against the Communists — and their united front — along the old lines; in other States, also, the newly formed Democratic Labor Parties were threatening to enter the unions, the President of the New South Wales branch declaring that his party favoured the re-establishment of the Industrial Groups. 63 In fact, however, in States other than Victoria and, to a lesser extent, Queensland the majority of Groupers had remained within the Labor Party and a number of the important Group-controlled unions had retained their affiliation with the A.L.P. Their reverses of 1954 and 1955 had left the Groupers wiser men, and they now set themselves

62

63
S.M.H., 21 December 1956.
to concentrate on driving the Communists from the unions without at the same time trying to gain ascendancy in the A.L.P. In the background, reputedly directing the Groupers' renewed industrial crusade, was the National Civic Council (N.C.C.), with B.A. Santamaria as its President. 64 The Communists had to vary their tactics according to the circumstances; in Victoria they found themselves able to make common cause in the unions with progressive A.L.P. members in combatting the D.L.P. and its associated Industrial Groups, but elsewhere the situation was more like that which held before the Labor split of 1954-55, that is, Groupers and Communists both working to influence a directionless centre grouping of A.L.P. and traditionalist unionists, the only difference being that the Industrial Groups were no longer officially attached to the A.L.P.

Let us consider first the Victorian situation. Here the State Branches of the F.I.A. and the F.C.U., along with three or four smaller unions, 65 were affiliated to the D.L.P. and were supplying it with political funds. 72 other unions, 66 including the State Branches

65 Rawson gives different figures for the number of unions affiliated with the Victorian D.L.P.; in one place he says there were five (D.W. Rawson, Australia Votes, p.11) and in another, six (ibid., p.45).
66 According to the A.L.P. State Secretary, J. Tripovich (Sun, Melbourne, 7 November 1958), Rawson gives 63 as the figure (D.W. Rawson, op. cit. p.11).
of the A.R.U. and the B.W.I.U. and the Melbourne Branch of the W.W.F., remained affiliated to the Victorian Branch of the A.L.P. which, as Rawson has suggested, had owed a great deal to its trade union supporters after the 1955 split. With a strong interest in countering the D.L.P's industrial activities, the Victorian Branch of the A.L.P. chose to ignore the ban on unity tickets proclaimed by the A.L.P. Federal Conference with the result that united fronts became the rule in most of the important unions. The trend towards two-party patterns in trade union politics, discussed in the preceding chapter, became stronger in 1957 and 1958 in Victoria. In the State Branch of the F.I.A., for example, a well integrated faction took shape behind A.H. Houlper, who at the union ballot of December 1958 made a strong bid, with overt A.L.P. and covert Communist support, to defeat the strongly entrenched Grouper administration, headed by R. Campbell (President) and R. Lundberg (Secretary). The result was much closer than the previous poll in 1955; Campbell defeated Houlper for the Presidency by 2,870 to 2,300, the other Grouper officers being returned by comparable majorities. The two-party pattern was also pronounced inside the State Branch of the A.R.U. (17,000 members), in which J.J. Brown's united front alliance (the Militant United team) lost ground to the Groupers at the executive elections of June 1957.

67 Ibid., pp.15-16.
68 Age, 9 December 1958.
United front strength on the union's Council fell from 33 to 29 (out of 54 members) as a result of the ballot, while the voting for the officers again betrayed the existence of coherent electoral groups, despite the A.R.U's dispersed and segmented electorate. The results were as follows (Brown was not standing for re-election at this poll):^69

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Militant United</th>
<th>Industrial Grouper</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>State President</td>
<td>R.J. Pauline 4476</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vice President</td>
<td>E.C. Bone 4505</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Secretary</td>
<td>W.H.L. O'Brien 4471</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industrial Officer</td>
<td>R.J. Haining 4097</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Heagney, who was standing for re-election, appears to have enjoyed a considerable personal vote.

In other States, however, the A.L.P's objections to unity tickets and the continued presence of Groupers within Labor's trade union factions altered the terms of the conflict. Dr Evatt, anxious to eliminate the unity ticket issue from the 1958 election campaign, favoured making the ban recommended by the Brisbane Conference an effective one.^70 In August 1958 the A.L.P. Federal Executive ordered State Branches to implement the Federal Conference's decision, warning that Federal intervention would otherwise be considered. Subsequently, the New South Wales State Executive expelled from the A.L.P. four members of the W.W.F. and the B.W.I.U. for violating

this embargo, and similar charges were made in a number of other cases. Twenty-seven New South Wales unions thereupon petitioned the A.L.P. Federal President, F.E. Chamberlain, requesting him to prevent such interference in union affairs. The rate of expulsions appears to have dropped after this complaint. 71

Despite such obstacles, the Communists persevered with the united front strategy throughout 1957 and 1958. They remained in effective control of the fortress unions, such as the W.W.F., and the Miners' Federation, and kept up a steady pressure on the Groupers in several unions of the inner defensive ring, more particularly the F.I.A., the A.R.U. and the A.E.U. United front gains in the A.E.U. were particularly impressive: in 1957, a militant A.L.P. member, J.D. Garland, had been elected Secretary of the union's Commonwealth Council, 72 and in 1958 C.G. Hennessy, a Communist member of the Council, was re-elected unopposed to his old post. 73 L. Carmichael, a Communist, was elected Secretary of the Melbourne District Committee of the A.E.U. in 1958. 74 Within the F.I.A., however, Short's administration held its ground; according to Alan Reid, Thornton and

73 Tribune, 13 August 1958.
74 Ibid., 5 November 1958.
McPhillips sought to build up a united front opposition to Short around an 'Ironworkers Strengthen our Union' Committee, formed in July 1958 and a direct descendant of the Rank and File Committee of 1956. In the campaign for the F.I.A. ballot held in December, straight A.L.P. teams (supported by militants and Communists) were put forward but were easily defeated in all States except Victoria. The Victorian results so disturbed Short that he wrote to the Secretary of the F.I.A's Victorian Branch suggesting that his executive's poor showing indicated 'that there is considerable dissatisfaction among ironworkers over the question of your branches' (sic) continued affiliation with the D.L.P.' His suggestion that the Victorian Branch should discontinue its association with the D.L.P. was not well received.

The Communists were uncomfortably aware, however, that the united front was gradually losing its momentum and that, unless conditions altered, a stalemate in the overall struggle with the Groupers would soon be reached. The problem was not one of leadership: although many of the British Communist Party's trade union officials had resigned during the revisionist crisis, the Australian

---

75 Daily Telegraph, 15 October 1958.
76 S.M.H., 9 December 1958, 10 December 1958.
77 West Australian, 17 December 1958.
Party retained the loyalty of its important industrial leaders.\footnote{D.J. Bearlin, Assistant Secretary of the Melbourne Branch of the W.W.F., did resign from the Party, but his case was exceptional.} The problem, as Healy told the 18th Congress, was that the trade union movement would never be strong (that is, well organised, militant and class conscious) while many trade union leaders were reformists, while low union membership fees were the rule (producing a loose membership), and while the workers retained their faith in the arbitration system.

"Many workers have come to believe that it is only the Award that protects their wages and conditions, not the union."\footnote{Communist Review, June 1958, pp.240-1.} Nevertheless, as McPhillips observed in a pamphlet, many traditional unionists were now regarding the arbitration system with hostility,\footnote{Jack McPhillips, Penal Clauses – Menzies’ Weapon Against Unions and Wages, Sydney, 1958.} but this trend was being offset by the entry into trade union ranks of immigrant workers, especially those from Eastern Europe, many of whom were predisposed to hate Communists on sight. H. Stein reported to the 18th Congress on the need to devote attention to New Australian workers and to prevent tension developing between them and 'old' Australians.\footnote{Communist Review, June 1958, pp.246-9.} In the last resort, however, the Communists were banking on trade union militancy arising in a situation of economic crisis and widespread unemployment. Instead, the economy continued to thrive; there was an average of...
56,722 registered unemployed in 1957 and an average of 64,736 in 1958. Dixon suggested that the Party should work with the unemployed in requesting more benefits and in forming committees but this course of action was not seriously pursued in 1958.

Two political factors strengthened the united front in 1957 and 1958; one was the consolidation and increased militancy of the A.C.T.U. and the other was the D.L.P's campaign to obtain the abolition of compulsory union levies for political funds. The A.C.T.U's 1955 Congress had decided that a special committee should advise on methods which would permit representatives of the affiliated unions (arranged in groups according to industry) to be elected to the Interstate Executive. In a report to the A.C.T.U. Congress of September 1957, the committee recommended that six such representatives should be elected directly by the Congress delegates whereas previously only the four officers had been elected by the Congress itself, the remaining ten executive members being appointed by the individual State Branches of the A.C.T.U. The proposed changes were adopted by the Congress despite right-wing opposition, and, in the subsequent elections for the six new executive members, three Communists (J. Healy

---

G.M. Dawson and G. Seelaf) were returned. These, along with A. MacDonald, the Communist delegate from the A.C.T.U's Queensland branch, constituted an active minority group on the new executive. As in 1955, an alliance of Communist, militant and traditionalist delegates dominated the Congress and passed resolutions condemning the Japanese Peace Treaty, calling for a 35-hour week and criticising the Arbitration Court's handling of the basic wage question. The Interstate Executive, even before this Congress, had followed a radical course on a number of issues: it sent two delegations to Communist China, both of which attended May Day celebrations in Peking, and it delegated its Vice President to represent it at the All-China Trade Union Congress in 1958. Healy reported with satisfaction to the 18th Congress that the A.C.T.U. 'has become more stabilised, its authority as a national centre has become stronger.' Its value in reinforcing the united front was considerable.

The united front was given an additional boost by the hostility shown by unionists to attempts made in 1958 to deprive trade unions of the right to impose compulsory political levies on their members.

85 S.M.H., 25, 26, 27 and 28 September 1957.
86 Tribune, 3 April 1957, 14 May 1958.
87 Ibid., 15 January 1958.
In May 1957, H.E. Holt, the Minister for Labour, had told the House of Representatives that the Government was contemplating legislation to protect unionists not wanting to contribute to compulsory levies, a statement which disturbed the A.L.P., whose financial dependence on trade union contributions was known to be considerable. The D.L.P. had an interest in breaking the practice of compulsory union levies because its main chance of becoming a major party depended on its ability to attract support from the A.L.P., which would have had difficulty in finding additional sources of electioneering funds before the election of December 1958. All these motives and fears come to bear on a dispute which arose in the Hobart waterfront early in 1958. Frank Hursey and his son Denis, both D.L.P. supporters and members of the Hobart Branch of the W.W.F., were in February 1958 expelled from their union and prevented from working on the waterfront because they had not contributed to a compulsory levy of 10/- per member on 2 October 1956 to provide funds for the Tasmanian Branch of the A.L.P. The Hurseys soon became the centre of a cause célèbre, and received good notice in the mainland newspapers. In March, Holt reminded the House that the Government might introduce a measure to prevent the exaction of compulsory union levies for political purposes; in

90 S.M.H., 19 February 1958.
April, the Federal Council of the Grouper-controlled F.C.U. asked the Government to bring forward such legislation.92 The Hurseys, meanwhile, were being attacked by the Communists and lionised by the D.L.P.; at a large Sydney meeting, Frank Hursey said that the Hobart watersiders had tried to murder him.93 With D.L.P. encouragement, the Hurseys took their case to the courts. The Tasmanian Supreme Court came out in their favour; in delivering his judgment on 7 November 1958, Sir Stanley Burbury, C.J., held that the Hurseys had been within their rights in not paying the disputed levy, the imposition of which was not within any express or implied power conferred by any W.W.F. Federal or Branch Rule.94 The Hobart Branch of the W.W.F. appealed to the High Court, which in September 1959 ruled that the union had validly imposed the compulsory levy and reduced the damages awarded to the Hurseys from £5,000 to £2,000.95

At the time of the 1958 election, however, this outcome had not been expected. As the parties developed their campaigns in October and November, two symbols were extracted from industrial politics – the Hursey case and the unity ticket. Both were to seriously embarrass the A.L.P. and Dr Evatt.

92 Age, 19 April 1958.
93 S.M.H., 7 April 1958.
The 1958 election

In a pre-election survey, which appeared in the Communist Review for September 1958, Sharkey sketched in the broad lines of the strategy the Party would pursue in the forthcoming campaign. The defeat of the reactionary Menzies Government was the principal objective, he declared, because 'Menzies' opposed the peace movement, served the interests of American and Australian monopoly capitalists, and acted as the agent of American imperialism in South-East Asia. He had told the 18th Congress that the return of a Labor Government would mean a better Australian foreign policy, a tougher policy towards monopolies and a more progressive administration generally.

We Communists do not believe that the Labor Party's program can finally answer the problems raised by monopoly capitalism. We do not believe that the Labor Party leadership can establish the socialist order of society.

Only a militant revolutionary vanguard party, the Communist Party, can successfully fulfil those historic tasks.

But a Labor Government with a progressive immediate program of reforms at home and a peaceful foreign policy is possible if Menzies can be defeated at the forthcoming elections. That would be a step in the right direction in existing conditions.

The Party's tactics were to follow the usual pattern. It would run a minimum of candidates and direct its supporters to give their

---

97 Ibid., p.32.
second preferences to Labor candidates. At the same time, it was to use whatever influence it possessed to persuade the D.L.P. to exchange its preferences with the A.L.P., so long as the latter was not obliged to accept the D.L.P's 'reactionary, semi-fascist outlook and policies.' Sharkey still insisted that the D.L.P's rank-and-file belonged by temperament to the Labor movement and that they would not side with the Right in the last resort. He stated in his pre-election survey:

We advocate this line of approach because we believe there are honest workers, temporarily misled by the false propaganda of the D.L.P. and the capitalist press, who will eventually return to the ranks of the labour movement.

A political atmosphere should be created wherein the D.L.P. leaders would be compelled, willy nilly, to direct their second preferences to the A.L.P.

Although evidence is lacking on this point, it is probable that the Communist Party directed some of its workers to assist progressive A.L.P. candidates combat the D.L.P.; the Communist worker whom Westerway found supporting Leslie Haylen in Parkes may not have been an exception.

