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THE AUSTRALIAN QUARTERLY

THE AUSTRALIAN POLITICAL PARTY SYSTEM

BY

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"*. . . The party system belongs to the mechanism of democracy and in my opinion is necessary for its healthy operation. . . . But democracy cannot really give us more than we put into it and it has only been able to achieve what it has because it has been stimulated by leadership and observed a relatively high degree of comradeship. . . . A democracy which does not produce leaders, condemns itself. . . .*"

Sir Frederick Eggleston in
Reflections of an Australian Liberal. (Melbourne, 1953.)

"*Now greeting, hooting and abuse,*
To each man's party prove of use
And mud and stones, and waving hats
And broken heads, and putrid cats
Are offsprings made to aide the cause
Of Order, Government, and Laws."

(From, "The Election Day". Anon.)

FOREWORD

The Australian Political Party System includes three papers read at the First Winter Forum of the Victorian Group of The Australian Institute of Political Science together with a fourth and introductory essay, assessing the three papers.

Established early in 1953, the Victorian group of the Institute launched its proceedings with a public discussion in Melbourne of a topic, always well to the fore in the public mind, if seldom examined calmly and creatively in the light of its basic and enduring qualities. It was in a spirit of eschewing the heat in preference for the light that the Victorian group organized its first forum; the papers read at it, and now brought before a wider public in this book, are illuminating and enlightening. Fully and clearly, two senior members of the great Australian political parties have set down their conceptions; two experienced university teachers of Politics have given us their somewhat more detached analyses. The four papers together tell a comprehensive story of the party structure in Australia which should be of interest to all students of Politics—not only those concerned with formal studies but also for the many for whom Politics is the stuff of life.

The Victorian group of the Institute takes pleasure in the knowledge that its First Winter Forum achieved the end hoped for—a thoughtful and creative discussion of one of the great topics of our times.

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INTRODUCTION AND COMMENT

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"Cent monographies sur les partis socialistes des différents pays du monde, si elle se limitent à leur organisation, à leur composition et à leurs ressources financières sans étudier, au moins brièvement, les structures totales des pays intéressés, n'apprennent presque rien sur ces parties: on est resté dans le formel."

(G.-E. Lavau. "Partis Politiques et Réalités Sociales." p. 164.)

"Il faut un singulier mépris du réel pour ramener un phénomène social comme la révolution nazie au mauvais choix d'une technique électorale et pour s'imaginer que l'équilibre politique d'une nation dépend du nombre de ses partis et de la manière dont elle établit le rapport entre les suffrages et les sièges. Les disputes sur le système électoral et sur le nombre et la nature des partis détournent l'attention des seules choses qui soient réelles—et qui comptent pour la transformation du monde: le pain, le logement, l'éducation, les inégalités sociales, la vie spirituelle des hommes. Si la "Science Politique" ne contribue pas à en faire prendre conscience et à fournir des matériaux et une méthode pour une politique démystifiée, alors elle ne sert à rien, elle n'est plus une science mais une distraction."

(G.-E. Lavau. "Partis Politiques et Réalités Sociales." p. 165.)

I

POLITICAL CONFLICT is coincident with society. At some time or other there is in every community dispute on who shall fashion its public decisions, and what the quality and ends of these decisions should be. This is the view we have been brought to by empiricism, and the idea of natural communal harmony is now a metaphysical extravagance. The modes by which these disputes are conducted and resolved, the intensity of these disputes, the issues which men dispute, and the consequences of these disputes on the life of the community vary with each epoch and each society, but

common to the conflict in Tikopia or Westminster, Babylonia or Washington, the Talensi or the Australians, are the groups of men who, impelled by ideals, fear, ambition, suspicions, and querulous necessities strive for prestige, status, and power.

The political distinction of our own society then does not rest in the anxious maneouvring of groups for power, nor in the motives which impel individuals to engage in the business of government, or to influence the decisions of governors. Where we may lay some claim to singularity is in the arena and the procedures we have adopted for the resolution of our internal political differences. The definitive institutions of our politics are the general election, and the party system. And together they symbolize the two norms basic to our society—the belief in the value of the free competition of ideas, and the free association of men in the pursuit of power to implement these ideas.

There is no difficulty in defining the free general election. But what precisely is the "political party"? How shall we distinguish the monolithic structure of our time from the Grecian "Oligarchs" and "Democrats", from the Guelfs and the Ghibellines, from the "Petitioners" and the "Abhorrers" of the 17th and 18th century English politics, or from the "Friends of the Member for Westminster"? By the trappings of organization, by their programmes, by the size and continuity of their support, by their solidarity, by the degree of corruption and violence? Or shall we dispense altogether with definitions because the "political party" is so strikingly a part of our political reality?

In the history of the British community, at least, the genesis of the modern party system is sufficiently dated from two cardinal moments; the admission of the adult population (or a substantial portion of it) to the free selection of parliamentary representatives, and the neutralization of the sovereign prerogative through the emergence of cabinet government. These are the catalyctic episodes in English

history when the "faction" of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries becomes the recognizable institution of our own time. In no sense is the transmutation sudden. Viewed through the perspective of the mid-nineteenth century alone it is difficult to distinguish the loose and evanescent political associations of the Georgian era from the unstable groupings of the early Victorian period. They are barely more than factions writ large on the foundations of the 1832 Reform Act. In the perspective of our own time, however, the shape, style, and constitutional role of the present goliath are quite unmistakable. First, it is the institution of electoral and parliamentary organization; of national and local executives; of permanent headquarters; of partisan research bureaux; of the extraordinarily influential "secretary" and the secretariats; of "party bosses"; of annual conferences; of national programmes and ideologies; of discipline and expulsions; of popular financial contributions; of canvassing; of incessant partisan communication with the public; of electoral agents; of massive electoral expenditure; of social welfare and social amusements; indeed a vast community voluntarily composed by a variety of people with a variety of political expectations, and characterized by its own traditions, its own norms, loyalties, factions, conflicts, and social strata. Second, and more vitally, it is the institution which informs every significant constitutional principle of parliamentary government—the choice of government, appointment of government, the conduct of government, the dismissal of government, the existence of opposition, and the neutrality of the Crown—with meaning and purpose. Without "party" the notion of representative and responsible government is meaningless. Indeed, if no other factor could differentiate the modern party system from its earlier counterparts, this above all, the democratization of government by the "party", is its singular distinction.

In terms of its organization, dimensions, assumptions,

spirit, and its constitutional role, then it is not difficult to distinguish the modern party from the "Abhorrers" and the "Petitioners" of the eighteenth century or even from its more primitive models. Yet it is a nice paradox that the institution called into existence to democratize the conflict for power is, like its earlier and cruder prototypes equally stigmatized for its threat to good government. The indictments of the "party" in the eighteenth century bear a remarkable similarity to the protests of our own age. To the brilliant "Trimmer", the Marquis of Halifax, the "best party is but a kind of conspiracy against the rest of the nation. . . . Parties forget insensibly that there is anybody in the World but themselves. . . . Party is little else than an Inquisition, where Men are under such a discipline in carrying on the common cause, as leaves no liberty of Private Opinion". Bolingbroke's classical lament in the "Dissertation on Parties" is no different. "No grief hath lain more heavily at the hearts of all good men than those . . . about the spirit of party, which inspires animosity and breeds rancour; which hath so often destroyed our inward peace; weakened our national strength, and sullied our glory abroad." And today, Christopher Hollis, (*Can Parliament Survive*), Professor Keeton, (*The Passing of Parliament*), T. C. Utley in the *Times* and so many others express concern for the intensification of party oligarchy, the transference of parliamentary decision to extra-parliamentary cabals, the intolerance of the independent, and the strangulation of free discussion. It is not an affliction of British parliamentary government only. In *Les Partis Politiques* Duverger has voiced the same concern, "les partis deviennent totalitaires. Ils requièrent de leurs membres une adhésion plus intime; ils constituent des systèmes complets et clos d'explication du monde. L'ardeur, la foi, l'enthousiasme et l'intolérance règnent dans ces Eglises des temps modernes; les luttes partisanes deviennent des guerres de religion."[1] No

[1] *Les Partis Politiques*, pp. 463-4.

doubt these protests spring from a great variety of discontents. One would scarcely equate the political predispositions of the "Trimmer" with Christopher Hollis, or Bolingbroke's fretful "Dissertation" with the spirit of Belloc and Chesterton's damnation of the party. There is here either nostalgia for the leisured debates of another age, a plaint for a lost Liberalism, a dislike of any manifestation of caesarism, or even simply the frustration of the rejected. One distinction, however, we can draw between the assailants of the party in the eighteenth century and our own time. To them the idyll of the "Patriot King" may have offered a viable alternative to factional strife. To us there is no other alternative but a choice between "good" and "bad" party government. This much the modern critics are at least agreed that to destroy the party system is to undermine our institutions far more completely than the damage they suffer from the excesses of party spirit.

II

The subject chosen by the Victorian Group of the Australian Institute of Political Science for its inaugural meeting is therefore an exceptionally rewarding field of discourse. In what manner, however, can we best represent the Forum's contribution to the current spate of discussion on the party? At first sight the three papers read to the Institute appear to have little in common beyond the fact that each is concerned with the phenomenon of "party" in one or another of its aspects. Their diversity may be easily typified in their material, in their perspective, and in their style. Mr Calwell and Mr McMahon, for example, are chiefly concerned with party ideology, party policy, and party structure. Mr Webb is concerned with the relevance of contemporary research and ideas on the party to Australian material. Mr Calwell and Mr McMahon reflect the self-accorded views of two partisan leaders. Mr Webb is an

academic observer. Each paper projects a number of interesting issues. Together, however, they raise, expressly or implicitly, one of the most intractable problems of the party—what determines the character, the behaviour, the organization, and the mutations of the party—the society in which it functions, the electoral system through which the parties compete for power or both? And if both what is the precise nature of their interaction? This is a question which this introduction might elaborate in two ways; first, by adumbrating the current ideas on this problem; and secondly, by bringing the material of these papers into the focus of this thought.

The ecology of the party enjoys a highly respectable tradition in academic research. And from the pattern of ideas one may distinguish two schools of thought. Broadly one school has formulated a set of virtually geometric correlations for the interaction of parties and electoral systems, and the other has set its face against any final typification of the electoral influence. For convenience the first may be labelled the "Euclideans", and the other the "Circumstantialists" (with apologies to Professor Murdoch). The propositions of each school are easily recognized. Thus for the "Euclideans" the electoral factor is the pre-eminent determinant of party structure and party behaviour.[2] Whatever the variability of social factors, once given the electoral system then fairly safe generalizations may be made regarding the number of parties, the inter-relationship of parties, the character of the parties, and so on. Their axioms are commonplace. For example, the two-party

[2] For an extreme representative of this school, note Cormenin's view of electoral laws. "C'est là tout le gouvernement, tout l'Etat, toute la Charte. On pourrait même aller jusqu'à ce qu'il n'y a pas dans le pays d'autre loi politique ou . . . qu'elle contient toutes les autres lois puisqu'elle est la loi matrice. La Charte est la société au repos, la loi électorale est la société en marche. Dites-moi quels sont vos électeurs et je vous dirai quel est votre gouvernement." Quoted in G. E. Lavau, *Partis Politiques et Réalités Sociales*, p. 15.

system is the product of single member constituencies and majority voting. The multi-party system is the consequence of proportional representation. In a two-party system majority voting inhibits the rise of third parties. In a multi-party system proportional representation facilitates the proliferation of parties. The predisposition of the two-party system is towards political stability. In the multi-party state the predominant tendency is towards political instability. (La R. P. brise l'Etat.) The electoral conditions of the two-party system promote the convergence of the two major parties. Proportional representation exacerbates and perpetuates political cleavages. Majority voting is very sensitive to traditional ideas, and insensitive to "new" ideas. Proportional representation is insensitive to any variation in "old" ideas, but very sensitive to "new" opinion. In a single member constituency the personality of a member plays a vital role. By contrast the list system has a collective character which effaces the personal role of the candidate. Finally the paragon and epitome of all the two-party virtues and vices is the United Kingdom, and (despite the earnest endeavours of such French publicists as Rene Sedillot, Robert Guillain, and Bertrand de Jouvenal to demonstrate the contrary) the political recidivist is multi-partied, fragmented France.[3] One might find some or all of these views in almost any of the older and often current English political texts, and more recently they have received their most exhaustive and scholarly development in the work of Professor Maurice Duverger[4], of the University of Bordeaux.

The entire schematic approach of this school is rejected by the "Circumstantialists". For scholars like George

[3] See Mattei Dogan, "La Stabilité du Personelle Parlementaire sous la Troisième République". *Revue Française de Science Politique*, Vol. III, No. 2, p. 319, 1953.

[4] See *Les Partis Politiques*, 1951. Also "The Influence of the Electoral System on Political Life", *International Social Science Bulletin*, Vol. 3, No. 2, p. 335.

Lavau, Chapsal, Goriely and others, there is an over-simplification and overgeneralization in the "Euclidean" axioms. For them the electoral system is not a simple element which can be easily isolated from the complex social structure of any community to explain its party system. To them the differential socio-economic, ethnic, historical, demographic, and geographic circumstances present crucial methodological difficulties in the way of such generalized abstractions. In their view the electoral factor obtains a variable significance from variable circumstances. Hence they assert, for example, that a bi-party system may co-exist with proportional representation, or a multi-party system with majority voting in single member constituencies. They deny that the two-party/multi-party categories predicate any absolute set of attributes. Thus for example, political stability is not the necessary product of the two-party system, nor instability the necessary consequence of a multi-party system. The equilibrium or disequilibrium of communities depend on a far more complex set of factors. Where a society is firmly grounded in democratic institutions, where historical circumstances have developed a high level of social cohesion, and where the national temperament is relatively stable, then political stability will prevail irrespective of the number of parties. In short the "Circumstantialists" position is this: that an electoral system may exercise a significant or negligible influence on the formation, composition, coherence, and ideas of a party, entirely depending on the specific type of society and period involved. If an electoral system exercises a potent influence in two different countries it may do so for two entirely different sets of reasons. Similarly, where it exercises a negligible influence in two different countries it may again result from two different sets of circumstances. There is thus the possibility for infinite variations in the electoral influence corresponding to the changing variety of societal factors in different communities at different

times.[5] M. Lavau has expressed the "Circumstantialist" position so forcefully in a critical examination of Professor Duverger's work.[6] "L'élément décisif qui explique le 'Wafd' ce n'est ni sa structure, ni le système partisan ou électoral ou il s'inscrit, c'est l'Egypte." To understand the Wafd we must know Egypt. To understand the Australian party system we must know Australia.

There is considerable appeal in both these positions—the scientism of the "Euclideans" and the political relativism of the "Circumstantialists". Our final inclinations, however, towards one school or the other cannot be simply determined by our psychological predisposition for simplicity or complexity, order or disorder. For before we can even begin to take positions we must make some sort of peace with two preliminary problems: first, the methodological bête noir of the social sciences—by what means and with what certainty can we compute, evaluate, predict, and correlate the diverse elements of social action; secondly, the no less obstinate problem of comparative political analysis, by what means and with what certainty can we isolate political institutions from their specific cultural contexts to found some useful basis for comparison and generalization? These are not the fastidious epistomelogical casuistries of scholars to confound the understanding of the "practical" legislator. For after all is it an easy thing to understand Australia—or for that matter any other community? What value and what meaning, for example, shall we give to electoral statistics? What are the precise implications of a majority vote for a party? What precise weight shall we give to those social factors which are statistically incorrigible? Is the idea of "party" in the United States and Australia sufficiently similar to compare the two-party systems of the

[5] See the exceptionally interesting interpretation of the origin of the two-party system in British politics by Leslie Lipson. *American Pol. Sci. Rev.*, Vol. 47. No. 2. June '53, pp. 337-58.

[6] See *Partis Politiques et Réalités Sociales*, 1953, p. 9.

two societies? In short if to understand the Australian party system we must know Australia, in what way can we know this community, in the manner of Lynd in "Middletown", Malinowski in the Trobriand Islands, or Alistair Cooke in America? We need not labour these difficulties more than this. What we can do now is to example them briefly from the context of these three papers.

III

We can begin with Mr Webb for he is probably the first to attempt an explanation of the Australian party system in terms of its electoral techniques. And his paper merits the closest attention. Broadly his concern is to account for the bi-polarity of the Australian party system, to explain its perpetuation, to evaluate the impact of preferential voting on bi-party politics (a major part of his paper), and to assess the general consequences of bi-partisan politics for Australia. Without risking the emasculation of an abstract let us simply indicate the trends of his argument in his own words. Concluding his analysis of the consequences of P.V., in Australia he writes, "My argument could, at this stage, be summarized somewhat as follows: Australia has a two-party system which is the result in part of a popular belief that no other system is compatible with responsible government and in part of the tendency of single-member constituencies to eliminate minor parties; the distinctive features of the Australian two-party system (for example, splintering and factionalism in the two major parties)[7] are in part due to the adoption of preferential voting." In a subsequent paragraph, "The importance of electoral laws in explaining party systems lies in the fact that the purpose of political parties is to win elections. Electoral laws are, as it were, the rules of the party battle and they must therefore be a principal determinant of party behaviour. But it

[7] My parenthesis.

is obvious that they are only a partial determinant; in some measure, party behaviour must be a result of other forces, including the structure of society itself." And in a concluding passage, "A large part of Australian political writing in these days consists of laments for the intellectual bankruptcy of the political parties and the dominance of the party machines. *I have tried to show, however, that the parties are in the main what the two-party system makes them—and the system is esentially the same at most times and in most places.*"[8]

The identification of the last passage is—in its language and its emphasis—quite unmistakable. It is *not*, "the parties are in the main what the Australian society makes them . . .", but, "the parties are in the main what the two-party system makes them . . ." Clearly, Mr Webb's inclination is towards M. Duverger and the traditional "Euclidean" electoral hypotheses of the older English texts. His mode of argument, the type of conclusions, and the difficulties which stand in the of way both the arguments and conclusions of this approach may now be examined in greater detail by taking several illustrations from Mr Webb's paper.

One of the central hypotheses to which Mr Webb appears to defer is the bi-polarizing consequences of simple majority voting in single member constituencies. As our first example, therefore, let us note Mr Webb's interpretation of the decline and growth, or the disappearance and reappearance of "independent" candidates in the three periods, 1910-1917; 1919-1929; and 1931-1946. He points out, for instance, that "for the four elections after the fusion (1910), Australia had an orthodox two-party system", and he suggests that "the decline in percentage of votes cast for independents during this period, together with their virtual elimination from political life" (see his Table 2) is a direct illustration of the two-party tendency to "under-represent" third parties and independents. Is the fate of "independents" in this period to be explained

[8] My italics.

solely in the terms of the electoral system, in terms of the "*et ceteri*" social factors, or both? In the first place we may be inclined to question the comparability of the percentage of votes for independent candidates in 1910 with the subsequent three elections. Given 1910 as a base year the decline from 5·3 per cent of the votes to 1·3 per cent in 1917 appears highly significant. But is 1910 an appropriate base? If it begins a period of bi-furcation in Australian politics does it not also terminate a period when no two-parties had as yet clearly established an electoral superiority over a third party; where the federal issues were still somewhat confused; where the major cleavages had not yet crystallized; where in many respects it was simply a matter of implementing agreed attitudes; and where the electoral predisposition towards "independents" might still be expected to be high? This apart, however, the period which covers the elections of 1913, 1914 and 1917 is notable for at least two things: First we are concerned with a period of unprecedented war-time emergency for the nation when the pressure towards social cohesion might tend to reduce the ambit of political controversy and concentrate attention on a relatively few simple issues. Further it is a period which experienced the violent bi-polarizing impact of the conscription issue. What weight shall we give to these factors? What room was there for independents when the community was compelled to take sides on an issue which admitted of one of two answers only? How far do these crisis events explain the "virtual elimination" of the independent vote in this period?

