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Discussion Paper No. 6 **Australian Politics** **Catholic Perspectives**

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Introduction: Ideology and Tribalism in Australian Catholicism

by Michael Hogan

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In the last few years there has occurred a revival of interest in Catholic politics in Australia. It was last a central topic for academic discussion in the 1960s, but a number of events have revived the interest. Recently in Sydney I have attended a conference for the fiftieth anniversary of the start of Santamaria's Movement, another for the fortieth anniversary of the Labor Split, and this conference on Catholic politics. It is not all nostalgia; the success of Eureka Street magazine has contributed a great deal to focusing debate on new aspects of the long relationship between the Australian Catholic community and the political process.

What seems to me interesting in the conference which has provided the chapters for this book is the discussions of ideas and values rather than the more usual argument about the conflict of political organisations and the effectiveness of different political strategies. Race Mathews wonders whatever happened to the Distributist ideas of Chesterton and Belloc which seemed so important to Catholics in an earlier era. David Pollard reflects on a renewed theology and the vision of a reformable society which underlay the activity of the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace. Anne O'Brien asks us to think again about the gender assumptions of the usual interpretations of Catholic politics, while Ray Cassin analyses a number of traditions of Catholic social thought.

Other contributors, such as Ed Campion, Jim Macken and Chris Sidoti seem to me to fit into a more typical pattern of discussions about Catholics politics, highlighting matters of strategy, tactics, authority and loyalty. Politics is a team sport, and Australian Catholics seem to have had a flair for the skills of leadership, loyalty, cooperative endeavour - and aggression against the opposing team - which make for effective team behaviour. Since the teams one joins are not so much chosen as inherited, and since they are defined by such characteristics as religion and ethnic origin, perhaps 'tribal' is a better than the term 'team'. I would like to take advantage of what I see as two distinct ways of looking at Catholic politics to reflect upon the relative importance in Australia of, on the one hand ideas and ideology, and the other hand an almost tribal attitude to the conduct of politics.

It is commonplace for commentators about Australia culture in general, as about Australian Catholicism, to comment on the lack of interest in ideas. Ray Cassin is critical of the 'thin' body of doctrine which is the Catholic social theory of the last hundred years in Australia. Whatever about the depth or the originality of the ideas, I think that Australian Catholics have shown an interest in them. Generally, Australians have tended to avoid the extremes of ideology that helped to send Europe into two world wars. We have had our share of authoritarian political evangelists, on the left as on the right, but overall I see it as a blessing on Australia that they have been ignored by most of the population. If an interest in ideas means that Australian intellectuals have not taken up the fads of theorists in France or Germany who have been struggling to find answers to problems which have not been our problems, then I regard that as good common sense. But it is not true that Australians or Catholic Australians have not been interested in ideas which were perceived as relevant to

our society. When ideas and values have not been influential in Australian Catholic politics, then perhaps Cassin is correct as the most powerful and effective ideas have not been intellectually subtle. They have been simple ideas, yet profound in their impact. A typical example is the attitude of some nineteenth century Catholic leaders such as Archbishop Polding or Attorney General Plunkett, or those Catholic High Court judges adjudicating more recently on the Mabo case - that if British justice is such a wonderful heritage, it should apply equally to Aboriginal Australians.

Nevertheless, to say that ideas have been prominent in Australian Catholicism is not to argue that they have been the main engine of political activity. I do not believe that they have been. Most dynamism among Australian Catholic has come when they have found a sense of common identity as different from others. Their most vigorous political activity, as in the construction of the labour movement, the anti-communism of Santamaria's 'Movement', or the struggles over education, has been when they have found a class or sectarian enemy to fight. This is the politics of the tribe, not the politics of ideology. It is also, ultimately, the politics of sectarianism, as Ed Campion's paper discusses. The politics of education funding, whether in the 1860's or in the 1960's, was fundamentally tribal self-interest politics. It was accompanied with an ideology of rights, freedoms and justice, but these ideas did not produce the political campaigns. They arose to justify them. Ray Cassin gives a rather more subtle explanation for the relationship between ideas and tribalism when he suggests that the tribal hostility of Catholics and Communism finds its reason in the similarity of their ideas about how human history will turn out.

Let us take a few moments in Australia history - moments when Catholics were moving closer to centre stage of our political life. At the time of the formation of the Labor Party at the end of the last century the labour movement was completely permeated with a conflict of ideas about the role of the working classes in politics. Marxism, anarchism, syndicalism, guild socialism, Fabian socialism, Protestant moral reform, cooperative and self help movements, single tax and other oddball panaceas: all competed for the hearts and minds of the workers. It is nonsense to suggest that the labour movement was not interested in ideas. Some of these ideas can be seen reflected in the trade union movement and the Labor Party, but what is remarkable about the history of the Labor Party in this respect was that it has not been a construct of any coherent set of ideologies. Rather it has borrowed those ideas which make sense of choices and allegiances which have been made in the political arena. In a sense, the significant ideas, like the welfare state agenda of Curtin and Chifley, have been in response to perceived political needs, not a cause of them. Likewise, in the Catholic community the encyclical of Leo XIII is regarded as an important event for its infusion of social justice ideas. The significant thing, however, about *Rerum Novarum* was that for most Australian working class Catholics its progressive ideas were 'old hat'. The Pope was telling Australians Catholics what they already knew and were in the process of implementing. Praxis first, ideas gratefully accepted later. Ideas are reinforcement, not the creative spirit.

In the heady years of 'Catholic Action' which led into the crusade against the communism the infusion was very strong. The original Campions, the Catholic Worker, the rural and youth branches of the Jocist movement all endeavoured to use ideas as the engine of social change. The ideas were largely borrowed - from Cardijn, Maritain, Chesterton and Belloc, Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin, Fanfani or Suhard - and were the inspiration for more than one generation of Australian Catholics. Australian authors - P. S. Cleary, the Catholic Worker

team, Frank Sheed and a batch of historians of Catholicism such as O'Brien, Suttor and Murtagh - adapted these ideas to construct various syntheses for Australian conditions. The Catholic community absorbed many of these ideas in the first series of Social Justice Statements published by the bishops, with editorial help from Santamaria, in the 1940s. But did the ideas have a political impact? Was anything changed because of them? Very little. Race Mathews' paper provides a good example. The ideas of Chesterton about Distributism and the need for worker ownership and control were widely accepted by leaders of the Catholic community in the years during and immediately after the war. But they were not taken seriously enough to be thought capable of being implemented. In Canada similar ideas produced the Antigonish movement which had a minor echo in Australia. In Spain they helped to create the remarkable cooperative corporation of Mondragon. In Australia, the energy of the anti-Communist crusade pushed all other Catholic potential causes into the background. The interest of the tribe - portrayed with such clarity in the Spanish Civil War - took priority.

Likewise in the years after Vatican II the ferment of ideas, especially borrowed from North and South America, was a central part of an Australian Catholic response to a world and a church which did not seem to be changing rapidly enough. Ideas from the pages of the National Catholic Reporter and the post-Vatican 'paper back theology' competed with the arguments of the Santamarias and Bishop Muldoons who believed that the direction of social and ecclesiastical change should be reversed. The activity of the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace was primarily concerned with changing accepted ideas as indeed had been the earlier social justice statements of the Australian hierarchy in the 1940s and 1950s. Did the work of the CCJP change the mentality of Australian Catholics about matters of justice and peace? I would hope that all that effort was not wasted. I do not think that it was. Yet, with hindsight it seems that the CCJP was more accurately reflecting ideas rather than changing them. The world had changed; the ideas were catching up. The value of the CCJP was that it accurately listened, not that it effectively preached. And when it came to the crunch - when the mandate of CCJP was withdrawn tribalism won the day. The values which promoted justice for all and peace for all could not prevail against the values of authority, loyalty, unity, and allegiance to the concept of a united Catholic voice on social and political affairs. In this instance the tribal chiefs were the bishops.

In a review of a recent book of mine on the Australian Catholic traditions of social justice, Michael Costigan, Executive Secretary of the Bishops' committee which succeeded the CCJP, took me to task for not making Daniel Mannix one of the heroes of the account. Mannix is a good example of the point that I am making here. I have no doubt that ideas were important for Mannix and there is no comparison in this respect with the closed minds of his Sydney contemporaries Michael Kelly or Norman Gilroy, but I regard Mannix as perhaps the best example of a tribal leader in the history of Australian Catholics. I am also sure that he had a commitment to social justice, as did most Australian bishops of the time. Yet he had a deeper commitment to the issues of justice for the Irish and justice for Catholics, justice for his tribe. Ideas were his weapons of sectarian struggle against the enemies of his tribe.

Now many members of the tribe are folding their tents and going elsewhere I see this as a pity, since I do not regard the existence of tribes as something undesirable. Some of their values promote extremes of sectarianism, race hatred and 'ethnic cleansing', which can have no justification. Moreover, the call for loyalty and obedience can often conceal mere

authoritarianism and a denial of liberty. That is the 'dark side of the force'. Yet, the tribe is also an effective instrument of that creative social cooperation which is the only acceptable way of reforming society and of overcoming its evils. What I would ask of a twentieth century or twenty-first century Catholic tribalism is that it maximize the opportunities for genuine social cooperation between its own members and the members of other groups in society. This means that it will need to adopt a democratic, open and internally just pattern of leadership and participation. That gets us to the issue of clericalism, which is perhaps the topic for another conference.

People And Politics: The Australian Catholic Tradition

by Edmund Campion

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For Gabi Hollows

The longest lasting impact religion has made on our public life came in the social legislation of the early 20th century. For a variety of historical reasons, some of which I will discuss later Protestants had gravitated to the non-Labor parties, making them effectively a Protestant popular front. They were able to enact laws on drink, Sunday observance, gambling, censorship, theatres and even sea bathing. This was not purely 'religious' legislation, some of it was class legislation. The gambling laws, for instance, penalised working class gamblers by restricting midweek racing (so they wouldn't skip work) and pony racing; leaving untouched the more middle class horse racing, the gentlemen's clubs and Saturday racing. The anti-gambling laws also failed to recognise that the most prevalent form of gambling in our community was the stock exchange; they failed to see that stockbrokers are, in reality, better dressed bookmakers' clerks. As well, not everyone accepted this legislated puritanism, so that an unintended result was the creation of a black market culture: if you wanted a drink out of hours or a bet off the course, there would always be someone to provide it for you and corrupt police to allow it to happen. The dismantling of many of these laws in recent years points to a rejection of the religious impulses that produced them.

In the 1940s and 1950s there was a serious and vigorous attempt by Catholics to take over the political life of the nation, in order to legislate, in their turn, their version of the good life. In 1952 B A Santamaria wrote to Archbishop Mannix that members of his political machine, the Movement, would soon take over the labour movement and they would have members in federal and state parliaments. In a few years, he wrote, Australian governments would be implementing Catholic social programmes, such as the settling of migrants on small farms and state aid for church schools. This too was a failure. It failed because the Australian people rejected the methods as undemocratic.

Despite these failures, it remains true that many of the public conflicts of our history were worked out in religious terms. The status struggle of convicts, 19th century rows about immigration, state aid to non-government schools - the answers to such questions tended to split the community along religious lines, Catholic versus Protestant, with ugliness on both sides. It is significant that until the appearance of Professor Michael Hogan's *The Sectarian Strand* (Penguin, 1987) no one had had the stomach to produce an overall study of sectarianism in the whole 200 years of our European history. As anyone knows who has worked in this field the material is too gamey, maggot-ridden and flyblown not to give

offence to someone or other. Of course, in all this time the churches had a beneficent public presence in our society. Their schools, their hospitals, their cathedrals, churches and chapels dotted the land. Historically, however, this sectarianism may prove a more significant contribution to our public culture. It promoted a two-party system of the spirit, not only in politics, but also in business, sport, social life and education. It sickened many people: if that's what religion was about, they felt, then they wanted none of it. To find out more about this element of Australian history, I want now to look closely at one aspect of it.

To the church historian, one of the most interesting happenings of the Bicentennial year of 1988 was the election of Mr Nick Greiner as Premier of New South Wales. Mr Greiner is a Roman Catholic. There have been plenty of Catholic Premiers of NSW; but in this century Mr Greiner was the first from the conservative side of politics. That is what interested the church historian. For the church historian could not fail to remember that 65 years earlier another conservative government, that of Sir George Warburton Fuller, had got within one vote in parliament of making it illegal to be a Roman Catholic in NSW. What happened was this: in earlier times Catholics had been discouraged, even forbidden, by their church from being married by anyone but a priest. Nevertheless, if a Catholic were married by a Protestant minister, the marriage was recognised by the church as valid. Then in 1908 the pope issued a decree, known from its first words as the *Ne Temere* decree, stating that in future the church would not recognise such marriages as valid. This teaching of the *Ne Temere* decree was built in to the new code of canon law which came into effect in 1918. Many Protestants viewed this as unacceptable popery. If a marriage, they argued, was recognised as valid by the sovereign state of NSW, what right had the Pope of Rome or any of his priests to declare it invalid? At the least it seemed to be derogatory; and at the most to be disloyal. And anyone conniving with it - say, by promulgating the *Ne Temere* decree - seemed also tinged with disloyalty. So the very powerful Protestant Federation decided to make a fight of it. Before the 1922 state elections the Federation presented each candidate with six questions:

- 1) would he support legislation to allow government inspection of convents?
- 2) would he keep a check on Roman Catholics in the public service?
- 3) would he oppose state aid to denominational schools and institutions?
- 4) would he restrict state bursaries to state high schools?
- 5) would he keep denominational trainees out of teachers' colleges?
- 6) would he make promulgation of the *Ne Temere* decree a criminal offence?

To these questions many of the non-Labor candidates said YES; indeed, many of them were already members or open supporters of the Protestant Federation. Thus non-Labor won. So in 1924 the Fuller government brought forward legislation to amend the Marriage Act in order to prohibit under law the promulgation of the *Ne Temere* decree. Archbishop Michael Kelly announced that he and his priests would go to jail rather than comply: 'We must obey God before men' he said, quoting St Peter. Fine, said the Protestants, we will extend the jails to accommodate all of you. Well, it was a near-run thing. The Lower House passed the legislation; it was blocked in the upper house by only one vote. But by now some people, particularly the Anglican bishops, were beginning to get the jitters: why shouldn't a church make rules for its own members?; if they don't like what the church was doing, they could get out; and if the Roman Catholics were touched, would Anglicans be next? Nevertheless, the government persisted with its bill. Again the upper house frustrated the government's

intentions; which sent it to the polls, where it was defeated.