98 Loc. cit.
99 Ibid., pp.32-3.
100 Communist Review, September 1958, p.373.
The Communists' election programme was moderate by their standards, though not by other parties. The Party recommended such measures as a cut in defence expenditure, the nationalisation of monopolies, raising the federal basic wage to the level it would have reached but for the abolition of the quarterly adjustment in 1953, the repeal of repressive legislation against the trade unions, and better credit, drought relief and freight rates for farmers. In their propaganda, however, the Communists dwelt with enthusiasm on their favourite hate symbols. The Tribune's cartoonist, H. McClintock enjoyed himself immensely in compiling a cartoon pamphlet entitled 'Bob and His Weird Mob', in which 'Menzies' appeared in various stages of dress and undress betraying the people's interests with gay abandon. In the 'Case of the Missing Millions' a corpulent Menzies, arrogant and heavy jowled, is shown running past puzzled citizens with a huge sack containing £1,570 million; he ignores the pleas of people wanting this money for increased pensions, endowments, education grants, and the like, and finally pours it through a drain-grill to be collected by a Kitchener-type general and a decadent businessman, both interested in increased arms expenditure.

All the Communists counted for in the campaign, however, was their value to the Government parties and the D.L.P. as a bogey.
with which to embarrass the Labor Party. A Country Party member, P.E. Lucock, had suggested to the House in April that another referendum should be held to ban the Communist Party, whereupon Holt had announced that the Government would not consider another attempt until the A.L.P. was prepared to advocate the ban as well.\textsuperscript{104} In July, Menzies had stated that the Communist threat would be the main issue in the Government's election campaign.\textsuperscript{105} In the event, as Rawson has noted,\textsuperscript{106} Menzies did not make extensive use of such issues as unity tickets, the Petrov Case and the A.L.P's alleged connection with the Communist Party (although he did tell a Sydney audience that he still favoured banning the latter)\textsuperscript{107} during the actual campaign – but he hardly needed to, because the D.L.P. made its main concern the stressing and restressing of these very issues. Despite its moderate policy, the A.L.P. was unable to counter effectively such charges, and, despite Dr Evatt's offer to resign in exchange for D.L.P. preferences,\textsuperscript{108} it was unable to reach any understanding with its new rival.

The results did not alter the position of the parties very much, which came as a blow to those Labor supporters who had hoped that

\textsuperscript{105} S.M.H., 17 July 1958.
\textsuperscript{106} D.W. Rawson, op. cit., pp.87-99.
\textsuperscript{107} Ibid., pp.96-7.
\textsuperscript{108} See Ibid., pp.90-5.
their party would demonstrate by its increased strength that the
D.L.P. did not constitute a serious danger. In the House of Represen-
tatives, the Liberal Party gained one seat, bringing its total to 58,
and the Country Party, which also gained one place, reached 19 members,
giving a total coalition strength of 77 in a House of 122; Labor's
total fell from 47 to 45. The Government also won a majority of the
Senate places; when the new members took their places after 1 July 1959,
the state of the parties was Government 32, A.L.P. 26 and D.L.P. 2, so
that the Government once more regained the control of the Senate it
had lost in 1956. There was some suggestion that the Government's
gains in the House of Representatives were due to the help its members
received from D.L.P. preferences, which helped the Liberal and Country
Parties to win 20 of their seats. Interest also centred on the showing
of the D.L.P. and the Q.L.P., who together polled 9.40 per cent of the
votes in the House election and 7.6 per cent in the Senate election. 109
In Victoria, where the D.L.P. polled 14.75 per cent of the votes cast
in the House election, Rawson found that, on the whole, the party
had lost ground in Labor seats and gained ground in Liberal and
Country Party seats, indicating that its social base was changing.
Rawson concluded that the D.L.P.'s Labor bias had 'certainly been
sharply reduced.' 110

110 Ibid., pp. 238-9.
The Communist Party stood 20 candidates for the House of Representatives and polled 26,337 votes, or 0.53 per cent of the total vote. Of the 20 seats, 17 had also been contested at the 1955 election and in 15 of these the Communist vote declined appreciably. This decline was partly attributable to the fact that many progressive voters may have voted for the Labor Party to support it against the D.L.P., which intervened with effect in most of Labor's blue ribbon seats. The Communists' Senate teams won 134,263 votes (or 2.6 per cent of the total), 101,516 of which came from New South Wales, where the Party again won first place on the ballot paper. Yet here again a general decline may be noted if these results are compared with those of 1955; in Victoria, for example, the Communists were not placed first on the ballot paper in either poll and there the Party's Senate vote dropped from 13,471 in 1955 to 11,525.111

The Party's commentators made heavy weather of interpreting the results, which were discouraging from every possible angle - the A.L.P. had not improved on its 1955 position, the D.L.P. had shown its staying power and, to cap everything, the Communist vote had gone down. Tribune warned its readers against seeing too much in the Party's loss of votes.

This is not due to any decrease in support for Party policy but must be attributed to the strong desire among workers to get rid of Menzies.

111 Ibid., p.228.
There is still lack of clear understanding of the preferential system of voting.

This caused many workers who agree with the Communist Party's program to nevertheless give their No. 1 vote to A.L.P. candidates out of fear of splitting the anti-Menzies vote if they gave it to the Communist Party.

Other factors contributing to the results, according to Tribune, were the D.L.P.'s second preferences, the internal divisions within the A.L.P. and Labor's uninspiring campaign. Writing for the Communist Review in January, Sharkey repeated these points and added some of his own. Proportional representation, he suggested was 'the only way to secure a more fair representation in a bourgeois "democracy"'. The 'worsening economic position...was largely concealed from the people during the course of the election campaign,' and 'the bulk of the D.L.P. support' had been drawn from the Labor Party, thus weakening it in its fight against the Government. The heart-searching within the A.L.P. was much more painful. F.E. Chamberlain suggested that Labor's defeat was 'due to the fear of Communism, particularly on the part of a section of the community whose religious persuasion makes it susceptible to the sustained propaganda to which it has been subjected.' Others were saying that had the A.L.P. taken a stronger line against

---

112 Tribune, 26 November 1958.
113 Communist Review, January 1959, p.5.
114 Ibid., p.9.
115 West Australian, 2 December 1958.
unity tickets before the election the Communist bogey would not have proved so potent a weapon against it. The Party's failure to make up the ground it had lost at the 1955 poll reinforced the impression that the D.L.P. was continuing to attract a good deal of support from former Labor supporters, and that while Dr Evatt remained leader of the Parliamentary Party it would be difficult to win these back to the fold. Evatt's position was certainly weakened by the election result. The Communists were once more visited by their old fear that right-wing elements within the A.L.P. might swing it away from the progressive line marked out by the decisions of the Hobart and Brisbane Conferences and even result in its forming a new agreement with the D.L.P. Already in September 1958 Sharkey had spoken of the need to 'strengthen the independent role of the Communist Party.' These and other signs suggested that the period of the united front might be coming to an end.

116
Communist Review, September 1958, p.373.
CHAPTER NINE

THE COMMUNIST PARTY REAFFIRMS ITS IDENTITY AS THE A.L.P. MOVES TO THE RIGHT

Since the 1958 Federal Election, the Communist Party has faced considerable difficulty in acting out its general strategy of the united front. Both Dr Evatt and later A.A. Calwell, who became the Labor leader in March 1960, used all their powers to break down the practice of unity tickets in trade union elections and generally to dissociate the A.L.P. from the Communists. Recent years have also seen the gradual rebuilding of anti-Communist feeling in some quarters, especially in such organisations as the R.S.L. and those associated with various Catholic lay movements, such as Santamaria's National Civic Council. The Communist Party's response to these difficulties has been cautious; to the present, it continues to advocate the united front strategy but it has now chosen to emphasise certain new tactical schemes. For one thing, the Communist leaders have been stressing the need for the Party to preserve its separate identity, on the grounds that only a strong and open Communist Party can show the people the way to Socialism; this line contrasts with that of the mid-fifties, when the Communists had spoken of a possible radicalisation of the A.L.P. and of its eventual fusion with the Communist Party.

To describe the shifts of the period 1959-62 in these terms is to oversimplify what was an extremely involved process of adaptation. This chapter will follow the development of the Party's latest situation.
in three stages, beginning with the period covering Dr Evatt's last year as Labor leader.

The A.L.P. adopts a tougher policy on the unity ticket issue, 1959-60

The Communists' interest in the morphology of the A.L.P. was particularly strong after the 1958 election results had been announced. Along with many other Australians, they were asking themselves how long Dr Evatt would remain the leader of the Parliamentary Party, and whether the A.L.P. as a whole would begin shifting to the Right in an effort to cut the ground from under the D.L.P. Writing for the *World Marxist Review*, Thornton said that the majority of workers still supported the A.L.P. because they believed that, despite its past failings, it was sound at heart and because the 'protracted boom', which had lasted since the Second World War, had given them the illusion that capitalism had brought prosperity to Australia. Under existing conditions, he felt that the Communists in the trade unions should continue to press for united action with the Labor unionists and that they should not become impatient because certain unionists remained 'backward'.

Trade unions are not political parties, and it is unreal to expect the membership always to have the same attitude to all questions. The policy pursued by the union should be one which is generally in the interests of the members, but so designed as to get the support of all or at least the overwhelming majority of the members.¹

¹ Ernest Thornton, 'More Actively Put Forward the Policy of the Party', *World Marxist Review*, December 1959, Vol. 2, No. 12, pp.51-4. This article contained the statement that the boom had lasted since the First World War; Thornton said later he had meant the Second World War (*Communist Review*, February 1960, p.85).
Illusions of prosperity and faith in the A.L.P. had made the workers blind to the failings of their reformist leaders, whose policy Aarons later described in the following terms:

Their policy is: in the political field, there is only one form of action – to vote for a Labor Government and leave everything to it; in the trade union field, leave everything to the officials, go to arbitration, put a good case, and hope for the best. These two policies fit in together to make a whole: the policy of class collaboration, of upholding capitalism.2

That the A.L.P. was 'the second party of capitalism' in Australia was still the central point in the Communists' analysis of the Labor movement, but Sharkey, in summing up the situation early in 1959, drew attention to the tensions between different groups within and without the A.L.P. On the extreme Right, he placed the D.L.P. as a party of reaction, even of fascism; its supporters, he suggested, were formerly Labor supporters.3 Within the A.L.P., however, was an important right-wing group whose outlook and policies were similar to those of the D.L.P., except that it preferred to subvert the A.L.P. rather than intimidate it into accepting anti-Communist policies. It followed the course prescribed by Cardinal Gilroy, while the D.L.P. was acting in keeping with the ideas of Archbishop Mannix.

The difference is in tactics, not principle. The one supports the D.L.P. in order to try to protect capitalism

---

3 Ibid., January 1959, p.9. See also S. Aarons in ibid., February 1959, p.84.
against the socialist revolution, the others believe the same end can be attained by working within the official A.L.P. to combat progressive trends and swing the A.L.P. to the right, to fascist-like anti-Communism.4

Besides this clerical right wing, Sharkey also distinguished a strong group of '"traditional" Rightwing reformists' who were concerned to depose Dr Evatt from party leadership, and who were opposed to the progressive policies adopted by the party at Hobart and Brisbane. On the Left of the party was a progressive group, whose outlook was best represented in the Victorian State Executive. These then were the main elements of Labor politics; a clerical and neo-fascist D.L.P. acting as a right-wing pole of attraction; two right-wing groups, one clerical and the other reformist; and a progressive group. One danger here was that the two right-wing groups might bring about a reconciliation with the D.L.P. on the basis of anti-working-class and anti-Communist policies.5 The role of the Communist Party under these circumstances was to bring 'understanding and conviction' to those A.L.P. supporters who were already class conscious and progressive, but who nevertheless continued to place mistaken trust in their reformist leaders. The latter in their turn affected an interest in progressive policies 'as a sham to deceive the workers.'6

In plotting the future course of the Labor movement the Communists were unable to rid themselves of their morbid interest in economic

4 Ibid., January 1959, p.4.
5 Ibid., November 1959, p.461.
crisis. Sharkey reported to the Central Committee that present indications were for 'a further economic decline, a growth of reactionary tendencies in all fields' and an attack by the Government on the Labor movement and on democratic rights.\(^7\) Dixon said that as this crisis developed, unemployment and poverty would spread, the capitalists would attack the workers' living standards, and the class struggle would intensify.\(^8\) In anticipating the shape of crisis politics, however, the Communists provided a different interpretation from that which they had offered a few years before; the advice was now that the Communists should concentrate on their own Party, affirming its identity and building up its strength, and not expect the left-wing group in the A.L.P. to save the day. J.R. Hughes reported to the Party's New South Wales State Committee:

> Comrades, if it were possible to turn the A.L.P. into a Socialist Party there would be no need for a Communist Party. We would fold up our Party and join the A.L.P. But Lenin proved, and all history confirms, that such a course would behead the working class and deny its historical mission to advance to socialism. There is only one way forward, one way to strengthen socialist ideas, that is to build the Communist Party.

Building the Communist Party necessarily implied providing it with strong allies amongst the trade unions. Dixon pointed out that the

\(^7\) Ibid., April 1959, p.149.

\(^8\) Ibid., p.154.

Labor Party had sought to create the convention that the A.L.P. should deal with politics and the trade unions with economic affairs, within the framework of the arbitration system. On the contrary, he argued, the trade unions needed more, not less, politics in their affairs. 'A great political and educational campaign is necessary to arouse the trade unions to the nature of the capitalist attack, to build union solidarity, to develop the political consciousness of the workers and to popularise Socialism.' Dixon obviously envisaged a stage being reached when several of the major trade unions, such as the W.W.F. and the Miners' Federation, would affiliate with the Communist Party and supply it with funds. The building up of the trade unions around a strong and progressive A.C.T.U. framework was a related objective.