The difficulty of demonstrating what is statistically incapable of demonstration places these factors at some sort of disadvantage to the statistically corrigible data. This can be clearly seen in the mode in which the electoral statistics which follow the introduction of preferential voting tend to reinforce Mr Webb's interpretation of the elections in 1910, 1913, 1914 and 1917. Thus he notes the apparent contrast

that "in the four elections between 1910 to 1917, the highest number of candidates was 162 in 1910 and the lowest 140 in 1914, whereas in the five elections between 1919 and 1929 (in which preferential voting was operative) the lowest number of candidates was 150 in 1928 and the highest 199 in 1922".[9] He notes also that "whereas between 1910 and 1917 the total vote for independent candidates dwindled rapidly, it increased substantially in 1919 and, with the exception of the 1925 election, remained at above 3 per cent". From this he concludes that "preferential voting, by lessening the dangers of vote splitting, *somewhat* lessened the reluctance of electors to vote for independents", and "gave *some* encouragement to independents and to unendorsed party candidates".[10]

Here again we are confronted with the same problem—What precise weight should we attribute to the influence of preferential voting from these statistics, and what precise weight should we give to the *et ceteri* factors? What does *somewhat* lessened, and *some* encouragement mean? At first sight one's attention may be drawn to the voting for independents in 1925 (see his Table 3.) Why does this year form an exception to the general trend? Is it due to the negligible influence of preferential voting in that year? Or is it due to other reasons? If we remove this troublesome year, however, in what other factors might we find an explanation for the sudden rise in the percentage of votes in 1919, and the maintenance of a comparatively higher voting percentage for independents in this period? What weight shall we give, for example, to the fact that there was a growth in the size of the electorate in the period, 1919-1929? Obviously it could scarcely explain the sudden increase between 1917 and 1919, but how far does it help to account for the increased candidature at a later stage of this period? More compellingly, how far should we take into account the

[9] Parenthesis is mine. [10] My italics.

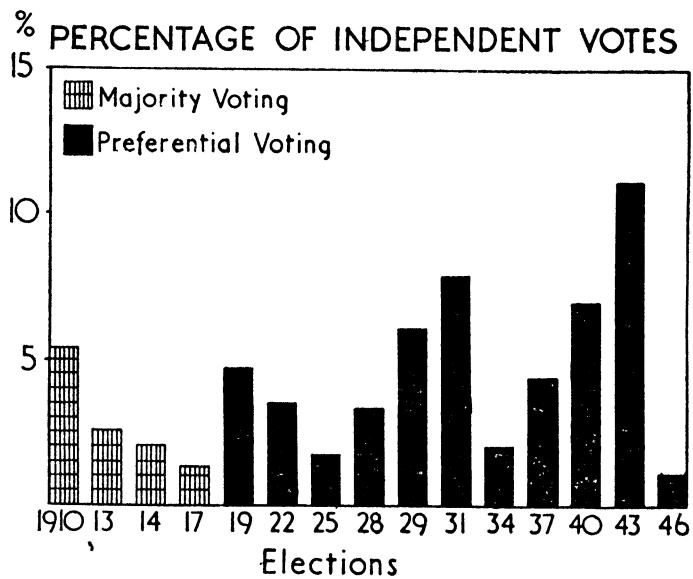
increased prestige of the Federal parliament after the first World War? How far does the changing balance of power in the Commonwealth, and the impetus of political centralization stimulate the growth in the candidacies for the Federal parliament? Further: What weight shall we give to the rise of the Country Party which deliberately adopted multiple endorsements? Or even more generally: How far does the social disposition of this period explain Mr Webb's statistics? Does a community released from the emergency of war, and in the confused aftermath of war, become more responsive to shifts in ideas? Are the new issues of this period such that older allegiances are re-examined and relaxed. And if so, how far do these factors explain the higher incidence of voting for independents in this period? In brief, if Mr Webb finds some explanation for the figures of Table 2 and Table 3 in the operation of two different electoral systems, how far might we attribute this difference to the fact that these figures concern two different social periods?

Mr Webb's analysis of electoral behaviour under preferential voting for the third period, 1931-1946 is equally interesting. For this period he points out that "the pattern of Australian politics in the elections of 1931, 1934, 1937, 1940, 1943 and 1946 is dramatically different from that in the five preceding elections". He notes that together with the "emergence of a litter of minor parties" the total number of candidacies, independents, and the percentage of votes for independents "rises steeply" in this period, culminating in the unprecedented figures of the 1943 election. Why this "dramatic" difference? Mr Webb finds the expected—and certainly the most persuasive—reason for this unusual political fragmentation in the disintegrating impact of the depression on both Labour and non-Labour parties. It is an interesting explanation for this reason only, however, that in interpreting the electoral data of this period he should defer explicitly to the impact of a major socio-

economic factor on the growth of the "independent" vote, whereas in the preceding five elections (1919-1929) he conveys the impression that the growth of the "independent" vote in this period is somehow attributable to the influence of preferential voting to the neglect of other factors. What are we to infer from this, therefore—that preferential voting is a negligible influence in the 30s, and a significant influence in the 20s? And if so, is the divergent influence of preferential voting in these two periods again explicable by the differential social circumstances of the 20s and 30s. Or is it due to some inexplicable vagary of preferential voting itself? Alternatively may we infer that preferential voting has excercised a negligible influence both in the 20s and the 30s; that the significant influence of preferential voting for the elections of 1919-1929 is *apparent* only; and that we might find the realistic explanation in the social issues of this period?

From the accompanying graph of the voting for independents we may note that already in 1929 there is a significant rise in the percentage of votes for the independent candidate compared with the preceding three elections; (see his Tables 3 and 4) that on the eve of the depression the proportion rises sharply from the pre-depression mean of approximately 3 per cent to 6 per cent; climbs gently to the depression peak of 7 per cent, falls sharply in the first post-depression election (1934), regains some momentum in the next election (1937), rises sharply in the first year of war almost to the depression peak of 7 per cent, continues to rise to the unprecedented level of 11 per cent in the third year of war, and drops precipitately three years after in the first post-war election (1946) to 1·8 per cent. Clearly there is no significant general trend in the period 1929 to 1946—or for that matter in the previous eight elections. Instead the coincidence of the critical peaks in this graph with the two major crises—depression and war—strongly suggests that we might find the predominant reason for this "dramatic"

change in these two factors. But again, we may ask, how decisive would such a conclusion be? Could we, on the basis of this coincidence alone, for example, dismiss the influence of preferential voting in this period altogether? Could we say that given these social crises the political



(Based on tables 2, 3, and 4 of Mr Webb's paper.)

disintegration of this period, and the proliferation of candidates would have been as high under simple majority voting? Scarcely: For even if such a graph gives pre-eminence to the crisis factors of this period we can no more demonstrate, absolutely, the exclusive influence of these crises than we can determine the precise contributary influence of preferential voting. Moreover, we have this further tantalizing fact; that—apart from the influence of the depression—the proliferation of minor parties and

independents in the elections of 1940 and 1943 present an interesting contrast to the "virtual elimination" of independents in the war-time elections of 1914 and 1917. How shall we explain this contrast? Can we suggest this time that a war-crisis has any necessary socially solidifying effect in view of the results of the 1940 and 1943 elections? Or is the fragmentation of 1943 totally unrelated to the war? On the other hand does this contrast between the war-time voting for independents under a simple majority system (1914, 1917) and preferential voting (1940, 1947) tend to support Mr Webb's expectations? Or is the social identity of these two periods so different that we can found no useful comparisons?

Whatever the precise impact of the depression and war on the incidence of "minor parties" and "independents" however, for Mr Webb preferential voting has exercised a significant influence throughout the periods 1919-1929, 1931-1946. And this conviction leads him to the challenging hypothesis that preferential voting is in some real sense responsible for the notorious "factionalism" of Australian politics. Witness his argument: "To what extent then," he asks in his final assessment of this electoral system "can the notorious factionalism of Australian politics be attributed to preferential voting?" His reply is interesting.

> "The striking difference between the 1919-1929 and 1931-1946 periods is a warning against hasty generalization. In the first period, though independent candidacies increase, there is no noticeable tendency for parties to splinter or—apart from the Country Party—for new parties to emerge. On the other hand, it would be difficult to attribute the splintering and factionalism of the period between 1931 and 1946 *solely* to the inability of the Labour Party to meet the challenge of the economic depression. In the United Kingdom and New Zealand, and indeed in most countries with two-

> party systems, the party in power at the onset of the depression tended to disintegrate. But the disintegration lasted for a comparatively short time. In Australia, the splintering process went on for fifteen years with a brief interlude of stability in the period of the 1937 election. It is thus difficult to avoid the conclusion that preferential voting, because it lessens the fear of vote splitting, *greatly* reduces the two-party system's capacity to resist factionalism and *greatly* extends the time the system takes to recuperate after a major fission." (My italics.)

If we presume that "factionalism" and "intrigue" in Australian politics is particularly "notorious" (a view not free of doubt), and further, if we presume that the "splintering" process continued for fifteen years after the depression, (a view of even greater dubiety if we consider the solidarity of Labour after the advent of the Curtin government) to what extent does Mr Webb's own argument suggest a necessary and significant causal relationship between preferential voting and factionalism in this period? First we may note that the generality of Mr Webb's conclusion does not rest on an equal generality of evidence. While his reference is to the two major parties and more especially the Labour party, Mr Webb finds his most compelling examples in that fount of so many pathological party examples in this period, New South Wales (compare the addiction of the older political texts to France for their examples of the "evils" which attend a multi-party system.) Why this particularity of evidence? Does it suggest that the "history of the State Labour revolt in New South Wales"—or for that matter the history of New South Wales politics in general—provides *exceptional* reasons—either in terms of issues, personalities, or circumstances—for the incidence of factionalism in that State? And if so what are implications for Mr Webb's hypothesis?

The generality of evidence aside, however, the central problem is really this: that if we agree with Mr Webb that it is difficult to attribute the "splintering and factionalism" *solely* to the consequences of the depression, does it follow incluctably that it must be due in some significant part to preferential voting? Are these two factors—the depression and preferential voting—logically exclusive alternatives? To summon the examples of the United Kingdom and New Zealand does not assist us very much. For while we know that factionalism is probably endemic in all societies and in all parties; and while we know also that "*les militants*" have a special proclivity towards fragmentation, we have already called attention to the sizeable difficulties in the way of comparative political analysis. Clearly before we could make the slightest use of either the experience of the United Kingdom or New Zealand—or for that matter any other country—we would have to consider, at least, these questions: Has either of the Labour movements in these countries precisely the same self-destructive history as the Australian Labour party? Is the opposition to Labour in either country characterized by a similar framework, composition, history, or ideas? Has either country the fragmenting influence of a federally structured party system? Is the political business of either country conducted in the same tough, venomous and refractory terms as we conduct our politics in Australia? Was the social experience of the depression precisely the same in all three countries? And if we cannot find sufficient identity in these matters might we not search for factors which are particular to the condition of the Australian society in this period?

If we revert to our graph, for example, we may note that the elections for this period—in terms of their high or low incidence of voting for independents—may be arranged into three distinct groups rather than one homogeneous group; first, the two *depression* elections, 1929 and 1931; secondly, the two *recovery* elections, 1934 and 1937; and

thirdly, the two *war-time* elections, 1940 and 1943. Hence, clearly we are not dealing simply with "depression" issues. We may also note, furthermore, that the incidence of "splintering" occurs in different periods in each party. In the elections of 1929 and 1931 the fragmentation appears to be primarily within the Labour party, and more particularly in New South Wales. The party of the "Right"—apart from its special difficulties with Hughes—remained relatively solid from 1932 until the death of Lyons. Conversely while Labour appears to emerge from a long period of disunity with the advent of the Curtin government in 1941 the U.A.P., already bordering on disunity with the change of leadership, enters a period of unprecedented fragmentation (almost unknown to Labour) with the defeat of the Menzies government. In each case, therefore, we may note that the "splintering" in each party coincides first *with a fundamental conflict over leadership and policy* (on the "Left" between State and Federal labour over the control of the machine; between the A.W.U. and the A.C.T.U.; between political and industrial labour over the pursuit of the Fisher tradition in Labour policy or a more radical semi-revolutionary policy: on the "Right" the conflict over the Menzies leadership, the conflict between the Deakin-ite Liberals and the "Collins Street junta"; the traditional enmity between New South Wales and Victoria, the complications of the Country Party, and the consequences of an incoherent loose party structure) and secondly in both cases *the peak of fragmentation coincides with the defeat of each party.* Can we know then the precise contribution of preferential voting to this history of factionalism without ascertaining at least two things: first, the precise motivation and intensity of these conflicts; secondly, the precise identity of the "minor parties" and "independents"; whether they were "dissidents" or "pure" minor parties,[11] what pro-

[11] See the distinction between "dissident" and "pure" independent in M.K. Adler, "Independent Candidates", *Political Studies*, Vol. 1. No. 1, p. 81.

portion of the total "independents" and "minor parties" the "dissidents" form, what were their reasons for "dissidence", and the influence of preferential voting on their decision to break away from the major parties.

IV

We have deferred at length to several of Mr Webb's arguments to illustrate some of the difficulties of evaluating with precision the behaviour of political parties in terms of electoral factors. The problem may be now finally exampled by projecting one other—perhaps more difficult—hypothesis of Mr Webb's against the background of Mr Calwell's and Mr McMahon's papers. There is currently an assumption that in a bi-party system due to the impossibility of either contestant founding a majority on the support of any single class or interest group, there is a tendency for the two parties to *converge on the centre* with these secondary consequences that the boundary line between the two parties becomes vague, fundamental issues are suppressed in the blast and counterblast of competition, and debate becomes devoid of content.[12] This is a tendency which, Mr Webb claims, is equally applicable to Australia, and that here, especially, the federal structure acts as a synergism to the process of convergence.

The problem of party convergence—and divergence—is a cinderella issue and we can best explore its implications through four questions; first, what precisely does the idea of "convergence on the centre" mean? Second, how can we identify the degree of convergence and divergence between parties? Third, how can we establish this tendency to convergence? Finally, is this tendency unique to the two-party system? Let us examine each in turn.

At the beginning the notion of convergence offers relatively little difficulty. Two people are said to converge if

[12] See V. O. Key, *Political Parties and Pressure Groups*, p. 225.

they leave their original positions and move towards each other at the same or different speeds. The movement may be purposive or fortuitous; initiated and propelled by their own free will or by external direction. In terms of the mutation of party doctrine and electoral policy it involves us therefore in the inquiry *who* and *what* determine the movements of party policy, and if the party "elite", in response to what pressures, what forces, and on the basis of what calculations? Where our difficulties begin however, is with the term *centre*. It is, of course, a word in common use. But is it simply a clîché like the "floating voter" or is it something more precise. If we speak of *convergence on the centre* for example, it seems to imply that there is some ascertainable mid-distant point between the two parties to which their movement—even if at different speeds—is somehow directed. Is there such a "mid-distant" point, and if so, is it some fixed doctrinal position, or is it entirely relative to the positions occupied by the parties at any given time? *Who, for example, inhabit this mid-distant position?* Is the "centre" predominantly composed of a particular social class, occupation, age, and sex? Or is the "centre" simply a representative spectrum of the community in general—containing an equal proportion of the Common Room *intelligentsia*, the professions, the petit bourgeoisie, and the lumpen proletariat, the young and the aged, the housewife and the career-woman, the clerk under 30 and the clerk over 60? Is there any distinguishing intellectual or moral quality in the "centre"? Does it consist—as Mr Webb believes—of the "best elements of a country's political life" or is it no more than a fair cross-section of a community's resources of geniuses, mediocrities and fools, the stable and the neuraesthenic? And what are the "ideas" of the "centre"? Are they the devotees of the Aristotelian mean, of Eggleston's "positive Liberalism", or of Popper's "social engineering"; are they the uncommitted rationalists delicately poised to adjudicate the merits of each political

contest in terms of the national interest, or are they also those who have no dominating interest in politics, no system of ideas, no clear position in relation to key issues (the "undecided" entries on the canvasser's role) and whose vote is reluctantly cast in terms of what they believe to be their immediate interest at any moment.

The difficulties of this term—and there are formidable objections to its use—are avoided if we simply re-state the general idea of "convergence" in such terms as Key employs, namely, "the parties of a two-party system tend towards *similarity* in their views on public issues. They may and do have *differences* but the points of *agreement* outnumber the points of *disagreement*."[13] And with this restatement our problem becomes—is there a tendency for the parties in a bi-party system to converge to the point where the area of agreement between them is greater than the area of disagreement? Or translated into concrete issues, are the policies of the Republican and Democratic parties in the United States for example less distinguishable now in 1953 than in 1933, or in 1933 less than 1917, or 1917 less than 1878? Or was the identification of the Whigs and Tories more complete in 1886 than 1867, and in 1867 more than 1832? Or more closely, are the points of agreement between Mr Calwell's and Mr McMahon's party greater in 1953 than in 1941, or in 1941 more than in 1933, and in 1933 more than in 1910? The approach to this problem must involve at least two stages: first, to identify and assess the points of similarity and difference between the parties at the present; and second, to make a similar determination for any given previous period and compare the results. Let us see what this implies for the Australian parties.

If we accept Mr McMahon's notion of the principles which distinguish Liberal and Labour party doctrine, the two parties stand at the poles of heaven and hell. It is no less than the opposition between Labour's socialism,

[13] Key loc. cit.

authoritarianism, anti-individualism, anti-parliamentarianism, materialism, and irrationalism, and the Liberal's belief in the "Rule of Law", the "doctrine of original sin", the enlightened free-will of the individual, the sanctity of property, the market economy, parliamentary democracy, and minimal state intervention in the life of the community. And Mr Calwell? Mr Calwell's paper does not reveal his version of the ideological gulf which separates the two parties. It would be quite safe to presume, however, that the Deputy-Leader of the Labour Party would reject Mr Webb's view that the difference between the two parties is now simply a matter of emphasis. If we examine, on the other hand, the official platforms of the two parties, if we make a tidy conspectus of their aspirations and their formulae, and no more than this, the differences are apparent but to nothing like the dramatic extent Mr McMahon, or possibly Mr Calwell presume. And, of course, if we examine the governmental record of the two parties, their differences recede even further.

From which of these sources, then, shall we establish the real similarities and the real differences between the parties? It is not difficult to demonstrate, for example, that the distinctions which leaders, believers, and partisans draw between parties are somewhat idealized and exaggerated. Should we reject them, therefore, in favour of an "objective" reading of their platforms and records? Should we ignore the versions of Mr McMahon and Mr Calwell? To do so would be absurd. For clearly, a party is not merely the record of its legislative activity, and the similarities and dissimilarities between parties cannot assume their real proportions simply by juxtaposing their platforms under some convenient heads of policy. What the electorate *believes* these similarities and differences to be, what it regards as crucial or minor, is of vital importance. Given this, however, we strike these further complications that what the party evangelists, their disciples and their camp-followers

believe to be the critical differentia will coruscate with all the colours of the rainbow, according to the intensity and quality of their allegiance to the party. How then shall we evaluate this heterogeneity of beliefs and emphases? And with what certainty can we compare the beliefs of 1910, or 1917 with the attitudes of our own time? Are the beliefs of each epoch founded on the same assumptions? Are the institutions we are comparing precisely the same?

These are substantial difficulties which must confront any elaborate investigation of Mr Webb's hypothesis. But if we assume, however loosely, that the area of agreement between Mr Calwell and Mr McMahon is steadily increasing, if we assume that the great divisive issue of "property" is falling into disuse, and that compared to this no other issues can drive so fundamental a cleavage into the community, is the process of convergence a phenomenon unique to the two-party system?