The Ne Temere legislation and other unfriendly activities of the Fuller government in the 1920s is reason enough why the success of Mr Greiner in 1988 brought a twinkle of irony to the eye of the church historian. History had certainly moved on, when a Roman Catholic could lead that side of politics. Of course, some one will want to remind us, the 1920s were special times, with all Australia talking about the nun from Wagga Wagga, Sister Liguori, who had escaped from the convent there - in those years, nuns never left the convent; they escaped, or were rescued, or they leapt over the wall - and then she was taken to the Lunacy Court by the bishop; and then the next year she, in her turn, was to take the bishop to court for malicious detention; and then she would be kidnapped by strong-arm Catholics eager to argue her back into the convent. Stirring times. People were still talking about Father Jerger, the Passionist who had just been deported for opposing conscription from the pulpit during the Great War - deported despite monster rallies all over Australia.

Older people's conversations could still carry stories about the sensational Conyugham Case, when the dean of St Mary's Cathedral in Sydney had been accused in court of the seduction of a Test cricketer's wife. In those years anti-Catholicism and its obverse anti-Protestantism crackled in the air like summer lightning; you couldn't be surprised that some of it struck Parliament House.

And yet, what was it all about, that sectarianism? Sectarianism is the pursuit of social, economic or political goals under the banner, and sometimes the disguise, of religion. There was, to be sure, some genuine and principled dislike of Roman Catholic religious practices such as convents, clerical celibacy and devotion to the saints. Yet if Catholics had given up those objectionable practices - opened up the convents, allowed priests to marry or removed the statues from their churches - I doubt whether what we call sectarianism would have entirely disappeared. This is because there lay behind the outbreaks of sectarianism a deeper question than at first appeared. Behind each of them lay the great question which has faced us since the beginning and continues to face us: what does it mean to be an Australian?

Through most of our history there have been two main answers to that question. The first said that to be an Australian was to be a member of the British Empire; for Australia was British, with British institutions, British customs, British culture and, for the most part, British people. We were part of the Empire and that was fundamental to being an Australian. The second answer to the question was less sure of itself. It acknowledged that we were part of the Empire and all that; but it went on to assert that there were special things about being an Australian. Here, for instance, there might be an end to the class system and inherited snobbery; here the average bloke and his missus and their family might get a fairer go than they ever got elsewhere; here was a society of the second chance; here, as Henry Lawson said

*They march in mateship, side by side
The Protestant and Roman;
They call no biped lord or sir,
And touch their hat to no man*

Here there might be a chance for that 'millennial Eden' of which another poet, Bernard O'Dowd⁷ sang; a new chance for the human race, a new society in a new world.

Now, in general, those who answered the question in the first way, the men and woman of the Empire, were associated with the Anglican and Protestant churches. In those churches the Union flag was displayed proudly, the Sovereign and the royal family were spoken of with pride and warmth as role models, and British traditions were paramount. History is never simple but I think it true to say that many, if not most, of those who answered the question in the second way, the way of Australian national sentiment, were found in the Catholic ranks. So the great question of our history got tangled up with religion; and thus the sectarian strand ran through all our history.

In very recent years historians seem to be coming to a consensus that it was pre-eminently the Irish who developed that love of the land which issued in the Australian national sentiment. It seems to have worked as follows: the Irish came here with an overpowering love of their native land; yet they also had - what observers such as Surgeon Cunningham could not help noticing - a heartfelt appreciation of what their new country gave them. 'We were never so well off in our lives before', they said to all who would listen. Imperceptibly, without anyone telling them what to do, they transferred their love of Ireland to love of Australia, and so the Irish became the foremost creators of what it meant to be an Australian. Add to this the fact that for good historical reasons Irishism had become inextricably linked to Catholicism; and you have a very potent mixture. To be Irish was to be Catholic; and to be Irish was to be native Australian therefore to be Catholic was to be Australian nationalist. So on 24 May when others celebrated the late Queen Victoria's birthday as Empire Day, Catholics celebrated the day as the feast day of Our Lady help of Christians, Patroness of Australia, calling it Australia Day. On that day, when others sang 'God Save Our Gracious King', they sang, 'God bless our lovely morning land, Australia'. When others raised the union flag of Great Britain, they raised the new flag of Australian federation with its Southern Cross - giving, they saw, a blessing to their love of country. When other pulpits lauded the virtues of England and Empire, their pulpits spoke of Anzac Day and Australia Day and the legitimate pride of a new nation. Thus the great question, what does it mean to be an Australian, ran along Reformation lines; and sectarianism became a central strand of our experience as a nation.

The Great War demonstrated the centrality of this sectarianism in Australian life. Catholic and Protestant attitudes to the war differed. Catholics saw it as a political event, even as a political opportunity. Let us play our part, argued Archbishop Kelly of Sydney, and Protestants will learn to appreciate us; and after the war they will give us back state aid for our schools. The Protestant view of the war was more openly religious. First, there was the question of our duty to the Empire. Duty is a religious virtue; it is energized by religion. The Empire had founded, nurtured and protected (by the Royal Navy, for instance) Australia. Now Australia owed the Empire a reciprocal duty of fighting for it; and Protestant opinion makers underlined the religious imperative of such reciprocity. Among some Protestant leaders there was also an almost sacramental attitude to the war: it could cleanse, strengthen and even ennoble Australia's manhood. The war cannot stop yet, one of them said, Australia's manhood has not been cleansed sufficiently. This perception of the war as a cleansing, sacramental event lay behind their agitation for early closing of pubs: we want pure, clear-headed soldier saints. By the time of the two conscription referenda in the last years of the

war, such differences of perception about the nature of the war, political versus religious, were ready to coalesce with the two answers to the great question. On the YES side there was an intensification of fervour and an increase in the religious identification of war aims. Among Catholic opponents of conscription, such as T J Ryan, Premier of Queensland (the real leader of the NO case, although YES tacticians made a bogeyman of Archbishop Mannix - a tactic which has fooled even some historians and biographers into overstating Mannix's contribution to the NO case), there was an argument that there should be conscription of wealth before conscription of men. The big end of town seemed to be doing quite well out of the war, while the poor died for the Empire. The Irish question, particularly after the Easter Rebellion of 1916, was a fixative of this point of view. Thus by the end of the war the nation was lined up on two sides: Empire loyalist, Protestant and conscriptionist versus Australian nationalist, Catholic and anti-conscriptionist. The vigour of the referenda campaigns forced this division onto party politics; from now on the Australian Labor Party would be seen as 'the Catholic party' and non-Labor would be seen as Protestant. Because Catholics by and large opposed conscription they were seen by the men and women of the Empire to be disloyal to the Empire and therefore disloyal to Australia. Disloyal, disloyalty - the bitter epithet would poison our civil life for decades. It explains why Catholics could not feel at home among the conservatives. Hence springs the irony of Mr Greiner's success in 1988. (In passing, another irony: Mr Greiner is a grandson of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, not the British Empire).

The events of World War II, especially the fall of Singapore, cleared much of this poison out of our system. After Singapore, it was obvious that belonging to the British Empire was not the fundamental thing about being an Australian. After Singapore, we knew that, for the first time, we were fighting a war for ourselves, not for a sentiment of Empire. We knew that, out here at least, the British Empire was finished. This meant that we went into the postwar world with some of our national agenda attended to and the great question answered, at least negatively. Yet that question persists, although somewhat altered. Now we live in a multicultural society, so that the question facing us today is: what does it mean to be an Australian in a multicultural society?

Edmund Campion's latest book is *A Place in the City*, (Penguin: Ringwood, Melbourne, 1994) Page 12

Shaw and Chesterton: The Reconciliation
by Race Mathews
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Introduction:

The fortieth anniversary of the instigation of the Labor Split by Dr Evatt on 5 October, 1954, has revived theories of a thwarted Catholic takeover of Australia. Tom Truman's robust 1959 polemic Catholic Action in Politics is once again alive and well, and now living in Humphrey McQueen's column in the Weekend Australian.

McQueen argues that the Petrov Affair, Evatt's defeat at the 1954 elections and the subsequent denunciation of the Industrial Groups saved Australia from a national government dominated by the Catholic Action groups around B.A. Santamaria. McQueen's account reads in part:

The claim that ASIO arranged Petrov's defection to save us from a left-wing government under Evatt has never held water, given how right-wing Evatt's policies were in 1954. If there is any truth in the Petrov conspiracy, it is more likely that the Anglo-Saxon Protestants moved to prevent a government in which Santamaria set the agenda than that they sabotaged the election chances of the left-wing Evatt.

"Evatt's madness and machinations" McQueen concludes, "prevented the forces of black Catholic reaction from dominating the government"².

I speak with the greater feeling because the fears McQueen now recycles were very real at the time to me and many of my generation in the Labor Party. We lacked the historical background which would have enabled us distinguish between such genuine dangers to the party as Mr Santamaria and his associates may have represented, and the wilder flights of sectarian fantasy to which McQueen now gives renewed currency.

A less strident view than that of McQueen, might hold that miscalculation on the part of Mr Santamaria resulted effectively in a marginalising of the role of Catholic social thought and thinkers in Australian political life from which as yet there has been no adequate recovery. As a nation, we are very much the poorer for what in other circumstances may well have been a fruitful cross-fertilisation between Catholic social thought and traditions such as the Fabian socialism of which I remain an unrepentant advocate.

It is plain in hindsight that the middle nineteen-fifties when the Santamaria Movement finally over-reached itself was also a point where the dominant democratic socialist paradigm of nationalisation, statutory corporations and command economies was approaching exhaustion. Opinion within the ALP was open increasingly to input from such credible sources as the predominantly Distributist tradition among Australian Catholics had to that point represented.

This is not in any way to suggest that Australia was likely to become a Distributist society or the ALP a Distributist party, but rather that a more profitable intellectual and political synthesis might have been achieved, and a legislative environment more propitious for the taking of Distributist initiatives created. At the least, ignorance or indifference would not

now be causing ALP governments to adopt as has recently been the case measures prejudicial to such characteristically Distributist enterprises as credit unions, co-operatives and employee share ownership plans³.

When the Movement usurped the authority of the church and the bishops to enforce its will within the unions and the party - as was the case unambiguously in Victoria if less so in other states and in particular in NSW - it did more than ensure that Evatt would turn in desperation to sectarianism as the only means adequate to arrest and finally roll back the burgeoning Santamaria hegemony. It gambled with - and lost - at that same moment the credibility which Catholic social theorists had worked for decades to achieve.

The fact that it is even now difficult or impossible to obtain a hearing for Catholic social insights of proven worth within the party and the unions which are their natural constituency - that successive generations of young labour women and men have grown up in virtual ignorance of the existence of Catholic social doctrine, much less of its content and significance - has been a major intellectual and political misfortune. History may well conclude that not the least of Mr Santamaria's disservices to Australia has been the exclusion from their rightful influence within the party and the unions of the Distributist doctrines to whose advancement his formidable intellect and advocacy had at an earlier stages of his career been devoted⁴.

Distributism

The principal biographer of the British writer and leading Distributist G.K. Chesterton, Maisie Ward, recorded in 1944 that "In Australia Distributism has given a fresh slant to both Labour and Catholic leadership"⁵. Bruce Duncan credits the Distributists with having been particularly important for Australian Catholics because "they introduced them to a whole new world of radical ideas"⁶. Yet so totally has the memory of Distributism been allowed to fade that it is necessary at the outset to recall briefly its origins, principles and objectives.

Catholic social reformers such as Ketteler, Von Vogelsang and Harmel in Europe and later - J.A. Ryan in America and the young P.S. Cleary in Australia wanted a just social order which avoided replacing the excesses of capitalism with those of the bureaucratic state as favoured by communists and some socialists⁷. The thrust of Pope Leo XIII's great social encyclical *Rerum Novarum* in 1891 was supportive of the self-help values of the cooperative movement as established by the Rochdale Pioneers in 1844.

British Catholics such as Chesterton allied themselves with advocates of co-operation and Guild Socialism, against what Chesterton's friend Hilaire Belloc characterised memorably as "the Servile State". In the view of the Distributists - as Chesterton and his associates styled themselves - power and property had been filched from the common people in the course of the Industrial and Agricultural Revolutions, and should now be returned to them.

"The Distributists", Duncan writes, "were maximalists who would accept nothing less than workers owning the means of production. "The Distributist view", writes A.N. Wilson, "was that the Unions, instead of merely begging for wages, like children clamouring for more sweets, should demand, as of right, joint ownership of the industries in which they served":

To be shareholders in a common guild was the only way in which they could be liberated from the Servile State of Capitalism. Socialism was but the same Servile State given a different name. For a wage-earner, even if his wages became high, remained another man's property, his creature⁷ his slave. Only by joint-proprietorship could the human dignity, destroyed by the Industrial Revolution, be restored⁹.

The platform of the Distributist League specified that "Every worker should own a share in the Assets and Control of the business in which he works. Land, in the view of the League, should be owned by those who farmed it, houses by their occupants and small businesses by their operators.

The League's critics responded with the caricature of its objectives as "three acres and a cow". Efforts by Distributists to be taken seriously were also poorly served by elements within their ranks whose romantic attachment to the Middle Ages and medieval guilds distracted them from practical social reform, and caused them to oppose on principle the use of machinery, even for agriculture.

A case in point was the prominent Distributist cleric, Father Vincent McNabb. It has been said of Father McNabb that "Hatred of machinery combined with a love of poverty sundered him from his typewriter"².

Duncan points out that disillusionment and consequent rejection of parliamentary reform on the part of other Distributists resulted in a move away from democratic methods and in a more authoritarian direction: "They heightened suspicion about the power of the State, the negative aspect of which was to hinder the introduction of welfare services for needy people"³.

At the extreme, some Distributists flirted with fascism, and were admirers of Mussolini. Dudley Barker writes in his 1973 biography of Chesterton that "In all this Chesterton was pushed by Belloc, who was soon to be detecting Masonic Plots influencing America against the noble Italian, and who, during the civil war in Spain, could acclaim Franco as the saviour of us all"⁴. As was the case also for the Fabians, what Distributism from time to time needed most was to be saved from its friends⁵.