The Communists' ideas about the A.L.P. were informed by their impressions of the Labor Party's Federal Conference, held at Canberra in May 1959. Although the Conference had been preceded by a rather heated discussion about whether or not the Parliamentary Party should have supported the increases in members' and ministers' salaries recommended by a special commission, the real issues before the delegates (there were six from each of the six State branches) was whether the party should strengthen its ban on unity tickets and

---

10 Ibid., March 1959, p.113.
water down the policies approved by the Hobart and Brisbane Conferences. Both steps, it was held, would enable the A.L.P. either to reach an understanding with the D.L.P. or to attract away its popular support. Labor's disappointing results in the 1958 election had left the impression that the D.L.P. was, for all its unpleasantness, the real obstacle to power, and Dr Evatt and other leaders now came under strong pressure to make concessions to the party on their Right. Left-wing opposition to such concessions was expressed principally by the Victorian State Executive of the A.L.P. and, to a lesser extent, by a strong minority faction in the New South Wales Branch of the Party. The unions affiliated to the A.L.P. were already starting to take two sides over the issue; unions controlled by united front administrations tended to oppose concessions while those which remained under ex-Grouper or right-wing control, such as the F.I.A., urged the need for conciliation. The unity ticket now became the focal symbol in the dispute; the left wing defended the practice as a legitimate function of trade union politics, arguing that the A.L.P. should not interfere in union affairs, while the right wing took the view that the party should break the practice to witness its good faith as an anti-Communist force. Dr Evatt described unity tickets as a 'running sore' which might 'destroy' the Labor Party. \[12\]

\[12\] S.M.H., 8 May 1959.
The A.L.P.'s Federal Conference did not alter the general framework of the Hobart policies but neither did it add to their number. Motions were passed calling for an end to nuclear testing, declaring the party's faith in democratic socialism (still undefined) and requesting the Federal Parliamentary Party to continue pressing for the repeal of the 1951 amendments to the Arbitration Act. The debate on unity tickets sharply divided the delegates; those on the Left spoke for a motion declaring opposition to interference in trade union affairs 'providing that the name of the A.L.P. is not used in such a way as to create political unity with any other political party', while those on the Right supported an amendment reaffirming the previous ban on A.L.P. members participating in unity tickets teams and further declaring 'the responsibility of all A.L.P. members to ensure that the Trade Unions remain in control of Executives sympathetic to and supporting A.L.P. policy.' The amendment became the motion and was passed by 20 votes to 16, the Victorian and South Australian delegations voting in the minority along with four Western Australians. Dr Evatt had, according to all reports, been active behind the scenes to obtain this decision. Dixon commented that Evatt's attack on unity tickets, as well as his support of salary increases for parliamentarians,

---

14 S.M.H., 16 May 1959.
showed that he was now on the Right of his party. The Victorian State Conference of the A.L.P., held in June, asked the Federal Executive to reconsider the unity ticket ban but this request, having been opposed by the right-wing New South Wales and Tasmanian State Executives, was rejected in August by the Federal Executive.

The ban on unity tickets had been instituted primarily to prove that the A.L.P. was not soft in its dealings with Communists. In party politics this would help it to meet the charges being levelled against it by the D.L.P., but the implications of the ban in trade union politics had not been seriously considered. The principle of the ban had been set by the Federal Conference as early as 1957; the 1959 decisions marked an apparent intention to secure its enforcement. 'Enforcement' in what sense? The first stage, obviously, would be to step up the expulsions from the party of unionists who allowed their names to be associated with those of Communists, but it was equally obvious that the A.L.P. would be driven eventually to challenge the united fronts of the A.L.P., militant and Communist members which held in such important unions as the A.R.U., the Miners' Federation and the W.W.F. In short, the tougher the A.L.P.'s line on unity

---

16 S.M.H., 15 June 1959.
17 Ibid., 22 August 1959, 25 August 1959.
18 Ibid., 26 August 1959.
tickets the more certain would be its positive intrusion into trade union politics - against the Communists and with the ex-Grouper and moderate forces represented by such union administrations as Short's in the F.I.A. and Dr Lloyd Ross's in the New South Wales Branch of the A.R.U. For in most of the unions where unity tickets were a serious issue a rough 'two-party system' had developed. It was clear that, if the A.L.P. followed through its ban into direct intervention, it would have to form a united front in reverse against the Communists.

In 1959, however, the A.L.P. took no action in enforcing its ban beyond expelling a few of its members here and there. The trend in trade union politics, if anything, was still to the Left. Unemployment figures were still high, averaging 63,666 in 1959 as compared with 64,736 in 1958, and unionists were dissatisfied with their wage rates. The A.C.T.U. had been pressing three demands; that the quarterly adjustment of the basic wage, suspended in 1953, should be resumed; that the basic wage should be substantially increased, not only to take account of an alleged fall in the value of real wages since 1953 but also to reflect Australian industry's increased productivity since that date; and that margins should be restored to their previous ratios with the basic wage, the 1947 margin in the case of tradesman fitter's and that which existed before 1954 for all other categories of workers. There was widespread dissatisfaction amongst unionists when, on 6 June

---

1959, the Commonwealth Conciliation and Arbitration Commission declared against the A.C.T.U's case for restoring quarterly adjustments and gave an increase of 15/- per week in the basic wage, which the unions held to be quite inadequate. The wage decision sparked off a strike in the B.H.P. steelworks at Newcastle and Port Kembla; Short did his best to get F.I.A. members back to work and refused to allow his union to participate in a 24-hour stoppage staged in late July by a number of left-wing and traditionalist craft unions, despite the fact that this demonstration had the backing of the New South Wales Labor Council. Short's resistance to strike action probably played into the hands of the F.I.A's opposition faction, which became more active as discontent spread. Later in the year two F.I.A. members were fined for attending an unauthorised meeting.

In most of the militant unions the alliance between militants, Communists and left-wing A.L.P. forces continued unimpaired. In Victoria, J.J. Brown's united front administration improved its position in the A.R.U. ballot of June, while a D.L.P. attempt to capture the

---

21 See S.M.H., 9, 23, 24, 25, 28, 29 July 1959.
22 See ibid., 26 January 1960.
23 Age, 24 June 1959.
Amalgamated Postal Workers’ Union was foiled. A united front also lay behind the election of B.M. Nolan (A.L.P.) to succeed W. Bird, a Communist, as Secretary of the Victorian Branch of the Seamen’s Union. No serious attempt was made to disturb the united front administrations in other States; in Queensland, for example, the left-wing groups remained in control of the State Branches of the Meat Industry Employees’ Union, the Transport Workers’ Union, the A.E.U., the A.R.U., and the B.W.I.U. and of the Brisbane, Townsville, Rockhampton and Cairns Branches of the W.W.F. At the Federal level, the election of W. Mahon (A.L.P.) to succeed G.H. Neilly as General Secretary of the Miners’ Federation passed off without any fuss.

The A.C.T.U. Interstate Executive, meanwhile, had earned prestige by its energy in pressing the case for an increased basic wage and margins before the Arbitration Commission. In January, the A.W.U., which had never been affiliated to the A.C.T.U., proposed that a rival trade union federation should be established on the grounds that the present one was Communist-controlled. Its chances of forming such a body were destroyed when in June the F.I.A’s National Conference

---

24 Ibid., 8 July 1959.
26 S.M.H., 7 February 1959.
27 Ibid., 29 January 1961; Age, 7 May 1961.
voted to remain within the A.C.T.U. But the F.I.A. had already become the centre of a right-wing faction within the A.C.T.U., and rallied sufficient support to dissuade the Interstate Executive from persisting with its original plan to have trade union representatives from Communist countries attend the next A.C.T.U. Congress. The Congress, held at Melbourne between 31 August and 4 September, was nevertheless dominated by the majority of Communist, militant and traditionalist delegates which had swayed the decisions at the 1955 and 1957 meetings; except when the Communist group became imprudent, and suggested courses of action unacceptable to the centre delegates, the right-wing faction found itself at an extreme disadvantage in proceedings. The Congress endorsed the principle of visits from overseas trade unionists, called for the satisfaction of its demands for increased wages and margins, and severely criticised the Government's economic policies. It also condemned the penal provisions of the Arbitration Act but rejected the Communists' proposal for strike action in protest by 245 votes to 178. In the Executive elections, the Communist representation was cut down from four to three;

28 S.M.H., 30 June 1959.
29 See Age, 5 June 1959.
31 S.M.H., 3 September 1959.
G.M. Dawson and J. Healy were again appointed as the respective delegates of the Building and Transport Groups, but G. Seelaf was defeated in the voting for the Food and Distributive Group delegate by 29 to 24.\(^32\) A. MacDonald had previously been re-elected to represent the Queensland State Branch.

By this time, it had been widely rumoured that Dr Evatt would soon be retiring from politics and that under new leadership the A.L.P. would make a new bid for power. E.F. Hill wrote in the *Communist Review* that the bourgeoisie, alarmed at the possibility that the decline of the A.L.P. might allow the Communist Party to win mass support, were now trying to repair the damage; 'the Labor Party is vital to the maintenance of capitalism.'\(^33\) In February 1960 Evatt resigned as party leader to become Chief Justice of the New South Wales Supreme Court; A.A. Calwell and E.G. Whitlam soon emerged as the leading candidates for the positions of leader and deputy leader respectively. The left-wing groups within the A.L.P. and the trade union movement believed that Calwell, if he became leader, would move to effect a reconciliation between his party and the D.L.P. They rallied behind the candidature of R.T. Pollard, an M.H.R. from Victoria; a meeting of about 20 left-wing trade unions at Sydney  

came out in his favour. The Caucus of the Parliamentary Party met for the election on 7 March; Calwell defeated Pollard for the leadership by 42 to 30, while Whitlam defeated E.J. Ward for the deputy leadership by 38 to 34. Tribune claimed that the contest for the leadership had been a clash between Left and Right within the A.L.P.

The cleavages in caucus reflect deep conflicts through the whole Party. And these in turn are a reflection of the A.L.P's basic contradiction - its two-class nature.

It relies for support on the working class, but pursues policies acceptable to capitalism.

Hill suggested later that Calwell would serve as an instrument for rehabilitating the Labor Party, 'to cleanse it of Left and mass influence and restore it to a real bourgeois parliamentary opposition.' Calwell, he claimed, would soon be attempting to bring the A.L.P's policies into line with those of the D.L.P. Dixon speculated later whether such a shift to the Right would result in a further split in the Labor Party. Spokesmen for the D.L.P. were meanwhile denying that Evatt's departure had opened up the possibility of a rapprochement between the two parties. In April, Senators Cole

34 S.M.H., 18 February 1960, 19 February 1960. Estimates of the number of unions represented varied from 17 to 25.


36 Ibid., 9 March 1960.

37 Communist Review, April 1960, p.147.

38 Ibid., May 1960, p.184.
and McManus said that their terms for reconciliation were the rein-
statement of industrial groups in the trade unions, a reversal of
the Labor Party's foreign policies, the restoration of the 'old'
Victorian and New South Wales State Executives and an amnesty for
D.L.P. members rejoining the A.L.P. 39

The A.L.P's drive for power, 1960–61

Senators Cole and McManus were overstating their case; a more
balanced view of the D.L.P's expectations was presented by B.A.
Santamaria in an article published in the Sydney Morning Herald on
5 January 1960. Santamaria pronounced himself in favour of a
reunified Labor Party and made clear that his conditions were twofold;
a strictly enforced ban on unity tickets in the trade unions and a
reversal of Labor's 'Hobart' foreign policies. 40 Santamaria was in a
strong bargaining position; in Victoria, where the D.L.P. had the
backing of the Church hierarchy, it had shown its ability to hold
its vote under strong pressure (its share of the vote in Victorian
State Elections was to rise from 14.4 to 16.9 per cent in July 196141).
Its trade union influence was important only in Victoria, where it

39 See D.W. Rawson, 'Political Chronicle', Australian Journal of
40 S.M.H., 5 January 1960. See also his statement in ibid., 30
November 1959.
41 Figures from R.J. May, 'Political Review', Australian Quarterly,
retained the affiliation of the State Branches of the F.C.U. and the Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and Joiners, along with a few smaller unions, but in other States it had already proved its nuisance value. The real question, however, was whether the A.L.P. would ever win back those of its supporters who had joined the D.L.P.; by 1960 the D.L.P. gave all the appearance of becoming a Christian Democratic party of the centre Right, with conservative social as well as foreign and industrial policies. Santamaria may well have been making an offer which he could not have fulfilled, put to the test. But at least he added strength to those groups inside the A.L.P. who believed that some agreement with the D.L.P. was feasible and who therefore pressed for concessions to its outlook. To that extent Santamaria's offer had an important effect.

The tensions within the Labor Party increased considerably in 1960 and 1961. The Victorian Executive remained as the rallying point for the left-wing factions and unions while the New South Wales Executive, especially after C.T. Oliver became its President in November 1960, became more openly anti-Communist and conservative in its policies. Victoria and New South Wales were the key States as far as the Labor Party was concerned; in Victoria, the right-wing forces looked to the leadership of the State Parliamentary Labor Party and to Senator Kennelly for guidance, while in New South Wales

42 S.M.H., 12 November 1960.
a strong, union-based left-wing faction was making its presence felt. The Queensland Executive inclined towards the Left, even after the State Branch of the A.W.U. reaffiliated with it in July 1961, the Western Australian and South Australian Executives tended to keep to the centre, and the Tasmanian Executive usually sided with New South Wales in serious disputes. As Federal President, and later as Federal Secretary, of the A.L.P., F.E. Chamberlain employed his considerable personal influence to strike a balance between the two sides, but it soon became clear that good offices would not be sufficient to avoid divergence. The unity ticket remained the outward issue in dispute, the Left claiming that the party should keep out of union affairs and the Right claiming that it had to provide anti-Communist leadership to the mass of A.L.P. unionists. But the underlying, and possibly more important issue, concerned the A.L.P's future relationship with the D.L.P.; whereas the Left claimed that it was not only anti-Communist but anti-Labor and anti-Socialist in orientation and that it should therefore be regarded as a conservative force, the Right within the party claimed that its supporters were Labor men at heart and that many of its leaders, particularly those with an A.L.P. background, were reasonable men. Even if reconciliation could not be achieved in the near future, they

---
43

argued, at least the D.L.P. might be persuaded to allocate its second preferences to the A.L.P. if the latter took a firm line on unity tickets.