If we paraphrase Mr Webb's argument in Professor Key's terms, it takes this quasi-syllogistic form. The "tendency toward agreement between parties under a bipartisan system flows from the fact that (i) party leaders must seek to build a majority; (ii) a majority cannot be established on the support of a single class or interest; and therefore (iii) party leaders must draw further support from all classes and interests.[14] What precisely does this tell us about the mutations of party policy in a two-party system? Can we ascribe the dicision of Mr Calwell's party to castrate the "socialist tiger", or Mr McMahon's party to claim identity with the historic doctrines of liberalism to this fact alone? And if so . . . does this hypothesis suggest a motivation unique to the two-party system? Let us look at the arguments a little more closely. In the first place if we assume that the characteristic which distinguishes the "party" from other social institutions is the intention to control or share in the control of governmental power, then

[14] Key loc. cit.

we may say that *every party under every competitive political system is concerned to maximize its electoral support.* To assume otherwise is a contradiction in terms. "Toute la compagne électorale consiste à définir une platforme susceptible d'attirer le maximum d'électeurs. . . ."[15] And "toute le jeu parlementaire consiste à essayer de cumuler les avantages du pouvoir et la liberté de l'opposition".[16] On this basis alone, therefore, there is little to differentiate the Australian Labour party, for example, from the French Parti socialiste. Next, if we assume that a majority cannot be established on the support of a single class or interest—an assumption which is only tenable if every class or interest constitutes a fraction roughly less than 75 per cent of the electorate, and further, that there is no basic homogeneity of interest within *any* class—*then all parties in every competitive political system will seek further support outside the essential nucleus of their strength.* The modes by which parties will seek to accrete further strength, and their capacity to attract further support, will, of course, vary considerably. We are familiar, for example with the general blandishments of the two-party electoral strategy (a characteristic but not an exclusive feature of the two-party system) and the explicit inter-party arrangements—electoral, parliamentary, or ministerial—of the multi-party systems (the characteristic but not exclusive features of the multi-party systems—for example witness the negotiations of the Liberal and Country parties in Australia). *But the distinction between the two-party/multi-party systems on this basis is essentially one of techniques and not of purpose.*

At this level of generalization, therefore, the hypothesis provides no exclusive motivation for convergence in the two-party system, for (a) if the quest for majorities is common to all parties, and (b) if the search for support induces a degree of standardization in party policies, then

[15] Duverger, p. 416. [16] Duverger, p. 367.

we can expect to find, and indeed do find some tendency towards convergence in every competitive political system. Can we say then that the tendency towards convergence is *greater*, or more *rapid*, or more *permanent* in the bi-party system? It is impossible to do so for the very simple reason that we are not dealing with two distinct and homogeneous types of "party" system. Within each so-called system and with each epoch the tendency to convergence and the degree of convergence varies fundamentally. And within each system the process of convergence may alternate with periods of acute divergence. Otherwise how shall we account for the closer identification of Australian parties—at least until 1945—with the notable divergence of the English parties in the same period? Or the virtually unique similarity of American parties—at least until 1929—compared either with the English or the Australian parties for the same period? Or the closer identity of the Scandanavian or Swiss parties compared with the Italian or French parties? Or the relative convergence of the Whigs and Tories in the mid-nineteenth century compared with the divergence of the Labour and Conservative parties in the first half of the twentieth century? Does this suggest that the degree of convergence—or divergence—is unrelated to the arithmetical character of the party system? That the two-party/multi-party dichotomy is a sterile guide to the associative and dissociative tendencies of parties? Can we say, instead, that if the common quest for "majorities" exposes all parties to some standardizing influence their propensity for convergence or divergence is dependent on a complex variety of factors—the range, intensity, and history of the divisive issues in each community; the predominant expectations and usages of the community; the degree of social cohesion; the habit of political accommodation between the major contestants for power; the degree of social mobility; and so on? In short the totality of factors which characterize a particular society?

V

These are but a few exploratory comments on a problem of great difficulty and of great fascination. On the one hand we have the view that it is possible to subsume the manifold peculiarities of every party system under a single organizing principle. On the other the belief that parties are profoundly and permanently the product of their age and their society. On the one hand the view that the sterility of parliamentary debate in Australia is the product of the two-party system. On the other the belief that the quality of debate is less the product of any electoral system than the quality of the society which selects those who will participate in its debates. Whatever the precise answer, this we can note; that while these three papers concern the party system, their concern implicitly and fundamentally, is with a much more vital factor—the behaviour of the single voter. He is the irreducible unit of our politics, and with him rests the ceaseless possibility of mocking the most precious generalizations and the most persistent efforts to capture his eccentricity and perversity, his beliefs and predispositions in electoral tables, charts, or graphs. It may well be that "electoral laws are . . . the rules of the party battle" but how far does the elector acknowledge their jurisdiction or sanction?

THE LIBERAL PARTY

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MOST LIBERALS have a conscientious objection to dogmas in politics. They reject the extremes of fanaticism. Politics is, in truth, a study of human nature in society with emphasis on the parliamentary and economic aspects of man's activities. I approach the subject with reserve and, I hope, humility. These ideas are the basis of a philosophy, not a consistently worked out and all embracing plan.

I have been closely associated with politics most of my adult life and have taken a keen interest in the scientific side of politics for many years, both inside and outside the University. For at least two to three years much of my time was given up to a study of the scientific side of Communism and Socialism.

I do not claim that this analysis of the theory and practice of Liberalism in Australia is common to all members of the Liberal Party. I do say that many of the principles inspired the new members of the Liberal Party when I first joined in 1949. There is a wide variety of views which change from time to time. Often these views are conditioned by contemporary opinion and the political climate. In the short run, political activity undoubtedly bows to expediency.

SOME BASIC ASSUMPTIONS

As I have said, we are dealing with the problem of human nature in society. So it might help if I first explained my views of the characteristics of human nature and how they influence political action.

Many of my views are based on these assumptions:—

(i) The Christian World in which we live has as its sustaining principle the idea of the individual as the central feature of society. We therefore reject the proposition that the "State" has some inherent value and can be of greater consequence than the individuals who compose it. We reject the view of Plato in his "Republic" and subsequently abandoned in his later works, notably the "Laws". We reject the philosophical basis of Hegel and Marx.

(ii) Man alone possesses the capacity to think and act purposefully. Although the implication is over-simplified because the causes of change are highly complex, this implies that the primary driving force throughout history has been the individual man and woman. I accept the idea that the individual determines change in society. Consequently I reject the materialistic thesis of Socialism and Communism that the forms or conditions of production are the fundamental determinants of social structures and change. As the individual is the driving force in society and undoubtedly responds to external stimulae—to rewards of one kind or another—he must have satisfactory incentives for effort and achievement.

(iii) The Doctrine of Original Sin. Following St. Paul that Man is born with the tendency to sin, of hereditary weakness which, if not disciplined, will lead to excess or sin of one kind or another. This implies, of course, that too great a power must not be placed in the hands of the exceptional individual. If this principle is accepted, it demands distribution of power and deterrents to the arbitrary abuse of authority. By the tests of fact alone and logic a more persuasive case can be made out for this Doctrine

than for Rousseau's fantasy of the Noble Savage or Marx' vision of the classless society.

(iv) The Doctrine of Free Will, a will that belongs to man alone; the ability to choose; to express within limits a free choice, and therefore to be able to choose between right and wrong, good and evil. Without free will there can of course be no evil.

Inherently, and in the widest sense, freedom of choice implies the Parliamentary Democracy and a market economy.

Functions

In this paper I do not consider the relationship of ethics or theology to politics but look at the problem from two points of view:—

(i) The idea of Parliamentary Democracy as the source and custodian of our essential liberties, the milieu in which the individual will have the opportunity of developing his own character and aptitudes.

(ii) The concept of the Government and Parliament as the responsible authority for keeping healthy the economic climate in which Society works.

Civil Freedoms

The political foundation of the Liberal system is based upon the need to preserve the essential civil freedoms. By this I mean, amongst other things—

Freedom of speech and worship;

Freedom of assembly and association to carry out peaceful constitutional changes;

Freedom in the choice of occupation; and

Freedom to manage one's personal income and, therefore, to save and accumulate real and personal property.

These are the ultimate personal values of the Liberal political system.

As Professor Hayek, in "The Road to Serfdom" (pp. 20-21) puts it:—

> "The essential features of that individualism which from elements proved by Christianity and the philosophy of classical antiquity was first fully developed during the Renaissance . . . the respect for the individual man qua man, that is the recognition of his own views and tastes as supreme in his own sphere . . . and the belief that it is desirable that men should develop their own individual gifts and bents. . . . Tolerance is perhaps the only word which still preserves the full meaning of the principle. . . ."

Later, at pp. 23 and 24, Hayek says:—

> "There is nothing in the basic principles of liberalism to make it a stationary creed, there are no hard and fast rules fixed once and for all. The fundamental principle that in the ordering of our affairs we should make as much use as possible of the spontaneous forces of society, and resort as little as possible to coercion, is capable of an infinite variety of applications."

Means and Ends

Those are the ultimate ends of the Liberal Way, but equally important is the means adopted to achieve them. In deciding the means, care must be taken to prevent abuse of authority and the possible destruction of those very values which are the ultimate end of Liberalism. The Liberal view is that there are certain legal or constitutional canons or conventions to be observed if the essential freedoms are to be preserved. Principles such as the Rule of Law—i.e., the absolute supremacy of regular law as opposed to arbitrary power or capriciousness, trial by jury, the writ of habeas-

corpus and other well-known means familiar to the students of Constitutional Law—are the bulwarks behind which the essential freedoms are protected.

The indirect conventional means will usually be more successful than the direct approach.

It should be evident that Liberalism is not a dogma. It is more an opportunity than a way. It presents the opportunities and the economic and intellectual climate in which independence of thought, freedom and imagination can flourish. It does not expect too much of mankind. Individual men and women are capable of real greatness; but you cannot expect constant sacrifice, discipline and effort from most of us.

The Labour View

Might I digress for the moment to explain the contrast between the Liberal and the Socialist and Labour view. We should first distinguish between the Fabians and the great mass of Socialists. The Fabians are the "Brains Trust" and advance guard of Socialist thought. They are the Iconoclasts. The Labour speaker at this Forum agrees that "most members of the Labour Party are prepared to follow the Fabian line". He, however, makes the error of thinking that the Fabians still believe in economic determinism. In fact, economic determinism has now been rejected by the Fabians.

The Socialists are the great mass of doctrinaire followers who think they want the socialization of production, distribution and exchange. They provide the great body of support but add little to the original thought of the Fabian Movement. The forthright Socialist does not bother disguising the fact that Socialism implies the authoritarian society and the destruction of parliamentary democracy. Let the late Harold Laski speak for himself. In "Democracy in Crisis", at about page 87, Professor Laski says that Parliamentary democracy must not be allowed to form an

obstacle to the realization of Socialism. Not only must "a Socialist Government take vast powers and legislate under them by ordinance and decree and suspend the classical formula of normal opposition, but the continuance of parliamentary government would depend on its (i.e. the Labour Government's) possession of guarantees from the Conservative Party that its work of transformation would not be disrupted by repeal in the event of its defeat at the polls". Later Socialists, among them Crossman, Gordon Walker and Evan Durbin, have reformed but, as they admit, essential pieces are missing from the Socialist mechanism.

What do the Fabians now think about social equality and the Socialist centrally planned State?

In the "New Fabian Essays" of the United Kingdom Socialist Society, published in 1952, R. H. S. Crossman in the first essay points out that the idea of automatic progress based upon the material means of production shared by the Marxists and the early Fabians has now been rejected. He says on page 8 of the Essays:—

> "This materialistic conception of progress was based upon assumptions about human behaviour which psychological research has shown to have no basis in reality, and on a theory of democratic politics which has been confuted by the facts of the last thirty years. There is neither a natural identity of interests nor yet an inherent contradiction in the economic system." "The evolutionary and the revolutionary philosophies of progress have both proved false."

Crossman also argues that the Socialists must now start again and re-work their philosophies and their basic lines of action. "Vital pieces of research have yet to be undertaken", he says. But the Socialists still cling to Materialism.

> "To begin with, we must accept the fact that, in the strictest sense of the words there is no such thing as

moral progress. For morality consists in the decision to do good, and there is no evidence that more men decide more often to do what they believe to be their duty in a civilised society than do so in a primitive society."

After a pedestrian, footslogging definition of the way in which welfare capitalism falls short of Socialism, Crossman says (pp. 26 and 27):—

"Overshadowing these two questions is the threat of the managerial society. The planned economy and the centralisation of power are no longer socialist objectives. The main task of socialism today is to prevent the concentration of power in the hands of either industrial management or the state bureaucracy—in brief, to distribute responsibility and so to enlarge freedom of choice."

I think sufficient facts are available for a persuasive, even conclusive, case to be made that the greatest failures of our time have been the attempt by the Socialists and Social Theorists to apply dogmas and political theories to contemporary society which have never been understood or scientifically worked out; and the attempt to organize according to plans which in the light of subsequent experience and research have proved inappropriate to an individual society.

Julien Benda calls this kind of intellectual failure or scientific incompleteness "The Treason of the Clerks", the failure of the so-called university intellectual—the adolescent Bertrand Russells and the Joads—who, by the way, are now contrite and repentant.

"The Treason" takes different forms. To our loss, the influential intellectuals or Mentalists attempted to create a mechanical society in our time. The failure of the theory was a foregone conclusion. Psychological and irrational mankind cannot be mechanized in an individual society.

There is no more wretched story of intellectual betrayal or disillusionment than is sketched in "The God that Failed" by the Mentalists, the former Communist intellectuals, Koestler, Gide, Silone or the American Negro, Richard Wright. Fanatically they staked their lives and consciences on Socialism and Communism. Revelation came the hard way through experience. For Koestler the answer is measured in the depth of his despair and abandonment of all hope in morality and the future of mankind.

Silone and Wright are now pessimists. Like Arnold Toynbee they believe that progress, moral or physical, is not impossible but extremely difficult.

This is the story of the failure of the dogmas—the fanatical Socialist and Communist Intellectuals who have betrayed civilization in our time.

It is a story of a failure to learn the lessons of history, of having to re-learn in our time the need to return to genuine Liberal principles as the source of freedom for the common man.

The Economic Function of Politics

The second aspect is economic. If we accept the doctrine of Original Sin and that the individual is the driving force in Society, we must, I think, recognize the need of differential rewards and incentives for effort and the need to distribute economic power widely. The late J. M. Keynes, in "The General Theory of Employment", expresses his view in this way:—

> "For my own part I believe that there is social and psychological justification for significant inequalities of income and wealth but not for such large disparities as exist today (in England). There are valuable human activities which require the motive of money making and the environment of private wealth—ownership for their full fruition. Moreover, dangerous human proc-

> livities can be canalised into comparatively harmless channels by the existence of opportunities for money-making and private wealth, which, if they cannot be satisfied in this way may find their outlet in cruelty, the reckless pursuit of personal power and authority and other forms of self-aggrandisement. It is better that a man should tyrannise over his bank balance than over his fellow-citizens; and whilst the former is sometimes denounced as being but a means to the latter, sometimes at least it is an alternative."

The problem of the division of power—economic and political power as an essential protection against arbitrariness and tyranny—hardly needs stressing.

Liberals recognize the heartfelt desire of the common man to own his own home and to have his own possessions. Ambitions of this kind are instinctive and within limits they provide the necessary conditions for an independent and full family life, the very basis for contentment and the milieu for building the character of the individual and members of his family.

One of the assumptions in this thesis was of man as purposeful and acquisitive.

It would be difficult to deny that each of us responds to external stimulae, to rewards of one kind or another. The Liberal way is to provide the incentive of a better living and better opportunities for self-development.

The Performance of Capitalism

The performances of industry under private management is an unsung story. Comparisons between the performances of Capitalism and Socialism are not possible. Socialism has as yet no achievements to its credit.

Amongst the objective scientific Socialists full credit is given for the performance of Capitalism. I for one (whilst fully recognizing the need for gradual reform) have never

understood the apologetic approach of most Liberals to the attacks on Reformed Capitalism and the market economy. The greatest of the Socialists, Karl Marx, gives the system full credit for its performances in the economic and industrial spheres. In the Manifesto he says:—

> "The bourgeoisie . . . has been the first to show what man's activity can bring about. It has accomplished wonders far surpassing Egyptian pyramids, Roman aqueducts and Gothic cathedrals. . . . The bourgeoisie . . . draws all nations . . . into *civilization*. . . . The bourgeoisie, during its rule of scarce one hundred years, has created more massive and more colossal productive forces than have all preceding generations together."

Performance—Quantitative and Qualitative

Performance in *producing* the goods, relative to U.S. experience, has been measured by Joseph Schumpeter, perhaps the greatest Socialist thinker of modern times. In *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy* (p. 66) he concedes

> "One way of expressing our result is that, if capitalism repeated its past performance for another half century . . . this would do away with anything that according to present standards could be called poverty, even in the lowest strata of the population, pathological cases alone excepted."

On the problem of *distribution of the product* amongst various income groups he admits (p. 67)

> "There is one more point that is important for a correct appraisal. . . . I have stated above that broadly speaking, relative shares in national income have remained substantially constant over the last hundred years. This however, is true only if we measure them in money.

> Measured in real terms, relative shares have substantially changed in favour of the lower income groups. This follows from the fact that the capitalist engine is first and last an engine of mass production which unavoidably means also production for the masses."

The best definition I can find of this mechanism is that used by the International Labour Office in *World Economic Development* (p. 61):—

> "It's a method of levelling income and living standards upwards."

Social Justice

It may be that if we are to fulfil the spirit of Articles 5 and 6 of the Atlantic Charter—

(5) to secure for all improved standards of labour, economic advancement and social security, and

(6) an assurance that all men in all lands may live out their lives in freedom from fear and freedom from want—

it will be necessary to harness the dynamic forces of Capitalism for the common good, but this does not imply radical revolutionary change. It does imply reformation and a heightened sense of social justice and responsibility throughout all sections of the community.

It has been pointed out to me during the last few days that it might be wise to stress that one of the most notable achievements of Capitalism is its flexibility and its capacity to absorb peaceful reform. It might be pleaded that the reforms were thrust upon it by political and social forces but the fact remains that at a period when it owned and operated the productive forces of the State it had sufficient flexibility under the influence of its liberal directions to accept the reforms without the violence that has marked major changes in other countries.

The Liberal goal is Social Justice, but in the light of what I have said about the performances of Capitalism it would be completely senseless to produce theoretical equality and social justice at a cost of economic progress and lower living standards for all. In other words, it would be criminal lunacy to destroy the very mechanism on which the realization of higher standards of living and social justice ultimately depend. Man being what he is, this is a difficult lesson for the Mentalists and "Clerks" to learn and apply.

I ask the question: Isn't it better to tame its dynamics in the common good than destroy it?

The tragedy of the story is that the moral climate in which Capitalism can work efficiently has already been undermined by the repentant Socialists and Communists.

The Western intellectual has changed his mind and it is now difficult to find the appeal of Socialism other than to the arrested developees and the Billabong Economists who are either behind the times or who have not yet had to face the exposé of intellectual derision.

Politics in Practice

Turn now to the practical side of politics, to the problem of the organization and leadership of the parties and the functions of the Parliamentary Party.

The ideal is expressed by Barker in *Reflections on Government.* On pages 412-413 he says:

> "In the delicate balance of the democratic system cabinets have to command as well as to obey the organisation of the party; they have to guide as well as follow, the opinion of one legislature; they have to maintain their touch with the electorate, as well as with party and the legislature; and it may be their duty to draw from the electorate an independent strength which enables them to confront with authority

the other factors with which they are linked. It would be an error of policy to exalt the cabinet unduly at the expense of the legislature; but it is perhaps a still greater, and it has certainly been a more widespread error, to exalt the legislature unduly at the expense of cabinet. A system and centre of leadership is necessary in any form of government."

The Labour Party

Let us examine for a few moments the reverse side of the problem in order that we may have a basis for comparison. As the Labour Party is organized, a Cabinet which should provide a united and commanding executive is in practice deprived of real authority and leadership. The Labour Party Caucus in theory determines policy but—of critical importance—members of the Parliamentary Labour Party must vote in accordance with the decisions of the Triennial Conference of the A.L.P.

The Labour speaker has stressed that "the Labour Party has tended towards centralisation of power in the Executives and particularly so in the Federal Executive of the Party". It is hierarchical in structure.

It seems fair, therefore, to describe a Labour Cabinet as a Triennial Conference Cabinet. The theory does not work continuously in practice. Up to the present there has always been an influential group which sincerely believes in the principles of Parliamentary independence. Its powers wax and wane. In recent times the Group has been directed by the Triennial Conference on matters which the Conference considered touch essential principles of the Labour platform. It may be that many pay lip-service to the plank. But what is correct is that if the Triennial Conference becomes dictatorial it can force its views on the Parliamentary Members.

The second vital fact is that the Labour Party changes its

policy and platform to suit the prevailing political needs.

> "The Architects of the Labour Party were more interested in action than in doctrine, in social reform than in social reconstruction."
>
> (Overacker—*The Australian Party System*, p. 49.)

The Party's original objectives included:—

(i) The cultivation of an Australian sentiment;
(ii) The maintenance and
(iii) The development in Australia of an enlightened and self-reliant community.