Chesterton for the most part stood squarely in the moderate and modernist camp of land distribution and worker ownership and control. "Distributists", he assured his audience in the course of a notable address, "are perfectly sensible and sane people"⁶. A revealing essay by Ian Boyd sees Chesterton novels such as *The Napoleon of Notting Hill*, *The Ball and the Cross* and *The Return of Don Quixote* as being notable for their underlying distrust and rejection of medievalist politics.

"What is interesting", Boyd writes, "is the implication that the medieval ideal is entirely destructive unless it is seen as a kind of myth providing a perennial social standard for the modern world"¹⁷. Maisie Ward says of Chesterton that "He did not want the League to consist entirely of extremists lest it should be thought to consist entirely of cranks, especially at a moment when 'intelligent people are beginning to like Distributism because Distributism is natural.

Shaw and Chesterton

The issues were clarified for many by a notable series of public debates extending over a sixteen year period from 1911, between Chesterton and the best known Fabian socialist of the day, Bernard Shaw. Public interest in their discourse is exemplified by the overflow attendance at their final encounter, in the Kingsway Hall in London, in November, 1927.

The auspicing body for the Kingsway Hall debate was Chesterton's Distributist League, as it had been on earlier occasions Shaw's Fabian Society and, earlier again, the Heretics Club at Cambridge University. Belloc as so often previously was master of ceremonies. Proceedings were relayed throughout and beyond Britain by the recently-established BBC, in what has been seen as "one of the most notable events of the first few months of the Corporation's existence"~9. The topic - nominated by Chesterton - was "Do We Agree"?.

A contemporary account evokes "the tumultuous attempts of crowds of people to storm Kingsway Hall on that November night". "Throughout the proceedings", the account continues, "wild hordes of men and women struggled in the corridors and hurled themselves against the shut doors of the hall"20. Shaw's most recent biographer, Michael Holroyd, writes that would-be attendees unable to gain admission "flowed round the building like hot lava"2~.

Shaw argued in an inspired opening passage that he and Chesterton would in the East be "reverenced as madmen":

*It matters very little on what points they (ie. the madmen) differ; they have all kinds of aberrations which rise out of their training, out of their knowledge or ignorance. But if you listen to them carefully and find that at certain points they agree, then you have some reason for supposing that there the spirit of the age is coming through, and giving you an inspired message. Reject all the contradictory things they say and concentrate your attention on the things upon which they agree, and you may be listening to the voice of revelation*22.

"Not so much an opinion as a revolt", Shaw continued, had been growing up for the last hundred years or so "against the obviously monstrous and anomalous mis-distribution of wealth under what we call the capitalist system":

I have always, since I got clear on the subject of Socialism, said, "Don't put in the foreground the nationalisation of the means of production, distribution and exchange; you will never get there if you begin with them. You have to begin with the distribution of wealth."

Chesterton was a Distributist, Shaw said, "which means today a Redistributist" "He has arrived", concluded Shaw' "by his own path at my own position"23.

"Mr Shaw", Chesterton for his part rejoined, "has laid down with critical justice and lucidity grounds with which I can imagine nobody being such a fool as to deny: the distribution of property in the modern world is a monstrosity and a blasphemy". There was further agreement, Chesterton said, in that "So far as possible under human conditions I should desire the community - or, as we used to call it in the old English language, the Commons to

own the means of production". "The whole point" was, in Chesterton's view, "when you say that the community ought to own the means of production, what do you mean?":

What Mr Shaw means is not that all the people should control the means of production, but that the product should be distributed among the vast mass of the Commons, and that is quite a different thing. It is not controlling the means of production at all. If all the citizens had simply an equal share of the income of the State they would not have any control of the capital. That is where G.K. Chesterton differs from George Bernard Shaw.

"Mr Bernard Shaw" Chesterton concluded, "proposes to distribute wealth. We propose to distribute power"²⁴.

Hindsight shows plainly that such differences as were seen to arise between Chesterton and Shaw - between Distributism and Socialism - resulted on both sides from insufficiency of information. The means of giving effect to socialism favoured by Shaw - nationalisation, statutory corporations and the command economy - had at the time not been shown by bitter experience to be incompatible with basic socialist principles and values. In the case of Distributism, no practical means of giving effect to the ideals articulated by Chesterton had so far been formulated.

"Chesterton", as Ian Boyd points out, "never gave a systematic account of what he meant by Distributism anywhere in his writing"²⁵. "About the details of this new world", as Maisie Ward acknowledges, "there was room for a variety of opinion"²⁶. In the circumstances of the Kingsway Hall debate, Shaw could as freely claim to be in agreement with Chesterton as could Chesterton claim to disagree with Shaw.

Subsequent developments in Distributist thought and practice allow no such latitude to those of us by whom the question "Do We Agree?" must now be addressed. The absence of practical ways to give effect to Distributism which so gravely handicapped Chesterton in his debates with Shaw has now long since been corrected. It remains for the nature and significance of what has been learned to be more widely understood and applied.

Antigonish

Proposals for a new Distributism driven by credit unions were hammered out in the first instance in the nineteen-thirties and beyond by the Antigonish Movement in Canada.

The Antigonish Movement stemmed from the work of a former Vice-President of the St Francis Xavier University at Antigonish in Nova Scotia, Father James J. Tomkins. In 1923, Tomkins transferred from the university to the poverty-stricken Canso parish as parish priest.

An ardent advocate of Rochdale co-operation and an admirer of adult education programs such as those of the University of Wisconsin, the Workers' Education Association in Britain and the Folk Schools in Scandinavia, Tomkins set out to persuade the exploited and impoverished local fishermen to pull themselves up by their bootstraps and take back control of their lives. "When a man gets up on his hind legs", Tomkins told his parishioners, "no one can walk on him"²⁷. The "Antigonish Principles" for which the movement saw itself as

standing read in summary:

*enhancing the dignity of the individual; education as the basis for social reform; economic co-operation as the foundation of production and distribution systems; and fundamental change for those social institutions which oppress the realisation of a full and abundant life for all people*²⁸.

Study circles were formed, outside speakers were called in and discussion material was distributed. Nine years later, a climate conducive to the acceptance of co-operatives had emerged. The Canadian government was persuaded to establish a Royal Commission on the fishing industry, whose final report in every respect endorsed the Tomkins formula of practical education in conjunction with co-operative action.

The university established an Extension Board, with Father Moses Coady as its Director, and a mandate to undertake education for everyday life. "Adult education", Tomkins had stated, "should be designed for the best brains we have to wrestle with the worst problems we have"²⁹. Coady was of the same mind. Tomkins' study clubs were reinforced and expanded. The Extension Board added general meetings, talks by trained lecturers and short courses and conferences at the university. There was a library service, special pamphlets and bulletins, radio broadcasts and a fortnightly newspaper.

What was in effect a Distributist crusade on the part of the Extension Board gave rise ultimately to credit unions, fishing co-operatives, dairy co-operatives, poultry cooperatives, a co-operative abattoir, housing societies and co-operative stores. On the occasion of Tomkins' retirement in 1949, Time reported that to then:

*In 400 Maritime credit unions, 90,000 members had saved \$9.5 million and lent out \$23.5 million over 15 years. Four wholesale and 200 retail co-ops did \$23 million worth of business a year. And co-op business enterprises valued at \$30 million were selling everything from fish to seed potatoes*³⁰.

The Antigonish Movement taught that constant adult education was the essential prerequisite for enabling people to retain control of their lives and achieve economic and social self-sufficiency. The Movement's blueprint envisaged ideally that a community involving itself for the first time in organisation along co-operative lines - in putting to work Distributist principles - should begin with the establishment of a credit co-operative.

Capital mobilised from local sources through the credit union could then be drawn on to set up a co-operative store. Once a sufficiently large number of stores were in business, a cooperative wholesale body along the lines the Co-operative Wholesale Society in Britain could be formed.

The final step would be the establishment of produces co-operatives, which would supply their goods through the wholesale society to the co-operative stores, as autonomous components of an integrated co-operative manufacturing and merchandising system. While the many notable instances of co-operative development undertaken in Nova Scotia include no instance of the credit union driven model in its entirety - and as a consequence in the view of some "The focussed vision and social critique of the once famed Antigonish Movement

has virtually vanished from public life"³¹ - it has been taken up to triumphant effect at Mondragon in Spain.

Mondragon

The great complex of manufacturing, agricultural, consumer, service and support cooperatives at Mondragon exemplifies how credit union driven Distributism can be given effect.

The essentials of the Mondragon story are simple. Mondragon is a small town, engaged traditionally in the processing of iron and steel. The regional economy was devastated in the nineteen-thirties by the Spanish Civil War. Poverty and massive unemployment remained endemic well into the nineteen-fifties. In 1956, a remarkable Catholic priest, Don Jose Maria Arizmendiarietta, persuaded the Mondragon townspeople to back the establishment of a small factory, using hand tools and sheet metal to manufacture oil-fired heaters and stoves for the local market³². Three years later, the factory was re-structured as a co-operative, wholly owned and operated by its workers.

At the same time, a credit union, the Caja Laboral Popular (CLP) was formed to mobilise local capital for the expansion of the original factory and the establishment of additional industrial co-operatives. The CLP is a "secondary" or "support" co-operative, owned jointly by its workers and the industrial co-operatives it services.

What has developed from these small beginnings is a group of more than 100 cooperatives, known collectively since 1992 as the Mondragon Co-operative Corporation (MCC). All told, the Mondragon co-operatives have more than 25,000 members, and an annual turnover of \$A6 billion. Their products include - to name only a sample - ultrasophisticated machine tools, heavy earth-moving machinery, automotive components and Spain's largest range of furniture and domestic appliances. Whole factories are designed and fabricated to order in Mondragon, for buyers overseas. Up to a third of Mondragon's output is exported.

The MCC also operates co-operative supermarkets, hypermarkets and shopping malls, which currently are extending their activities into France. These Eroski consumer cooperatives are stocked in part from the group's agricultural co-operatives. Many of their buildings are erected by the MCC construction co-operatives, which also built facilities for the Barcelona Olympic Games. The CLP has become Spain's thirteenth largest savings bank, with more than 200 branches. In 1992, General Motors designated the MCC as its "European Corporation of the Year".

The spectacular success of credit union driven Distributism as exemplified at Mondragon is attributable to three factors. First, the CLP enables the MCC to be totally capital self-sufficient, and also funds development for conventional businesses and development projects within and beyond the Basque region.

In addition, the CLP has operated an Entrepreneurial Division, which assesses applications for the establishment of new co-operatives, works closely on the preparation of business plans for those which are approved and supports them until they have found their feet. While MCC co-operatives have sometimes had to be amalgamated, only one has ever had to be

closed down.

Secondly, the CLP has given rise to further support co-operatives. For example, Spanish law classifies members of co-operatives as self-employed, and consequently ineligible for pensions, health care and other social security benefits. The MCC has therefore developed a social security system of its own, through the Lagun-Aro support co-operative.

A research and development co-operative - Ikerlan - keeps the MCC at the cutting edge of technological and scientific advances, and enables it to enter into strategic alliances with advanced R & D centres elsewhere in the European community. At the time of a visit I paid to Mondragon in 1985, Ikerlan's specialties were robotics, artificial intelligence, computer-assisted design and manufacturing and numeric control systems for machine tools.

The MCC University of Technology is a support co-operative, as are its school of business management and its network of local kindergartens and primary and secondary schools. Students at the university can if necessary pay their way as members of their own support co-operative - Alecoop - whose products include teaching machines. Mondragon exemplifies co-operatives supporting one another to achieve their common goals.

Thirdly, as members and co-owners, the workers in the co-operatives share equally in their profits - and, on occasion, losses - and have an equal say in their affairs. The rights of members include participating directly in the making of the policies of the co-operatives, which then delegate the day-to-day conduct of their affairs to managers hired in on contract.

Unlike shareholders in conventional businesses, members are in a position to monitor performance continuously, and develop informed views as to where improvements are necessary and how to bring them about. Observers have summarised the outcome as an "institutionalisation of entrepreneurship".

The effect is apparent in productivity levels which are far higher than those in neighbouring private sector or public sector enterprises. Absenteeism and other indicators of workplace dysfunction are far less prevalent. A further attribute of Mondragon is its ability to enable adherents of otherwise divergent political persuasions to work harmoniously with one another. My three hosts at a lunch in Mondragon in 1985 were a Christian Democrat, a supporter of the Right in the Basque regional assembly and a left-socialist who at the time was pre-occupied with the need to defend the revolution in Nicaragua³³.

Conclusion

Plainly Mondragon in every significant respect meets the requirements and fulfils the hopes of both Distributists and democratic socialists. What now remains to be seen is whether the reconciliation so achieved between the views respectively of Chesterton and Shaw is of other than academic interest or significance.

If currently there are among us those who believe like Chesterton that "the distribution of property in the modern world is a monstrosity and a blasphemy" they are conspicuous largely by their silence. Still less do we see challenged in any meaningful sense those such as Mrs Thatcher who trumpet in regard to the free market economy that "There is no alternative". If

the heirs of Chesterton and Shaw have the commitment and energy to pursue so radical an alternative to our current social order as Mondragon offers, it is now time for them to speak out and act accordingly.

The alternative is that the future will be allowed to pass by default into the hands of those who affirm with Mrs Thatcher that "There is no such thing as society". Belloc in that event will be shown to have been the authentic prophet at Kingsway Hall, predicting as he did in his summing-up that "in a few short years" the debate between Chesterton and Shaw would be as antiquated as were crinolines³⁴.