Could the D.L.P. vote still be regarded as a potential Labor vote? There is every indication that Calwell, Whitlam and Senator Kennelly, for example, thought that it was, and that an electoral agreement was possible and essential between the two parties. A special committee established by the A.L.P. Federal Executive to report on election prospects reported in December 1960 that Labor could defeat the Government with the aid of D.L.P. preferences. At the same time, of course, the Labor leaders realised that if they made too many concessions to the D.L.P. to obtain such an agreement they might aggravate the differences within their own party to breaking point. Senators McManus and Cole made an offer late in 1960 to arrange a preference exchange provided the A.L.P. took steps to enforce its ban on unity tickets and changed its foreign policy but this overture was rejected by the Federal Executive. The extent to which the Federal Parliamentary Party had lost touch with progressive feeling in the Labor movement was borne out during the discussion on the Crimes Act Amendment Bill, introduced by the Attorney-General,

---

46 S.M.H., 7 December 1960.
Sir Garfield Barwick, in September 1960. The most objectionable features of the original Bill were its exceptionally wide definitions of treason, treachery and espionage; for example, a person was supposed to commit the crime of treachery by assisting 'by any means whatever an enemy at war with a proclaimed country', that is, a country proclaimed by Parliament. The Communist Party objected to such provisions immediately, and the A.C.T.U. and most of the important unions followed suit; but it was not until late October that the Parliamentary Labor Party came out against the Bill. 47

The A.L.P's 24th Federal Conference, also held at Canberra, in April 1961, was most significant for its clandestine than its public politics. Publicly, it passed resolutions which indicated certain important shifts from the spirit, if not the letter, of the Hobart policies; its motion on West New Guinea, favouring the right of self determination by the native people and U.N. mediation, implied a denial of the Indonesian claim to the territory; while urging the recognition of Communist China it asked that 'a sympathetic and informed attitude be taken to the problem of Formosa'; while calling for the withdrawal of Australian troops from Malaya, it expressed the desire to see SEATO become more of a cultural and economic than a military body - but accepting its continuation all the same; other

47

motions were passed advocating a revision of the Crimes Act and the Arbitration Act, to remove its penal clauses and supporting, by working through the appropriate agencies, increases in wages and salaries.48 The clash on unity tickets took place behind the scenes; the Victorian delegates had planned to make an issue of their demand that the ban on unity tickets be relaxed, but were persuaded just before the conference began to drop the motion they had submitted to that effect. During the conference, the right-wing delegates from New South Wales and Tasmania did their best to raise the issue but the matter was glossed over, the conference simply reaffirming its previous decisions.49 In the months following the conference, however, Calwell made statements which linked the two central problems; on the one hand he expressed the opinion that many D.L.P. voters would return to the A.L.P. at the impending Victorian and Federal Elections50 and on the other he warned that A.L.P. members knowingly standing on unity tickets would be expelled from the party.51

In July the election for the officers of the A.L.P. Federal Executive were held. In the ballot for President, the right and left-wing candidates, W.R. Colbourne and J.V. Stout respectively,

---

49 S.M.H., 10, 11, 12 and 15 April 1961.
50 Ibid., 12 June 1961.
51 Canberra Times, 17 April 1961.
obtained equal votes; Colbourne's name was then drawn from a hat. \(^5^2\) A former Grouper, Colbourne soon showed that his term of office would be an eventful one; before long he was railing against the Communist Party as 'a subversive, anti-God and anti-Christian organisation.' \(^5^3\) Meanwhile, events in Victoria had brought the unity ticket issue into the limelight once more. Unusual prominence had been given in the press to the election of the Victorian A.R.U. Branch, held in June, in which J.J. Brown's united front team (which included a member of the State A.L.P. Executive) again easily defeated the Groupers. \(^5^4\) The Victorian State Election, held on 15 July, resulted in another defeat for the Labor Party and an increased D.L.P. vote; the Victorian Parliamentary Labor Party blamed its poor showing on the prevalence of unity tickets in the State and reported this opinion to the A.L.P. Federal Executive. The latter decided to meet in August to consider what action, if any, it should take against the Victorian Executive; three Victorian unions, including the State A.R.U. Branch, warned against direct intervention, while officials of several New South Wales unions and party branches petitioned the Federal Executive opposing any electoral pact with the D.L.P. \(^5^5\)

\(^5^2\) S.M.H., 7 July 1961.
\(^5^3\) Ibid., 31 July 1961.
\(^5^4\) Age, 29 June 1961.
\(^5^5\) S.M.H., 22 August 1961.
When the Federal Executive met, Whitlam and Senators McKenna and Kennelly urged strong action on the grounds that unless the ban on unity tickets were enforced Labor would be at a disadvantage in contesting the coming Federal Election; the Victorian and Queensland delegates are reported to have opposed intervention on principle while Calwell and Chamberlain urged the need for conciliation. Indeed, there is every likelihood that their reluctance to proceed to strong measures was partly governed by their fear that the Left might break away from the A.L.P. and attempt to establish a Social Democratic party. In the event, the Executive confirmed its previous decisions on the ban, declared that it favoured members of the A.L.P. contesting union elections against Communists, and asked the various State Branches to report back on what steps were being taken to enforce the ban. In September, Calwell expressed the hope that the D.L.P. and the Q.L.P. would agree to an exchange of preferences with the A.L.P.; his proposal was promptly rejected by D.L.P. spokesmen.

The months preceding the election saw the Victorian Executive put up a brave show of 'enforcing the ban'. It called upon three members of the Melbourne Branch of the W.W.F. to answer charges of

---

56 Ibid., 24 August 1961.
57 For this meeting and the events which preceded it, see R.J. May, 'Political Review', Australian Quarterly, December 1961, Vol. XXXIII, No. 4, pp.100-1.
supporting Communists; later it expelled two A.L.P. members for supporting a Communist against an A.L.P. team in the B.W.I.U. State Branch ballot. The A.L.P. team won the latter contest, which meant that the B.W.I.U. Branches in Victoria, Canberra, Tasmania and Western Australia had now been freed from Communist control. The New South Wales Executive, under Oliver's Presidency, had been conspicuously vigorous in expelling unity ticketeers; in September two members of the Amalgamated Postal Workers' Union were expelled from the party on unity ticket charges, while in November two A.L.P. members of the Electrical Trades Union were expelled for the same reason. Expulsions were also being effected in South Australia and in other States.

Already the A.L.P. was being driven beyond the stage of merely enforcing its ban on unity tickets to that of directly intervening in union affairs. This was dramatically illustrated in

59 Sun, Melbourne, 14 October 1961.
60 Sunday Telegraph, 26 November 1961.
the widely publicised election of the General Secretary of the W.W.F. in late 1961. The death of the former General Secretary, J. Healy, on 13 July 1961 came as a severe blow to the Communist Party; Healy had held that position since 1937 and had become a figure of respect and affection amongst waterside workers in all the main ports. Just before his death he had been re-elected by 16,031 votes to the 3,683 accorded his Groper rival, V.C. Alford. As his successor the Communists nominated Tom Nelson, Secretary of the Sydney Branch of the W.W.F. and a well-known Party member; the A.L.P. responded by putting forward its own nominee, C. Fitzgibbon, President of the Newcastle Branch of the W.W.F. and a member of the New South Wales A.L.P. Executive. Fitzgibbon's candidature was openly supported by Calwell and Colbourne and was actively canvassed by the D.L.P. and Santamaria's N.C.C. The ballot, held on 14 November, produced a surprise result; Fitzgibbon defeated Nelson by 11,088 votes to 8,921 (two other candidates polled small totals) indicating a shift of about 8,000 votes since Healy's re-election earlier in the year. The Communist Party's vulnerability, even in one of its fortress unions, was fully exposed, and once more the lesson was driven home that its support in the unions more often reflected the popularity and

65 S.M.H., 16 November 1961.
efficiency of its officers than the appeal of its ideology. Nelson won majorities in the Sydney, Port Kembla, Cairns, Launceston and Urangan Branches of the union, but elsewhere Fitzgibbon emerged a clear winner. The votes in the chief ports were:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>City</th>
<th>Fitzgibbon</th>
<th>Nelson</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sydney</td>
<td>1,676</td>
<td>3,110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melbourne</td>
<td>2,210</td>
<td>1,682</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adelaide</td>
<td>1,210</td>
<td>413</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brisbane</td>
<td>1,163</td>
<td>774</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fremantle</td>
<td>1,362</td>
<td>417</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hobart</td>
<td>923</td>
<td>494</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fitzgibbon, following his election, faced the difficulty of working with an Executive composed of militant and Communist unionists, but the value of his election as a symbol was immense.

By the end of 1961, the Federal Labor leaders were becoming accustomed to intervening in union elections. Whitlam supported the A.L.P. nominee who came close to defeating J.W. Bevan in the election for the General Secretaryship of the Boilermakers' Society; Calwell sent a congratulatory telegram to Short when his administration again won a clear majority in the F.I.A. election of December 1961. The Communists scored a few successes here and there (a Communist, N. Gallagher, was elected Federal Secretary of the Builders Labourers'

---


70 See *Age*, 5 December 1961; *Tribune*, 6 December 1961.
Federation, formerly under traditionalist control\(^{71}\) but on the whole they found themselves losing positions, even in the fortress unions. In the A.E.U. their hold became less firm; in February 1961, a Communist, C.M. Southwell, narrowly defeated three opponents to secure election to the union's Commonwealth Council\(^{72}\) – this meant that all three members of the Council were Communists but the size of the opposition vote had been disquieting. Later in the year, one of the Communist councillors, A. Wilson, was defeated by a non-party, anti-Communist candidate, C. Shearer.\(^{73}\) In October, the Communist Secretary of the union's Melbourne District was re-elected by a very narrow margin.\(^{74}\)

As the new offensive against the Communists gathered momentum in the individual unions, moves were being made in the trade union movement as a whole to reduce the amount of left-wing influence in A.C.T.U. affairs. The A.C.T.U., however, was in a particularly strong position; in July 1961, following its representations, the Arbitration Commission granted an increase of 12/- in the basic wage (although the A.C.T.U. had pressed for 49/-) and agreed to an annual adjustment of the new level by the Consumer Retail Price Index, which was preferred

---

\(^{71}\) Loc. cit.

\(^{72}\) Ibid., 22 March 1961.

\(^{73}\) Ibid., 31 May 1961; S.M.H., 27 May 1961.

\(^{74}\) Tribune, 11 October 1961.
to the older 'C' Series Index. These gains were widely appreciated throughout the trade union movement. The A.C.T.U. was under attack on several fronts. In 1960, Senator Cole had revived the D.L.P's longstanding complaint about trade union's imposing compulsory political levies upon their members and in August 1960 announced his intention of introducing a private member's bill to allow unionists to refuse to contribute to such levies. The A.C.T.U. parried this move by declaring its opinion 'that a compulsory political election levy should not be applied by affiliated unions'; although this was no more than a recommendation, the Federal Government declared itself satisfied with the statement as a declaration of policy. Cole's bill was defeated on the second reading division in November, four Government Senators voting with the two D.L.P. members in its favour. A more serious attack was developed over the reciprocal visits issue. In May 1960, the A.C.T.U. Interstate Executive decided to impose a levy

75 Australian Council of Trade Unions. Executive Report for Consideration by The Australian Congress of Trade Unions...commencing... September 4, 1961, Melbourne, n.d., p.11.
76 S.M.H., 30 August 1960.
on its affiliated unions to help finance reciprocal visits between
Australian unionists and union delegations from other countries,
including Communist countries. 80 The A.C.T.U. invited both a
British Trades Union Congress delegation and the Secretary of the Inter­
national Confederation of Free Trade Unions to visit Australia but
neither accepted; in late 1960 a delegation from Communist China arrived
for a rather stormy visit 81 and later an A.C.T.U. delegation visited
China. 82 During this time, however, a number of right-wing unions,
including the F.I.A., the F.C.U. and the Australasian Society of
Engineers had roused strong opposition both to the special levy and to
the principle of reciprocal visits with Communist countries. In May
1961, in an effort to appease the opposition, the Interstate Executive
decided to suspend future visits (a delegation from the Soviet Union
had been expected) until the A.C.T.U. Congress had considered the
matter. 83 Fully eighteen unions had by July aligned themselves with
the F.I.A. in refusing to pay their affiliation fees unless the special
levy were dropped, but the A.C.T.U. President, A.E. Monk, refused to
give way on the essential principle. As a result, none of the 18
unions attended the A.C.T.U. Congress in September 1961. There was

80  
S.M.H., 13 May 1960.
81  
Catholic Worker, October 1961.
82  
83  
Advertiser, 13 May 1961.
some talk afterwards of their forming a rival trade union federation but subsequently only one of the 18 disaffiliated with the A.C.T.U.; by the end of the year the Interstate Executive was exploring the possibilities of a reconciliation.

In the absence of the 18 right-wing unions, the A.C.T.U. Congress was expected to be a riotously left-wing affair, but in fact it maintained the moderate tenor of the previous congresses. It endorsed the Executive's line on the special levy and reciprocal visits issue, declared that the basic wage was still 48/- per week short of the desired level and called for increased margins. The Executive elections showed a decided drop in Communist influence, despite the absence of the 18 dissenters. G.M. Dawson was elected as the Building Group representative by a decreased majority while G. Seelaf's defeat in the ballot for the Food and Distributive Group representative was even more decisive than in 1959; Healy's place as representative of the Transport Group was taken by a non-Communist militant, M. O'Brien, Federal Secretary of the A.R.U.; the Communists' representation on the Interstate Executive was maintained at three only because T. Wright.