Following on the All-Australian Trade Union and Labour Party Conference in 1921 the policy of the Labour Party was radically changed and the basic objective of the party, as amended by the Federal Conference held at Canberra in September 1948, became

> "The socialisation of industry, production, distribution and exchange."

On the 22nd January 1953 a Preamble was added for the first time to the Constitution of the Australian Labour Party. In this preamble the following appears:—

> "The Australian Labour Party is an organisation having as its purpose the development of a free independent and enlightened Australian nation within the British Commonwealth of Nations."

This preamble does not refer to socialization. The socialization plank still stands in the platform. An explanatory clause was added to the socialization plank at the 1951 Conference to the effect that socialization would be introduced only to eliminate exploitation.

On a reasonable interpretation the policy and objective is capable of the widest application and could be used to socialize any industry under the guise of eliminating exploitation. The age old tactic of confusing the common man

with complicated phrases and vague policies has been adopted by the renovators of the altered constitution.

The Labour Policy is like a political pak-a-pu ticket. It requires an oriental divine rather than an occidental mind to ascertain its meaning.

It can therefore be seen that the Labour Party is controlled from outside. The Parliamentary Party is not the representative of the electorate and does not control its own destinies. Despite all efforts to provide a formula acceptable to the middle of the road people socialism still remains the first objective of the party.

Need I repeat with Laski that in the long run Socialism spells the end of Parliamentary Democracy. It means Single Party Government. The previous Speaker, a spokesman for the Labour Party, is reported to have said (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 15 June 1953) "we might even live to see the day when we evolve a one party State in Australia". By one means or another the Labour Party would in ten years or so prevent any other Party from having the opportunity to oppose or act as an alternative Government.

The Liberal Party Organization

I have previously referred to Barker's ideas on the ideal principles of organization of a political party. The Party is organized on different lines in each of the States, although the essentials are much the same. The essential features of the organization of the Liberal Party in New South Wales are:—

(a) *Membership*

Under the constitution of the party, any person who has a vote at a Federal or State election shall be eligible for enrolment. The Party attempts to cater for the views of all groups providing only that they adhere to the general principles and policies of the

Party and are acceptable to members. The basic requirement of the Labour Party is "to be a member of the Labour Party one must be a member of a Trade Union covering his or her calling". This rule may be *waived* and it has been, but the primary rule is to insist on trade union membership and in practice an unusually large percentage of parliamentary members are trade unionists.

(b) *The Branches*

The branch is the basic unit. It is the local organisation of Liberal supporters mainly concerned with the bread and butter task of working for the success of the endorsed candidate, and to discuss and adopt resolutions on any problem to be forwarded to the State Council for general debate. In theory the Liberal Party attempts to build the organization around the branches rather than the Parliamentary member as this tends to encourage active supporters and workers into the Party. They then have the feeling that they are taking part and helping to frame Liberal opinion. There is of course a tendency for power to move from the branches to the Council and Executive. This is a tendency which must be resisted, even prevented, if the Party is to remain healthy and vigorous and if power is to be decentralized. Many of the more intelligent members of the Party are actively engaged in considering this problem and the means which can be adopted to prevent centralization and Executive anaemia.

(c) *The Council of the Party*

Is made up largely of delegates from the branches. It is the supreme governing body of the Party with authority to exercise all or any of the powers of the organization within the boundaries of its own State. It meets monthly and debates resolutions sent in by

the branches. It has authority to delegate all or any of its powers to

(d) *The Executive, Federal or State*

which continuously manage the Party affairs. These Executives are not policy-making organizations but execute the policy of the Party as it seeps up from the branches and Council.

(e) *The Federal Secretariat*

Is composed of the permanent officials of the Party, co-ordinates the thinking of the State Organizations and provides the "back room boys" for continuous economic and political research and study. It is of inestimable value in the preparation of data and statistics for all members and for suggesting the best means of presenting contentious issues and sustaining public interest. It is a true Public Relations bureau.

(f) *The Parliamentary Party*, and

(g) *The Government or Cabinet*

Selection of Candidates

Selection of candidates is by 50 members of the Party; 30 elected by the branch members of the relevant constituency, 20 selected or balloted for by the Council or Executive of the Party.

It is perhaps not the perfect method, but I know no better, nor do I know of any glaring mistakes in the selection of candidates. In fact, there are now suggestions in Labour circles that Labour should copy this method to eliminate the pure "roads and bridges" member who is the curse of their exclusively local pre-selection system.

At the pre-selection meetings candidates speak for 8 minutes and are cross-examined for 7 minutes by members of the committee. Branches within a division have the right to request candidates to appear for cross-examination or to

put their points of view on particular problems. This right is frequently exercised at the discretion of the branches themselves.

Who Determines Policy?

The question is frequently asked: "Who determines the Party policy?" The Government acts on the view that it is a National and not a Party Government and must therefore exercise decisive National leadership and be free from effective pressure groups and lobbys. In my experience no pressure group has exercised effective power within the Liberal Party.

This central feature of Liberalism is preserved in that the Cabinet, under the Prime Minister, considers itself as responsible to Parliament and the people, guided by the Parliamentary Party as the means of sounding public opinion and of ascertaining the reaction of the public to contemplated and actual legislation. The Government alone interprets the views expressed and makes up its mind as to whether or not they reflect the sustained and confirmed convictions of the people.

The Parliamentary Party is the well spring of new ideas, and the source of suggestions for improving policies initiated by the Government and of removing crudeness and anomalies in bills brought into the Party Room for consideration.

Continuity in carrying out a dogmatic Party programme is impracticable and even undesirable. Whilst there is general recognition of the ideals of the Liberal faith, different individuals place a different emphasis on particular planks in the platform and as to the public importance of the various issues.

There is no line of apostolic succession in the Party with a special Minister or Member trained and ready to carry on a ritual or accepted line of policy. Personality predominates. What one Prime Minister would attempt might be quite beyond the wish or capacity of his successor.

Party Discussion and Debate

It is known that Members complain that they are not given sufficient opportunity to express their views in the Party Room.

This may be correct. If it is, it is to some extent a result of the large numbers in the Party, the limitations as to time and the geographical position of Canberra.

Most Party Members in the Party Room seem to prefer to put their point of view as to what their electorate is thinking and how Government policy is affecting the voter.

I express the personal view that most Members have adequate opportunities to express their views in the House, the Party Room or the Council and in letters to the Prime Minister and Ministers.

Although the Budget is not discussed at pre-Party meetings, other subjects are freely and provocatively debated, and the range of interests and variety of views on important subjects has to be heard to be believed.

As a generalization, no voting takes place in the Party Room on individual issues. Members, however, can clearly make their views known. If there is a sufficiently strong objection to a proposal for a Bill the Government may withdraw the proposal. This has been done.

Co-ordination of Groups

An effective means has not yet been found of co-ordinating the activities of the various groups nor is each group conscious of its particular function and place in the organization.

The individual Member is not bound by the collective judgment of the Parliamentary Group. The sanctions against recalcitrants are persuasive and moral only—particularly the weapon of ostracism by members of the Parliamentary Party. The Parliamentary Group is not responsible to a central authority.

A Divisional Selection Committee may of course withdraw support. This would be unusual. The circumstances in which such action would be taken other than for extraordinary conduct such as being a renegade or guilty of criminal conduct are difficult to imagine. The honest independent would probably be protected by the branches.

Extra-Parliamentary Discipline

One of the seeming difficulties of the Liberal Party is to maintain an effective extra-parliamentary organization to enforce discipline. This factor can possibly be over-stressed. It is a responsibility of the Government to persuade the great majority of members that the line of action taken by the Government is correct and it is only on the isolated occasion that a member of the Liberal or Country Parties feels that it is prudent or expedient to vote on the other side of the House.

Under this system the tendency is for the goal of vitality and freedom to be achieved. Whilst the Government can take risks as to a policy which it considers in the long run will bring beneficial effects it cannot so far step out of line as to challenge the will of the Parliamentary Party.

I have heard it argued that there is a considerable amount of dragooning by the Party Whip. I venture the opinion that in the Liberal Party as at present organized the Whip makes no attempt to dragoon the Parliamentary Member. The present incumbent happens to be one of the most intelligent and out-spoken members of Parliament. I think he would resent any attempt to stifle individual freedom of expression within the bounds of the parliamentary tradition and responsibility.

Cabinet—Choice of Members

The Prime Minister selects his Cabinet. There has been some discussion in New South Wales as to whether this

should be done by the Parliamentary Party. For many reasons it is considered this would be both impracticable and unwise in Federal politics. The logic of the case for the Prime Minister selecting his Cabinet is:—

> In the case of Parliamentary members the classical view of the responsibilities of Parliamentary members to their electorate is put by Burke in his Address to the Electors of Bristol in 1774
>
> > "that his unbiased opinion, his mature judgment, his enlightened conscience, he ought not to sacrifice to you, to any man or to any set of men living".

The Liberal Party member is not prepared to surrender his personal judgment to the Party machine or to the corporate Parliamentary Party.

In the case of a Cabinet, as I have said, the Government accepts the view that it represents the People and the Parliament and not the Party. It is a national and not a Party government. Logically, therefore, it follows that if Cabinet is to be independent it should not be elected by the Parliamentary Party, nor should it be subject to Party domination. It would not be desirable for members of Cabinet to give their first allegiance to those who elect them in the Party Room rather than to the Prime Minister and to Cabinet as a whole.

In the United Kingdom, in both the Conservative and the Labour Parties, the Prime Minister has an unfettered right to select his Cabinet.

Conclusion

The Labour Party

In a nutshell, if the complex can be expressed succinctly, the essential difference between the Liberal and the Labour Party organization is that the Labour Party has harnessed

the Trade Union horse to the Labour Party dray. The Liberal Party guides its own destiny.

Labour can normally count on strong, sometimes decisive, support from the Trade Union Movement, and on many of the less fortunate sections of the community.

It deliberately appeals to the disgruntled. It has made full use of the Marxian message of the terrestial paradise this side of the grave. This has been done, on the one hand, by crystallizing that feeling of being thwarted and ill-treated (which is the auto-therapeutic attitude of the unsuccessful many) and, on the other hand, by proclaiming the ability to deliver from all economic ills. These combined forces are the foundations and strength of the Labour Party. Much of their advantage is usually fritted away by mistakes or fanaticism or by superior leadership in the Liberal Movement.

The Liberal Party

The Liberal Party does not represent sectional groups. It attempts to represent all and must, therefore, represent many groups with conflicting aims and objectives. It has the great practical difficulty of pursuing a course in the national interest which will not violently and permanently injure or antagonize any large sectional groups. The Leader of the Party has in the long run the impracticable duty of guiding many spirited horses in the single harness.

The danger of fractionalization is always real. The practical difficulties are enormous. So the Liberal Party depends to an unusual degree on the commonsense and prudence of its members and Cabinet and either the persuasive powers or personal brilliance of the Parliamentary leaders.

The success of the movement will depend on the extent to which the leader can harness and guide the various forces in his team. Compromise and tolerance are the essentials of success.

At least 12/15% of the Australian electorate is politically

unattached and it can swing its vote quickly from one party to the other. This group decides the fate of Government.

It is to this group that Liberalism must appeal if it is to remain on the Treasury Benches for reasonably long periods.

A National policy based on the goal of steady national development seems the best long term approach to these voters.

Whilst a long term policy on National lines may have temporary disadvantages and may cause temporary hardships, it should in the long run appeal to the swinging voter.

A strong percentage of this group would normally prefer stability to the prospect of voting for a sectional party representing in the main particular interests.

I could not stress too frequently that we should not expect miracles. We should not attempt too much at one throw. Recognizing our limitations, there is no reason for despair. Fortunes will fluctuate but I feel sure that given the opportunities the individual will find greater happiness and contentment under Liberalism than under any other system of which I have as yet heard.

THE AUSTRALIAN LABOUR PARTY

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To WRITE the story of the Australian Labour Party in one short paper is an impossible task. Many books of great value have been written about this subject by politicians, historians and economists and other interested people. They take hours to read and took months to write. I can only attempt, therefore, to summarize the facts and interpret them in a cursory way in my contribution to this first Winter School of the Victorian Group of the Australian Institute of Political Science concerning the formation and growth and the development of the influence of the great political force which is known as the Australian Labour Party. That Party is the only one in Australian politics today that can win a majority of seats in both Houses of the Commonwealth Parliament and in the Legislative Assemblies of the six States of Australia and govern in its own right. It, alone of the three great parties, has no need to enter into agreements, or coalesce with the representatives of any other political party, in order to form and maintain a government.

I divide my paper into seven parts, as follows:—

Part 1—Formation and Growth of the Party.

Part 2—Some of the Party's Special Characteristics.

Part 3—Centralization of Power and other Trends in the Party.

Part 4—The History of the Socialization Objective.

Part 5—Party Organization.
Part 6—Relationship of the Trade Union Movement to the Party.
Part 7—The Parliamentary Role of the Party.

Part 1—Formation and Growth of the Party

The establishment of the Labour Party is popularly regarded as having happened as a consequence of the great maritime and shearers' strikes which occurred between the years 1890 and 1894 in a period of intense class bitterness and industrial unrest. This, too, was the time of the bank smashes with all the resultant misery and ruin which this economic catastrophe caused. Paradoxically there were labour members of Parliament before there was a Labour Party. One of the first Members of Parliament who can be regarded as something of the prototype of modern labour parliamentarians was Charles Jardine Don, who was elected to the Victorian Legislative Assembly in 1859. From the establishment of responsible Government in all the Australian colonies in 1856 onwards, trade union representatives were elected to the lower Houses of the various colonies, either with the endorsement or with the support of individual trade unions or groups of trade unions. Trade unionism among certain craft unions was strong from about 1856 onwards. It had grown so strong by that time that the Victorian Parliament enacted a measure in that year which established the principle of the eight hour day. Other Colonial Parliaments followed this example in later times, but it was not until more than a half century later that the British Parliament enacted similar legislation.

The Labour Party, as we know it today, is the product of many influences that have left their mark on Australian thought and character.

The Chartist Movement came into existence in Great Britain in 1838 because of the failure of the Reform Bill of

1832, which enfranchised the middle classes, to do anything for the working classes of that country. The struggles and the strikes, the mass meetings and the million strong petitions backed the demands of the Chartist leaders for the six point "People's Charter". Those famous six points were as follows:—

Equal electoral areas,
Universal suffrage,
Payment of members,
No property qualifications,
Vote by ballot, and
Annual Parliaments.

All but the last point have long since been translated into legislative actuality in England and in Australia.

In this country, each point or plank of the Chartist platform had to be fought for long before in the six Colonies victory was won. The final victories have yet to be won in regard to the unrepresentative Legislative Councils of South Australia, Western Australia and Tasmania in our Federation.

The Chartist Movement disappeared in Great Britain in the early years of the 1850-1860 decade, but its spirit lived on in that country, in the six Colonies of Australia and throughout the other self-governing areas of the then British Empire. The spirit of Chartism, the emphasis on political equality, still lives on.

The discovery of gold brought to our shores many who accepted Chartism and other adventurous and dissatisfied spirits from Great Britain and Ireland, the European Continent and even from Canada and the United States. Such men and women were imbued with what were then regarded as radical ideas and they were single-minded in their own earnest advocacy of social change. They were in revolt against the evils of the old world, and they all dreamed of a new world, based on human betterment.

They were, for the large part, anti-traditionalists and had scant respect for conventional thinking and conventional ideas. They helped to popularize the views of William Owen, the English Utopian socialist, and his theory of surplus value. Many of them saw advantages in Frederich List's views on protection as a fiscal weapon for the expansion of native industry. Others preached the "scientific socialism" of the other German philosopher, Karl Marx. Later, many came under the influence of the American Henry George's views on the unearned increment of land and the theory of the single tax. The writings of Edward Bellamy, the American, and William Morris, the Welshman, led to a wide acceptance of socialism as a way of social improvement. John Stuart Mills' writings also exercised a great influence. Paranthetically, I should like to mention that Sir Henry Parkes, several times Premier of New South Wales, and Sir Graham Berry, several times Premier of Victoria, were two former Chartists. The original W. C. Wentworth from his place in the Legislative Council in New South Wales stigmatized Parkes, the young radical who had just then entered the Legislative Assembly, as an anarchist and a subversive force. Australians of recent generations prefer to regard Parkes as the Father of Federation. Also, paranthetically, I want to remind this generation that it was this Wentworth, too, who was the first to denounce those of his political opponents whom he particularly disliked as communists. The publication of the Marx-Engels communist manifesto of 1848 created a great fear in Wentworth's mind. Eighteen hundred and forty-eight was the year of revolutionary movements which challenged the existing order in most European countries, and notably in Germany, Hungary, Poland, Italy, France and Ireland. Their failure and resulting repression led to a large exodus of political and social dissenters from Europe who found a new and more acceptable home under southern skies, and helped by their radicalism to shape the political destinies

of the Austral land which sheltered them. The Irish insurrectionists, the Scottish martyrs, the Welsh Chartists coming as convicts, and the victims of the mass evictions of Scottish crofters and Irish tenants by parasitical absentee landlords, for the most part, as well as English social rebels, all played their part in establishing and fostering new political ideas and social reforms in this new land. These restless people with their demands for social changes and with their hatred for the rule of wealth made possible the movement against social tyranny and exploitation that found its expression in the one and only attempted revolution in this country—the Eureka Stockade of 1854. All significant reforms of the next half century grew out of what happened at Eureka. At least, that is what we like to think. Eureka certainly assisted the movement for those objectives that were under way. Some may even feel that this movement was within sight of its goal even before Eureka happened. The seeming failure of Eureka became a triumphant success. Responsible Government, the secret ballot and adult suffrage were three of the great benefits that flowed from that short but bloody encounter. The Labour Party cherishes the thought that its beginnings are to be found in the Eureka encounter.

The purpose of this first Winter School of the Victorian Group of the Australian Institute of Political Science is to discuss political parties as we know them in this year of grace, and so I pass over the happenings of the intervening years between 1856 and 1890 to tell the story, as I know it, of the Australian Labour Party, which is now either the Government or the alternative Government, as the official Opposition in every Parliament in the Commonwealth. The Labour Party, as distinct from what is called the Labour Movement, and as a separate political entity, came into being when the workers of the early 90s realized that none of the then existing political parties could properly represent their interests in any of the six Colonial Parliaments. The first Labour Parties were exclusively working-

class parties. The bitter class disputes of the day made them into protective organizations which struggled for social progress, for a higher living standard for every worker and for the amelioration, generally, of the lot of those who had nothing else to sell but their labour power, and everything to lose unless they established their own political party. The title of the Australian Labour Party was not adopted until the Federal Conference of the Party held at Perth in 1918. Until that time each State organization bore a different name which was much the same as it was in the 1890s. In New South Wales "The Political Labour League" was the official title of labour in politics; in Victoria "The Political Labour Council" constituted the State organization; in Queensland and Tasmania, there had been "The Workers' Political Organization", while in South Australia the "United Labour Party" was the official description of the party organization. In Western Australia, political and industrial activity were controlled by the one body known as "The Australian Labour Federation". Labour sent thirty-six representatives out of one hundred and twenty into the Parliament of New South Wales in 1891. Victoria in 1894 elected sixteen representatives out of ninety. The other Colonies also established their Labour Parties during this period and won some parliamentary representation. The growth of the British Labour Party was slower by comparison. It did not become a powerful influence in British politics until much later than the Australian Labour Party. In 1910 the Labour Party had control of both the Senate and the House of Representatives in this country and had by then established the Commonwealth Bank, the Australian Navy and much of its programme of social welfare legislation. By contrast, it was not until 1945 that the British Labour Party was able to elect sufficient members to give it an absolute majority for the first time in the British House of Commons.

Until 1915 there was no Federal Executive of the Party

to interpret the Federal Platform and control the Federal section of the Organization between Federal Conferences; and so, for ten years before Federation, and for fifteen years after, the State organizations of the Party were the only bodies that were closely knit and functioned continuously. For those first fifteen post-Federation years, the State bodies were virtually independent units. The result was that the members of the Federal Parliamentary Labour Party for the first fifteen years were more under the control of their respective State bodies than they were under that of the Federal party organization.