Notes

1. Truman T., 1959, *Catholic Action in Politics*, Melbourne, Georgian House.
2. McQueen H., 1994, "Time to Sing Evatt's Praises", *Weekend Australian*, 1/10/94.
3. For example, the Kirner Labor Government was only narrowly restrained from inadvertently wiping out the state's credit unions in the aftermath of the Pyramid building society fiasco. The Keating Labor government is now stripping credit unions nationally of the tax advantages which the Whitlam Labor government extended to them in recognition of their co-operative status as recently as twenty years ago. Credit unions have become subject in recent times to inappropriate regulatory requirements which seriously impair their establishment and growth. Efforts to up-date state cooperatives legislation or secure commonwealth legislation have largely been frustrated or ignored. The recent attempt to de-mutualise the NRMA highlights the vulnerability of Distributist and mutualist bodies.
4. See also Suttor T.L., 1961. "Catholicism in Australian Politics since Federation" in Mayer H. (ed.) *Catholics and the Free Society: An Australian Symposium*, Melbourne, F.W. Cheshire; Hogan M. (ed.) 1990, *Justice Now! Social Justice Statements of the Australian Catholic Bishop*, First Series: 1940-1966 Department of Government, Sydney and Beilharz P., 1994, *Transforming Labor: Labour Tradition and the Labor Decade in Australia*, Cambridge University Press, pp. 61-75.
5. Ward M., 1944, *Gilbert Keith Chesterton*: London, Sheed and Ward. p. 446.
6. Duncan B., 1991, *The Church Social Teachings: From Rerum Novarum to 1931*, North Blackburn, Victoria, Collins Dove, p. 140
7. Wilhelm Ketteler 1811-1877, Karl von Vogelsang 1818-1890, Leon Harnel 1829-1915, John A. Ryan 1869-1945, Patrick S. Cleary 1861-1941.
8. Duncan, 1991. p. 144.
9. Wilson A.N., 1984, *Hilaire Belloc*, London, Hamish Hamilton, p. 294.
10. Chesterton G.K. and Shaw B, 1928, *Do We Agree?*, London, Cecil Palmer, p. 48.
11. "Three acres and a cow" was in fact a slogan coined by the Liberal Party in Britain and used extensively by Lloyd George in the aftermath of World War I.
12. Duncan, 1991, p. 143.
13. Duncan, 1991, p. 146.
14. Barker D., 1973, *G.K Chesterton: A Biography*, London, Constable p. 275.
15. As could be said also of the Fabians, who were compromised in the eyes of many by Shaw's apologies for Mussolini and Stalin and Beatrice and Sidney Webb's Soviet Communism: *A New Civilisation*, In the case of Shaw and Mussolini, see for example Holroyd M., 1991, *Bernard Shaw, Vol. III. 1918-1950: The Lure of Fantasy*, London, Chatto

& Windus, pp. 143-146.

16. Chesterton and Shaw, 1928, p. 34.

17. Boyd I "Chesterton and Distributism" in Conlon D.J. (ed), 1987, *GK Chesterton: A Half Century of Views*, Oxford University Press, p. 287.

18. Ward, 1944, p. 440.

19. Barker, 1973, p. 276.

20. Furlong W.B., 1970, *Shaw and Chesterton: The Metaphysical Jesters*, The Pennsylvania State University Press, p. 140.

21. Holroyd M., 1989, *Bernard Shaw, Vol. II, 1898-1918: The Pursuit of Power*, London, Chatto & Windus, p. 220.

22. Chesterton and Shaw, 1928, pp. 10-11.

23. Chesterton and Shaw, 1928, pp. 15-16.

24. Chesterton and Shaw, 1928, pp. 19-20, 22-23, 26.

25. Boyd, 1987, p. 283.

26. Ward, 1944, p. 437.

27. Chafe J.R., 1962, "The Most Unforgettable Character I've Met", *Readers' Digest*, October, 1962.

28. MacInnes D.W., 1985, "Masters of Our Destiny: The Ideal and the Reality". Address to the Second Topshee Memorial Conference, Antigonis, 21 June, 1985, p. 1.

29. Chafe, 1962.

30. *Time*, 17 June, 1949.

31. MacInnes, 1985. p. 5.

32. Given the support of Franco by Belloc and some other Distributists, there is a nice irony in the fact that Arizmendiarietta fought on the republican side in the Civil War and narrowly escaped execution as a prisoner of Franco's army.

33. For comprehensive accounts of the Mondragon Co-operative Corporation, see Whyte W.F. and Whyte K.K., 1991, *Making Mondragon: The Growth and Dynamics of the Worker Co-operative Complex*, Second Edition. New York, Cornell University Press, and Morrison R., 1991, *We Build the Road As We Travel*, Philadelphia, New Society Publishers.

34. Chesterton and Shaw, 1928, p. 46.

Catholic Formation in the 1940s and the Politics of the Split
by Jim Macken
 Industrial Commission of NSW (1975-1989)

My treatment of this subject will be subjective because my formation was not universally experienced and because my experiences were not the universal experience of all 1940s Catholics. Furthermore, apparently objective views of the period are divisive and often borne of biases.

The two great preoccupations of the 1940s were first the war and then the problems of postwar reconstruction. As students at Riverview we were blessed with having Father John J O'Shaughnessy SJ. He was keen for us to leave school well grounded in Catholic social teaching, especially *Rerum Novarum* (1891). We had another priest, Fr Ryan SJ, who was an authority on both Spain and Mexico. We knew well the story of the Spanish civil war and also of the fabulous life of Father Miguel Pro who was martyred in Mexico.

I doubt that any Catholic boy grew up in the 1940s not knowing (and for very good reason) that communism was the threat to the church around the world and in Australia and that we had a duty to do whatever we could to prevent a communist revolution at least in Australia. It may sound to some a ridiculous attitude but that would be a view borne of coloured hindsight and is incorrect. It was not ridiculous then and was not borne of any biases. Communism in the middle 1940s posed exactly that threat.

It was not surprising that when I left school I sought and obtained employment with the National Catholic Rural Movement as I was interested in Catholic Action in the countryside and there was no Catholic Action organisations in the Sydney Diocese. After some years I transferred to ~work for the Catholic Social Movement and became active in the union movement. I think we were well trained in those years for participation in the justice field. Even at school we attended the Domain on Sundays to see whether we could handle debates with the Rationalists.

I sought a transfer back to Sydney as this is where my home was and I worked in CUSA house for some years with the Catholic Social Movement. Like it or not, the Movement in the Head Office and the Victorian Office was totally lay dominated (priests, of course were for saying Mass at weekend conferences); while the Sydney office was dominated in every way and at every turn by the ubiquitous Dr. Paddy Ryan MSC - a very great man' but a cleric.

The scene was set for the Split in this interstate rivalry and interstate difference as to the role and function of the laity. When the Split came I was working on the waterfront as a union secretary and whatever you might like to think of unions in this day and age, the waterfront in the middle 1950's was no kindergarten. The fight to maintain the relevance of Catholic social teachings against a tide of communism backed with intimidation and violence was difficult if you will pardon an understatement. It was a ferocious engagement against a well organised enemy in his heartland. I have seen grown men cry at the thought of their having to go before another stop-work meeting of wharfies and other unions and carry what was then an ALP banner. There were no Bishops and no priests to help us then and, as it was a lay milieu, we did not seek from them anything but their prayers. For that fight to succeed we

knew we had to maintain a national organisation as the ballots and the struggle was a national struggle.

Everything has been written that fairly ought to be written about the Split, so I will try to avoid covering the major events. Its impacts on my self and my union and work on the waterfront must, however, be detailed momentarily.

I was secretary of the ALP Combined Waterfront Unions Committee and this embraced every union (left, right and centre) on the waterfront except for the communist unions, the WWF and SUA. It was an ALP Committee and I was the only Movement member of it.

When Evatt started the sectarian attack in November 1954 there was no one who did not think then that Evatt was insane - there is no one around today that does not think so as well. It was with the response of the Church in New South Wales that I am concerned today.

I assumed in my naivety that the response of the Movement would be a national one as had always been the case. It was not long before one by one union officials and political figures were summonsed to CUSA house and told that the formation of the DLP on a national basis was not to happen; and that in NSW, anyone who joined the DLP was being disloyal to the Cardinal'. This oblique threat grew in tone and content as the months passed.

Attempts to break the affiliation of NSW Movement members with the National Office became quite strident. We were told that the body was Catholic and that therefore it was a matter for each Diocese as to whether it existed or not; and that where ever it did exist, it was under the control of the Bishops as to its policies.

The frenzy became farcical in the end. I was quite clearly told that deliberate defiance of an edict of the Bishop would entitle him to excommunicate me. I well recall the nighttime visit to a Jesuit friend from Riverview (then at St. Aloysius) who told me of my rights of appeal to Rome and promised that the threat was so absurd that I could be admitted to the Sacraments at one or other of the Jesuit parishes or schools if the worst came to the worst.

I formally stated the query as to whether I was free as secretary of a union to buy a roneo machine for the members if the executive approved the purchase; when to do so resulted in not paying ALP affiliation fees. I was told that in those circumstances I had to oppose the resolution as a matter of Catholic duty. Why go on? The farce came to an end with the Roman letters in which the power of the Bishops over laity in the political arena was excluded; and the Movement in NSW became the Paulian Association.

How well I recall the late night meetings at the Presbytery at Stanmore when we were addressed by Bishop Carroll. I recall the general resentment, the bitterness and the anger. Even those who went to the mass meeting at Kensington came away disgusted and angry. Even those who 'stayed in the ALP' retained their links with the national body but had to meet in secret 'in case Roy Boylan sees us'.

I cannot vocalise the atmosphere of those times.

What of its long term effect on myself as a Catholic? That is also something I find hard to express. I was shocked. I was alienated from the Church generally; and I was one who still thought that to tackle a priest roughly in football training could be a sin. I was never again to have my faith in clerical authority restored ... even in matters of faith and morals I have a good look, at what they say and make my own mind up about it. The fact is it took such an experience to teach me the obvious: the fact that a man may be a good theologian does not make him a good politician. The Church made a tremendous blunder.

The Sydney Diocesan authority was claiming that they could decide on a diocese by diocese basis what the Catholics should do on a political basis in that diocese; including, if you please, how they should vote and who they should support in union elections.

I knew the national campaign in the Ironworkers Union or any other union could be won only by a national decision being taken by the members of that union. The future now could not be clerical and diocesan but rather national and civic, which is how the National Civic Council got its name.

I completely agree with Patrick O'Farrell's view of those times which I read recently for the first time in his *Vanished Kingdoms* (pp. 277-279). His point is that the effect of the clerical intervention in a peculiarly lay sphere has had a continuing effect in NSW to the present day.

The authority of the Bishops is now rarely exercised at all on any subject. In matters of faith and morals in the Diocese, the real authority lies with the bureaucracy of the Catholic Education Office. Where once teachers stood in loco parentis, now parents are told (in patronising terms) that they stand in loco tutoris. Matters of religious instruction to which parents strongly object are decided without any reference to parents; and when the Bishops are asked to take some action in order to have orthodox teachings given to students, they are silent. I believe that they have no longer got any real authority because of their abuse of authority in the 50's.

My upbringing on *Rerum Novarum* has been revived and renewed by the publication by John Paul II of the Encyclicals: *Laborem Exercens* (1981), *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* (1987), *Christifideles Laici* (1988) and *Veritatis Splendor* (1994). At least now the laity have some direction that is appropriate for Catholic action in the modern world of work. I don't know who the papal advisers are, but whoever they are, they are spot on in their treatment of the problems of work in the modern world. The right to strike enunciated as a human right rather than an industrial privilege is stated again, as is the right to organise unions, the right to have dignified work relationships and so on.

With the collapse of Marxism and the disappearance of communism a remarkable but very positive development has occurred. Those of us who fought the communists over so many years now find that we can forge common cause with the 'hard hat' Left. They too find that in the philosophy contained in those Encyclicals they have a new cause; and with the former 'groupers', they have new allies.

I am proud to be associated with many of my former political opponents I know Bob Santamaria too has good relationships with many former political opponents. We can join

with them to act as we were asked to act in Christifideles Laici (1988), paragraph 43:

to fight for the most opportune overcoming of numerous injustices that come from organisations of work which lack a proper goal; to make the workplace become a community of persons respected in their uniqueness and in their right to participation; to develop new solidarity among those that participate in a common work; to raise up new forms of entrepreneurship and to look again at systems of commerce, finance and exchange of technology.

Action For Justice: Sources For Vision

By David Pollard

Industry Commission, Melbourne

There is a sense in which *Rerum Novarum* was the starting point for much of what is classified as Roman Catholic (RC) social teaching today. But of course, the origins of this set of teachings goes back much further than this: to the Scriptures themselves and to that early set of reflections of scripture: the Fathers.

As far as scripture is concerned, the synoptic gospels spring to mind most immediately (Luke 4 good news to the poor and Matthew 25, last judgement for example) but the epistles, too, have been influential in ordering the way in Christian communities relate to themselves and to the outside world.

Before coming back to these seminal influences on the vision which RC teaching brings to the worldwide struggle, let me risk a few generalisations which may help to clarify why the RC church has interested itself in these matters and why it has given the debate such a distinctive twist.

Inclusiveness

In the first place it has often been said that the RC church is inclusive. This is in contradistinction to the modal experiences of, eg, the Protestant churches which have tended to be less so and in the extreme - exclusive. If one of the abiding images of the reformed tradition has been the gathering in of the elect, the literal or metaphorical 144 thousand marked with the blood of the lamb, perhaps the counterpoint in RC popular imagery has been an outward imperative, the driving force to evangelise as much of the world as possible before the terrible Day.

Accounts of the missionary journeys of Francis Xavier for example have him baptising almost impossibly high numbers of candidates in a single day in order to include in the rolls of the church the maximum number of souls and minimise the number of (unsavable) ones outside. Again, the influence on the conquest of South America of the Spanish thirst for souls is well known and embarrassingly retold in 1992 by those conscious of its sometimes negative impact.

This inclusiveness has been a characteristic of the RC Church for a long time and has controlled the general direction of much of its teaching. St Thomas Aquinas for example, in his treatise in the *Summa* on Law, asserts that the law is there to promote the common good: (a concept which we may presumably re-embrace now that Communism and its notion of the impossibility of anything approaching a common good in a class-based society is gone.)

The common good means the good of everyone and supports notions of co-responsibility in society, a common interest in society's production, an obligation to include the marginalised in the ordering of society and in the words of the present Pope, a 'social mortgage' on property.

Dignity of the Person

A second distinctive characteristic of the RC vision of society has been the notion of the dignity of the human person. This sounds almost impossibly wide ranging to our ears, but gains shape when one considers the gross abuses against the apparently obvious ethic in our own century. Infamous butcheries of the century have included the Armenian, the Jewish, the Chinese, the Khmer, the Hutu/Tutsi. These are apart from the wars which generally provided their context and which increase in lethality at a technologically exponential rate.

Embedded here is another Catholic perspective - that of the presence of God in everything within and outside the world. The Cosmos is full of God and that means that no corner of the created universe is absent from him. All human laws must therefore derive from the first law of the indwelling of God in the world.