---

84 See S.M.H., 29 September 1961.
85 Ibid., 15 December 1961.
of the Sheet Metal Workers' Union, was elected unopposed as the representative of the Metal Group, a result which would certainly have not occurred had the F.I.A. been present. 87

The Communist Party's reactions to these trends inside the Labor Party and the trade union movement were mixed; enthusiasm for united front work appears to have fallen off considerably in 1960 and 1961, especially amongst the Party's trade union cadres, and once more complaints about left sectarianism began to outnumber those about right opportunism. But Sharkey and Dixon continued to develop the doctrinal points they had laid down in 1959; the A.L.P. is shifting rightwards under the attraction of the D.L.P., but its own left wing will prevent it from going too far. Therefore, the united front should be maintained, if for no other reason than to ensure the defeat of the Menzies Government. The Party's 19th Congress of June 1961 gave the leaders an opportunity to state their case at length. Sharkey's criticism of the Menzies Government followed the usual line (the agent of U.S. imperialism, a war administration etc. 88), and he continued to explain its long term in office by the 'protraction' of the post-war boom and its use of press, radio and television as 'an enormous propaganda machine...which practically brainwashes the people with

87 Australian Council of Trade Unions. Decisions of the Australian Congress of Trade Unions...on September 4 to 8, 1961, p.19.
lying propaganda and bourgeois ideology twenty-four hours per day, every day.' 89 But the theme which he and Dixon highlighted was: 'Menzies, the agent of the Monopolies' - a theme which was to form the centre piece of the Party's election propaganda. Ralph Gibson, writing in 1959, had drawn attention to the existence of three main monopoly groups in Australia, each more or less interlocking; the metal group (consisting of B.H.P., the Collins House group of companies and the National Bank of Australasia Ltd), the sugar group (dominated by the Colonial Sugar Refining Co. Ltd) and a powerful group of British overseas companies. Growing up alongside these was a new group composed of American subsidiary companies, such as General Motors-Holden's 90. Dixon spoke of the monopolies supplying the funds of the Liberal and Country Parties 91 although Aarons claimed in 1961 that the Menzies Government served the special interests of the metal group. 92 The Resolution adopted by the Congress made a special point of condemning monopolies and demanding measures for their control. 93

The Communists' analysis of trends within the Labor Party still conformed to the main lines set down in 1959. In his Report to the

89 Ibid., January 1959, p.9.
90 Ibid., February 1959, p.49.
91 Ibid., March 1959, p.112.
19th Congress, Sharkey again illustrated his argument with references to two right-wing groups, the one clerical and pro-Grouper and the other traditionalist and opportunist, and a smaller progressive section within the A.L.P. There was now, however, greater stress laid on the ambitions of the pro-Grouper wing of the Party, seen as the power behind the agitation for banning unity tickets. According to L. Aarons:

The main danger is the extreme rightwing within the Labor Party - the DLP fellow travellers like Short and company, and others who fully accept the main tenets of Grouper policy and want an unprincipled compromise with the DLP.

This rightwing has stealthily regained power in the ALP against the wishes of the majority of ALP members and supporters. Some prominent leaders of the centre and even some of those called Left ALP'ers are compromising with this rightwing.

It will be noticed that Aarons talks here of 'the extreme rightwing' and 'the centre' rather than of two rightist groups; this classification found greater favour in 1962, as we shall see shortly.

Sharkey argued that the pressure of these two groups had swung the A.L.P. to the Right: 'The trend in the A.L.P. today is further towards the extreme Right, to a more open position as the alternative party of capitalism.' The shift was intended to bring the A.L.P.


95 Tribune, 14 July 1961.

into line with the D.L.P. on policy matters, with a view to
arranging either an electoral pact or a reunification of the two
parties; it could be measured by the fact that the Labor Party's
foreign policy in particular was becoming indistinguishable from
the Government's. For example, Sharkey cited the fact that the
A.L.P. had not supported Indonesia's claim to West New Guinea, that
it had come to accept SEATO as a desirable alliance, and that it had
recommended 'a sympathetic and informed attitude' towards Taiwan. 97
For all this, Sharkey argued, the Communist Party still needed to
pursue its united front strategy.

We are always prepared to form a united front for progressive
measures of benefit to the working class. We strive to influence
Labor policy in favor of the working people, while retaining
freedom to criticise and to oppose the reactionary aspects of
their policies, both foreign and domestic. Such is our fixed
Leninist attitude, based on the fact that the main base of the
Labor Party is still the working class and that this demands the
application of the line of the united front in order to strengthen
the working class in its struggles and win support for socialist
ideas. 98

Left sectarianism, although the right-wing character of the A.L.P.
invited such a response, was to be avoided. At the same time, however,
the Communist Party should clearly mark out its differences with its
neighbour.

97 Ibid., July 1961, p.274. For other Communist criticisms of A.L.P.
foreign policy, see Tribune, 27 July 1960, 14 December 1960,
Rejecting false theories of 'joining the A.L.P. to convert it into a revolutionary party,' we Communists know very well that the way to influence the A.L.P. membership and awaken the working class for socialism is to build a more powerful Communist Party based on scientific socialist principles, on Marxism-Leninism. 99

In his attacks on the D.L.P., Sharkey reached new heights of polemic. The D.L.P., as he saw it, supports the savage dictatorships that exist in the world. It is a running sore on the body politic, a semi-fascist type of party, a support of reaction at home and abroad. It must be ruthlessly fought and eliminated from the labor movement and the political life of the country. This is the task not only for Communists, but for all progressive forces. 100

In an article written after the Congress, Ken Miller suggested that the D.L.P. was being financed by the monopolies and by the U.S. State Department but he took care to point out that since its electoral standing was strongest in industrial suburbs most of its voters were drawn from the ranks of the workers. 101 There was no suggestion in 1961 from the Communist Party that an exchange of preferences should be arranged between the A.L.P. and the D.L.P., a suggestion which it had gladly made in 1958.

Looking to the future, the speakers at the 19th Congress again alluded to the possibility of a serious economic crisis bringing with it widespread social discontent. L. Aarons predicted that as

this crisis developed the workers would find allies in other classes with an interest in defeating monopolies; the small and middle farmers, the urban middle class, and the small and middle capitalists were amongst the likely allies he mentioned.\textsuperscript{102} Sharkey claimed that the Government's assistance to the monopolies at the expense of the 'petty-bourgeois and middle capitalists' as well as the workers would lead inevitably to 'mass struggles'.\textsuperscript{103} From such ideas, and from the general themes about monopoly exploitation expounded at the Congress, emerged the Party's election slogan - 'The People Against Monopoly, for Peace, Higher Living Standards, Democracy'.\textsuperscript{104}

In the campaign for the Federal Election of 9 December 1961, the Communist Party again urged its supporters to give second preferences to the A.L.P. and to vote for Labor candidates where no Communists were offering. W.J. Brown enjoined Communists to make the campaign an occasion for strengthening the united front.

An important task of campaign directors, candidates, and, in fact, all campaign workers is to develop the widest possible united front discussion with rank and file A.L.P. workers during campaign meeting rounds, leafleting or paste-up activities.

Friendly relations should be established with the A.L.P. campaign headquarters. The question of exchange of preferences should be raised in a correct way, re-stating that Communist policy is to give the Labor candidates second preferences and

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{102} \textit{Ibid.}, July 1961, p.278.
\item \textsuperscript{103} \textit{Ibid.}, p.270.
\item \textsuperscript{104} \textit{Ibid.}, February 1962, p.40.
\end{itemize}
pointing out in a friendly, non-sectarian way that A.L.P. preferences should go to the Communist Party, a working class party and not to the party of the workers' enemy.\textsuperscript{105}

The general campaign rolled on above the Communists' heads. Since the Government parties could safely leave the Communist issue to the D.L.P. they did not place undue emphasis on the question although their candidates frequently referred to unity tickets and the Treasurer, H.E. Holt, alleged that four Labor Senate contestants were Communists or fellow-travellers.\textsuperscript{106} Nevertheless, they did not use the Communist bogey to any great extent, despite the fact that in 1960 the Liberal Party had widely distributed an anti-Communist pamphlet\textsuperscript{107} and Menzies had referred at length to the dangers of Communism at a Liberal meeting in Melbourne.\textsuperscript{108} The leader of the Country Party, J. McEwen, left the subject well alone during the campaign; this was probably due partly to the fact that he was less given to anti-Communist polemics than his predecessor, Sir Arthur Fadden, and partly to the spectacular increases in the sales of wheat and wool to Communist China, which had become Australia's fifth best customer in 1960-61.\textsuperscript{109} The D.L.P.

\textsuperscript{105}\textit{Ibid.}, November 1961, p.419.
\textsuperscript{106}\textit{S.M.H.}, 21 October 1961.
\textsuperscript{107}\textit{The Face of Communism: A Threat and a Challenge to Free Men Everywhere}, Sydney, n.d.
\textsuperscript{108}\textit{Age}, 24 September 1960.
of course, maintained that Communism was the principle issue of the

election. \footnote{110}

The election produced an unexpectedly close result, but although
the Labor Party secured more votes than the Government parties, the
latter retained power with a majority of two, having held many seats
with the aid of D.L.P. preferences. The Government had nevertheless
lost control of the Senate which after 1 July 1962 was composed of 30
Liberal and Country Party, 28 Labor, one D.L.P. and one Independent
member. The Communist Party, whose 21 candidates for House seats
polled 25,429 votes, tended to increase its vote in seats contested
by right-wing Labor candidates and to lose support in seats contested
by left-wing Labor men. \footnote{111} With the exception of Kooyong, the Party
ominated candidates only for blue-ribbon Labor seats or non-Labor
seats containing strong working-class enclaves. The Communist Senate
vote slumped because, for the first time since 1951, it failed to
secure the first place on the ballot paper for the New South Wales
contest in which it polled only 18,702 votes. Had it not been for
the fact that the Communist team in Victoria (which gained first
place on the ballot paper) attracted 45,316 votes, the Party's
Australia-wide vote would have been far below the 78,148 (1.6 per
cent of the total) which it in fact recorded.

\footnote{110}{S.M.H., 30 October 1961.}

\footnote{111}{See Joe Palmada in \textit{Communist Review}, February 1962, p.40.}
At this point, there is room for considering whether the Communist Party has substantially increased its political following since the Second World War. The two tables given below, the first listing the Communist Senate votes for the three Eastern States since 1949 and the second setting out the Communists' percentage votes in six representative House seats since 1943, indicate a steady decline in the late forties and a levelling out at a low level in recent years. The Senate table shows first, the distortion which 'first-place-on-the-ballot-paper' produced, particularly in New South Wales, and second

**COMMUNIST SENATE VOTES AS A PERCENTAGE OF THE VALID VOTES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>New South Wales</th>
<th>Victoria</th>
<th>Queensland</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1949</td>
<td>1.70</td>
<td>3.53*</td>
<td>1.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>3.59*</td>
<td>1.45</td>
<td>1.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1953</td>
<td>4.48*</td>
<td>3.48*</td>
<td>1.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1955</td>
<td>6.33*</td>
<td>1.14</td>
<td>4.15*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1958</td>
<td>5.90*</td>
<td>0.89</td>
<td>0.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>1.05</td>
<td>3.35*</td>
<td>0.71</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* First place on the ballot paper.

that the decline of Communist support in these States, taken as a whole, has been steady; from 1.73 to 0.71 per cent in Queensland, from 1.70 to 1.05 per cent in New South Wales and from 1.45 (1951) to 0.89 per cent (1958) in Victoria. The House of Representatives electorates chosen for the second table cover the range of backgrounds in which the Party has worked since the war. Hunter encloses a number of mining communities, Newcastle an industrial area, West
Sydney and Yarra are based on working-class suburbs, Herbert includes the port of Bowen (with militant traditions) and Kooyong, the black sheep in this grouping, is a middle-class suburban seat held by the Prime Minister, whom the Communists have taken a consistent delight in challenging.

COMMUNIST VOTES IN CERTAIN HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES SEATS AS A PERCENTAGE OF THE VALID VOTES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Herbert</th>
<th>Hunter</th>
<th>Kooyong</th>
<th>Newcastle</th>
<th>West Sydney</th>
<th>Yarra</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1943</td>
<td>34.20</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>8.18</td>
<td>11.34</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>10.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1949</td>
<td>5.24</td>
<td>9.58</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3.23</td>
<td>5.01</td>
<td>2.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>3.23</td>
<td>7.24</td>
<td>4.15</td>
<td>4.30</td>
<td>10.45</td>
<td>4.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1954</td>
<td>3.53</td>
<td>6.13</td>
<td>1.80</td>
<td>1.98</td>
<td>6.07</td>
<td>3.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1955</td>
<td>6.51</td>
<td>7.83</td>
<td>1.19</td>
<td>2.19</td>
<td>6.15</td>
<td>2.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1958</td>
<td>1.79</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1.07</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4.33</td>
<td>1.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>2.76</td>
<td>5.70</td>
<td>0.99</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>5.60</td>
<td>1.72</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

F.W. Paterson had sufficient personal backing in Herbert to attract the exceptionally high vote of 34.20 per cent in 1943; under first-past-the-post voting this would have brought him within reach of winning in a three-cornered contest but under preferential voting a Communist candidate, unless he could win Labor's second preferences, would have to obtain at least 46 or 47 per cent of the primary votes to stand a chance of remaining ahead on the final count. The 1943 and 1946 votes at Herbert were highly exceptional; in only three other cases did a Communist poll over 10 per cent of the valid votes, at Newcastle and Yarra in 1943 and at West Sydney in 1951. Providing allowance is made for the boundary changes made in the electoral redistributions of 1949 and 1955, the trends in these electorates (except in Kooyong)
give some idea of how the Party's fortunes fluctuated in areas where it had some social basis. The decline from 1943 to 1949 is quite marked, but the pattern of change in the fifties is confused. There was a recovery in three seats in 1951 balanced by a decline in two others; in 1954 the vote fell in all seats except Herbert, and rose in all except Kooyong and Yarra in 1955; a further fall occurred in the four seats contested in 1958, followed by a slight recovery in 1961 in all cases except Kooyong and (possibly) Hunter. The overall trend in the fifties, however, was unmistakably a downward one; it is most unlikely that the slight upturn of 1961 represents the beginning of better electoral days for the Party. Social unrest is more likely to increase support for the left-wing Labor figures who represent such radical electorates as West Sydney, Hunter, Newcastle and Yarra. At the same time, it is quite likely that the size of the concealed Communist vote is considerable and that, as Sharkey has often suggested, it would do much better under proportional representation.