It is true, I think, to say that, in the early and formative years of the Labour Party many social and political nonconformists, and many social and political iconoclasts—people much like the people who came in the days of the gold rushes—found asylum in the ranks of the Labour Party. To them it was the Party of the future, and so they joined it to help mould it according to their conception of what a vigorous, democratic party should be. The pioneers of the Labour Party, like many who followed them, preached their doctrines with an almost evangelical zeal. Enthusiastic propagandists, their stories were always simple, direct, and appealing. Their philosophy expressed the needs of their times. It is easy to trace in the Platform of the Labour Party, the teachings of Owen, Bellamy, List, George and a dozen other writers and thinkers of the nineteenth century, and it is plain that from the beginning the doctrines of the Party were based very largely upon the same ethical principles that distinguish the great religions that have won the support of mankind.

Part 2—Some of the Party's Special Characteristics

In its infancy, the Labour Party, being the third force, and generally the weakest force, in the legislatures of the Colonies, sought to pay one capitalist group off against

another. It used the tactics then being successfully employed by the Irish Nationalists in the House of Commons under the leadership of Isaac Butt and Charles Stewart Parnell, but whereas the Irish Nationalists subordinated all other differences to the winning of Irish Home Rule, the members of the Labour Party were often times divided amongst themselves on the controversial issues of the day. It came about therefore that the Party Conferences required Labour Members of Parliament to sign a pledge to act and vote in unison on matters covered by the Platform of the Party. It was the requirement that all Members must sign the pledge that caused the first split in the Labour Party after the experience of only one Parliament in New South Wales of having unpledged members. It used to be the boast of non-Labour parties, and in fact was often asserted as a great liberal principle, that members of non-Labour parties went into Parliament bound by no pledges to any outside political organizations and bound only by pledges given to the electors who sent them into Parliament. The example of a Party binding its Parliamentary representation by a written undertaking to obey the Party Platform and be and remain subject to the discipline of the party's organization is no longer a distinctive characteristic of the Labour Party. All other parties have now adopted the practice established by the Labour Party in this regard, and legal doubts as to its validity that may have been suggested by passages in the judgments of the High Court in R. V. Boston 33 *Commonwealth Law Reports* 386 may be taken to have been stilled by common political custom.

One very distinctive characteristic of the Labour Party has been its emphasis on Australianism. Its hostility to Imperial Federation, its objection to imported Governors-General and Governors, its stated and sustained objection to any more oversea borrowings; its opposition to the bestowal of Imperial Honours, and its unshakable belief in the policy of Protection, are all evidences of a strongly

developed nationalistic outlook. On all these questions the Labour Party stands alone. The national desire to preserve the homogeneity of the Australian people would probably be weakened considerably if it were not for the Labour Party's watchfulness and determination not to allow fundamental alterations in our immigration laws. The Labour Party is the equalitarian party in Australian politics and expressed itself thus in the adoption of its first Objective:—

(a) The cultivation of an Australian sentiment, based upon the maintenance of racial purity and the development in Australia of an enlightened and self-reliant community;

(b) The securing of the full results of their industry to all producers by the collective ownership of monopolies, and the extension of the industrial and economic functions of the State and municipality.

The teachings of the American revolution, and later of the French Revolution and the writings of men like Tom Paine, have certainly influenced Labour thought in the direction of liberty, equality and fraternity. The fact that there has never been a landed aristocracy in this country, and that the people who founded our Australian democracy came to escape crowded cities or harsh social conditions in Europe, would make it easy to secure popular acceptance of views and philosophies that paid scant respect to theories designed to buttress and justify a social system based on privilege and inequality. The teachings of the Fabian socialists, of which George Bernard Shaw was the principal exponent, as well as the life and labours of men like Keir Hardie, did much to mould labour thought in this country over the past six decades, and the Labour Party is the only Party that vigorously and declaredly opposes monopoly capitalism. Hence it is that Labour men and women proclaim proudly that theirs is the only Party that puts the interests of Australia first at all times, and under all circumstances.

Part 3—Centralization of Power and other Trends in the Party

Labour's approach to the problem of socialism has been a pragmatic one. It sees itself as a political reformist party fighting on a programme of immediate demands for social improvement and economic progress. It has never allowed itself to be merely an exponent of purely theoretical ideas if, by so doing, it endangers its prospects of winning and holding control of Parliamentary power with which to effect its desires for social and economic change. Believing that economic forces and an awakened public opinion will eventually make its views acceptable to the people, it does not seek at any time to move much ahead of public opinion. In this respect it follows the line of England's Fabian Socialists. In cases like Bank Nationalization and Airlines Nationalization has it taken urgent action, but only because it believed delay would enable the supporters of great vested interests to harm the common good and thwart the the electoral mandate given at the 1946 Elections in respect of Airlines Nationalization Act and the Commonwealth Bank Act, both passed by Parliament in 1945.

In its sixty years' existence, the Labour Party has tended towards centralization of powers in executives and, particularly so in recent years, in the Federal Executive of the Party. This has been balanced, to some extent, by the retention in State Branches of the right of selection and nomination of candidates, but the rules of the Federal Conference and, between Federal Conferences, of the Federal Executive give the right of appeal to aggrieved members to the Federal Executive and ultimately to the Federal Conference. Twice in the State of New South Wales, the Federal Executive has intervened to discipline the New South Wales Branch. The first occasion was in 1931 when the State Executive adopted the Lang Plan in defiance of the policy decided upon by the Federal Parliamentary Labour

Party during the Prime Ministership of the late Mr James H. Scullin. The second occasion was in June 1940 when the members of the Executive at that time sought to defy the decisions of a Federal Conference. The present tendency is towards a greater consolidation of Federal authority in policy making where it affects the Federal Parliament, and greater authority in the hands of the Federal Executive in interpreting that policy. The events following the adoption of the Premiers' Plan in 1931 led to Federal intervention, first at a Federal Executive Meeting and later at a Special Federal Conference, in order to decide just what should or should not be done about that particular plan, and the attitude that should be adopted towards it by members of Federal and State Parliaments alike.

The decision of the 1950 Federal Conference at Canberra that the Federal Conference should meet biennially instead of triennially betokens not merely the growing strength, numerically and financially, of the Party organization but is an indication of a move that will undoubtedly be made in the next few years to have the Federal Conference meet annually. The Federal Executive now meets twice a year instead of only once, as was the practice from 1915 on to the end of World War II.

It has been said, with truth, that the present structure of the Labour Party is hierarchical. The structure of the Liberal Party and the Country Party is in each case also hierarchical, though the discipline which these two organizations can impose on Party members is nowhere nearly as complete and effective as the Labour Party can enforce.

Part 4—The History of the Socialization Objective

In the early months of 1921, the Federal Executive of the Labour Party met under the presidency of the then Federal President (Mr E. J. Holloway). There was con-

siderable discussion at this Federal Executive meeting about the Party's existing Objective. Some members felt that it no longer adequately expressed the hopes and purposes of the Party, and so a resolution was adopted to assemble an All Australian Trades Union Congress and seek, from that body of representatives of trade unions, an expression of what the industrial movement felt should be the aims of the political wing of the Labour Movement. It was also decided by the Federal Executive that the resolutions of this Congress should be submitted by the Executive to a Federal Conference of the Labour Party to be held later.

The Congress met in Melbourne in June 1921, and Mr Holloway, who presided, was the then President of the Melbourne Trades Hall Council, as well as the Federal President of the Australian Labour Party. He subsequently became a member of the Federal Parliament and served as a Minister in the Scullin, Curtin, Forde and Chifley Governments. The Congress, which was a most representative gathering, resolved to recommend that the Objective of the Party should be altered to the form we now know. In other words, this Congress recommended to the Labour Party that its Objective should be:—

> "The socialisation of industry, production, distribution and exchange."

A Committee was then appointed to devise ways and means of realizing the Objective.

There were nine paragraphs in the report of the Committee, the second one of which dealt with the organization of workers along the lines of industry.

At the Federal Conference of the Laboor Party convened in Brisbane in October of the same year, it was agreed by 20 votes to 11 to make socialization, in the terms defined by the Australian Trade Union Congress, the Objective of the Party. The Methods to be used in implementing the Objec-

tive were approved by this Conference. A declaration of the meaning of the Objective was also approved and this became the famous Blackburn Interpretation. The policy of the Party, in regard to methods, as finally adopted by the Brisbane Conference is set out hereunder:—

Socialization of Industry by:—

(a) The constitutional utilization of Industrial and Parliamentary machinery;

(b) The organization of workers along the lines of industry;

(c) The nationalization of banking and all principal industries;

(d) The municipalization of such services as can best be operated in limited areas;

(e) The government of nationalized industries by Boards upon which the workers in the industries and the community shall have representation;

(f) The establishment of an elective Supreme Economic Council by all nationalized industries;

(g) The setting up of Labour research and Labour information bureaux and of Labour educational institutions, in which the workers shall be trained in the management of the nationalized industries.

The Blackburn Interpretation, adopted by 15 votes to 13, was expressed in these words:—

"That the A.L.P. proposes collective ownership for the purpose of preventing exploitation.

"Wherever private ownership is a means of exploitation it is opposed by the Party.

"That the Party does not seek to abolish private property, even of an instrument of production, where such instrument is utilised by its owner in a socially useful manner without exploitation."

That interpretation was never rescinded and, because it was necessary to allay some doubts which had been aroused by political opponents as to whether it had binding force, it was re-affirmed by the Federal Executive in 1949.

The Objective has remained unaltered to this day, and, in my opinion, will continue to remain unaltered, but the Methods to be used in implementing the Objective were radically amended at the 1927 Federal Conference held in Canberra. They were further amended by the 1948 Canberra Conference. The 1927 Conference was notable, in that it was the first Federal Conference of the Party to meet in the National Capital. Incidentally, it met in one of the two new government secretariats, there being then no other meeting place in Canberra. The decision of the 1927 Canberra Conference in respect of Methods, now called Principles of Action, is as follows:—

Socialization of Industry by:—

(a) The constitutional utilization of the Federal, State and Municipal Government Parliamentary and administrative machinery.

(b) The extension of the scope and powers of the Commonwealth Bank until complete control of banking is in the hands of the people.

(c) The organization and establishment of co-operative activities in which the workers and other producers shall be trained in the management, responsibility, and control of industry.

(d) The cultivation of Labour ideals and principles and the development of the spirit of social service.

(e) The setting-up of Labour research and Labour information bureaux, and Labour educational institutions.

(f) Progressive enactment of reform, as defined in the Labour Platform as set out hereunder.

A comparison of the decisions of the Brisbane (1921) Conference and the Canberra (1927) Conference shows that the influence of the revolutionary years of 1917-19 in Europe had weakened by 1927, and that the Labour Party was committed to a much more evolutionary scheme for the realization of its aims. Incidentally, the view taken by the Labour Party in 1927 was not contrary to the views expressed by many Labour-minded writers, then and subsequently, on the aims of socialization. Dr Lloyd Ross in two splendid articles in two Australian magazines, *The Twentieth Century*, December 1947, and *The Australian Quarterly*, March 1950, deals very extensively with all these, and other related, matters.

Mr E. H. Lane in his book, *Dawn to Dusk*, made his contribution to the history of Labour in Politics around the period of 1921-22, and his reminiscences, although partisan and critical, are of great value to those seeking to discover why things happened as they did, and what really influenced the minds of those who made the decisions in 1921 and around which so much controversy has raged at different times and particularly in recent years. Although the 1921 Brisbane Conference of the Party adopted the resolutions of the All Australian Conference of Trade Unions of June 1921, there were some militant trade unionists then who felt that the trade union view point had been submerged at Brisbane, and the following interesting extract from Mr Lane's work shows how deep the cleavage was between political Labour and a section of industrial Labour at the next All Australian Trades Union Conference held in June 1922:—

> "In the following June (1922), the All Australian Trades Union Congress again assembled in Melbourne to review the decisions of the A.L.P. Brisbane Conference and the response of the unions to the programme adopted at the 1921 Trade Union Congress. The

report of the President, E. J. Holloway, revealed that the high hopes of a united Australian Labour Movement and an honest acceptance of the progressive policy laid down, had to a very large degree not been fulfilled.

"In his opening address, the president stated: 'that the old tooth and claw policy in more than one State, is still the order of the day, and, of course, with the inevitable result, to the disgrace and downfall of the workers' movement'.

"Although the congress adopted the objective and methods adopted by the Federal (Labour) Convention at Brisbane, there was evinced a very strong resentment by the militant section of the congress at the Brisbane Convention's attitude and an amendment was moved repudiating the reactionary revision of the All Australian Trade Union Congress policy by the Brisbane A.L.P. conference."

I believe that the decision of the Labour Party in 1921 to change its Objective was due to the conviction that the old Objective was not a sufficient answer to monopoly capitalism or to the growing challenge of communism. The Labour Party of the 1920s was determined in emphasizing to the people of Australia that there was only one political party that could faithfully represent the needs of all wage and salary earners and all working farmers. It was determined that the spurious claims of the communists to be a working class party, or, indeed, a political party in the Australian acceptance of that term, must be resisted, and it was thought that the change in the Objective made by the Brisbane (1921) Conference would, together with the Methods outlined by the same Conference, and the Blackburn Interpretation, achieve the desired result. I believe it has done so because the Communist Party has never been able to poll much more than one per cent of votes cast in

any electorate from 1921 to 1953, except in one Queensland electorate.

There has been, in the intervening years, a small minority section which has propagated the idea that the Labour Party should campaign in political campaigns on the socialization issue alone, whilst other sections have demanded from time to time the setting up of socialization groups, or units, to popularize the Objective, with a view to altering, ultimately, the Objective to one of total socialism. The socialization units set up in the State of New South Wales when the Labour Party was suffering under the Lang dictatorship, sought, after a time, to capture the Lang machine, but failed. They were eventually dissolved, but functioned strongly in the early depression years in that State. It would be idle to deny that the Labour Party, like every other political force, is a coalition party in many respects, and that there exists a majority and minority view on almost every question of topical importance as well as on the planks of the Party platform. There are some who are frankly non-socialist, while others grow impatient of piecemeal reform and want to campaign for "Socialism in our time". Most members of the Party are prepared to follow the Fabian line, completely confident that the education of the people and economic factors will ultimately ensure a majority acceptance of every plank in the Labour Party's platform. Ten years, twenty years or even fifty years means a very little wait for the Labour Party for the winning of popular approval in their present or modified form of its political principles. It is certain that what it advocates is morally and ethically sound and socially beneficial, and that in no respect can there be any conflict between it and any Church or other group concerned with spiritual and moral questions.

Despite what our opponents say, the history of the Party, since the adoption of the socialization Objective, proves very clearly that the Labour Party does not stand for total

socialism, and does not deny, and never has denied, the right, and, indeed, the desirability, of private ownership of land, or of the instruments of production, provided that such ownership is not used against the interests of the community. The Labour Party stands for the socialization, or nationalization, of such public utilities which the national interest demands should not be allowed to remain in the hands of private enterprise. Every leader of the Federal Labour Party, since 1921, has gone on record to this effect. The following view expressed by our former great Leader and Prime Minister (Mr J. B. Chifley) places the issue beyond all doubt, except, of course, for those who, for various reasons, refuse to be convinced.

On 12th November 1947, Mr Chifley said:

"Representations have been received from various trades unions regarding the nationalisation of coal mines and the iron and steel industry, and, in reply, I have pointed out that the Commonwealth Parliament has no power under the Constitution to nationalise those industries, even if the Government wished to do so. Therefore, it is sheer nonsense to talk of the Government's plans for nationalising such industries."

And again on 30th September 1949, Mr Chifley said:

"I have made my position and that of the Australian Labour Party quite clear on a number of occasions in reply to questions at public meetings and in addresses to conferences of the A.L.P. What the A.L.P. has said, and what I have said very often on behalf of the Party, is that if some great public utility is not serving the best interests of the community and is not being properly managed in the interests of the people, or is exploiting the public, it should be the subject of nationalisation, or, as some people call it, of socialisation.

"I repeat what I have said. If, in the opinion of the

A.L.P., some great public utility is not being properly managed in the best interests of the people, or is exploiting the people, that utility should be placed under public ownership. The Government has never made out a list of industries that might be, or should be, nationalised in the interests of the community. Any decision of that kind can be made only in respect of particular industries in the light of circumstances existing at the time."

The 1945 Melbourne Conference was the next to give consideration to the revision of the Party's Federal Platform and Rules. This Conference appointed a Committee to make such revision and the Committee so appointed duly reported to the 1948 Canberra Conference. The alterations to the Principles of Action for the realization of the Objective of the Party, as recommended by the Committee, were adopted. The important alteration made added a new section "The National Planning of the Economic, Social and Cultural Development of the Commonwealth". As approved by the 1948 Conference, the Principles of Action read as follows:—

"Socialisation of Industry by—

(a) The Constitutional utilisation of Federal and State Parliaments, Municipal or other Government-created Authorities.

(b) The National Planning of the Economic, Social and Cultural Development of the Commonwealth.

(c) The complete control of banking and credit by the nation.

(d) The organisation and establishment of co-operative activities, in which the workers and other producers shall be trained in the management, responsibility and control of industry.

(e) The cultivation of Labour ideals and principles, the

development of the spirit of community service and the recognition of the responsibilities of citizenship.

(f) The establishment of Economic and Research Bureaux.

(g) Progressive enactment of reform, as defined in the Labour Platform."

Other amendments were also made to the general Platform but none to that section headed "Methods". This section has remained unaltered since 1927 and reads as follows:—

"1. Cultivation of Australian democratic sentiment, development of an enlightened and self-reliant community and maintenance of White Australia.

"2. Complete Australian self-Government as a member of the British Commonwealth of Nations, the Commonwealth Parliament alone controlling administration with the Vice-regal representative at all times acting on the advice of Commonwealth Ministers, except where such appears inconsistent with Imperial Treaty Obligations."

Indeed it is little different from the first Objective adopted in 1915.

Not satisfied that the Objective of the Party was yet stated clearly enough to escape misrepresentation by unscrupulous people, the 1951 Canberra Conference dealt with two Agenda Items. The first resulted in the following addition to the Objective.

The Australian Labour Party proposes socialization or social control of industry and the means of production, distribution and exchange to the extent necessary to eliminate anti-social features of industry, and anti-social features of the processes of exploitation and production, distribution and exchange in accordance with the Principles of Action, Methods and Progressive Reforms set out in this Platform.

The second item proposed that a Preamble should be added in the Party Platform which—

(a) Asserts the Australian character of the A.L.P. and its objective in developing a free, enlightened Australian community.

(b) Asserts the right of ownership of property in any form not involving exploitation.

(c) Repudiates revolutionary Communism and asserts the necessity for maintaining democratic institutions guaranteeing freedom of speech, press, assembly, organization of charitable and welfare organization.

The Conference decision was that the Federal Executive prepare such a Preamble to the Federal Platform, setting out the nature and general philosophy of the Labour Party, and report thereon to the next Federal Conference. The Federal Executive gave consideration to that decision and, in due course, recommended to the Adelaide 1953 Conference that a Preamble be so added to the Federal Platform. This Preamble was prepared by Mr Beazley, M.H.R., and was unanimously adopted by Conference. It reads as follows:—

Australian Labour Party

PREAMBLE TO FEDERAL PLATFORM

Setting out the Nature and General Philosophy of the Party

The Australian Labour Party is a movement having as its purpose the development of a free, independent and enlightened Australian nation within the British Commonwealth of Nations.

It had its origin in the aspirations of the Australian people for a dignified and constructive way of life.

The Party as a parliamentary force grew out of the national sentiment and the Trade Union Movement of the 19th century. The entry of Labour into Parliament transformed the political issues in this country to questions of social, economic and industrial reform.

The Australian Labour Party in the Commonwealth and the States is democratic, national and constitutional.

It is democratic in that it believes that politics should be conducted within a framework of free elections on the basis of universal adult suffrage; that Governments may be freely elected and freely dismissed by the electorate; that the right of constitutional opposition to a Government is essential to freedom, and the Party rejects the conception that any Government once installed is irremovable.

The Australian Labour Party is national in that it considers that the welfare of the Australian community cannot be secured by any political movement subject to international discipline such as the Communist Party.

The Australian Labour Party stands for the most efficient and scientific defence of the Commonwealth, by naval, military, aerial and civil defence, by scientific research, and by a properly planned migration policy.