If, on the other hand, one believes that the world is fundamentally alienated from God, that despite the creation and redemption, we live in an alien landscape where salvation is a sometime thing (and this view is not absent from Catholic theology itself - witness Augustine's concept of the world as a *massa damnata* from which the occasional soul is predestined for glory), then violence against the individual is normal. Perhaps the best current proof of this is the practical experience of life under atheistic/pagan regimes like Nazism and totalitarian/socialist regimes like Stalinism. If God is not indwelling in the world anything is possible.

History: the Actualisation of the Vision

There were some very important milestones which need to be noted in outlining the history of modern social encyclicals. In a sense, the experience of the history has called forth the need to utter the vision. These milestones have included for example;

- the Protestant Reformation and the curtailing of papal hegemony in the civil sphere and the encroachments of individualism into the communal solidarity of Catholicism;
- the French revolution and the invention of bourgeois rights and freedoms and their defence through Terror and war;
- Nazism and its romantic atheistic naturalism, and
- Communism and its materialism, its violence and idolatry of things (technically, the priority of the material in determining culture: pathetically and tellingly manifest in the devotion of the nomenclature to the worst excrescences of western materialism).

To some of these events, church teaching embodied the vision more effectively than others. The Church's response to Nazism was weak and ambiguous. Still, compared to the response of Britain and France in 1938 when Czechoslovakia was handed to Hitler because Britain was not prepared to defend "people we hardly know," it was a start.

The vision was embodied much more effectively in the Church's struggle against communism. In the face of decades of criticism from the Left, the Church kept up an unflinching opposition to atheistic materialism and won itself a reputation for being anti-socialist i.e. against equality (ironically!).

Summary

The RC Church then, orients itself according to some fundamental notions in its envisioning of the phenomenon of God acting in history. The scriptures are part of an ongoing tradition which the journeying Church uses to judge the fundamental integrity of its own teaching and proclamation. It is also judged by that same Word. This journeying Church is an inclusive body which is supposed to include everyone (some of the really interesting Catholic heresies like montanism, Albigensianism and Jansenism have been quite exclusivist). This church carries the message about God's continuous presence and action in the world and the consequent dignity of the person who is privileged to dwell in that world. The world is the locus of grace: that is, it is the place where people may encounter God and experience acceptance.

Second Vatican Council

Following the Second Vatican Council, during the liberal pontificate of Paul VI, the Pontifical Commission for Justice and Peace and counterpart Commissions around the world were established to service different Bishops' Conferences. Their remit was to be anything the Bishops' Conferences decided they should do, but in all cases, the Vision which was to guide them was to be the notion that action for justice was inextricably linked with proclaiming the gospel. (As a matter of fact this assertion contains more problems than it solves but that is another story).

The link was pushed in the statement of the Synod of Bishops in 1972 where the two were explicitly linked. It was believed that the RC Church, the largest, oldest, most alive and most respected religious body in the world, should be seen to be able to take action explicitly in human rights struggles which commanded wide support. These struggles were to be especially:

- *the struggle against war and for peace;
- *disarmament;
- *human rights abuses against individuals and minorities;
- *political persecution (remember the Helsinki Accords),
- *family rights;
- *economic rights (cf John Paul II's "social mortgage on property" for example);
- *workers' rights.

These had the potential to be essentially uncontroversial issues within the RC Church because they were so general. Even Richard Nixon was in favour of human rights. That they were not so uncontroversial, and, indeed, that the application of the general to the particular in a specific issue in any culture could prove divisive, is a topic which Chris Sidoti will discuss in the following paper.

**From The General to the Particular:
Achievements of the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace
by Chris Sidoti
Human Rights Commission, Sydney**

Introduction

Catholic social teaching has a modern history of over a century. It has been developed as a response to contemporary needs and experiences and as an articulated vision of a just society. Its essential principles provide a radical critique of human societies and economies, although few realise that this is so. Its fundamental concerns are the concerns of ordinary people: war and peace, disarmament, cultural rights, political and economic rights, family rights. However the social teaching of the universal Church, of popes, synods and councils, is general not particular, global not local. It is a set of principles that require local application to particular circumstances before they acquire a biting edge. In that application the teachings and the concerns of the Church become controversial.

Church social teaching demands local application of its general principles. There is a challenge to move beyond the level of generality to enter the cut and thrust of local debate and action on significant social, economic and political issues. This challenge was found in *Gaudium et Spes* and in Paul VI's encyclical, *Populorum Progressio*. Its clearest expression, however, is in *Octagesima Adveniens*, Paul VI's Apostolic Letter to Cardinal Roy, first President of the Pontifical Commission for Justice and Peace:

In the face of such widely varying situations it is difficult for us to utter a unified message and to put forward a solution which has universal validity. Such is not our ambition, nor is it our mission. It is up to the Christian communities to analyse with objectivity the situation which is proper to their own country, to shed on it the light of the Gospel's unalterable words and to draw principles of reflection, norms of judgement and directives for action from the social teaching of the Church (Octagesima Adveniens, 1971, para 4)

Giving flesh in Australia to Catholic social teaching was the mission and life of the CCJP. The Commission heard the words of Paul VI that:

it is not enough to recall principles, state intentions, point to crying injustices and utter prophetic denunciations; these words will lack real weight unless they are accompanied for each individual by a livelier awareness of personal responsibility and by effective action (Octagesima Adveniens, 1971, para 48).

It was eager to analyse the Australian experience, shed on it the light of the Gospel and derive directions for action. Its role was to make and share prudential judgements about the past, present and future of Australian society and, as a Catholic Christian agency, to enter the arena of public debate and action.

The Interim Justice and Peace Commission was appointed in May 1969 and met for the first time on 19 June 1969. The Commission remained interim until it was constituted separately from Australian Catholic Relief in 1972; it remained the National Commission for Justice and Peace until it was renamed Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace in 1976. It was

abolished in 1987. This paper discusses some of the Commission achievements during its 18 years.

The Consistent Presentation Of A Catholic Christian Voice On Critical Social Issues Facing Australia

The Commission's most significant achievement was the articulation and presentation of a Catholic Christian voice on the critical social issues facing Australia during its life. It did not take up and drop issues on a random basis or as community and political whims changed. Rather, it was consistent in identifying and pursuing the most significant matters on which it could make an effective contribution. It reflected on these on the basis of scripture and Catholic social teaching and developed its views. It worked dialectically, listening to and speaking with others, including governments, activists and academics, but most importantly with the people actually experiencing injustice. Over the years it was able to build a comprehensive vision for a just Australia society, within which it located each of the issues it considered.

From the earliest days the Commission's agenda included among its priorities Aboriginal affairs, development, peace and disarmament, and civil and political rights. As Australia entered the recession of the late 1970s, the issue of poverty in this country was added to its work. The Commission undertook major projects on poverty generally and on unemployment and housing in particular. In determining its program, the Commission was conscious of the priority to be given to poor people but it also looked more generally at the nature of our society and its effect on particular groups, such as women, immigrants and young people. The unifying commitment for the Commission was to human rights, full human development and peace. All of these policy areas cannot be discussed here today.² By way of illustration I would like to concentrate on the Commission's work in Aboriginal affairs.

Contributing To Justice For Indigenous Australians

At its first meeting the Interim Commission placed Aboriginal issues among its priorities. This concern never left it. This view was affirmed at the first meeting of the new National Commission in 1972 and found its first significant expression in the 1978 Social Justice Statement, *Aborigines: ~4 Statement of Concern*. The 1978 Social Justice Statement laid the theological basis and the sociological understanding for the Commission's work with and on behalf of Aboriginal people over the following decade. Certainly there were developments in that theology and that understanding but the Statement stood the test of time well and was always the reference point for Commission policy and strategy. It enabled the Commission to accept Aboriginal perspectives that land rights were the critical issue in their struggle for justice.

In the succeeding years, the Commission's work took two different thrusts: support for Aboriginal communities in particular disputes and involvement in the broader issues of land rights law. It was concerned both with political action and community education. The Commission was active in most of the critical situations of Aboriginal affairs. It supported the communities at Aurukun and Mornington Island in 1978-79, and the Noonkanbah community in the early 1980s. It sent representatives to be with those communities at critical times in their struggles with the States Governments. These activities convinced the Commission of the need to take up the general issue of land rights law. It made representations to virtually every inquiry dealing with land rights during these years: the

NSW Parliaments Select Committee on Aborigines (1979-80), the Rowland Review of the Aboriginal Land Rights (NT) Act (1980), the Seaman Inquiry in WA (1984) and the Federal Government Preferred National Land Rights Model (1985). It was involved in the debate on the Queensland Acts and on the various attempts to water down the NT Act. In undertaking these activities the Commission was in regular contact with Aboriginal people. It sought advice on the best role it could play. It was repeatedly told of its responsibility as a non-Aboriginal organisation to educate non-Aboriginal Australians about their obligations towards Aborigines and about the perspectives of Aboriginal people. It published its various submissions to government inquiries and used the media extensively to pursue its views and actions.

There was a conviction, however, that more was needed to get the message to ordinary churchgoers. The Commission worked with the Australian Council of Churches and the Uniting Church Commission for World Mission on an Aboriginal Land Rights educational campaign, which included educational material, most usefully a book on the theological approach to land rights, *Land Rights: A Christian Perspective* (Alternative Publishing Cooperative Chippendale, 1980); and a national speaking tour by Pat Dodson, then a Catholic priest at Alice Springs.

The Commission asked the bishops to issue a pastoral letter - they did so in August 1980 but incorporated little of what the Commission drafted for them. Through its work on these issues, the increasing evidence available to it and the insights of many of its members, the Commission as a whole recognised the fundamental conflict between the interests of Aboriginal communities and those of mining companies which wanted unrestricted access to land for exploration and exploitation. The Noonkanbah dispute and the attempts to amend the NT Act were examples of this process.

In seeking ways in which the Commission could assist Aboriginal communities, especially where they did have some negotiating power, the Commission was told of the need for good information in an accessible form. Non-Aboriginal support groups needed the same kind of material. In this way it commenced its most controversial project on Aboriginal issues, a study of a multinational mining corporation. The Corporate Study Project was also undertaken jointly with the Uniting Church Commission for World Mission. It aimed to produce both a research book, dealing principally with one large mining group (Rio Tinto Zinc and its Australian subsidiary Conzinc Rio Tinto Australia); and a package of more general material for Aboriginal communities.

The latter came first: a poster, a cassette tape in a number of Central Australian Aboriginal languages, and a comic book. The material proved very popular among Aboriginal communities and organisations and their response to it was positive. However the Australian Mining Industry Council and its President, Hugh Morgan, were less enthusiastic. They complained to the Bishops' Conference, particularly about the comic book. The Secretary of the Conference, Bishop Dougherty, apologised to AMIC on behalf of the bishops. Subsequently the Bishops' Conference ordered that all remaining copies of the comic book be destroyed. The undistributed copies of the comic book were taken to a paper re-cycling depot where they were weighed and the amount of \$9.20 was given for them.

The Conference also withdrew the Commission from the publication of the research book which was later published by the Uniting Church Commission alone - R. Howitt with J. Douglas, *Aborigines and Mining Companies in Northern Australia* (Alternative Publishing Cooperative Chippendale, 1983). The former Prime Minister, E G Whitlam, had previously agreed to write a forward to the book and still did so. When advised of the Commission's inability to be involved in the publication, he told me that the Catholic bishops made it very difficult for one to be a fellow traveler with Christianity.

In its work with Aboriginal people the Commission was very concerned that it was always exclusively or almost exclusively a non-Aboriginal organisation. It was committed, however, to ensuring that it had direct contact with Aboriginal people. Dick Buchhorn and John Gherardi were critical to this between 1976 and 1980, as they had excellent networks among Aboriginal communities and organisations. Barry Tunks, though less well placed initially, was able to continue these links after 1980. But more structured links were seen to be necessary. From 1982 there was one Aboriginal person among the Commission members, first Margaret Valadian and later Kaye Mundine. And in the early 1980s the Commission established a project group with significant Aboriginal participation to run its educational and corporate study projects. This group consisted of some of the most significant Aboriginal leaders then and now: Pat Dodson, Pat Shane, Neville Bonner, Michael Mansell, Les Melzer, Jim Stanley and Rybnga Green. It must be said, however, that the Commission never considered itself completely successful in ensuring the level of direct involvement with Aboriginal people which it wanted and thought necessary.

The Commission's commitment to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cause continued to the very end. Its last major statement, published after its dismissal, was on this subject, the 1987 Social Justice Statement, *Just and Proper Settlement*. This Statement was prepared in the context of the 1988 bicentenary of European settlement. It dealt with the need for reconciliation between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians and other Australians. It returned to the Commission's central concern for land rights. It was a fitting document to end the Commission's work. The Commission's work on indigenous issues placed it among a number of significant organisations that over two decades turned round public, political and legal attitudes towards justice for the original Australians. It helped make Aboriginal affairs a moral issue that demanded tangible responses from government at some cost to the wider community. I have no doubt that its work contributed to the changed perspective that saw the High Court recognise native title to land. I consider it no coincidence that six of the seven High Court judges sitting on the case had Catholic backgrounds and that those six made up the majority in favour of recognising native title.

Participating In Political Debate

The annual Social Justice Statements were critical components of the Commission's strategies and processes. They certainly consumed more Commission resources each year than any other project, because of the enormous effort that went into drafting, consulting, negotiating, publishing and promoting. The Statements prepared by the Commission were the second series of Social Justice Statements within the Australian church.

The first series was published between 1940 and 1962 and the second was published annually from 1973 to 1987 inclusive. The 1987 Statement, *Just and Proper Settlement*, was published three months after the dismissal of the Commission. As it was prepared by the Commission

and its staff, it is properly considered to be part of the corpus of CCJP Social Justice Statements. The only year during that period when no statement appeared was 1986 when for the first and only time the Bishops' Conference rejected the draft and had the Commission publish a collection of snippets from papal documents instead. Together the two series of Social Justice Statements constituted a uniquely Australian contribution to the Catholic Church's justice ministry and were very highly regarded by church organisations elsewhere in the world. For that reason it is quite astounding that they should have received no recognition in the bishops' pastoral letter to mark the centenary of Catholic social teaching in 1991.