The Communist Party in 1962

The Communist Party of Australia enters its forty-third year with its illusions intact. The troubles of the revisionist defection are almost forgotten and Sharkey and Dixon, now 64 and 57 respectively, remain apparently unassailable as leaders. But although their broad interpretations of Australian conditions and the Party's strategic problems remain virtually unchallenged, they have had some difficulty
of late in holding the Party to the Soviet line in the current disputes within the international Communist movement. The points of difference between the Soviet Union and China are well known; whereas the Russians suggested that war with the capitalist countries was not inevitable and that the conventions of 'peaceful co-existence' would permit a peaceful transition to world Socialism, the Chinese leaders held to the view that war between the Communist and imperialist countries remained inevitable.\(^{112}\) The Soviet leaders believed that war could be prevented because the balance of power had now altered in favour of the Communist countries and because the Soviet Union possessed atomic weapons. At first the Australian Party tended to side with the Chinese, with whom it had enjoyed close contacts throughout the fifties, a number of its young functionaries having been impressed by the enthusiasm which they encountered on visits to China. Besides, Sharkey and Dixon were by temperament and conviction orthodox in their revolutionism; for them the Soviet position savoured of revisionism and the Chinese position of orthodox Leninism. At the Conference of 81 Communist Parties at Moscow in November 1960 the Australian Party was one of the four which took China's part in the proceedings.\(^{113}\) \textit{Tribune}, however, described stories of a


Sino-Soviet divergence as 'baseless'; but it emerged later that the dispute had created differences amongst members of the Australian Party. G. McDonald, an organiser of the Victorian Branch of the B.W.I.U., was expelled from the Party in 1961 for urging, in roneoed leaflets, that the rank-and-file should be allowed to discuss the issues at stake.

In October 1961, Sharkey visited Moscow as a delegate to the 22nd Congress of the C.P.S.U., where Khrushchov again referred in strong terms to the errors connected with the cult of the individual which had prevailed in Stalin's times. He made no critical mention of the Chinese but strongly attacked the Albanian Party of Labour for having an outlook which was unmistakeably in sympathy with that of the Chinese Party. Enver Hoxha, First Secretary of the Albanian Party, replied in a speech delivered at Tirana, Albania, on 7 November, in which he attacked the C.P.S.U., accused its leaders of revisionism and of fawning to imperialism. Sharkey's first reports to Australia were mildly pro-Soviet and after Hoxha's speech he appears to have swung even more firmly to the Soviet side. He had some difficulty in

114 Tribune, 9 November 1960.
117 See, for example, Tribune, 8 November 1961.
swinging the rest of the Party's leadership behind him. In the March 1962 issue of the Communist Review a statement rebutting Hoxha's complaints and affirming the Australian Party's support for the resolution adopted by the 81 Parties in November 1960 was published. This statement had been adopted at a meeting of the Political Committee on 20 December 1961 and had subsequently been the subject of dispute amongst the members of the Central Committee. When this body met early in February it endorsed the Political Committee's statement by 35 votes to 2, with one abstention. Dixon, who had been ill beforehand, was said to have supported the adoption of the statement. An anonymous correspondent in the Bulletin claimed later that fully six members of the Central Committee, including Hughes and Thornton, had opposed the statement, that three had voted against it, and that Dixon had expressed doubts about its contents. Some objections were raised by the Victorian State Committee, which came into line following a visit by Sharkey. E.F. Hill, it would appear, had committed himself rather heavily to the Chinese position, and he lost his places as Secretary of the Victorian State Committee and as

---

119 Ibid., p.70.
120 Bulletin, 12 May 1962.
121 Tribune, 7 March 1962.
a member of the four-man Secretariat. He nevertheless remained on the Political Committee, the Central Committee and the Victorian State Committee. With Hill's demotion, the flutter in the dovecots subsided, without having produced much serious unrest amongst the rank-and-file membership.

Although data on this subject is skimpy, the Party's membership does appear to have been increasing again recently. A report from Brisbane in 1959 said that 43 members had been recruited there and that local Tribune sales had increased by 10 per cent. An Adelaide report said that the Party's South Australian membership had been increased by 25 per cent (that is, about 60 members) in 1958. Recent estimates of total membership have ranged from 5,000 in 1959 to 5,800 in 1961. The latter figure is probably too low; it would be surprising if the 1958 total of about 5,850 has not been exceeded.

---

122 Ibid., 14 March 1962. The announcement of Hill's demotion appeared in three small paragraphs at the bottom of page ten in the twelve-page Tribune. See also the statement by Hill in ibid., 25 April 1962.
123 Ibid., 18 April 1962.
125 Ibid., September 1959, p.378.
126 Observer, 17 October 1959.
127 Fact, 7 December 1961. Fred Wells recently put the figure at 5,000 (Nation, 2 June 1962.
128 See above, p.317.
by at least 1,000 additional members. The indications are that the
new recruits are in many cases young men and not old hands returning
to the 'old factional rat-race'. The Adelaide report cited above
spoke with some enthusiasm about the new men.

Our new members constitute a large percentage of the most
active core of Party activists in South Australia. In many
cases they seem keener to participate in Party work and study
than some of our older, more experienced comrades. They have
come to the Party in a different, more favourable period and
therefore seem to lack some of the inhibitions, inferiority
complexes and fear of the masses that pervade the work of quite
a section of our older members.129

At the same time, the frequent references to the need for better cadres
and more ideological education130 suggest that the Australian Party
has not yet developed the high degree of integration and organisation
which would enable it either to expand very far beyond its present
size or survive an extended period of clandestine activity.

Information on the Party press is also incomplete. Tribune sales
have risen again lately (circulation in New South Wales is reported
to have increased by 1,300 in 1961131) and in November 1960 publication
of the Queensland Guardian began again after a gap of six years. On
the debit side, however, it remains true that the Tribune suffers from
a lack of inspired reporting from the local branch level, and that

130 See, for example, B. Taft, 'Our Cadre Policy', ibid., February
131 Ibid., June 1962, p.180. Tribune sales are reported to have
gone up by 1,835 between June and November 1961 (Tribune, 6 December
1961).
the Communist Review retains its laboured and jargon-ridden style. Its analyses of the Australian social structure and political trends are still overdrawn and loaded with a false sense of melodrama.

The Party is still far from attaining any of its immediate class objectives. It still works on the assumption that the united front strategy and its trade union connections will ultimately bring it the 'contact with the masses' which would reduce its isolation in Australian society and its vulnerability within the political system. Its influence is strong only in a few sections of the working class; the waterside workers of the main ports, the miners (especially those belonging to the Hunter Valley and Newcastle communities), seamen and some groups amongst the ironworkers, railwaymen, building workers and engineers. Where its trade union power has largely been a function of the effectiveness of its workers, its position has already been threatened by the A.L.P's persistent efforts to break the practice of unity tickets. The front organisations through which it hoped to influence the urban middle classes do not possess large memberships; its youth and student organisations have lost their former drive; its efforts to gain recruits and supporters amongst the rural poor have been fruitless, and will continue to be so unless it can achieve the near miracle of winning over the A.W.U. Above all, the Party must reckon with the possibility that its small membership and its lack of popularity may again invite an attempt to ban it by legislation, especially now that Dr Evatt has retired from politics. A marked
deterioration in economic conditions might increase its support amongst the working class, provided international considerations did not force it to adopt strong anti-reformist and adventurist rather than united front strategies, but this possibility remains remote.

Recent political trends have increased the Party's discomfiture. The A.L.P.'s good showing in the 1961 election, although it dispelled the myth that the loss of some Catholic votes had left it electorally enfeebled, nevertheless whetted the appetite of the Labor leaders for a stiffer policy towards unity tickets. The fact which most troubles them is that although the A.L.P. did very well in most States, and exceeded expectations in Queensland, it failed to make up its Victorian losses; at the 1954 election, the A.L.P. won 15 Victorian seats, but this total fell in 1955 to 10 as a result of the split; none of the five seats lost was regained at either the 1958 or the 1961 elections while the D.L.P. vote has remained constant at 14.75 per cent. 132 There was no surprise, therefore, when in January the A.L.P. Federal Executive ordered the Victorian Branch to take action against the use of unity tickets, particularly in the A.R.U. 133 The Victorian Branch refused to be pushed too hard and later claimed that the evidence against A.L.P. members alleged to have stood on A.R.U. unity tickets was not sufficient

---


133 *S.M.H.*, 13 January 1962.
to warrant expulsion. Dr J.F. Cairns, the left-wing Victorian M.H.R., asserted that trade unionists 'should have freedom to associate with whom they like', a statement to which the Federal President, W.R. Colbourne, took exception. In New South Wales, on the other hand, the pressure on unity tickets was strictly maintained. C.T. Oliver, the A.L.P. State President, stated in June that A.L.P. members must vote for A.L.P. candidates in union ballots, a directive which marked a further stage in the A.L.P.'s slow drift towards a direct re-intervention in union politics. Expulsions for breaches of the unity ticket ban continued in New South Wales.

The Communists claimed to see in such developments a further indication of the A.L.P.'s drift to the Right. Sharkey reported to the Central Committee a few months ago that the right-wing forces in the Labor Party were consolidating their control with a view to making important policy concession to the D.L.P. Their aim, of course, was to achieve an electoral pact with the D.L.P., even if Labor principles were sacrificed in the process. Sharkey then went on to elaborate

---

134 Age, 14 April 1962.
136 S.M.H., 19 June 1962.
137 Canberra Times, 15 September 1962.
his conception of the three groupings inside the Federal Parliamentary Labor Party: identified with the clerical Right were 20 or so members from States other than Victoria 'who represent much the same ideology as the expelled D.L.P’ers'; the largest grouping 'is that of Mr. Calwell which is also Rightist and is endeavouring to conciliate the D.L.P.' by 'indulging in reactionary anti-Communism'; on the Left was a third group, which, with the backing of militants in the Labor movement, 'is struggling for progressive policies and fighting against the extreme Rightwing.' Sharkey nevertheless claimed that the need for the united front remained; the Calwell group, he pointed out, still upheld 'traditional A.L.P. reformism' and the Communist Party would support it when it put forward proposals for the benefit of the working people. 139 Even so, the dangers of left sectarianism spreading through the Party had become greater. Just before his death, E. Robertson warned that unless the Party avoided sectarianism and dogmatism it stood a strong chance of becoming isolated in the Labor movement. 140 Reporting to the Central Committee in August, Sharkey said:

While Right mistakes, in glossing over reactionary trends in A.L.P. policies or creating illusions about the role of a Federal Labor Government are damaging to our Party and the working class, left errors in this situation constitute the main danger. 141

139 Ibid., p.170.
140 Ibid., p.178.
141 Tribune, 22 August 1962.
Just before the Federal Election of 1961, Sharkey had warned that the Groupers had launched a new drive, backed by Santamaria's N.C.C.; their aim, he said, was to split the A.C.T.U. and to gain control of certain unions. Since then, the Communists have played up the N.C.C. bogey with a care suggesting that they see in it a means of reviving traditionalist fears of the Groupers and restoring their faith in united front activities. Joe Palamada suggested that the N.C.C. acted as a general staff directing the operations of the D.L.P. and the Q.L.P.; Paul Mortier claimed that it wished to convert the trade unions into 'servile instruments of imperialism in the cold war'; Sharkey saw it working in league with the security police to change the unions into 'fascist type unions such as those set up by Mussolini and Hitler, subordinated to the monopolies and warmongers'; Tribune described both the N.C.C. and the D.L.P. as the agents of monopoly capitalism - behind them was the 'sinister Black Hand' of Santamaria. In a recent pamphlet, Mortier warned that the N.C.C. was redoubling its efforts to split the A.C.T.U., subvert the A.L.P. and frustrate the 'united and active movement of

143 Ibid., February 1962, p.41.
144 Ibid., April 1962, p.128.
145 Ibid., June 1962, p.171.
146 Tribune, 29 August 1962.
working people' which had come into being. 'That is why an urgent task, part of the fight against monopoly and the Menzies Government, is to destroy the influence of the N.C.C. in the labour movement.'

147

The Party is also disturbed about the spread of virulent anti-Communist propaganda in recent years, not only by such Catholic lay bodies as Santamaria's N.C.C. and the Knights of the Southern Cross, 148 but also by a number of East European migrant associations which have become active of late. A number of federal parliamentarians, including Senator G.R. Cole, Sir Wilfred Kent-Hughes and Senator J.G. Gorton, have publicly supported the right-wing and separatist Anti-Bolshevik Bloc of Nations, whose membership overlaps to some extent with that of the Asian Peoples' Anti-Communist League, founded in South Korea in 1954. The League, whose ties with the D.L.P. in Western Australia and Victoria are extremely close, was recently established on a federal basis in Australia with F.P. McManus, the former Victorian D.L.P. Senator, as Federal Secretary and a Liberal, Senator G.C. Hannan, as Federal President. However, the Communist Party does not regard the immigration programme today with as much suspicion as it did in the late forties and early fifties and it favours increasing the intake of Southern European migrants, particularly Italians and Greeks. In August 1962, Tribune commenced a regular political and industrial column in the Italian language.

147 Paul Mortier, Danger, NCC at Work, Sydney, 1962, p.44.
148 S.M.H., 28 October 1959.
With anti-Communist strength rising in a number of trade unions, the R.S.L. launched yet another campaign to 'expose' the activities of the Communist Party.\(^{149}\) The Menzies Government declared that it would 'assist' the R.S.L. in its campaign.\(^{150}\) However, it met with a poor response from many metropolitan newspapers, mainly because of the wildly exaggerated and melodramatic statements which the League issued to the press. On the other hand, the R.S.L. claimed that it received strong support from East European migrants and a number of unions,\(^{151}\) including the A.W.U.,\(^{152}\) and the Victorian Branches of the F.C.U. and the Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and Joiners.\(^{153}\) Sharkey depicted the R.S.L.'s anti-Communist drive as a 'screen for war preparations' and an attack on civil liberties and the Labor movement.\(^{154}\)

In the trade unions, the Communists lost control of the A.E.U. in February 1962 when one of the two Communist members of the union's Commonwealth Council, C.G. Hennessy, was defeated by J. McDowell (A.L.P.) by 6,182 votes to 2,957.\(^{155}\) McDowell, together with another

---

149 Canberra Times, 15 February 1962.
150 Ibid., 9 March 1962.
151 Sunday Telegraph, 12 August 1962.
152 Ibid., 25 March 1962.
153 Tribune, 4 April 1962.
155 Canberra Times, 24 February 1962.
anti-Communist, C. Shearer, was able to outvote the sole remaining Communist, C.M. Southwell. Although McDowell did not receive official support from the A.L.P.'s leaders, he did secure (as Shearer had done in 1961) considerable backing from the N.C.C. In June, the union's Sydney District Secretary, A. Searle, a Communist, was defeated by an A.L.P. member following C.T. Oliver's direction to A.L.P. members to support Labor Party candidates. Recently, however, the Executive Council of the A.E.U. in London has directed the Commonwealth Council of the Australian body to conduct future ballots in accordance with its own rules, that is, without resort to court-controlled ballots. It is still too early to tell whether this directive will have any effect on the Australian situation. Within the A.C.T.U., also, the Communists have found their influence dwindling; in August 1962 the A.C.T.U. Interstate Executive assured the dissident right-wing unions that the levies imposed on member unions would not be used to finance visits of trade union delegations from Communist countries.