The Labour Party is constitutional in that it believes that its objectives must be attained by the constitutional utilization of Federal, State and local Governments; and that the Constitution should be altered by decisions of the Australian electorate.

The Australian Labour Party rejects theories of revolution and asserts that these theories have disastrous consequences to the people and do not attain real and lasting benefits.

The Labour Party policy is made by Federal Conferences of delegates from all States, and the Party policy within the States is framed by conferences of delegates elected by

the constitutent branches and affiliated unions. Its policy is not framed by directives from the leadership but by resolutions from the members within branches and affiliated unions.

The Labour Party supports at all times the basic civil rights guaranteed in the past by such historic documents as Magna Carta, the Bill of Rights and Habeas Corpus; it supports the separation and independence of judicial power from the executive and the legislature, freedom of worship, of the Press, of speech, assembly and association.

This brings the story of the adoption by the Labour Party of its socialization Objective up to the present time. I have stated the reasons for the adoption of the Objective in the first instance, and the reasons why modifications were made to the original decision. I have also shown the changes that have since been made in the Principles of Action because of misrepresentation by interested persons, whether they were members of opposite political Parties or other anti-Labour minded people.

As the history of the Objective from 1921 to 1953 has not been stated previously in accessible form, I feel that perhaps that to do so may be my major contribution at this Forum.

Part 5—Party Organization

The Labour Party in each State consists of a Central Executive elected annually in the State of New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia and Tasmania at State Conferences consisting of representatives of affiliated Trade Unions and representatives of Branch members in each State electorate. The Conference representation generally consists of one representative for the first 500 members, a second representative for the next 500 members and one additional representative for each additional 1000 members.

The same rule in regard to representation applies both to State electorate councils and affiliated Unions.

In the early days of the Labour Party, Trade Union representatives were not required to be members of the Party and, until quite recent years, were on occasions not only not members of the Party but were members of other organizations which were highly critical of the Labour Party. First in New South Wales, and then in Victoria and now, I believe, in all of the four States mentioned delegates to each State Conference must be members of the Party, for at least two years in the case of Victoria, and three years in the case of New South Wales, and for similar definite periods in the case of other States, before their credentials are accepted.

In the case of Queensland and Western Australia, State Conferences are held triennially, the reason being that the vast area of each State and the small population occupying it made it a financial impossibility for such gatherings to assemble more frequently.

Members of the Central Executives in the four States first mentioned are elected directly by Conference delegates. In Queensland, what is called an Inner Executive is elected by the Triennial Conference delegates but the full membership of the Queensland Central Executive is much larger, consisting of the members of the Inner Executive and delegates elected subsequent to Conference by groups of affiliated Unions. These Union representatives can be changed from time to time by the group of Unions concerned.

In each State, the Executive is the supreme body between Conferences but the decisions of any State Executive are subject to appeal to the State Conference concerned and, as I have already pointed out, to the Federal Executive and, if necessary, later to the Federal Conference. A general disinclination has been exhibited by Federal Executives and Federal Conferences to interfere with the local autonomy

of the States when appeals by individuals who feel aggrieved have come before either body, unless, of course, some big principle is involved. It was the appeal of certain New South Wales members of the Federal Parliamentary Labour Party to the Federal Executive, after the Melbourne Federal Conference of June 1940, that gave the Federal Executive the opportunity and the justification combined to clear out the majority membership of the Executive then in power in New South Wales.

The combined membership of Labour Party branches throughout Australia is not large. The Party that never commands less than 42% or 43% of the Australian electorate and on occasions has won the approval of 54% of the electors could expect a membership of several millions, but the membership of the Party is but a fraction of that potential. To be a member of the Labour Party one must be a member of a Trade Union covering his or her calling. In cases where a person's calling is not covered by a Trade Union or where a prospective member is an employer of labour, the rule may be waived, but membership of a Trade Union does not provide for automatic membership of the Labour Party except in the State of Western Australia where the political and industrial wings of the Party are combined. In that State, the Secretary of the State Central Executive has charge of all political matters and in addition appears for the combined Union membership in cases before the State Arbitration Court.

Members of Trade Unions in New South Wales desiring to vote in the selection of Labour candidates for political honours must sign the Pledge Book at a meeting of a Branch of the A.L.P. in the area in which they reside at least twelve months prior to the date of calling for nominations and also have signed the Pledge Book during the year in which nominations are called and prior to the date on which nominations are called, otherwise they cannot vote when selection ballots are held. In Victoria and in

Queensland no such requirement is provided for, and all Trade Union members are eligible to vote by producing evidence that they have paid their Union dues at the time of the ballot, and after they have signed the pledge sheet promising to work for the candidate selected at the ballot, whoever he or she might be. The Queensland rule is somewhat similar to the Victorian rule. In South Australia, candidates are selected for State and Federal honours at the annual Party Conference by Conference delegates only. In that State each Union can cast its full affiliated membership vote as is done in England. This is known as the card vote and, as the Australian Workers' Union is the most powerful Union in South Australia, its card vote could be a deciding factor in all ballots. The card vote is not often used, each delegate's vote being regarded as of equal value when the selection of candidates and of the Party Executive for the ensuing year are being determined. In Tasmania, the members of the State Executive decide all questions of selection and endorsement, although in State Elections it has been the custom to endorse all candidates who submit their names even though the number endorsed is in excess of the positions being contested and considerably in excess of the members which can be elected under the system of proportionate representation. In Western Australia the candidates for Parliament are selected in much the same way as in Victoria and Queensland.

Part 6—Relationship of the Trade Union Movement to the Party

The Labour Party having grown out of the Trade Union Movement and, being financed from the beginning by fees paid by affiliated Trade Unions, the relationship between the Labour Party and the Trade Union Movement is and always must be a close and intimate one. If it ever should be otherwise, the Labour Party will suffer greatly and so,

too, will the Trade Union Movement. The Labour Party, based on the Trade Union Movement, holds as a fundamental tenet of its political faith that as all men were created equal, so all must have equal opportunities for leading a full and happy life, and thus it seeks to promote and protect the dignity and well being of each individual member of society. Because it opposes the exploitation of the workers, because it refuses to recognize the worker as merely another cost factor in production, because it believes that a few people at one end of the social scale should not be allowed to appropriate an unfair share of the national wealth with consequent undeserved destitution, poverty and misery for many at the other end of that same social scale, the Party seeks to change the basis of modern society in order to ensure the greatest good for the greatest number of citizens.

Most members of the Federal and of State and Municipal Parliamentary Labour Parties are trade unionists and have come into prominence in the Labour Party through their activities in the Unions. Furthermore, with very few exceptions, all members of the State Central Executives of the Party are active trade unionists, many of them being paid officials of the Trade Union Movement. Some years back a Federal Advisory Committee was set up by a Federal Conference consisting of representatives of the A.C.T.U. and A.W.U., representatives of the Federal Executive of the Party and representatives of the Federal Parliamentary Party to discuss policy matters affecting the Trade Union Movement. The principle was also applied in some States. The Federal Advisory Committee has functioned intermittently, but there is no doubt that such a body is a mutual help to the three organizations represented on it and can be helpful in securing common action over a large range of subjects. In Western Australia, where, as I have pointed out, the Trade Union Movement and the political wing function as one body, there is no need for extra consultative

organizations such as Advisory Committees. Attempts have been made from time to time, but always unsuccessfully, to adapt the Western Australian form of organization to the needs of the Eastern States, while in recent times an attempt has been made to change the Western Australian Branch plan to that of the Eastern States. Trade Unions are, to the extent which I have outlined, identified with the activities of the Labour Party. They do not dominate it in the sense that A.C.T.U. decisions are automatically adopted as Labour Party policy; often such decisions are not accepted. Some A.C.T.U. decisions do influence Party thinking and in accordance with usual procedures find their way on to the Party Platform. On occasions there have been conflicts between the A.C.T.U. and the Federal Parliamentary Labour Party, but that was more often so when Communist influence in the A.C.T.U. was much more powerful than it is today; at the moment, it is practically negligible. On the other hand, the Labour Party does not dominate, nor seek to dominate, the Trade Union Movement. Our organizational set-up, which is different to that which operates in the British Labour Party, is less likely to occasion, and more likely to avoid, conflicts of personalities and ideas between Party and Trade Union leaders which have become evident in recent years at British Labour Party Conferences.

In Australia, there have never been any Trade Unions organized on a religious basis which represented either a particular denomination or a broad association of Christian denominations. For that we should be very thankful. My hope is that this country will never see the workers split on religious grounds as they are today on the Trade Union front in some European and Asiatic countries. There may be historical reasons which explain the European happenings, as there probably are similar reasons for the formation of the German Centre Party in the political sphere because of differences between certain Church leaders with Bismarck

in the middle of the last century. Just as there is no justification, in my view, for the creation of Trade Unions associated with any church in Australia, so neither would it be desirable to have, in Australian politics, such bodies as Italy's Christian Democrats, Germany's Christian Democrats or France's M.R.Ps. Again, the conditions in Europe which foster the growth of such parties, fortunately, do not exist in the Australian climate. There have been one or two attempts in several State spheres to form religious parties but luckily such parties have been short-lived, and are practically all forgotten. In the Labour Party, as in the trade unions, there is room for people of all religions and also for those who hold no religious beliefs.

Part 7—The Parliamentary Role of the Party

The last matter that I want to deal with concerns the manner in which the Parliamentary Party operates. All members of the Caucus have equal status. The Party Leader has always been regarded as being only the first among such equals. In every ballot for positions in the Party (and this obtains in the Federal and all State Parties), every member of the Caucus is deemed to be a candidate unless he or she indicates otherwise. In other words, no nominations are taken. The method of election is by exhaustive ballot and, when Ministers are being elected, an exhaustive ballot can take hours to complete. With the enlarged membership of the Federal Parliament since the 1949 Elections, the balloting for the next Labour Government, when it is elected, will take considerably longer than heretofore. The Leader of the Labour Party, unlike the Leader of the Liberal Party, does not select his Ministers. The Ministers are voted into office in the same way in which the Leader was voted in, and his duty is to allocate portfolios. This task requires considerable thought so that the aptitudes and abilities of individual Ministers can be

utilized to the best advantage of the Government, of the Party and of the Country. The Caucus of the Party does not decide matters properly pertaining to the executive arm of Government, which is the Cabinet, but Caucus has the final say on every Bill before it is presented to Parliament. When in Opposition, the Labour Party elects an Executive, which is in effect a shadow Cabinet, and sometimes elects Party Committees, under the Chairmanship of a member of the Executive to study legislation when introduced by the Government, as well as to watch the activities of the various Departments and to make recommendations to the Party Executive where deemed necessary. Caucus meets weekly during Sessions, whether the Party is in Government or in Opposition, and at such meetings Cabinet business, when the Party is in Government, or executive business, when it in in Opposition, takes precedence over private members' business. There is nothing, however, to prevent private members bringing forward any business they desire to have discussed. The rule in the Federal Caucus is that whatever decisions Caucus makes are binding on all members of the Party. This rule differs somewhat in some State Caucuses, particularly where the State platform requires all members to act and vote in accordance with majority decisions, except where such decisions do not affect the planks of the Party's platform. In some instances, members who disagree with what has been decided upon have been known to absent themselves from divisions in the Parliament when the matter is under debate but in any such cases that I can recollect the result has not been affected by absentions. If the issue depended upon the vote of the member who was absent, the chances are he would have been present and followed the Party line. Disciplinary action generally would be taken against such a member only if the absence of his vote, or his vote in opposition, which of course would be a more serious thing still, had caused the defeat of the measure. Discipline in the Labour

Party, while firm on vital questions, is flexible enough to enable the Party to avoid internal upheaval where the Party's interests have not suffered in an Election or a Referendum Campaign because some members have failed to give the Party decision full support.

Conclusions

Finally, I thank the Victorian Group of the Institute for giving me the honour of reading the first paper of the first school held under its auspices since its recent formation. I apologize for the length of the paper but, as I said at the commencement, it is really impossible in the course of a paper which takes only an hour to read to cover the sixty years old history of the first and most successful experiment of a working-class Party seeking to establish itself in the political life of each of the Colonies and then in the Commonsphere, following Federation, and ultimately being able to compel the two political Parties, Conservatives and Liberals, which it sought to displace, to join together as one Party to try and stop its onward progress. The Australian Labour Party has made an enormous contribution to the life of the nation, and in the years ahead seems destined to maintain an equally powerful influence.

Every member of the Australian Labour Party believes that that powerful influence has always been consistently beneficial among the six Labour Prime Ministers. There have been four Prime Ministers who have led Labour Governments, and Labour Governments alone, backed by a majority of members in the House of Representatives, if not always by majorities in the Senate. Every Party member believes that these four statesmen have been among the most distinguished of those who have been privileged to hold the highest office which it is within the power of the Australian people to confer on any of its citizens. Their names are Andrew Fisher, James Henry Scullin, John

Curtin and Joseph Benedict Chifley. I knew all four and was intimately associated in many Party Conferences, and in the Federal Parliamentary Labour Party with the last three. It was my great honour and valued privilege to have served as a Minister of State under the last two.

THE AUSTRALIAN PARTY SYSTEM

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THE TITLE of a recent report by a committee of the American Political Science Association—"Towards a More Responsible Two-Party System"—is one sign of a change of attitude in democratic countries towards political parties. In the past, parties have been studied in somewhat the same spirit as the pure scientist shows in the study of natural phenomena. That is, it has not been assumed that the purpose of study is to enable us to have better political parties any more than it has been assumed that the purpose of meteorology is to enable us to have better weather. Political scientists have regarded it as part of their proper function to propose schemes for the reform of the civil service, the Cabinet, Parliament, and local government but they have seldom looked upon parties as institutions which the political community is entitled to shape in accordance with its political ideals. The courts, it seems, have a similar view. In Australia, as we know from Cameron *v.* Hogan,[1] a political party is legally a private association on a par with a cricket club or an art society; the courts will not interfere with its management or mismanagement of its affairs on any plea of public interest but only on the meagre ground that the property interest of a member has been injuriously affected.

There may be a justification in expediency for leaving political parties free to develop without interference from courts and legislatures, and it can be admitted that attempts by political communities to control the development and

[1] *Commonwealth Law Reports*, Vol. 51, pp. 358-386.

functioning of political parties have not always been happy. But there can be no good reason for failing to take political parties for what they are—institutions with public responsibilities accountable to the community for the manner in which they discharge these responsibilities. In fact, the beginnings of such an attitude are perceptible in Australia. Three recent works on Australian politics—Sir Frederick Eggleston's *Reflections of an Australian Liberal*, Professor Overacker's *Australian Party System*, and Professor Crisp's *Parliamentary Government of Australia*—have in common a disposition to measure political parties and the party system against certain norms of good government. But while it is healthy that parties should be judged critically and should be regarded as subject to control in the public interest, it is important for the critics to avoid the kind of empiricism which assumes that the task of bringing parties under social control is relatively simple. It is legitimate to say that a political party and, say, a civil service both exercise public functions and are therefore accountable for the manner in which they discharge these functions; but this one point of similarity, important as it is, should not obscure the fact that they are very different social entities. Public services are institutions created from outside to serve defined purposes; though in some measure they develop their own powers of growth and adaptation, their development is dictated largely by an externally imposed social policy. Political parties are spontaneous responses to needs seldom capable of precise definition; their development, up to the present, has been shaped by forces as yet imperfectly understood; and although a growing recognition of their importance in the processes of government is bringing them under critical judgment, it is still necessary, in the present state of our knowledge of their nature and functioning, to move warily in regulating their activities. In so far as we have political democracy, it has been made possible by party government, and it is therefore prudent to assume in

the party system some degree of imminent wisdom. This, perhaps, is a long way of saying that those who want a better party system should begin by enquiring why the system is what it is.

Before the last war, substantial books on the origins and functioning of the party system could be numbered on the fingers of one hand. The last decade or so, however, has seen notable advances in this branch of political science. In France, Duverger has made the first satisfying investigation of the effect of electoral systems on the development and functioning of parties and Goguel and others have demonstrated the possibilities of electoral geography. In England the election surveys sponsored by the Nuffield Foundation have shown the party system in action. In the United States sociologists and social psychologists have investigated the influence of social class and status on party membership and structure.

The purpose of this paper is to suggest the possible bearing of some of this recent research on the Australian situation. I hope to show that Australian parties do constitute a system, to show also how this system arose, and to indicate some of the influences which govern its working. Finality, as Disraeli remarked, is not the language of politics, and in any case so little work has been done in Australia on the history, structure, and interaction of political parties that an essay written now can be no more than a set of hypotheses for subsequent workers to demolish.

Even my first proposition, which is that Australia has a two-party system, is open to argument. Professor Lipson, while recognizing that minor parties can exist in a two-party system, holds that once a minor party succeeds in holding the balance between the principal contenders the two-party system ceases to exist.[2] This, he contends, has been the situation in Australia since the emergence of the

[2] Leslie Lipson, "The Two-Party System in British Politics", *American Political Science Review*, Vol. XLVII, No. 2, pp. 338-339.

Country Party. For reasons which I will develop later, I believe that this both misconceives the nature and functioning of the Country Party and defines the two-party system too narrowly.

It is clear that a two-party system had emerged in federal politics at the end of the first decade of federation, and it will be useful to begin by enquiring why it emerged and why it took the form it did.

Origins of the Two-Party System

In the first three Commonwealth Parliaments members were divided into three fairly even groups—Protectionist, Free Trade, and Labour.[3] The first two groups were not political parties in the present sense of the term; they had no permanent electoral organization, their discipline was loose, and they did not have programmes relevant to the whole range of political issues. To some extent, moreover, their basis was regional as well as ideological. The Free Traders represented mainly the commercial interests of New South Wales. The Protectionists had their main strength in Victoria, where the Liberal Party and the trade unions had formed a political alliance some twenty years previously. A substantial section of the Protectionist group was therefore Liberal and even radical on issues of social reform.

The Labour Party, drawing its strength principally from New South Wales and Queensland, was in strong contrast to the Protectionist and Free Trade groups; it had a permanent organization based on the trade union movement and a tight discipline. Its principal difference from the Labour Party of today was that, although it had a general programme, it was still an interest party. "The members of the Labour Party," said one of its members, "receive the

[3] For an account of this period see L. F. Fitzhardinge in *Nation Building in Australia*, pp. 15-113; also Walter Murdoch, *Alfred Deakin*, pp. 206-270.

support of the wage-earning class chiefly, because their interests in the past have been neglected. We are here to definitely voice their requirements, and chiefly because the needs of other sections are very carefully studied by other honourable members."[4]

In this period the normal basis for a government was the similarity of outlook between Labour members and the more radical wing of the Protectionists. When the tariff issue was dominant the Protectionist could usually form a government with the support of those Labour members who favoured protection. When there was peace on the tariff front and issues of social reform or labour legislation were dominant the common radicalism of the left-wing Protectionists and the Labour Party gave the Ministry a majority in the House. In the politics of this period it was men and policies that counted. A sense of the importance of the federal experiment drew to the Commonwealth Parliament men of powerful and independent minds. It was, moreover, a period in which great issues were decided. The tariff battle was resolved in favour of the Protectionists, the system of compulsory arbitration of industrial disputes was completed by its extension to the Commonwealth sphere, a national defence policy related to a wider Imperial defence policy was initiated, and the machinery of federal government was brought into being and principles of Commonwealth-State relations worked out. Historians have perhaps been too ready to regard the period as one of instability and confusion and the movement towards the two-party system as a desirable development in the direction of a more responsible government. Yet government based on loose and shifting alliances was in some respects well suited to the formative years of the Commonwealth. It may have been a disadvantage that no government was ever sure of its term of office, but it was wholly advantageous that, as each national issue arose, the

[4] *Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates*, Vol. 21, p. 4884.

predominant parliamentary opinion on that issue was effectively expressed.

During this first decade of the Commonwealth Parliament, elections to the House of Representatives (with the partial exception of that of 1901) were by simple majority and single member constituencies. According to a widely accepted theory, this electoral method tends, by a combination of mechanical and psychological factors, to the establishment of a two-party system. That is, the progressive under-representation of weaker parties ultimately brings electors to the view that a vote is ineffectual unless cast for one of the two main parties. At first sight, electoral results in the first three Commonwealth elections do not support this theory, since the main groups remained fairly even in both electoral support and parliamentary representation.