The bishops asked the Commission to revive the Statements in 1972. They became very important to the Commission. They were the only task regularly assigned to it by the bishops and were the subject of its closest contact with the bishops. Because of this link with the bishops, the Statements were accepted widely (although far from universally) in the parishes and so gave the Commission an unparalleled opportunity to reach large numbers of Catholics. Because they addressed some of the most controversial issues they received wide media coverage and were subject to considerable public debate.

This public media dimension of the Statements was very important. It was seen by the Commission as central to the success of a Statement and not coincidental or peripheral. Although most years they were among the largest selling religious publications in Australia apart from the Bible, no Statement as such ever reached more than 100 000 purchasers (presumably about 200 000 readers). The public media, however, touched most people in one form or another and was of particular interest to governments. The Commission carefully pursued a media strategy for the release and promotion of each Statement to ensure that its views reached as many people as possible. The Commission was assisted by its critics who always ensured a good controversy to capture the media's interest in the Statement.

The Statements had dual purposes: influencing government policy on the issue in question; and educating readers, Catholics and other Christians, about their responsibilities. It was difficult to reconcile these purposes in the one document. Often it was too technical for the ordinary reader or too simplistic for government or perhaps even both. Perhaps the intrinsic tension between the two purposes gave a sharper edge to the final documents.

The attempts at resolution were evident in the development of more attractive and better laid out documents, in the inclusion in the publications of guides for reflection on and discussion of the Statement and in the production of parallel materials in a variety of forms, for example, the students' editions of the Statements and audio-visual versions. Slide cassette sets were also produced and on some occasions, videos. Attempts were also made at publication to specialist audiences: the 1982 Statement in Italian, the 1983 Statement in Greek and Braille. In these ways the Statements reached a much wider audience. As many as 340 000 documents relating to the 1984 Statement were distributed.

Statement topics were selected by the bishops, drafts of the document were circulated to them individually for comment (most did not respond) and the final text had to be approved by them (either through the Bishops' Committee to which the Commission reported, or by the Bishops' Conference as a whole). The involvement of the bishops in the process was only one part of a very broad consultation on Statement drafts. Over the years, the Commission

became increasingly sophisticated in this. At a very early stage, external experts participated in Commission discussions of the particular issue. In some cases there was also general consultation at this time. With the 1984 Statement on young people, for example, simple questionnaires were widely distributed to young people through schools and youth organisations so that they could express their views and help to shape the final document - over 1200 written responses were received. That year the Commission also used less formal means of consultation to enable less literate young people to contribute as well. Each year several hundred copies of the draft document were distributed with requests for comment. They went to academic experts on the particular issue (theologians, economists, sociologists and so on), church social justice groups, appropriate government Ministers and officials, and any others who expressed an interest in receiving it or who were thought to have a contribution to make. The task of the analyzing responses was particularly difficult, especially as totally contradictory advice would inevitably be received. Ultimately the Commission had to decide the policy and be satisfied with the text.

The Social Justice Statements more than anything else established the reputation of the Commission. They took people by surprise - the institutional church was not expected to be able to comment with such weight on controversial and topical issues. Their insights and analyses were considered significant, even if they were not accepted. More often than not their views were validated by subsequent events. Because of the Statements the Commission became influential and highly regarded in the community generally and among political leaders, senior public officials and others in significant positions.

Educating the Community

The Commission's educational objectives in the Social Justice Statements carried through the rest of its work. It considered community education essential in the work of justice and peace. It acquired a commitment to education that was evident in specific educational programs and as a component in each project it undertook.

The educational objectives were pursued in a variety of ways: publications that provided for group discussion and reflection, audio-visual materials, seminars and Conferences (particularly the summer school program from 1979 to 1985). The activities and materials reflected the Commission's conviction that work for justice and peace required Christians to act co-operatively with others. The focus, therefore, was on small groups - encouraging interested individuals to become part of groups and to take part in group activities. The Commission built a broad informal network of groups and individuals which supported it in this work. It regularly sought additional assistance and resources from the Bishops' Conference for this purpose, largely unsuccessfully. Although bishops were regularly requested to appoint justice and peace co-ordinators or groups in their dioceses, few did so. For many years the Commission discussed the need for a social action handbook as a manual groups could use to develop skills, knowledge and commitment to this work. The handbook was finally published in 1984, entitled, *Changing You and I and Us: A Guide to Social Action*. The fact that it was seen as a necessary supplement to the Social Justice Statement of that year, *Changing Australia*, formalised the close relationship the Commission saw between the annual Statements and its community education work.

Making Ecumenism a Reality

The Commission's charter from the Bishops' Conference provided that it perform (its) work in an ecumenical perspective (Charter May, 1984). This reflected the Catholic Church's commitment, especially after Vatican II, to working with other Christian churches wherever possible. The Pontifical Commission for Justice and Peace, for example, had a similar mandate. It joined with the World Council of Churches in a number of endeavours, including the establishment of Sodepax as a centre for study and reflection on justice issues. The various Christian denominations were perhaps more able to co-operate effectively in the work for justice than in other areas of church life where dogmatic differences were more marked.

The Commission was involved in ecumenical work from its earliest days. Its beginnings coincided with the churches' initiative in establishing Action for World Development (AWD) to promote common commitment and action for justice by all Christians. Its principal ecumenical collaborators were the Australian Council of Churches, the Anglican Social Responsibilities Commission and the Uniting Church's Commission for World Mission and Commission on Social Responsibility. There were many joint enterprises among these agencies. Most were in relation to Aboriginal affairs, where the churches had clear common concerns to address the injustices of the last two centuries. These projects have already been described above.

The most significant and difficult ecumenical projects were the joint Social Justice Statements of 1983, 1984 and 1987. These were pioneering efforts through which each participant gained greatly in understanding and in effectiveness. The initiative for the first of these came from the Australian Council of Churches General Secretary, Jean Skuse, as early as 1980. It took some time for the agencies themselves and then for their church authorities, where necessary, to consider and approve the proposal. The task itself proved much more difficult than anyone imagined. The agencies brought to the process different starting points for their theological reflection. They had inequalities in resourcing, both in personnel and in finances, with the result that the Catholic Commission had to bear more of the responsibility and cost of the exercise than the others. Finally they had different decision-making processes and different requirements concerning hierarchical approval for the final product.

The preparation of the first ecumenical Statement in 1983 nearly came unstuck many times during the course of the work. The end product, *Changing Australia*, justified the effort: it represented the first and only attempt by the major churches in Australia to come to a common analysis of our society and to a common vision for its future. The experience is discussed by Keith Suter in his unpublished MA Honours thesis, 'The Uniting Church in Australia and Economic Justice: The Changing Australia Controversy'. Much of the document maintains its relevance in the 1990s. The later ecumenical Statements, *It is a Rocky Road: Young People in Australia and Proper Settlement*, were quite unique in how they developed. Neither had the same kind of endorsement from the participants as the first, as the approval processes became more complex. The preparation of the youth statement marked a further broadening of the process, with the Lutheran Church's Commission on Social Questions being consulted and being acknowledged in the endorsement of the Statement as such. By the time of the later statement, however, the Anglican Commission had quit the process, finding it difficult to reach agreement externally

and internally within the time required.

The three ecumenical Social Justice Statements were remarkable achievements. They probably represent the most tangible fruits of the dialogue among the Christian churches in Australia over the three decades since the Vatican Council. While the difficulties discovered in the process should not have been unexpected, the fact that they were successfully overcome was a matter of great excitement to all those involved. The Statements remain as reminders of the possibility of the churches playing a truly significant role in the development of a more just Australian society if they are prepared to take the risk and make the effort.

Working With All People

The Commission's efforts to work ecumenically were part of a wider commitment to collaboration with other organisations and individuals. This was known as the policy of common cause. It was an explicit policy set out by the Commission in a public statement in 1976. The Commission had been criticized for its involvement with a number of other groups in the establishment of the Australian East Timor Association and therefore considered it necessary to state its approach explicitly. The policy provided that the Commission would co-operate with others who shared its objectives and whose methods were not incompatible with the demands of the Gospel, provided that the work was not compromised by the association. The policy was seen as a way to maximize the limited resources available to the Commission and to influence the policies and work of other organisations. It was a conscious extension of the educational role of the Commission.

The practice of common cause brought the Commission into contact with a very wide range of groups. Many were church-based but others were trade unions, local community groups and groups aligned to particular political and ideological viewpoints. On a number of occasions there was considerable debate within the Commission as to whether to cooperate in particular projects because of the other groups involved. Certainly the willingness of the Commission to collaborate with these organisations left it open to criticism. As a strategy, however, it succeeded in bringing a positive Christian perspective to coalitions working on many of the most important social issues of the time. It was not simply work for justice but much broader evangelism. It also allowed the Commission to influence debates well beyond the limits of its resources.

Less controversial but probably even more important was the Commission's involvement in peak councils of non-government organisations. The Commission was a member of both the Australian Council of Social Service and the Australian Council for Overseas Aid, the two peaks in the principal areas of Commission concern - poverty and welfare in Australia, development and human rights overseas. The Commission decided that it should be an active member of both councils, participating at the board or executive level. In this way again, its influence could be maximized and its viewpoints given broader currency. The policy and practice of common cause was not restricted to non-government organisations, however. The Commission's collaboration with government agencies, such as the Australian Development Assistance Bureau on aid issues and the Department of Foreign Affairs on human rights cases, was based on the same approach. So too were its extensive associations with people who experienced injustice and their groups.

The Achievement

Perhaps now, seven years after its demise, the work of the CCJP can start to be evaluated with some degree of objectivity (although I may not be the right person for the task). With few resources, especially when compared to the other areas of the Catholic ministry in Australia, the Commission sought to influence and change public thinking and government policy on the most critical political and economic questions of the day. It sought to establish new alliances with those who were poor, with other churches and with people of goodwill generally.

The Commission succeeded in bringing a Catholic Christian voice into the most important debates. Its concerns were taken seriously, even if in retrospect many of its specific proposals must be accepted as naive. In fact its analysis of what was happening in Australia and the region and its concerns about where the country was going have generally been borne out by the events of the last decade. The important thing is that the Commission played its part with many others. It was not a lonely voice, although many times it seemed the only official Catholic voice on many issues. In fact it was part of a wider movement for change that included many other church and community groups. Through its policy of collaboration it contributed to fundamental shifts in community attitudes and government policies towards Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. It was part of the new consciousness of human rights that is evident in the courts and the legal profession, the media and other national institutions. It was a leader in arguing that Australia's future lay with the peoples of the region, in East Asia and the Pacific.

The Commission had two very important effects within the Church. First, it was a sign of hope to many Christians that the institutions of the Church were capable of responding to Christ's call to justice and peace. Young people particularly found in the Commission a reason to maintain their links with the Catholic Church. Its abolition for many raised issues that went to the heart of their Catholic affiliation. Second, its work was proof that ecumenical action in gospel ministry was possible. The expectations for Christian unity generated by Vatican II produced very little in fact. The Commission, especially through the joint Social Justice Statements, kept the commitment to unity alive when there was little evidence of it elsewhere.

The CCJP was very much a creature of its time and that time has now passed. Regrettably no successor has yet been found to respond as effectively to these times. The voice of Catholic social teaching from the official structures of the Church is inaudible on the great issues in Australia in the 1990s. The field is left to other agencies, like Uniya, but they struggle to work with little or no assistance from the institution. The challenge of Octagesima Adveniens is not being met.

Notes

1. This paper is based on a longer document: C. Sidoti 'The Twenty-Fifth Anniversary: Looking back on the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace', Catholics in Coalition for Justice and Peace, Occasional Paper, Series 1, No 3, September 1992.
2. For other policy aspects see additional references in note (1) above. Page 38

Catholics And Gender Politics I
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I thought it would be useful in a seminar about Catholic perspectives on politics to take those key periods of intellectual debate on which this seminar is based - the 1890s, the 1940s and the 1970s - and look at what Catholic women were doing then. The assumption of this periodisation is that the debates which were taking place at those times were nongendered - that men and women were equally interested in them and that they have stood to lose or gain equally by their outcomes. If we look more closely, however, it becomes apparent that men and women did not have identical needs and interests. The biggest single male political issue in the 1890s was the institutionalisation of working class politics in the birth of a Labor party - to which the contribution of Catholics has been subject of substantial research. The biggest achievement of women, at that time, however, was the right to vote. This is not to suggest complete separatism - either in the struggles themselves or in their outcomes. Indeed one of the main points of this paper is that there were close links between the politics of Catholic men and of Catholic women - in the 1890s over labour, in the 1940s over anti-communism and in the 1970s over the politics of liberation. However, a sensitivity to gender in the history of politics can draw attention to some significant cultural disjunctions. Women's activism can be seen as an ongoing struggle for citizenship: in the 1890s for political citizenship' (when Australian men had been enfranchised for 40 years) in the 1940s for economic and social citizenship and in the 1970s for sexual citizenship.

What I would like to do today is to investigate the contribution Catholic women made to Australian politics. I am not confining this discussion to individual women in parliament Enid Lyons would make a fascinating study but one too big for this paper. Rather I seek to draw attention to those women for whom some aspects of their Catholicism - cultural, political, devotional, theological - pushed them to want to change the social order and who worked collectively in organisations or movements or ginger groups in order to do so. I would like to examine the shifting relationships between firstly Catholic women and politics and secondly Catholic women and the church, against the background of their changing class position.

The two most fundamental points about Catholic women's involvement in the struggle for the vote in the 1890s are firstly that so few were involved in leadership roles, and secondly, that those few who were leaders were very important indeed. Why were so few Catholic women visible in the suffrage movement? Partly because of the social position of Catholics generally in the community - over-represented in the working classes with a tiny Catholic elite tending towards the politically conservative. But perhaps more importantly the overwhelmingly Protestant character of the W.C.T.U. made it an unlikely avenue for Catholic women's ambitions. Arriving from America in 1882 to promote home, health, temperance, God and votes for women, it took the suffrage issue into thousands of respectable Protestant homes, mobilising women on a mass scale in a way which no organization specifically formed to promote the suffrage issue, did No Catholic woman took a prominent role in the W.C.T.U.2

Of those few Catholic women prominent in the suffrage movement, the best known and best documented are the Golding sisters - Annie, Belle and Kate, who married Michael Dwyer.