159 Tribune, 29 September 1962.
Recent trends in several unions suggest that the A.L.P.'s latest intrusion into industrial politics is beginning to break down the united front pattern of the late fifties. Instead of the two-party systems which took shape a few years ago, an oddly balanced three-party situation is developing, with A.L.P. members forming amorphous centre groupings between militant-Communist and Grouper extremes. In the recent ballot of the Melbourne Branch of the W.W.F., for example, three teams were in competition; an Industrial Group ticket supported by the D.L.P., a traditionalist A.L.P. group, and a militant-Communist united front team (which again nominated J.H. Cummins, a Grouper, for the post of President). The latter team was returned to office, despite the fact that the combined votes of the Grouper and A.L.P. teams was almost equal to their own. Split voting, in fact, could be one of the considerations driving centre A.L.P. teams to form united-fronts-in-reverse. In the Victorian Branch of the A.R.U., also, some A.L.P. members have formed a Progressive United Union Team to contest the 1963 election; the Secretary of the union's Industrial Group has already invited it to make common cause with his side. Whether the A.L.P.'s intervention will produce this three-party effect in other States has yet to be seen; but the problem raised in Victoria applies elsewhere. Can

the A.L.P. stop at simply banning unity tickets; will not the logic of its intervention drive it into an alliance with the ex-Grouper and right-wing unions against the Communists and militants? Short's forecast that if the A.L.P. continued its present policy the Communists would be driven out of the unions in three to five years assumes a positive answer to these questions.

163 Ibid., 6 December 1961.
PART FOUR
CHAPTER TEN
CONCLUSION

Perhaps the most difficult task of Australian Communist leaders has been to maintain the faith of their followers in the certainty of ultimate success. The constantly receding mirage of the revolutionary crisis has sustained the Party through the whole of its forty-two years. The doctrine has altered from time to time; during the period 1930–34 the Party pursued a strong anti-reformist strategy, presenting its members with the hope of sudden revolution in which the organised proletariat would seize State power and institute a class dictatorship. Organisationally, the emphasis was on the Party's being geared for the rapid assumption and exercise of revolutionary authority. Between 1935 and 1939 and between 1941 and 1946, the doctrine was that, as Australian capitalism developed, the proletariat would broaden and become more class conscious and that, in consequence, the social basis for a large progressive party would be provided. The usual assumption was that the liberal-bourgeois A.L.P. would be supplanted (the exact sequence of events was not made clear) by a truly Socialist party, comprising the Communist Party and the progressive elements of the former Labor Party. The Party was depicted as playing a moderate role in the course of this transition. A reversion to the extreme strategies of the 1930–34 period occurred during the years 1947–49, when the Party implemented its 'adventurist' strategies. Since 1950,
however, it has pursued a further variant of the united front strategy: at first, the theory was that the A.L.P. would be transformed into a genuinely Socialist party with which the Communist Party would fuse to institute People's Power although in recent years, in reaction to the split of the Labor Party and revisionist talk within the Party about the peaceful transition to Socialism, the Communist leaders have tended to re-emphasise the independent role of the Party in attracting progressive support in pre-revolutionary politics. Communist doctrine has always been directed towards a vision, or visions — the revolutionary crisis internally and the triumph of Socialism on the world scale. Sharkey's claims of impending economic disaster have now become part of the Communist ritual, but he attracts attention when he suggests that the Soviet Union will within the next decade outstrip the United States as an industrial power, marking a further step towards the triumph of international Communism.¹

Doctrinally, however, the Australian Communists have found difficulty in squaring their stress on the Party's revolutionary mission, suggesting the need for organisational solidarity and discipline, with their claim that it should play a responsible role in pre-revolutionary politics, by taking part in election campaigns, forming a party in parliament should the occasion arise, and assisting the A.L.P. in its struggle with the Right. In his work on the British

Communist Party, Henry Pelling concluded: 'All the absurdities of the history of the party spring from this one fact, that it has been a revolutionary party in a non-revolutionary situation.' His comment could well apply to the Australian Party. The internal disputes sparked off by the C.P.S.U's 20th Congress of 1956, and culminating in the defection of the revisionists, brought the conflicting implications of these two policies into the open. The revisionists claimed that if the Party agreed that the transition to Socialism would be achieved peacefully within the structure of the liberal, democratic State, then it had to adopt an organisational form appropriate to the special circumstances of the transitional period; it would have to become an 'open' party, democratically organised; it would have to admit the co-existence of different points of view; it would have to study more carefully the problems of obtaining mass electoral support on non-Communist policies. The Sharkey-Dixon leadership replied, not by counter-argument, but by driving the revisionists out of the Party and by asserting the continued need for democratic centralism in organisation; they claimed that the Party had still to formulate its strategies on the assumption that the transition, while peaceful in the long run, would nevertheless be characterised by sharp class tensions and some vicious rearguard fighting by the bourgeoisie.

But there was more to their reaction than that. Sharkey and Dixon

---

remained revolutionaries and orthodox Leninists at heart, as is shown by their support of the Chinese case in the Sino-Soviet dispute until 1961. The revisionists' arguments have still to be answered, and their chief accusation, that the Communist Party had not become a mass party because of organisational and doctrinal rigidity, retains its sting.

As we suggested in the first chapter, the explanation for the Communist Party's failure to develop a mass following lies partly in its overseas connections and partly in the character of the Australian Labor movement; most groups of the Australian working class have enjoyed a level of material welfare which compares favourably with those prevailing in other Western countries, and they have found little reason to question the desirability of working within the arbitration system and giving political support to the A.L.P., which has shown on several occasions that it can secure socio-economic reforms which benefit the underprivileged. The charge that the Communist Party is nothing more than an agent of the Soviet Union, deputed to foment revolutions in Australia, has been sustained by the way in which Australian Communists adjusted their strategies to suit changes in the international line — in 1929, 1935, 1939, 1941, 1947 and 1950. In addition, the Communists' activities during the 'adventurist' phases of 1930–34 and 1947–49 were sufficiently reckless to bear out many of the things their detractors had been saying about them. The memories of these periods are easily evoked by anti-Communist organisations wishing to ban or isolate the Party. Furthermore, both the
'adventurist' periods occurred at times when the Party had good opportunities of building up a mass following; had it not adopted a hostile attitude to the Labor Party during the great depression, but instead pursued a united front strategy, it might well have emerged as an electoral and parliamentary force of consequence instead of condemning itself to continued isolation. Again, had it not embarked on the wild industrial policies of the late forties it might have retained, and possibly expanded, the considerable support its wartime activities had brought it.

The Communist Party in Australia bitterly resents the suggestion that it serves as an agent for a foreign power, and is alien to Australian society. Rebutting such charges, J.R. Hughes maintained that the Party's policy and programme were 'thoroughly pro-Australian and based on the best traditions of our people in the struggle for a completely free and independent Australia.' It is important to recognise that Australian Communists do identify themselves with the great radical symbols of the Australian Labor movement; they see themselves as embodying the values of the insurgents at Eureka in 1854 and of the workers during the great strikes of the early nineties. While it is true that the Australian Communists' interest in things Russian (and Chinese), and particularly their addiction to the abstruse jargon of Marxism-Leninism, convey the impression that their

---

Tribune, 18 July 1962.
Party has been unduly affected by its overseas connections, it is also true that they pride themselves on their Australianism and their sympathy with the values of the Australian working class. At public meetings Sharkey and Dixon speak in the direct and idiomatic language of industrial leaders. As Louise Overacker has observed, the Party 'has largely established its claim to the tradition of militancy running far back in the history of the [Labor] movement.'

The united front strategy of the fifties, chiefly aimed at defeating the Menzies Government, was hardly capable of obtaining the Party a mass following. Its implementation would have been extremely difficult had the A.L.P. not been in opposition at the federal level throughout the fifties. It was, at best, a defensive arrangement, particularly in the trade union movement, and its effectiveness as a means of extending the Party's influence was hampered in the first instance by the A.L.P's determination to seal off its political membership from Communist penetration and, in industrial affairs, to discourage co-operation between Labor and Communist unionists. In addition, the united front strategy, since it involved a public blurring of the issues separating the Communist and Labor Parties, hindered the work of educating Communist cadres and militants about the importance of their Party's special doctrines and long-term objectives. The Communist Party's recent difficulties in defining its separate identity,

---

and in securing the acceptance of that identity by its rank-and-file, are borne out by the constant references to right opportunism and 'submergence' as the errors of united front enthusiasts. Only in the trade unions does the Communist Party stand for a distinctive outlook; in election campaigns its policies are hardly noticed except when they appear, distorted, in the polemics of anti-Communist politicians. In Australian society, the Communist Party has not, except for a few years at the end of the Second World War, been accepted as a party wishing to play a 'responsible' role in the party system.

If a crisis, economic or otherwise, does occur in the near future, the Party may have a chance of expanding its following amongst the working class in the main industrial centres, but such an expansion would not provide it with the electoral strength it would need to take power. It faces a further handicap in that many of the unions in which its standing is most secure, such as the Miners' Federation and the W.W.F., are based on declining groups; to maintain its union power it must penetrate the organisations representing white-collar workers. The Party's enduring handicap remains the narrowness of its social base; it has failed conspicuously to gain any appreciable following amongst either the small farmer or middle-class groups, both of which would be seriously affected by an economic crisis. Their political response in this event might be a progressive one, providing the Communists with class allies, but it could equally well be a negative, possibly reactionary one, as the New Guard and Social Credit
movements of the depression period would appear to indicate. The Communist Party is thus at a political disadvantage on two counts; its following is not only limited amongst the working class but it has no basis at all for recruiting support in other classes.

The Party's main point of access to the working class is its control of certain important trade unions. In trade union politics, also, the Communists have weakened their position in the past by reckless policies, particularly by involving unions under their control in strike action for political purposes. Their failure to extent and sustain the great coal strike of 1949 not only revealed the limits of their power in the trade union movement; it discredited Communist cadres in the eyes of many traditionalist Labor unionists and provided the opportunity for the Industrial Groups' offensive of the early fifties. Had the Party in the late forties not pursued its 'adventurist' strategies and instead continued its earlier policies of drifting with the tides of unionist feeling, working within the arbitration system without complaint, using the strike weapon sparingly (and then only to attain economic ends) it would have entered the recent decade in a much stronger position. The set backs of 1950-52 have in many cases never been made good; the loss of the F.I.A. and the F.C.U. were particularly serious ones. The united front counter-offensive of 1954-56 served to push the Groupers back from some positions but it did not provide the Communists with the opportunity for establishing specifically Communist control of militant unions, and
of using that control to further the Party's programme of obtaining mass support.

The rise of the D.L.P. following the Labor split of 1955, and the subsequent reassertion of right-wing leadership within the A.L.P., led to the campaign against unity tickets (and the sanctions employed to back them up) which has recently shown signs of becoming an organised intrusion by the Labor Party into trade union affairs. The irony of this development is that it has been conditioned by considerations of Labor's electoral advantage rather than by circumstances in trade union politics. During the period of the united front, indeed, the Communists have shown considerable restraint in advancing their interests, and in resisting the Grouper and right-wing attacks; while working for good relations with A.L.P. unionists, the Communists have shown considerable skill in diplomacy and manoeuvre. The recent moves against unity tickets have placed the Party at a profound disadvantage, but as yet it still has more to gain by sustaining the united front, if only in the hope that the Groupers, backed by the National Civic Council, will again overplay their hand and drive the mass of traditionalist Labor unionists to the Left. There is also the possibility that the A.L.P's intervention may be cut short or limited should its own left-wing groups become too discontented.

As small today and as limited in its social basis as it was during the early years of the Second World War, the Communist Party remains highly vulnerable. The danger of repression remains very real;
anti-Communist feeling has, if anything, been heightened in recent years by the sustained propaganda of the D.L.P. and by other bodies such as the R.S.L. and the N.C.C. A fresh move to have the Party banned, perhaps by another constitutional referendum, cannot be excluded – nor can the possibility that it might succeed; the vote against the 1951 referendum proposal was a very narrow one and it is difficult to see either Calwell or Whitlam emulating Dr Evatt’s example in defending civil liberties with passion and political recklessness. Were a ban imposed, the Communist Party has sufficient organisational discipline and integrity to go underground, but it is extremely doubtful whether, as a clandestine organisation, it would be able to hold together over a long period, let alone extend its mass support. Judging from misgivings expressed from time to time in the Party press, it would appear that many of its cadres lack either the training or the doctrinal grounding to cope adequately with a long period of underground work.

In one sense, the Communist Party is little more than an embattled faction in trade union politics, though a faction characterised by excessive discipline and doctrinal pretensions; most of its members are unionists, its best cadres man its factory branches, its tactics in trade union affairs are subtle and well-calculated. Yet even here it has to serve the conventions dictated by the great mass of unionists; economism, strikes for economic ends, faith in a reformist A.L.P., reliance on the arbitration system, these are the values which the Communists have either to serve or accept. Outside some of the Branches
of the traditionally militant unions, such as the Seamen's Union, the Miners' Federation and the W.W.F., Communist control of a union remains a function of the Party's ability to observe and exploit conventions which doctrinally it abhors.

Yet in another sense the Communists are correct when they point out that their importance in Australian politics will ultimately be determined by the fact that they represent here the values of the Communist world. At the Party's 19th Congress Sharkey reminded delegates that 'a very considerable part' of its strength was due to the fact that

we are not alone in the world but are an integral part of the great communist movement whose vanguard is the Soviet Union. We are part of the most influential movement in the present day world. We are part of that movement that is advancing and marching to even greater victories on a world scale....