Table 1*

	Percentage of Votes	*Percentage of Seats*	*Average of Votes per seat won*
*1903:**			
Free Trade	31·8	34·7	8,817
Protectionist	28·4	33·3	8,196
Labour	30·4	30·7	9,521
Liberal	6·2	1·3	44,562
1906:			
Free Trade	28·5	26·7	13,573
Protectionist	23·7	28·0	10,737
Labour	36·4	32·0	14,438
Independent	·1	—	—
Tariff Reform	11·3	13·3	10,736

* The 1901 election was not conducted on a uniform franchise; no comparison, therefore, can be made of voting strengths and percentage of seats won.

The explanation of the relative stability of the main groups appears to be that the under-representation theory

of the origins of the two-party system applies only to a situation in which three or more nationally-organized parties are contesting most of the electorates. This was not the situation in the Commonwealth elections of 1901, 1903, and 1906. Only the Labour Party had a permanent central organization and it was as yet contesting only those electorates with substantial working-class populations. The Protectionist and Free Trade groups were not political parties in the present-day sense of the term and their strength was to some extent regionally concentrated. The movement towards the two-party system in Commonwealth politics paralleled, and was in part caused by, the development of the modern type of party organization. In most of the States the two-party system had already emerged and Australian electors were therefore already aware of the consequences of three-cornered contests under the system of single-member constituencies with majority voting. Moreover, by the middle of the decade, the Free Traders found themselves in the position of a minority attached to a lost cause. Reid's "Socialist tiger", paraded in the election of 1906, was the outcome of his search for a raison d'etre.[5] Finally, the decision of the Brisbane Labour Conference of 1908 to forbid Labour parliamentarians to enter political alliances spelled the end of government on the basis of group combinations.[6] Men like Groom might protest against the assumption that government by alliances was "absolutely fatal to the administration of responsible government under our Constitution",[7] but Deakin's metaphor of the three cricket elevens seems to have expressed the majority opinion.[8]

The more interesting question is not why the system of government by alliances gave way to the two-party system,

[5] Fitzhardinge op. cit. p. 55.

[6] Ibid p. 81.

[7] *Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates*, Vol. 22, p. 5261.

[8] Murdoch op. cit. p. 235.

but why the two-party division did not follow what appeared to be the natural line of cleavage. As we have seen, the common radicalism of the Labour Party members and a group of Protectionists was the real basis for majority government in the first decade of the Commonwealth parliament. Moreover, in both Victoria and New Zealand an alliance between Liberals and trade unionists had formed the basis for a mass party of the Left. Why, then, did not the Commonwealth parliamentary situation resolve itself on similar lines? Deakin, for one, had assumed as early as 1908 that this would be the course of events and had offered to withdraw from the leadership of his group in favour of Sir William Lyne in order that the latter might negotiate an alliance with Labour.[9] By this time, it should be noted, the tariff issue had ceased to be a real point of difficulty between the Protectionists and the Labour Party, since Deakin's "new protection" policy, in spite of the obstacles imposed by the High Court, had converted most Labour members to protectionism. The real reason for the unnatural alliance between the Protectionists and the Free Traders lay in the fact that the emergence of a separate Labour Party had destroyed the possibility of a Liberal-Trade Unionist Party on the Victorian and New Zealand pattern. For, although the social Liberalism of men like Deakin and Groom would have enabled them to accept most of the Labour Party's programme, they had also inherited enough of an older tradition of Liberalism to make the Labour Party's tight discipline and intolerance of dissent entirely unacceptable to them. The fusion of 1910 marked the end of the politics of men and principles and brought in the politics of party machines and interest groups.

One other aspect of the fusion deserves notice. The political faith of Deakin and his followers was Liberalism adapted to the Australian environment; from nineteenth-

[9] Fitzhardinge op. cit. p. 82.

century English Liberalism they had inherited a belief in the freedom and dignity of the individual as the touchstone of all political action, but the realities of the colonial environment had saved them from the dogmatic attachment to laissez faire which, by the end of the nineteenth century, was causing English Liberalism to lose the initiative in social reform. The weakness of this creed, it may be suspected, was that it came too close to expressing the political faith of the middle block in Australian politics and therefore afforded no basis for a two-party system. There is some confirmation for this point of view in the events preceding the 1910 election. Early in 1909, knowing that some sort of political consolidation was imminent, Deakin set out on a tour of the eastern States with the intention of stimulating political organization among his supporters.[10] The result of his tour is thus described in a letter to his sister:—

> "All the information gained confirmed my pessimistic outlook from an electoral point of view, though I was gratified to find our policy popular everywhere and, broadly speaking, with all classes. But this very encouraging state of mind promised nothing to us as a party. In each State a decisive rally is being made against the Labour caucus, and the old Opposition, being everywhere at the head of it, has those who sympathize with our views working with them for each local fray. We could not dissociate them for federal constituencies without a new organization of their own, which they dreaded, lest it should divide the vote against Labour. Hence there was no place for us or our organizations except in the very few electorates we already held. . . ."[11]

The fusion of 1910 was the beginning of a split in Australian Liberalism. In so far as it was individualist, it

[10] Ibid p. 83.

[11] Murdoch op. cit. p. 279.

became absorbed in the party of the right; in so far as it was radical and empirical it became absorbed in the Labour Party. But the great non-existent centre party of Australian politics, determining the general trend of political action, has remained in the Deakin tradition of Liberalism. Duverger, who has done more than any other political scientist to clarify the relationship between electoral systems and political parties, has noted the paradox that, although the single-member constituency system prevents the emergence of an organized centre party, nevertheless "the centre influences the whole parliamentary life of the country".[12]

The Two-Party System in Action

For four elections after the fusion, Australia had an orthodox two-party system. The following table shows the percentage of total valid votes cast for each party and for independent candidates and also the percentage of seats won by each group.

Table 2

	Non-Labour		*Labour*		*Independents*	
	Percentage of Votes	*Percentage of Seats*	*Percentage of Votes*	*Percentage of Seats*	*Percentage of Votes*	*Percentage of Seats*
1910	45·1	41·3	49·6	56·0	5·3	2·7
1913	48·9	50·7	48·5	49·3	2·6	—
1914	47·2	44·0	50·9	54·7	2·0	1·3
1917	54·2	70·7	44·5	29·3	1·3	—

We have here a good example of the tendency of the system of single-member constituencies with the simple majority vote to over-represent the party with the highest percentage

[12] M. Duverger, "The Influence of the Electoral System on Political Life", *International Social Science Bulletin*, Vol. 3, No. 2, p. 335.

of total votes and so to under-represent third parties and independents that the elector's effective choice must lie between the two major parties. Thus, with 54·2 per cent of votes in 1917, the non-Labour party won 70·7 per cent of seats, whereas 48·9 per cent of votes in 1913 won it only 50·7 per cent of seats. The decline in the percentage of votes cast for independents during the period is also significant, as also is their virtual elimination from political life. The main objective of the fusion—the establishment of a stable two-party system—had, it seemed, been fully achieved.

In 1919, however, the electoral law was changed in a manner which has profoundly affected the development of the party system. During the First World War the farming interest in Australia, as in several other countries, had become convinced of the need for independent political action. What would have happened if the Australian Country Party had been allowed to struggle for existence within the framework of the then existing electoral law is a matter for speculation. Possibly, like the New Zealand Country Party, it would have been strangled in infancy by the simple majority system; alternatively, it might have won a secure but restricted existence as a regional party similar to the Irish Nationalists. But it so happened that in a by-election in 1918 for the Victorian electorate of Flinders the Australian Country Party put up a candidate and thereby threatened to wreck the chances of S. M. Bruce, at that time the rising hope of the non-Labour forces. The Nationalists bought a straight fight for Bruce with a promise to introduce preferential voting.[13] Admittedly, the change commended itself to many on the non-Labour side who were repelled by the rigidity of party discipline and who hoped that preferential voting would do away with the pre-

[13] For a discussion of this episode and of the case for preferential voting see *Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates*, Vol. 86, pp. 7193-7220, 7242-7258, 7397-7423.

selection of candidates. It may be, indeed, that the introduction of preferential voting was less a matter of chance than the surface facts seem to indicate and that Australian political opinion was too varied and vigorous to be contained within the orthodox two-party system. The merit of preferential voting seemed to be that it enabled parties to relax their discipline without seriously compromising their electoral prospects.

Preferential Voting and the Party System: 1919-1929

Two main difficulties are encountered in any attempt to assess the effect of preferential voting on the party system, the first is that there is a continual danger of confusing cause and effect. Obviously electoral laws do influence the functioning of parties and their interaction; but over the long period it may reasonably be assumed that the party system tends to get the electoral system best suited to its needs. The second difficulty is that, at different periods, preferential voting appears to produce different effects.

It is clear, for instance, that the elections of 1919, 1922, 1925, 1928 and 1929 constitute a fairly homogenous group, in which the preferential voting system had the effects intended by its authors. Though parties did not abandon pre-selection, the number of candidates increased significantly. In the four elections between 1910 to 1917, the highest number of candidates was 162 in 1910 and the lowest 140 in 1914. In the five elections between 1919 and 1929, the lowest number of candidates was 150 in 1928 and the highest 199 in 1922. This increase is only partly accounted for by the emergence of the Country Party, and a closer examination of election returns suggests that preferential voting gave some encouragement to independents and to unendorsed party candidates. The two main parties did not, however, substantially modify their pre-selection systems, though the Country Party adopted

multiple endorsement. It is also noticeable that, whereas between 1910 and 1917 the total vote for independent candidates dwindled rapidly, it increased substantially in 1919 and, with the exception of the 1925 election, remained at above 3 per cent. It may be assumed that preferential voting, by lessening the dangers of vote splitting, somewhat lessened the reluctance of electors to vote for independents.

But the most noticeable feature of this period is the apparent ease with which the two-party system, assisted by preferential voting, accommodated itself to the existence of the Country Party. In the 1919 election, for instance, the Country Party contested seventeen seats and won eleven; of the seventeen seats contested, eight were also contested by Nationalist candidates. In the three-cornered contests, exchange of preferences between Nationalist and Country Party candidates was highly effective. In five cases where the result was decided on preferences the highest leakage was twelve per cent and the lowest three and a half per cent. This is the pattern for the period; it was only rarely that non-Labour lost seats through vote splitting, and on the whole the two main party machines seem to have had the situation fully under control.

But even in this period it is clear that preferential voting was not wholly effective in eliminating vote splitting. Since there is always some leakage of preferences—the average in three-cornered contests decided on preferences may be about five per cent—it was still necessary for the two non-Labour parties to seek the elimination of one of their candidates in electorates where non-Labour and Labour are evenly balanced. Moreover, it is noticeable that the leakage of preferences usually increases substantially when the number of candidates rises above three. Thus, in 1922 Riverina was contested by a Labour candidate, a Nationalist candidate, and two Country Party candidates. The seat was won by a Country Party candidate but the preferences of the Nationalist candidate and of the other Country

Party candidate revealed a leakage of 16·5 per cent to Labour.

The first-preference voting figures for the period are analysed in the following table:

Table 3

(Country Party figures in brackets)

	Non-Labour		*Labour*		*Independents*	
	Percentage of First Preference Votes	*Percentage of Seats*	*Percentage of First Preference Votes*	*Percentage of Seats*	*Percentage of First Preference Votes*	*Percentage of Seats*
1919	53·8 (8·4)	62·7 (14·7)	41·5	34·7	4·7	2·7
1922	50·9 (12·9)	60·0 (18·7)	43·8	38·7	3·4	1·3
1925	53·7 (11·6)	69·3 (20·0)	44·7	29·3	1·7	1·3
1928	51·9 (12·0)	57·3 (18·6)	44·8	41·3	3·3	1·3
1929	44·6 (11·3)	33·2 (14·6)	48·8	61·3	6·1	5·3

If for the moment we regard the Nationalist and Country Parties as constituting one political group, it is clear that, in this period, preferential voting gives a pattern not essentially different from simple majority voting. That is, the group which is stronger in terms of votes is relatively over-represented, and its over-representation is the more pronounced the higher its share of the votes. For instance, the non-Labour group in 1925 received less than 54 per cent of total votes but won nearly 70 per cent of seats. In 1929, however, its share of total votes fell to just under 45 per cent, but its share of seats fell to only a third of the total. On the evidence of the elections from 1919 to 1929, then, preferential voting, although it encourages independents and unendorsed candidates, does not modify the law of under-representation of weaker parties.

Preferential Voting and the Party System: 1931-1946

The pattern of Australian politics in the elections of 1931, 1934, 1937, 1940, 1943 and 1946 is dramatically

different from that in the five preceding elections. In 1931 the Labour Party split under the strains imposed by the economic depression. In New South Wales there was open conflict between the State Labour machine and the Federal Labour Party, and in addition the Labour cause was further divided by the emergence of other minor parties, including the Communist Party and the Social Credit Party. About 1938 the process of disintegration spread to non-Labour and was characterized by frequent independent candidates and by the emergence of a litter of minor parties, including the One Parliament for Australia Party, the Services and Citizens Party, and the Liberal and Democrats. As might be expected, the total of candidates rises steeply in this period—229 in 1931, 237 in 1934, 190 in 1937, 268 in 1940, and 327 in 1943. In the 1943 election there were eleven parties in the field, in addition to an exceptionally large number of independents and United Australia Party candidates secured little more than 16 per cent of the total first-preference votes.

The record of the preferential voting system in this period is an interesting one. In New South Wales Labour had won 20 out of 28 seats in the 1929 election; in the 1931 election, the conflict between State and Federal Labour machines lost it 13 of these seats. Preferential voting was largely ineffective in preventing vote splitting, for although 90 per cent and over of State Labour preferences went to Federal Labour, there was little reciprocity. Barton, which was contested by U.A.P., State Labour, and Federal Labour, was won by U.A.P. because over one-third of the Federal Labour preferences went to U.A.P. In East Sydney, State Labour could have won the seat with only 57 per cent of Federal Labour preferences, but in fact over 50 per cent of Federal Labour preferences went to U.A.P. In Macquarie, on the other hand, State Labour preferences were distributed 94 per cent to Federal Labour and 6 per cent to U.A.P.; however, 97 per cent of State Labour

preferences would have been required to elect the Federal Labour candidate. In Newcastle over 90 per cent of State Labour preferences went to the Federal Labour candidate, thereby securing his election.

The pattern of preference voting on the Labour side in subsequent elections of this period is similar to that for 1931, and the conclusion which emerges is that the Labour side is relatively unsuccessful in using the preferential voting system as a means of preserving its electoral strength in a period of structural disunity. The contrast in the allocation of State and Federal Labour preferences in 1931 is at first sight somewhat puzzling. Two causes seem likely. The first is that State Labour, being further to the left than Federal Labour, would be less likely to countenance the giving of preferences to the right; the second is that the Federal Labour Party conceived itself to be fighting for the unity of the movement as a whole and would therefore be likely to regard a victory for a rebel as a greater evil than the loss of a seat. In this connection it is relevant to note that whereas about 80 per cent of the preferences of Communist candidates normally go to Labour, only a very small percentage of Labour preferences to to Communist candidates. Indeed, the preferential voting system reveals clearly the extent to which the Labour Party's exclusiveness and its insistence on formal unity impede the mobilization of the varied political interests which lie to the left of the centre.

Non-Labour's use of the preferential voting system in this period is considerably more effective. The contrast with Labour is exemplified in the New South Wales electorate of Lang, which in 1931 was contested by State Labour, Federal Labour, and two U.A.P. candidates. Lang had been won by Labour in 1928 and 1929; it was lost to non-Labour in 1931 because, whereas 93 per cent of the weaker U.A.P. candidate's preferences went to the other U.A.P. candidate, only about two-thirds of Federal Labour preferences went to State Labour. But even on the non-Labour

side the leakage of preferences increases with the number of candidates, and in elections such as those of 1943 and 1946, when parties proliferated on the right, the preferential voting system did not save the right from a substantial loss of voting strength. These two elections mark the peak of factionalism in Australian politics, and there are occasional cases of dissident Labour candidates being elected on Liberal preferences. In Reid, in 1946, J. T. Lang received 80 per cent of Liberal preferences, and in Bourke in the same year Mrs Blackburn received over 80 per cent of Liberal preferences.

The following table analyses the election returns for the period:—

Table 4

(Country Party figures in brackets)

	Non-Labour		*Labour*		*Independents*	
	Percentage of First Preference Votes	*Percentage of Seats*	*Percentage of First Preference Votes*	*Percentage of Seats*	*Percentage of First Preference Votes*	*Percentage of Seats*
1931	53·2 (10·6)	74·6 (21·3)	38·2	24·0	7·8	1·3
1934	49·8 (13·5)	63·5 (20·3)	48·2	36·5	2·0	—
1937	49·7 (16·2)	60·8 (23·0)	45·9	39·2	4·4	—
1940	44·9 (13·8)	51·3 (18·9)	48·0	48·6	7·0	—
1943	35·8 (8·4)	32·4 (13·5)	53·0	66·2	11·1	1·4
1946	45·4 (11·4)	39·2 (14·9)	52·8	59·5	1·8	1·3

These figures bring out a tendency which is also perceptible in the preceding period—the tendency of non-Labour to be relatively over-represented by comparison with Labour. Thus, with 53·2 per cent of votes in 1931 non-Labour won 74·6 per cent of seats; with about the same percentage of votes in 1943 Labour won only 66·2 per cent of seats. The reason for this discrepancy will be discussed later.

The Role of the Country Party

Before discussing in general terms the effects of preferential voting on the party system, it seems appropriate to consider what light is thrown on the rôle of the Country Party by the facts we have been considering. The Country Party has lately become the whipping-boy of Australian politics. Sir Frederick Eggleston,[14] Professor Overacker,[15] and Professor Crisp[16] have all admonished it for opportunism and the *Sydney Morning Herald*[17] has recently recommended it to eliminate itself in the interests of good government. I will not venture to justify political opportunism, beyond remarking that if we are to make it a ground for eliminating politicians and parties it will be hard to know where to stop. But I will venture to suggest, on the strength of the voting figures for the periods, we have been considering, that the rôle of the Country Party has not been adequately understood.

If we consider the Country Party figures in Tables 3 and 4 one striking fact emerges: the Country Party's percentage of seats won is higher in every election it has contested, and sometimes substantially higher, than its percentage of the total of first-preference votes. This picture is even more striking if (as has been done in the next table) we calculate the number of votes which (on average) a party requires to win a seat.

These figures considerably illuminate our previous generalization that non-Labour tends to win its seats less expensively in terms of votes than Labour and therefore to be over-represented in relation to Labour. The usual

[14] Sir Frederick Eggleston, *Reflections of an Australian Liberal*, Chapter 5, "The Cost of the Country Party".

[15] Louise Overacker, *The Australian Party System*, pp. 220, 236-239.

[16] F. L. Crisp, *The Parliamentary Government of Australia*, p. 130.

[17] *Sydney Morning Herald*, March 24, 1953.

Table 5

	Percentage of First Preference Votes	*Percentage of Seats*	*Average of First Preference Votes per seat won*
1919:			
Labour	41·5	34·7	30,455
Nationalist	45·4	48·0	24,065
Country Party	8·4	14·7	14,542
Independent	4·7	2·7	45,525
1922:			
Labour	43·8	38·7	23,765
Nationalist	36·1	36·0	20,965
Country Party	12·9	18·7	14,452
Liberal	3·9	5·3	15,445
Independent	3·4	1·3	53,137
1925:			
Labour	44·7	29·3	59,214
Nationalist	42·1	49·3	33,201
Country Party	11·6	20·0	22,470
Independent	1·7	1·3	48,413
1928:			
Labour	44·8	41·3	37,340
Nationalist	39·9	38·7	38,290
Country Party	10·4	17·3	20,597
C.P. Progressive	1·6	1·3	41,713
Independent	3·3	1·3	84,273
1929:			
Labour	48·8	61·3	30,570
Nationalist	33·3	18·6	74,648·5
Country Party	10·3	13·3	29,782
Independent	6·1	1·3	176,730

explanation of this tendency is that Labour voting strength is heavily concentrated in certain working-class metropolitan seats and in the mining-pastoral seats. But if the Country Party figures are considered separately, it becomes apparent that the over-representation of non-Labour is

due largely (though not wholly) to the very heavy over-representation of the Country Party. The position seems to be that the Country Party contests a limited number of seats, most of them in the wheat belt and the small farming areas, and most of them only marginally attached to non-Labour. If the Country Party did not contest these seats, some of them would probably be lost to non-Labour. That is, by virtue of its ability to mobilize the country interest, the Country Party enables non-Labour to win more seats than would be possible if there were only one non-Labour Party.