They were members of the Womanhood Suffrage League from 1893, then formed their own organisation, the Women's Progressive Association, from 1904. Daughters of an Irish-born goldminer Joseph Golding and his Scottish-born wife Ann Fraser, in class terms each achieved a significant social advance on their parents. Annie became a teacher, first in rural one-teacher schools, finishing as mistress-in-charge of West Leichhardt Public School. Belle was the first female inspector under the Early Closing Act of 1899 and later became an inspector of factories. Kate was also a teacher, labour activist and mother of five children. She was a fellow of the Senate of the University of Sydney between 1916-24, a director and Vice-President of the Benevolent Society of NSW, and in 1921, one of the first female Justices of the Peace appointed in New South Wales. They had sufficient education and energy to enable them to speak publicly, write convincingly, and lobby effectively. They stood out from the mass of Catholic women but they always identified with working women. In class terms they were typical products of what the process of Irish immigration, elementary education and family support could achieve at its best.³

Their life-long commitment to labour politics locates them close to the heartland of Catholic men. Kate in particular was very active and influential in Labor Party circles. She was the first president of the Women's Organising Committee of the Political Labour League and in 1905 elected to the State Labour executive. Indeed, one historian has argued that she played a pivotal role in the achievement of the first Labor electoral victories, both State and Federal, in 1910 by canvassing the women's vote on a personal basis and organising the branches.⁴ Their labour sympathies grew directly out of their own experience and observation. In 1891-93 Michael Dwyer was headmaster of Broken Hill Public School when that town was prostrated by the combined effects of drought and strikes. Annie was active in union politics, in the Teachers Association of NSW, later a member of the Committee of the Public School Teachers' Institute and on the council of the NSW Public School Teachers' Association. Belle's job as inspector of factories gave her plenty of opportunity to observe the often unsanitary, over-crowded and dangerous conditions in which women and the young worked.

Their labour sympathies not only symbolised their ties with Catholic men but also distanced them from other leaders of the suffrage movement, in particular from Rose Scott, the Secretary of the Womanhood Suffrage League. Scott's family was wealthy and well connected - on her mother's side with the Rusdens, on her father's to the Mitchells. She was an intimate of Sydney society - according to Miles Franklin, "the personification of all that was most desirable and commendable in femininity".⁵ Scott found abhorrent "unwomanly" behaviour of any kind, particularly deploring the militancy of British suffragists. The Golding's were strong women who worked hard. When Edmund Barton addressed a crowd from the balcony of the Newtown Town Hall, during the 1897 elections to the Federal Convention, Annie and her "valorous female contingent", as the Daily Telegraph described them, challenged him on the question of votes for women.⁶ Annie was a fine public speaker and exercised her skills in the Newtown Debating Society, forming a formidable team with Maybanke Wolstoneholme, who recalled "we never lost a debate. I remember only one fight. It was in Newtown Town Hall, only a few chairs were broken".⁷

Conflict had been brewin⁸ between the Goldings and Scott since the early 1890s when they started actively building up the branches of the Womanhood Suffrage League in inner city working class suburbs of Glebe, Camperdown, Annandale, Redfern, Newtown and Lilyfield, to get as many working class women involved as possible. In 1902 tension became more

intense: the branches were prohibited from attending meetings of the Central Committee and yet were expected to pay an annual fee. In 1902 the Goldings left the Womanhood Suffrage League and formed the Women's Progressive Association.⁸ They can be seen as spokeswomen for those countless Catholic women, who, too burdened by the demands of work and child rearing to become actively involved in working class politics⁷ nevertheless lived lives which led them to desire social reform.

What were their ideas on women's rights? Like all "first-wave feminists", they could mouth that now spurious notion that women could claim innate moral superiority over men. If women were enfranchised the world would be transformed. In her address to the second Australasian Catholic Congress in 1904, (which she did not read but had to listen to being read by a man) two years after women were enfranchised federally, Annie spoke of the great power Australian women could now exercise:

Let their influence, radiating from the home, the school and public life, permeate the nation, instilling ideals of honour, justice, truth and humanity. Then, indeed, will the day of the sweeter, seducer and oppressor have forever passed away.

Earlier in the same paper she had likened the vote in Australian women's hands, to a sceptre

the judicious wielding of which guided by head and heart, can crush out greed, sectarian animosity, can uplift humanity, and place this bright, prosperous young nation in the forefront of the world.⁹

The belief in the intrinsic moral superiority of women derived in part from church teaching itself, being one side of that dichotomous coin which rendered women either very, very good or utterly evil. But rather than seeing this morality confining women within the home, they saw it as the imperative for her to influence public life. In the first quotation above, Annie saw a natural and unproblematic link between "the home, the school, and public life". She spoke not only about women's responsibilities but also of their possibilities. Furthermore, in different contexts their words were less constrained by the chivalric code. Annie told a meeting of women in Granville in 1898 that "(t)he only pedestal for a women was what her self-respect placed her on". Their claims emphasized natural justice, women's intrinsic right to independence and equality. To some extent they show elements of feminist essentialism which has reappeared in recent years, Belle writing in 17'e Dawn in 1899, "Man never had, or will, nor can represent women".

Their ideas on women's rights were not out of tune with those of important members of the church hierarchy. While some among the hierarchy took exception to female enfranchisement - O'Farrell cites Archbishop O'Reilly of Adelaide as thinking in 1915 that it "vulgarizes those to whom every chivalry is due"² - it found sympathy with certain key churchmen. Like the Goldings, Cardinal Moran saw female citizenship and labour ideals inextricably linked. In a new country like Australia, he told a congregation at Paddington, our great aim always would be that

the very- poorest person amongst them would have that comfort, which, as a civilized being he was entitled to ... he was sure the womanhood of NSW would be faithful to their duties in

casting their vote for such men as they deemed fittest to attain these results.~3

The Franciscan F.A. Fitzgerald, writing in the Australasian Catholic Record in 1903 showed a similar recognition of the crucial role women's household management played in distributive justice in the public sphere: she who shopped for groceries knew better than any the cost of living. But he went further, advocating equal pay and deploring the employment of women "with little more than half men's remuneration". Nor did he deny women a place in the workforce, though his view was much qualified: "Women have an equal right with men to earn their living in any capacity not out of harmony with their womanly nature or physical strength."~4

By the 1940s Catholic women activists looked rather different from the Goldings. They were the products of the Catholic girls schools established in the late 19th century to consolidate the faith and educate for motherhood, but which, importantly, also allowed a tiny minority of the clever and the fortunate a University education. The Altair group is a case in point: a group of Sydney women wishing to make Catholic women's voices heard in discussions of post-war reconstruction. Of the 12 founding members, 8 held degrees and most were working in professions which included journalism, accountancy, social work, law and architecture.~5 They represent the top, female end of that process of embourgeoisement which has marked Australia's 20th century history generally, and which the Catholic education system in particular so effectively hastened for its members. Unlike the Goldings~7 they identified as middle class.

They differed from the earlier generation, too, in creating an organizational base for their politics within the Church. The Goldings and Mrs. Dwyer remained practicing Catholics and were buried with Catholic rites. But they were never actively engaged in Catholic women's organisations. Kennedy notes that they briefly joined the newly founded Sydney Catholic Women's Association in 1913 but left after 6 weeks.~6

Culturally, the Catholic education system was so effective that by the 1940s Catholic women who saw themselves as political activists saw themselves as Catholics above all. It was with other Catholic women that they formed their closest ties and it was within the structures of the church that they sought a natural home. Sadly they did not find it. As Sally Kennedy has shown Cardinal Gilroy was deeply threatened by the independent attitude which women in NSW took. He refused to endorse the St Joan's Alliance and issued an edict in the Catholic press forbidding women to join. Founded in Sydney in 1946 by Mary Tenison Woods, Jean Daly and other members of Altair who sought to create a wider-based Catholic organisation, the Alliance was not the first women's organisation to become a casualty of episcopal authoritarianism. The radical Catholic Women's Social Guild, founded in Melbourne in 1916, was kneecapped by Archbishop Mannix in the heat of early 1920s post-conscription sectarian politics. While the history of the movement in NSW demonstrates that episcopal intervention was not confined to women, it is the point of contrast with the previous generation which stands out. The Goldings' arguments in favour of women's equality did not jar with Cardinal Moran. They shared a general perception of the close relationship between women's rights and the politics of justice. Apart from the notable differences between Moran and Gilroy themselves, however, the Goldings were no threat to church authority they occupied secular space. The women of the 1940s, schooled to identify strongly with the Church, did so, and

were fenced out.

What sorts of political issues were Catholic women concerned with in the 1940s? Broadly speaking, they were issues of female citizenship. "St Joan's ... is a body of Catholic citizens acting as citizens", declared Mary Tenison Woods in the December 1946 edition of the *Catholic Citizen*.^{~7} If Australian women gained political citizenship ahead of those in most other nations in 1902, economic and social citizenship did not follow automatically. Feminists of all religious persuasions and none, worked throughout the first half of the 20th century to rectify the imbalances between political and other forms of citizenship, which led them to causes as diverse as equal pay, motherhood endowment, the appointment of women prison warders and police officers. Catholic women in the 1940s stood out from non-Catholic activist women by their staunch anti-communism, and to this extent reflected the concerns of Catholic men. Indeed, one the founding purposes of the St Joan's Alliance was to prevent Jesse Street - known for her associations with the USSR - from getting a second term at the United Nations as a member of the Status of Women Commission. But the essence of their reforms for women were not noticeably different from those of secular women's organisations. The stated aim of the St Joan's Alliance was

To band together Catholics of both sexes, in order to secure political, social and economic equality between men and women; and to further the work and usefulness of Catholic women as citizens.

By the 1970s Catholic women's involvement in politics looks different again, though the picture is blurred - the lens too close. Nor do we have a perceptive and scholarly study to draw upon as Sally Kennedy's *Faith and Feminism* offered for the earlier period. But some observations can be offered. For 30 years after the end of the second world war a much more extensive system of Catholic secondary education, facilitated now by generous State aid, had spread its net widely across the class spectrum, and numbers of Catholic men and women fitted that now even more common bill, "the first one in their family to go to University". Many young Catholic women prominent in politics in the 1970s were products of that broader based education system and many were key figures in second wave feminism: Germaine Greer, Anne Summers, Susan Ryan, Carmel Niland. Unlike the activists of the 1940s, they were not aligned with Catholic women's groups. On the contrary most were at best ambivalent, more often hostile, to the church - though there was a discernible pattern among some of recognising a debt to the nuns who taught then and who provided role models as strong and independent women valuing academic excellence.^{~9} The essence of 1970s feminism cut to the heart of Catholic teaching in fundamental ways - most obviously in dethroning motherhood as the ultimate pinnacle of female achievement, and secondly, in advocating much greater freedom in sexual behaviour. The gap between church and educated women widened appreciably - which is not to deny that radical politics had been constantly fed by disenchanted Catholic women since the turn of the century: Dymphna Cusack is a well known case, but there are numbers of others who laboured for radical causes hidden from view.²⁰ Nor is it to deny that many women struggled to find a place where Catholicism, feminism and integrity could dwell profitably. But the church's immovability on issues like pre-marital sex, abortion, contraception and divorce in the face of sweeping cultural change, meant a sea-change in attitudes of Catholic women. The depth of bitterness which Therese Radic, for example, feels for "the black uniformed religious, those women-haters" who "de-

sexed our men" was unprecedented in Catholic women's discourse.^{2~}

The private life of Mary Tenison Woods, founding member of St Joan's Alliance in Sydney, first woman law graduate from the University of Adelaide, stands in direct contrast to those of later generations of Catholic women. After a brief and unfortunate marriage she divorced her husband in 1933 and then lived alone, sole support of her disabled son until her death in 1971, presumably untroubled by church teaching on private morality, and apparently not in contravention of it. Her commitment was to reforming the public sphere: apart from her short-lived association with the St Joan's Alliance, she was a member of the NSW Child Welfare Advisory Council, served on the Board of Social Studies and Training at the University of Sydney 1941-1949 and was appointed Chief of the Office of the Status of Women in the Human Rights Division of the UN, 1950-1958.²² One of the consequences of 1970s feminism has been the conceptual obliteration of the distinction between private and public. The Pope's latest reaction to recalcitrant divorced Catholics, can perhaps be seen as the cry for a return to the era of Mary Tenison Woods. He may well go back to that distant place, but I doubt if he'll take many Catholic women in Australia with him, though injury may be done to countless in the process.

The pattern which emerges from this brief historical overview is complex. Central to it is the role of the Catholic education system in the lives of women. Purveyor of social mobility, by the 1940s it had in important ways achieved its original aim of strengthening the faith and community of Catholics. Purveyed by women religious, however, it offered a role model of strength and independence to its students, some of whom were thus empowered to defy ecclesiastical authority. Throughout the first half of the 20th century, the Catholic ethos which the schools aspired to convey, competed in various ways with the liberal ideology underpinning the secular curriculum, crucial to master for its opening of worldly doors. By the 1960s and 1970s the politics of liberation - political, racial, sexual and theological - left its imprint on some Catholic schools and on young Catholics at University, and forced students to question those notions of absolute authority which the church still seemed to claim.

The most fundamental point of this discussion of Catholic perspectives on politics is that Catholic women had them' too. And, although the contexts from which they emerged were similar to those of Catholic men - labor, anti-Communist, liberationist - they were starting behind the 8-ball, seeking gains already won by men. It is no coincidence that most politically active Catholic women have been unmarried: to some extent they were waging campaigns on behalf of that vast majority of Catholic women whose lives as wives, mothers, paid workers, carers of aged and sick parents, have been characterised by continuing service, unseen except by those immediate to them. They, too, have negotiated the politics of gender - within marriage, motherhood, the school, and the parish. They were under particular pressure to conform because their domain was the home, their task the rearing of children. The secular state told them they were nation builders, the church that they were "chisellers of character, fashioners of souls."²³ For them, service has been their *raison d'être*. It is a notion unfashionable today, redolent on the one hand of "noblesse oblige", on the other of obsequious self-abnegation. In any case, it's no longer possible: economic edge demands competition, not service: the public service, burden on the taxpayer, is being wound back; self-service shopping is a metaphor for the 1990s. Service is an ideal which most Catholic women have been overfed. And yet, at its best, it is intrinsic to gospel values. Without it

there is chaos. Perhaps the next millennium can see its judicious application by men and women across public and private space.