The connection which has served them so badly in the past (except for the period 1941-45) may in the end prove their greatest advantage if the Soviet Union (and later Communist China) does succeed in surpassing the Western countries in industrial productivity, technological advance and living standards. Isaac Deutscher has written that the future economic ascendancy of the Soviet Union 'tends to place a huge question mark over the structure of Western society.' In underdeveloped countries such as

---

India and Burma the Communist bloc's material example is already the Communists' greatest asset, but in Australia it still does not count. For the present and the immediate future the Communist Party of Australia remains electorally insignificant, its importance restricted to its power in the trade union movement and its symbolic role in the politics of fear.
APPENDIX

BIOGRAPHICAL DETAILS OF PROMINENT COMMUNISTS AND EX-COMMUNISTS

Unfortunately, biographical information relating to a number of important Communists is extremely difficult to locate, so that a person's exclusion from this list in no way indicates that he (or she) does (or did) not occupy a leading position in the Party. Most of the prominent Communists who do not appear in this list have industrial working-class backgrounds. Details about Communists (and ex-Communists) with middle-class backgrounds are more readily obtainable. The biographical information which appears below has been culled from several sources, of which the most important are the Party's own publications and private correspondence. Persons who are known to have been born outside Australia have had their country of origin inserted in parentheses after their dates of birth. The remainder, to the best of my knowledge, were born in Australia. Only persons who are (or were) known to be definitely members of the Party have been included in this list. Former Communists have been clearly identified and the rest are (or were, at the time of their deaths) presumably still members of the Party.

In addition to the abbreviations used in the main body of the thesis, the following abbreviations are used:

413
C.P. Communist Party
Educ. Education
H.S. High School
Pres. President
Sec. Secretary
Univ. University


AARONS, Sam. Fought with International Brigade in Spanish Civil War. Sec., Western Australian State Committee, C.P., in forties and fifties.


BOUND, Max Alan. Sec., Tasmanian State Committee, C.P.


CALLAGHAN, John Pierce. Son of J.L. Callaghan, former member of the Queensland Land Court. Educ. Queensland Univ. (B.Sc., 1937; M.Sc., 1939). Former Biochemist, Royal North Shore Hospital. Former Chairman, Arts and Sciences Committee, C.P. Former Deputy Chairman, New South Wales Division, Australian Association of Scientific Workers. Brother of Mrs Kathleen Bacon (q.v.).


CHANDLER, Joseph Charles. Sec., Victorian Branch, B.W.I.U., since 1945 (Organiser, 1940-44). Left C.P., 1955; subsequently joined A.L.P.


COULL, James. Former member of Revolutionary Socialist Party. Sec., Victorian Branch, Liquor Employees' Union since July 1948.


DAVIS, Miss Florence Amy. Sec., Hotel, Club and Restaurant Employees' Union (N.S.W.) since 1947 (Assistant Sec., 1943–47).


GANDINI, John Rivo. Sec., Western Australian State Committee, C.P.


GIBSON, Ralph Siward. Son of Professor W.R. Boyce Gibson (Melbourne Univ.). Born 19 February 1906. Educ. Melbourne Grammar School, Melbourne Univ. (B.A., 1927), Manchester Univ. (M.A., 1930). Sec., Melbourne Univ. Labor Club, 1925–27. Former member of A.L.P. and British Labour Party. Joined C.P., 1932. Visited Soviet Union, 1933. Member of Victorian State Committee, C.P. since 1933 (for the greater part of this period, has held the positions of either Secretary or President of the State Committee). Member of Central Committee, C.P. since 1937. Brother of Professor A. Boyce Gibson (Melbourne Univ.) and Associate Professor Q.B. Gibson (Australian National Univ.).


GLASSON, Eric H. Sec., New South Wales Branch, Wool and Basil Workers' Union. Member of Central Committee, C.P. Died 8 July 1949.


GORDON, Terence Bruce. General Sec., Ships, Painters and Dockers' Union since 1945.


GRANT, Hugh. Sec., Sydney Branch, Boilermakers' Society since 1944.


HANSON, E.J. Sec., Queensland Branch, Operative Painters and Decorators' Union.


JONES, Claude. Born about 1916. Joined C.P., aged sixteen. Pres., Queensland State Committee, C.P. for many years (except during the early fifties when he was Chairman of the New South Wales State Committee, C.P.).


KING, John Hodge. Sec., Western District, Miners' Federation. Alderman, Lithgow City Council for several years.


LATTER, William. Pres., Coal Miners' Industrial Union, Western Australia since April 1952.


LOUDON, F. Sec., Newcastle Trades Hall Council until 1947.


McHenry, P. National Vice-Pres., F.I.A. during the forties.


MALONE, Patrick John. Sec., Victorian Builders Labourers' Federation since 1941. Member of Central Committee, C.P.


MILLAR, Thomas McLellan. Pres., Queensland Collieries Employees' Union.

MILLER, Kenneth Craig. Born 2 April 1913. Joined C.P., 1934. Served in World War II. Member of Central Committee, C.P.


MOTEN, Miss Mavis June. Born 1 June 1930. Educ. Melbourne Univ. National Sec., E.Y.L. Married to Alec Robertson (q.v.).


OGSTON, Adam. Born 4 December 1905 (Scotland). Former member of A.L.P. Served in World War II. Member of Central Committee, C.P.


PRICHARD, Miss Katharine Susannah. Born 1884 (Fiji). Foundation member, C.P., 1920. Former member of Central Committee, C.P. Visited Soviet Union, 1933. Authoress. Married to late Captain Hugo Throssell, V.C.

PURSE, Frank. Federal Sec., B.W.I.U. since 1947 (former Assistant Federal Sec.).


SEARLE, Mrs Henrietta. Former member of A.L.P. and State Labor Party. Former Sec., Women's Committee, C.P.


SENDY, John Alan. Sec., South Australian State Committee, C.P.


SMITH, B. Sec., Sydney Branch, Seamen's Union.


WILLIAMES, Mrs Cathleen Mary Isobel. Organiser, Victorian Branch, Liquor Employees' Union since 1948. Sec., Equal Pay Committee, Melbourne Trades Hall Council.


BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. OFFICIAL SOURCES


Commonwealth Law Reports


Official Year Book, Commonwealth of Australia

Parliamentary Debates, Commonwealth

Parliamentary Debates, New South Wales

Parliamentary Debates, Victoria

Parliamentary Debates, Queensland

Parliamentary Debates, South Australia

Parliamentary Debates, Western Australia

Parliamentary Handbook of the Commonwealth of Australia


2. PERIODICALS AND NEWSPAPERS

(a) Communist

Communist Review, Sydney.
Guardian, Brisbane.

436
Guardian, Melbourne.
Tribune, Sydney.

(b) Front Organisations

Friendship (Australian-Soviet Friendship Society), Sydney.
Liberty (Democratic Rights Council), Melbourne.
Our Women (Union of Australian Women), Sydney.
Peace (A.P.C.), Melbourne.
Progress, Sydney.
Realist Writer (Realist Writers' Groups), Sydney.
Target (E.Y.L.), Sydney.
World Trade Union News (W.F.T.U.), London.

(c) Metropolitan Newspapers

Advertiser, Adelaide.
Age, Melbourne.
Argus, Melbourne.
Canberra Times, Canberra.
Courier-Mail, Brisbane.
Daily Mirror, Sydney.
Daily Telegraph, Sydney.
Herald, Melbourne.
Mercury, Hobart.
News, Adelaide.
Northern Daily Leader, Tamworth.
Sun, Melbourne.
Sun, Sydney.
Sun-Herald, Sydney.
Sunday Mirror, Sydney.
Sunday Telegraph, Sydney.
Sydney Morning Herald, Sydney.
West Australian, Perth.

(d) Newspaper Publications

Argus Law Reports.

(e) Political Newspapers and Periodicals

Brian Fitzpatrick's Labor News Letter, Melbourne.
Century, Sydney.
Democrat (Victorian D.L.P.), Melbourne.
Fact (Victorian A.L.P.), Melbourne.
Freedom, Melbourne.
Labor Call (Victorian A.L.P.), Melbourne.
Labor Digest (New South Wales A.L.P.), Sydney.
New Age (Queensland A.L.P.), Brisbane.
News-Weekly (N.C.C. since 1960), Melbourne.
Sid Jordan's Views on the News, Sydney.
Socialist (Melbourne University A.L.P. Club), Melbourne.
Socialist and Industrial Labor, Sydney.
Standard (Q.L.P.), Brisbane.
Standard (New South Wales A.L.P.), Sydney.

(f) Trade Union Periodicals

Australian Worker (A.W.U.), Sydney.
Common Cause (Miners' Federation), Sydney.
Labor News (F.I.A.), Sydney.
Maritime Worker (W.W.F.), Sydney.

(g) General Periodicals

Advocate, Melbourne.
Australian Democrat, Melbourne.
Australian News Review, Melbourne.
Australian New Writing, Sydney.
Catholic Weekly, Sydney.
Catholic Worker, Melbourne.
Civil Liberty, Melbourne.
Dissent, Melbourne.
Far East Trade, London.
Free Spirit, Sydney.
Meanjin, Melbourne.
Melbourne University Magazine, Melbourne.
Month, Melbourne.
Mufti (Victorian R.S.L.), Melbourne.
Nation, Sydney.
New Voice, Melbourne.
Observer, Sydney.
Outlook, Sydney.
Overland, Melbourne.
Prospect, Melbourne.
Quadrant, Sydney.
Social Survey, Melbourne.
Twentieth Century, Melbourne.
Voice, Sydney.
(h) Academic Periodicals

A.P.S.A. News, Sydney.
Asian Survey, Berkeley, California.
Australian Quarterly, Sydney.
Historical Studies, Melbourne.
Journal of Industrial Relations, Sydney.
Problems of Communism, New York.

3. PARTY DOCUMENTS

(a) A.L.P.


(b) A.C.T.U.


(c) Communist Party

(i) Constitutions

Constitution of the Australian Communist Party (Adopted by the 14th National Congress, 1945), Sydney, n.d.
Constitution of the Communist Party of Australia (Adopted by the 16th National Congress, 1951), Sydney, 1951.

(ii) Programmes

Programme of the Australian Communist Party (Adopted by the 13th National Congress, 1943), Sydney, 1944.
Australia's Path to Socialism: Program of the Communist Party of Australia (Adopted by the 16th National Congress, 1951), Sydney, 1952.


(iii) Reports and Resolutions

A United Working Class and A United Front for Victory (Resolution adopted by the 13th National Congress), Sydney, 1943.


Communists in Congress (Reports to the 14th National Congress), Sydney, 1946.


The Way Forward (Resolutions adopted by the 15th National Congress), Sydney, 1948.

L.L. Sharkey, For Australia Prosperous and Independent (Report to the 15th National Congress), Sydney, 1948.


The People Against Monopoly (Resolution adopted by the 19th National Congress), Sydney, 1961.

4. UNPUBLISHED THESSES


5. PAMPHLETS

The pamphlets – both Communist and non-Communist – which have been consulted run into a very large number. It is unnecessary to list them all in detail here since they may be referred to in one or other of the collections made by the following persons:

(a) M.H. Ellis
(b) J.A. Ferguson
(c) R. Marginson
(d) S. Murray-Smith
(e) J.D. Playford
(f) I.A.H. Turner

The first two are held at the National Library, Canberra, while the others are held in the Archives of the Australian National University. Most of the important Communist Party pamphlets are referred to in the text. A select list follows:

(i) Communist


HUGHES, J.R., Keep the Unions Free, Sydney, 1949.


SHARKEY, L.L., Australian Communists and Soviet Russia, Sydney, 1947.


SHARKEY, L.L., Socialism in Australia: Communist View on Democratic Socialism, Sydney, 1957.


THORNTON, E., Trade Unions and the War, Sydney, 1942.


Ballot Riggers at Work! Melbourne, n.d.


Catholic Action at Work, Melbourne, 1945.


(ii) A.L.P.


Fighting Communism - The Democratic Way (Fabian Society of N.S.W.), Sydney, 1951.
(iii) Miscellaneous

CARR, Michael, Betrayal: Being a Short History of Australia's Fifth Column (Sane Democracy League), Sydney, n.d.


SHARPLEY, Cecil, I Was a Communist Leader, Melbourne, 1949.

The Communists v. The People, Brisbane, 1946.

The Face of Communism: A Threat and a Challenge to Free Men Everywhere (Liberal Party of Australia), Sydney, n.d.

Speakers' Notes: Referendum on Communism, Sydney, 1951, (Liberal Party of Australia), Sydney, n.d.


Spotlight on Santamaria, Melbourne, 1960.

6. ARTICLES


TRUMAN, Tom, 'Catholics and Politics in Australia', Western Political Quarterly, June 1959, Vol. XII, No. 2, pp.527-34.


WELLS, Fred, 'Right Strange for Mr Sharkey', Nation, 2 June 1962, pp.9-12.
7. BOOKS AND MONOGRAPHS

(a) Major works of Marxism–Leninism


STALIN, J., Problems of Leninism, Moscow, 1947.


(b) Commentaries on Marxism


MISTRANY, David, Marx Against the Peasant, London, 1951.


(c) Communism in overseas countries


(d) Communism in Australia


BOUSCAREN, Anthony T., Imperial Communism, Washington, 1953.


BURNS, Creighton, Parties and People: A Survey Based on the La Trobe Electorate, Melbourne, 1961.


CHISHOLM, A.H. (ed.), *The Australian Encyclopaedia*, 10 vols, Sydney, 1958, especially sections on 'Communist Party, Australian' and 'Trade Unions'.


DARK, E.P., *Who are the Reds?*, Sydney, 1946.


EGGLESTON, F.W., Reflections of an Australian Liberal, Melbourne, 1953.


FOENANDER, O. de R., Industrial Regulation in Australia, Melbourne, 1947.


FOENANDER, Orwell de R., Trade Unionism in Australia, Sydney, 1962.


LANG, J.T., Communism in Australia, Sydney, n.d.
LANG, J.T., Communism is Treason, Sydney, n.d.
LANG, J.T., I Remember, Sydney, n.d.


LEVI, Werner, Australia's Outlook on Asia, Sydney, 1958.

LINDSAY, Michael, China and the Cold War: A Study of International Politics, Melbourne, 1955.


MacKENZIE, Jeanne, Australian Paradox, Melbourne, 1961.


OWEN, J.E., The Road to Peace, Melbourne, 1954.

PERLMAN, Mark, Judges in Industry: A Study of labour arbitration in Australia, Melbourne, 1954.


WILKES, John and BENSON, S.E. (eds), Trade Unions in Australia, Sydney, 1959.


(e) Miscellaneous