If this view is correct, it follows that the Country Party is not an orthodox third party in the sense understood by Professor Lipson, but is more in the nature of a regional and autonomous extension of the main non-Labour Party. It does not, as Professor Lipson suggests, "hold the balance between the main contenders", for although it has a certain bargaining power its freedom of action is limited by two considerations.[18] The first is that (except in Victorian State politics, where it is in some respects a different party) the Country Party cannot be regarded as free to switch its allegiance at will between Labour and non-Labour. Its whole policy line has always been anti-Labour, its leaders have always been careful to emphasize its loyalty to composite non-Labour governments, and in any case the Labour Party's rules prevent it from entering alliances. In the second place, the introduction of list voting in Senate elections means that the Country Party, if it hopes to get Senate representation, has little option but to enter into an alliance with a party organized in all electorates. In its 34 years of representation in the Commonwealth Parliament, the Country Party has not once overthrown a government of the right, and it may be suspected that its disintegration would begin on the day that it attempted to do so.

[18] Lipson op. cit. p. 339.

The Consequences of Preferential Voting

Preferential voting, as we have seen, was introduced mainly in order to prevent the main party of the right from being weakened by the emergence of the Country Party and also with some thought that it might do away with or modify the system of pre-selection of candidates. The first purpose appears to have been achieved, though it is at least questionable whether preferential voting is a necessary condition of the Country Party's existence as a minor party within what is essentially a two-party system. If the analysis of the Country Party's role in the preceding section is valid, it may reasonably be argued that the Country Party could continue as a regional party by virtue of its ability to win certain country seats which the main party of the right would not be able to win.

The effect of preferential voting on pre-selection practices has been slight. Though the Country Party allows multiple endorsement, the two main parties have maintained rigid pre-selection systems. The U.A.P. allowed multiple endorsements in 1940, but only because it was so disunited that it was compelled to do so. However, although preferential voting has had little effect on pre-selection systems, it has obviously weakened the capacity of the main parties to enforce party discipline and to prevent splinter parties and unendorsed and independent candidates from entering the election field.

To what extent, then, can the notorious factionalism of Australian politics be attributed to preferential voting? The striking difference between the 1919-29 and 1931-46 periods is a warning against hasty generalization. In the first period, though independent candidacies increased, there was no noticeable tendency for parties to splinter or—apart from the Country Party—for new parties to emerge. On the other hand, it would be difficult to attribute the splintering and factionalism of the period between 1931

and 1946 solely to the inability of the Labour Party to meet the challenge of the economic depression. In the United Kingdom and New Zealand, and indeed in most countries with two-party systems, the party in power at the onset of the depression tended to disintegrate. But the disintegration lasted for a comparatively short time. In Australia, the splintering process went on for fifteen years, with a brief interlude of stability in the period of the 1937 election. It is thus difficult to avoid the conclusion that preferential voting, because it lessens the fear of vote splitting, greatly reduces the two-party system's capacity to resist factionalism and greatly extends the time the system takes to recuperate after a major fission.

The history of the State Labour revolt in New South Wales seems to support this conclusion. Splits of this sort are common enough in Labour movements, but with the system of single-member constituencies and simple majority voting the consequences of vote splitting are such that the left has a choice between unity and overwhelming electoral defeat. But preferential voting, even though the rival Labour factions were not able to work out an effective arrangement for the exchange of preferences, still enabled Labour to avoid overwhelming defeat. This at least partly explains why State Labour won four New South Wales seats in 1931 and nine in 1934 and why in a somewhat different form, this faction reasserted itself later.

The two-party system, then, is weakened by preferential voting. But it remains a two-party system. Like proportional representation, preferential voting encourages the multiplication of parties; but since it mitigates without eliminating the dangers of vote splitting it does not (as proportional representation does) enable a multiplicity of parties to exist. (The special case of the Country Party has already been considered.) The analyses of electoral returns given in this paper show that, with single-member constituencies, the substitution of preferential voting for simple majority voting

does not appreciably diminish the tendency of the system to under-represent the weaker of two major parties and so greatly to under represent third, fourth and fifth parties that their position is virtually hopeless. The figures for the 1931 election are a good illustration of this point:—

Table 6

	Percentage of First Preference Votes	*Percentage of Seats*	*Average of First Preference Votes per seat won*
1931:			
A.L.P.	27·1	18·7	61,390
State Labour	10·6	5·3	83,830
U.A.P.	42·6	53·3	33,751
Country Party	10·6	21·3	23,040
Communist	·3	—	—
Independent	7·8	1·3	250,060

The other important effect of preferential voting, already noticed, is to give an appreciable advantage to the non-Labour parties because they combine a tolerance of dissent with an underlying sense of community of interest. Because the Labour Party dislikes deviationists more than it dislikes its opponents of the right, it cannot get much advantage from preferential voting.

The record of preferential voting in Australia is not, I suggest, an impressive one. It has stimulated faction and intrigue but it has not removed or mitigated any of the bad features of the two-party system—its tendency to avoid issues rather than to face them, its insensitiveness to new currents of opinion, and its under-representation of minority interests. The minor parties which emerged in the period between 1931 and 1946 were short-lived and sterile; they added nothing to Australian political life except confusion and corruption.

The Social Basis of the Two-Party System

My argument could, at this stage, be summarized somewhat as follows: Australia has a two-party system which is the result in part of a popular belief that no other system is compatible with responsible government and in part of the tendency of single-member constituencies to eliminate minor parties; the distinctive features of the Australian two-party system are in part due to the adoption of preferential voting.

The importance of electoral laws in explaining party systems lies in the fact that the purpose of political parties is to win elections. Electoral laws are, as it were, the rules of the party battle and they must therefore be a principal determinant of party behaviour. But it is obvious that they are only a partial determinant; in some measure, party behaviour must be a result of other forces, including the structure of society itself. Most people are, in this matter, unconscious Marxists; even if they do not adopt in its wholeness the theory of parties put forward in the opening passages of the "Communist Manifesto",[19] they assume some relationship between party and social class. A recent French writer on party systems, for instance, makes the statement that the Liberal and Labour parties in Australia correspond roughly to the division between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat.[20] "All parties are class parties;" says Mr A. L. Rowse, "they represent an agglomeration of class-interests, and if you seek the motive force of their policy you must look to their centre of gravity, which is in class."[21]

The difficulty about these generalizations concerning the relationship between class and party is that the moment we try to extract a precise meaning from them we find that it

[19] H. J. Laski, *Communist Manifesto: Social Landmark*, pp. 136-137.

[20] M. Duverger, *Partis Politiques.*

[21] A. L. Rowse, *Politics and the Younger Generation*, p. 76.

is impossible to attach a clear and agreed meaning to the term "class". We can, however, get some clarification of the problem by laying hold of a proposition which is common to almost all theories of class—that a person's occupation imposes on him certain attitudes in regard to social and political issues,[22] or, more simply, that if we know something about a person's occupation we know something about his political opinions. The surveys carried out by Australian Public Opinion Polls make possible a rough test of this hypothesis. The following tables indicate the relationship between party voting and occupational status in the elections of 1951 and 1953.

Table 7

Survey 79—30 March 1951:

Occupational Groups	*How they said they voted at the 1949 Federal Election*			*How they said they would vote at the 1951 Federal Election*		
	Labour	*Non-Labour*	*Ind.*	*Labour*	*Non-Labour*	*Ind.*
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Professional, and business owners and managers	11	89	—	15	85	—
Owners of small businesses	43	57	—	46	53	1
White collar workers	39	61	—	34	64	2
Skilled workers	61	38	1	64	36	—
Semi-skilled	68	32	—	68	31	1
Unskilled	79	21	—	81	19	—
Farmers	15	85	—	18	82	—
Farm Labourers	47	52	1	53	47	—

[22] For a discussion of this proposition see Centres, *Psychology of Social Classes.*

Survey 94—10 April 1953:

Occupational Groups	*How they said they voted at the 1951 Federal Election*			*How they said they would vote at the 1953 Senate Election*		
	Labour	*Non-Labour*	*Ind.*	*Labour*	*Non-Labour*	*Ind.*
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Professional, and business owners and managers	20	80	—	22	78	—
Owners of small businesses	58	41	1	60	38	1
White collar workers	48	51	1	53	46	1
Skilled workers	70	30	—	77	23	—
Semi-skilled	75	25	—	78	22	—
Unskilled	85	14	1	89	10	1
Farmers	28	72	—	31	68	1
Farm Labourers	64	36	—	67	33	—

It is important to note that these tables indicate, not actual voting, but expressions of intention to vote in a particular way and assertions of having voted in a particular way. It is consequently probable that the preponderance of non-Labour voting at the top of the occupational scale and of Labour voting at the bottom of the scale are somewhat exaggerated. It is likely that more unskilled workers will vote non-Labour than will admit they voted non-Labour. The pattern shown in these tables is, it should be added, similar in its main outline to the patterns revealed by similar investigations in the United States and the United Kingdom.

Most people will say that they do not need public opinion polls to tell them that most unskilled workers vote Labour; but although the facts may be obvious, their bearing on the functioning of political parties and the party system may be less obvious. For the fact that most unskilled workers

vote Labour is less significant than the fact that one in five does not vote Labour. Putting it more generally, Australian political parties do not get overwhelming support from any one occupational group. The same phenomenon has been noted in England; a recent survey of the relationship between voting and occupation in the Greenwich area shows that what is conventionally described as a "solid working-class area" is one in which there is a 70-30 preponderance of Labour votes.[23] An American political scientist has drawn the following conclusion from similar correlations between voting and occupation in the United States:—

> Usually even under favourable circumstances 60 per cent or 70 per cent of any group is the maximum response that can be elicited in political agitation. All political organization is subject to a law of imperfect mobilization of social interests, the consequence of the fact that each individual person has many interests and belongs to many groups.[24]

The fact that political parties get some support from all occupational groups but cannot fully mobilize the support of any one group is one of the main influences determining policies and electoral appeals. If, for instance, the Labour Party were to base its election programme exclusively on the interests of trade unionists, it would not greatly increase its trade-union vote and would almost certainly lose heavily in support from other groups. More and more, in the two-party system, parties are coming to realize that safety lies in general appeals; for not only do gains secured by appeals to group interests tend to be self-cancelling, but identification with group interests diminishes the party's freedom of manoeuvre.

These considerations go some way towards explaining

[23] M. Benney and P. Geiss, "Social Class and Politics in Greenwich", *British Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 1, pp. 310-326.

[24] E. E. Schattachneider, *Party Government*, p. 87.

why, in Australia, the Labour Party has been relatively less successful than the main parties of the right in mobilizing electoral support. We have seen that, in the first decade of the Commonwealth Parliament, the Labour Party was in fact and professedly an interest party. It was able to function as an interest party only because, in the absence of the two-party system, it could wield effective political power by holding the balance between the Free Trade and Protectionist groups. When the Brisbane Labour Conference of 1908 vetoed political alliances and thereby hastened the emergence of a two-party system, it created for the political wing of the Labour movement a dilemma which it has not yet resolved. Henceforth, the Labour Party could only achieve power by becoming the mass party of the left and it could only do so by ceasing to be an interest party. From one point of view, the whole history of the Labour Party since the election of 1910 has been the history of a conflict between the efforts of the trade unions to preserve the original character of the Labour Party as the political expression of the industrial labour movement and the efforts of Labour politicians to win that freedom of manoeuvre which alone will enable them to gain political power. Sir Frederick Eggleston, in his *Reflections of an Australian Liberal*, makes the claim that the Liberal Party has always been better able to express the mind of the Australian people than the Labour Party has. This is a statement which could be variously interpreted, but if it means that the Liberal Party, being less securely anchored than the Labour Party to a single interest group, is better able to adopt its policy to changing circumstances and currents of opinion, I would agree with it. In the forty-three years since the two-party system established itself, the Liberal Party has held office for over twenty-eight years. This is partly due, as we have seen, to the tendency of the electoral system to under-represent Labour, but it is due also to non-Labour's greater freedom of manoeuvre.

The tension between the political and industrial wings of the Labour movement brought about by the demands of the two-party system is, I believe, a pointer to the significance of that very remarkable feature of the Australian labour movement—the A.L.P. industrial groups. The industrial groups are commonly regarded as a counter to Communist influence in the unions—which no doubt they are. But recent statements by Labour leaders put the groups in a somewhat different light. Dr Evatt has said that group control of the unions is necessary to ensure that future Labour governments will not be embarrassed, as Mr Chifley's government was in 1949, by the indiscipline of trade unions; and an official Labour publication, commenting on the success of the groups in gaining control of certain unions, claimed that this meant the re-affiliation of 80,000 unionists with the Labour Party.[25] We are, it seems, witnessing the reverse of the process whereby, towards the end of last century, the trade unions created a political party and then sought to keep it under control. Today the political party is reaching back and seeking to control the unions, hoping thereby to win the independence without which it cannot be fully effective as the party of the left in a two-party system.

The outcome of this curious process may be somewhat different from what the political wing of the Labour movement intends. Mr Stargardt, in his edition of Mr Chifley's speeches, has remarked that a struggle is in progress for the soul of the trade-union movement.[26] It is at least possible that the trade-union movement, following a clearly defined trend in the United Kingdom and New Zealand, may prefer to have a soul of its own. Now that the battle for trade-union rights has been won, and full employment accepted as a part of national policy, the case for trade

[25] *The Union Democrat* (Issued by the Central Industrial Executive of the A.L.P.) July, 1953.

[26] W. Stargardt (editor) *Things Worth Fighting For*, p. 8.

unions identifying themselves with one political party is at least open to argument. Most trade-union leaders would agree that their task is never more difficult than when a Labour government is in power.

Convergence on the Centre

It might seem inappropriate to end a discussion of the Australian party system without some reference to party policies, but with the progressive watering down of the Labour Party's socialism, it has become difficult for the student of politics to point to anything more than differences of emphasis in the party programmes. To some extent, as we have seen, there is a tendency in all two-party systems for the main parties to converge to the centre. This is due partly to the fact that, in the two-party system, it is only the voters of the centre who have an effective choice, and it is therefore to the centre that the parties must direct their appeal. It is due also to the fact that a party is not likely to achieve more than a 70 per cent mobilization of any social group: it cannot therefore afford to make its election policy a direct appeal to group interests.

In Australia, this process of convergence towards the centre has been powerfully stimulated by federalism. The two main parties, and to a less extent the Country Party, reflect in their structure the original federal compact. The State party organizations, like the State Parliaments in the first two decades of federalism, are more influential than the Commonwealth party organizations. Both in Commonwealth elections and referenda, the parties function, not as national organizations, but as loosely-knit federations of State organizations. In the half century since federation, there has been a steady accretion of power to the Commonwealth Parliament—so much so that in the smaller States parliamentary institutions have begun to atrophy. Federal issues now dominate the political life of Australia, whereas

in the earlier period of federation (as R. S. Parker has shown in his study of referendums) State political issues tended to dominate federal politics. Party organization has followed this trend—but with a long time lag. Thus, it was not until fifteen years after federation that the A.L.P. set up its Federal Executive, even though the Labour movement had been a powerful influence on the side of federalism. Moreover, although the Labour Party remains formally pledged to increase Commonwealth powers, and although Commonwealth powers have in fact increased substantially in the last two decades, the Labour Party structure has remained strongly resistant to centralization. Without much distortion of truth it could be said that the Federal Executive, far from being a centralizing influence, has been an instrument for keeping Commonwealth Labour parliamentarians under the control of the State Labour parties. The Liberal Party, which is in any case loosely articulated by comparison with the Labour Party, is a loose confederation of State parties with little delegation of power to the centre. It should be noted, however, that although there is less formal centralization in the Liberal Party, the existence of an efficient central secretariat and research organization, which the Labour Party noticeably lacks, tends to redress the balance. The Country Party is the least articulated of the three at the federal level.

The reason why the two main parties have continued to be organized mainly on a State basis and have not developed as national organizations is to be found, paradoxically enough, in the process by which the Commonwealth Parliament, since the late 1920s, has increased in power and influence at the expense of the State Parliaments. With the increase in federal power and influence, the important issues of political life are debated and decided in the federal rather than the State sphere. In the State sphere, therefore, the convergence of parties towards the centre has been pronounced and politics has become a contest for office

and the fruits of office. The proposition that in State politics convergence to the centre is more marked than in federal politics is, I believe, part of the reason why, in recent years, Queensland and Tasmania have regularly shown Labour majorities in State elections and Liberal-Country Party majorities in Commonwealth elections. Equally, it may explain why South Australia, with a heavy Labour majority in Commonwealth elections, has for years returned a non-Labour Government.

In Labour politics the State parties, themselves converging towards the centre, are constantly striving to pull the Commonwealth parliamentarians in the same direction. State election campaigns (as the 1947 election in Victoria dramatically proved) are fought more on Commonwealth than on State issues; therefore the Federal Executive, in which representatives of State parties heavily predominate, is normally an influence on the side of caution and negative policies.

For the Labour Party, federalism has in the past been a much more serious handicap than it has been to the non-Labour parties. In the Senate election campaign Dr Evatt made the significant statement that the socialist issue was dead because the constitution made socialism impossible.[27] One might perhaps broaden this statement somewhat and say that, as early as the end of the First World War, Labour's dynamic in matters of social reform had been seriously slowed down by constitutional difficulties and that constitutional reform is a pre-requisite for the recovery of this dynamic. But it seems apparent that the domination of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Labour Party by the Federal Executive, in which the influence of the State parties prevails, is a guarantee that no major constitutional reform will be attempted.

Non-Labour's difficulties in policy-making stem in part from the fusion of 1909. Within the non-Labour party, says

[27] *Courier-Mail*, Brisbane, April 9, 1953.

Fitzhardinge, "there has been a continuous struggle, sometimes visible, sometimes beneath the surface, between two sections; one deriving from the Conservative—Free Trade party of the Reid-Cook Opposition and one from Deakin's Liberal-Protectionist policy."[28] This inner disunity perhaps explains why Reid's "socialist tiger", now in its forty-seventh year is still the principal election equipment of the non-Labour parties. It should be noted that, on the two occasions when the non-Labour party has played a positive part in Australian politics, it has done so in a period of national emergency and under the leadership of a recruit from the left. The Nationalist Party, led by W. M. Hughes, came into existence for the specific purpose of organizing the national war effort in 1916; the United Australia Party, led by Lyons met the need for a strong government to cope with the economic depression. Both the Nationalist Party and the United Australia Party were, in their initial stages and by the circumstances of their origin, centre parties. They could remain so only for the duration of the emergency that created them; when the emergency had passed, the logic of the two-party system pulled them to the right. The present Liberal Party is to this extent justified in the claim that it does not derive from the United Australia Party; historically, it is in a line of descent from the fusion of 1909. "The main hope for the future," wrote Littleton Groom after the fusion, "lies in the signs of evolution on the part of the old reactionary forces . . . now allied with more progressive forces. If they can be depended upon to continue being liberalized all will be well."[29] Mr Menzies might have had the same thought thirty-five years later; Disraeli had it sixty-five years earlier. "A sound Conservative government," said Mr Taper musingly; "I understand: Tory men and Liberal measures."[30]

[28] Fitzhardinge op. cit. p. 86.

[29] Fitzhardinge op. cit. p. 85.

[30] Benjamin Disraeli, *Coningsby*, Bk. 2, chapter 6.

A large part of Australian political writing in these days consists of laments for the intellectual bankruptcy of the political parties and the dominance of party machines. I have tried to show, however, that the parties are in the main what the two-party system makes them—and the system is essentially the same at most times and in most places. Its advantage is political stability. Its disadvantage is that it leaves the centre unorganized and inarticulate; and usually the best elements of a country's political life are to be found at the centre. This disadvantage is lessened by the fact that the centre is influential because both parties must appeal to it during elections. But only lessened. The question which must be asked in whether, in the long run, stability is not too high a price to pay for a system which leaves party debate almost devoid of content and at times results in a two-party conspiracy to avoid the real issues of national policy.