Notes

1. Patrick O'Farrell, *The Catholic Church and Community: An Australian History* (Sydney 1985) p. 332.
2. Ian Tyrrell, "International aspects of the Temperance Movement" *Journal of Religious History* 12, June 1983; Ian Tyrrell *Women's World, Women's Empire* (North Carolina 1991); Audrey Oldfield, *Woman Suffrage in Australia* (Melbourne 1992) p. 182.
3. Beverley Kingston, "Golding, Annie McKenzie and Isabella Theresa", *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Vol 9, (eds) B Nairne and G Serle (Melbourne 1983); Viva Gallego, "Dwyer, Catherine Winifred", in *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Vol 8 (eds) B. Nairne and G. Serle (Melbourne 1981).
4. Heather Radi, "Kate Dwyer" in Heather Radi (ed) *200 Australian Women* (Sydney 1988).
5. Oldfield, *op cit*, p. 81.
6. *Ibid* p. 61.
7. *Ibid*. p. 84.
8. Judith Allen, *Rose Scott: Vision and Revision in Feminism* (Oxford 1994), Oldfield *op cit*.
9. Annie Golding, "The evolution of women and their possibilities" *Australasian Catholic Congress Proceedings*, 1904.
10. Oldfield, *op cit*, p. 195.
11. *Ibid*. p. 204.
12. Patrick O'Farrell, *The Catholic Church and Community* (Sydney 1986) p. 255.
13. Cited in T. A. Fitzgerald, "Women's Suffrage from a Catholic Standpoint" *Australasian Catholic Record*, July 1903
14. *Ibid*.
15. Sally Kennedy, *Faith and Feminism: Catholic Women's Struggles for Self-Expression* (Sydney 1985) p. 234.

16. Ibid. p. 10.

17. Kennedy, op cit, p. 246.

18. Ibid. p. 245.

19. See Carmel Niland's comments cited in Sophie McGrath, *These Women? Women Religious in the History of Australia*, The Sisters of Mercy, Parramatta, (Sydney 1989) p. 205-207.

20. See for example, Bella Lavender in Radi op cit.

21. Kate Nelson & Dominica Nelson (eds) *Sweet Mothers Sweet Maids. Journeys from Catholic Childhoods* (Ringwood 1986) p . 119.

22. Anne O'Brien, "Mary Tenison Woods" in *Australian Dictionary of Biography* (ed) J. Ritchie (Melbourne 1990).

23. Kennedy, op cit, p. viii.

**"The Hardest Way of Getting There is if You're Starting from Here" - Traditions of
Catholic Social Thought
by Ray Cassin
'Eureka Street', Melbourne**

It is always a bit of a luxury to have the last say, so I hope no one will mind if I indulge myself by beginning these reflections on Catholics and Australian politics with a quote from an American Calvinist, then go on to cite an American atheist, and conclude with some thoughts from an Anglican theologian who, to the best of my knowledge, has never visited this particular corner of what used to be his country's empire.

If nothing else, company of this kind may help me to justify the title I've chosen, 'The Hardest Way to Get There Is If You're Starting From Here.' Those of you who have visited Ireland will be familiar with the line. It's what you usually hear when you're backpacking round Connemara, and after passing the same milestone four times in as many hours you begin to accept that you're hopelessly lost. The milestone itself is no help because it is marked with one word, 'Galway', and two arrows pointing in opposite directions. But just as you're about to give up in despair you notice a little man in a green cap, dozing with his back propped up against the milestone. You wake him up and ask which is the right road to Galway, and after much deliberation he says, 'Ah, so you want to go to Galway? Well, if I was you I wouldn't be startin' from here.'

The infuriating thing about this sort of answer, of course, is not only that the leprechaun is stating the obvious, namely, 'You're miles from Galway, or anywhere else for that matter.' It's also that when you eventually get to Galway you find out that it didn't much matter where you started from, because the milestone marked a ring road - both directions led to Galway. So please stay with this overgrown leprechaun as I endeavour to lead you, in a meandering fashion, to Galway. It's what Sydney taxi drivers collecting Melburnians at Mascot call the scenic route, and if there's not a helluva lot of Australian scenery along the way it's because I think that very few of our problems, at a theoretical level, are uniquely Australian. They are problems characteristic of modernity, and we share them with other industrialised democracies and with the church in those democracies.

I want to begin, then, with something the Protestant theologian Reinhold Niebhuur wrote during the Spanish Civil War, about the response of the Catholic Church to that war. In the '30s this conflict polarised intellectuals in nearly every Western country in the same way that the Vietnam War did in the '60s and '70s. If you went to a student meeting, a trade union meeting, or stopped to listen to some street-corner orator haranguing passersby, you could usually guess where the speaker stood on any issue once you had heard what he or she had to say about the war in Spain. People on the left tended to support the republicans, those on the right tended to support Franco and his nationalists (as they called themselves) or fascists (as nearly everyone else called them).

In countries like Australia and the United States, however, Catholics were an exception to this easy pigeonholing. Because in these countries, although Catholics could usually be found somewhere left of centre on the political spectrum they also tended to be vocal Franco supporters. In Australia, of course, most Catholics were Labor voters, and in America they virtually constituted the labour wing of the Democratic Party. But large numbers of

Australian and American Catholics regarded Franco as a defender of the church and of Christian civilisation generally - yet these were the same people who, in Australia, were among the strongest opponents of fascist groups like the New Guard and the Australia Firsters, and who, in America, were among the strongest supporters of Roosevelt's New Deal. Very few Catholics anywhere, unfortunately, had the courage and clear judgment of the Thomist philosopher Jacques Maritain, who understood what kind of regime Franco would bring to Spain and declared for the republicans instead.

Now Reinhold Niebhuur, like Maritain, was on the side of the angels in Spain, and so against the side taken by most Catholics. But what makes Niebhuur's comments interesting is that, although he is a convinced Protestant, of progressive opinions in politics and mildly conservative opinions in theology, he is not an unsympathetic critic of Catholicism. This is what he writes in an essay called 'Catholicism and Anarchism in Spain', published in 1937 in the quaintly titled journal *Radical Religion*: 'Catholicism is not the only form of Christianity subject to the temptation of too intimate a relation with secular power. But it is the only form of Christianity to have founded a civilisation. And it all too easily allies itself with the defenders, rather than the critics, of the civilisation it founded.'

Now this might sound rather dated. You might say that the church which blessed Franco's legions is very different from the church of the past three decades - the church that has known the ecclesiology of Vatican II, and has developed its pastoral strategies from the vision of the wider world sketched out in the conciliar documents *Gaudium et Spes* and *Dignitatis Humanae*. Well, I don't think so, and not just because the wind that blows from Rome these days often seems to carry a whiff of Franco's marching legions in it.

Consider what Niebhuur is actually saying. He is doing more than merely drawing attention to the fact that the Catholic Church had long enjoyed a privileged position in Spanish society, and regarded the feudal oligarches who were content to maintain it in those privileges as its natural allies. Niebhuur is writing, I suspect, as much with a concern for what is happening at home in America as for what is happening in Spain. He is worried that people who might have been his natural political allies - all those immigrant Catholics who were organising labour unions, or 'fixing' the Democratic Party machine in America's big cities - were putting enormous energy into fighting doctrinal enemies (i.e. communists) rather than structural enemies (i.e. the wealth and power elites).

Niebhuur's problem, of course, is a familiar one in an Australian context, too; it was the underlying reason for the ALP split in the '50s. But I think we might now give a different explanation for the intensity of the struggle between Catholics and Communists in the middle decades of this century than that which would have been on offer from participants in those events. The great charge of those crusading anticommunist Catholics, it will be remembered, was that the evil of communism was essentially a matter of its atheism: the usual subtitle given to English translations of Pius XI's encyclical *Divini Redemptoris* (1937), for example, was *Against Atheistic Communism*.

But it cannot have been atheism per se that so electrified the Catholic imagination. After all, the church had lived for almost two centuries with the fact that an increasing number of people in modern industrial societies believed that the world and its contents were explicable

without recourse to any form of theistic belief.

No, I think that for Catholics the really terrifying thing about Marxism (by the 1890s, the most influential body of socialist doctrine) was that they dimly recognised an intellectual kinship with it. And this kinship was not simply a matter of a shared condemnation of the miseries that came in the wake of the industrial revolution. Many people - Catholic, Marxist or otherwise - were doing that. The point is rather that, of all the theories that modernity has spawned to explain itself, Marxism comes closest to being a secular version of Christian eschatological hope. Like Christianity, Marxism tells a story about human history, and claims to know how that story will turn out. It explains how history will end, and offers an assurance that everything will be all right in the end. For the first time, Christians felt that they had a rival on their own turf.

This sense of hostility towards a rival with whom one actually had a great deal in common sometimes seemed to be more marked in Catholicism than in other forms of Christianity. And this was because, as Niebhur says, Catholicism is the only form of Christianity to have founded a civilisation. The Augustinian political theology that underpinned the civilisation of medieval Christendom amounted to this: that one must live as though human history does have an end, and in the conviction that the incarnation of Christ and his continuing presence in the church are central to the working out of that history. But the rest is in God's hands; in other words, no one knows how it will end.

To which Marxists now replied with a resounding 'Oh yes we do!' Hence the sense of alarm with which the church regarded the rise of Marxism as the chief theoretical inspiration of European socialism, and hence the reason why, in the encyclical *Rerum Novarum* in 1891, Leo XIII initiated that rather thin body of doctrine known as Catholic Social Thought, with a capital 'S' and a capital 'T'.

Let me enter a couple of caveats here. First, what I am calling a 'thin' body of doctrine is not the entire sweep of Catholic social thinking, going back to Augustine and beyond, but the specific content of the 100-year-old encyclical tradition that begins with *Rerum Novarum* and has as its most recent example *Centesimus Annus*, in which the present Pope marked the centenary of *Rerum Novarum* by celebrating the demise of communism. And second, although I think that this encyclical tradition has been less illuminating in its social commentary than many Catholics claim it to have been, it is clear that the encyclicals were important in fostering the practical involvement of Catholics in democratic and reformist politics, a field they might otherwise have abdicated. This was notably so in Australia, where Cardinal Moran's casuistical interpretation of the condemnation of socialism in *Rerum Novarum* encouraged working-class Catholics to find a political home in the nascent Labor Party rather than in the conservative parties.

The problem with the encyclical tradition, it seems to me, is its obsession with highly schematized accounts of doctrinal extremes to be avoided (usually 'socialism', i.e. Marxism, and 'liberal individualism', i.e. pure laissez faire capitalism of a kind that probably has never existed anywhere, even in early Victorian England.). 'Catholic Social Thought', the middle ground between these extremes that the encyclicals commend to us, turns out to have very little positive content: greed and acquisitiveness are condemned (though when have they not been?), the formation of unions and other workers' associations that act to restrain greed

accordingly gets the green light, and the importance of family life is upheld (though usually in nostalgic terms that do not come to grips with the actual social dislocations caused by the growth of cities and the disintegration of village society.)

And that is about it for 'Catholic Social Thought', at least as it is expressed in the papal encyclicals. Those features of it which are sometimes claimed to be a distinctively Catholic contribution to modern social theory, such as the so-called 'principle of subsidiarity' (essentially, a resistance to the concentration of power and authority in the decision-making structures of the nation-state) are usually not originally Catholic at all: they reflect the revival of Aristotelian political theory in the writings of scholastic theologians, or in the republican tradition of the Italian city states. I for one am glad that the church has over many centuries incorporated that classical tradition into its own, but Catholics are gilding the lily when they speak as though they had some sort of copyright on it.

This lack of substantive content in Catholic Social Thought, however, was almost irrelevant for most of the 100 years subsequent to the issue of *Rerum Novarum*, because what was really important about that document and the encyclicals marking its various anniversaries (the 40th, the 70th, the 80th and the 90th) was not their actual prescriptions but their subtext. They always contained a condemnation of 'socialism' (of the doctrine, that is. Public ownership of enterprises per se was not condemned), and were intended to be read as counter-manifestos to the more famous Manifesto of Marx and Engels. The real message was: yes, let's resist the avarice of the rich, but let's not do it like that.

By the time we get to *Centesimus Annus* and the 100th anniversary of *Rerum Novarum*, however, the world has changed. The revolutions of 1989 in Eastern and Central Europe have blown down the house that Marx built, and the tripartite worldview of the encyclicals (tyrannical socialism, exploitative capitalism, virtuous Christian democracy) is now missing one of its ideological props. So in *Centesimus Annus* we get a long chapter on the significance of the end of communism, a chapter that some rightwing politicians have predictably, though incorrectly, chosen to read as a paen to the free market.

In the United States at present there is a rather arid debate between two groups of conservative Catholic intellectuals, as to whether *Centesimus Annus* should be read as a vindication of American-style capitalist democracy or of traditionalist Catholic communitarianism. I think this sort of debate misses the real significance of the encyclical. For *Centesimus Annus* is an attempt to grapple with the fact that the nature of our politics is changing; it is not a very successful attempt, for it uses the conceptual framework of struggles that have passed to try to describe the world that is coming after them. It finally exhausts the tradition inaugurated by *Rerum Novarum* but unwittingly, it also offers the prospect of a new beginning.

For it is important to realise that this kind of intellectual exhaustion is not only something facing Catholics. It is an even deeper problem for those in the socialist tradition that was demonised by the encyclicals, because history simply didn't turn out as the grand theory predicted it would. And when those who still subscribe to the grand theory offer explanations for what went wrong, and reinterpretations of the theory which attempt to preserve its predictive power, they sound increasingly like those Ptolemaic astronomers in the 17th century who tried to defend their system against that of Copernicus. In other words, they

sound like people who maintain that if the world doesn't work the way the theory says it should, then the problem must lie with the world rather than the theory.

I'm reluctant to use slippery labels like postmodernity and postmodernism, but I think that the difficulty of finding appropriate categories to describe new social realities is a general one. And I want to illustrate this by moving on from the world described by Reinhold Niebhr, the world of popes and warring Catholics and communists, to consider what one secular leftist has to say about the sorts of problems that form the background to Centesimus Annus. Richard Rorty is an American philosopher, raised in a radical tradition (his parents were active in various leftwing causes in the '30s, and in the '60s he followed their example), who now takes a sceptical view of all attempts to construct a comprehensive theory of human society.

In 'For A New Political Vocabulary', an essay published in Harper's Monthly (May 1992), Rorty writes: 'In the wake of the events of 1989 and 1991, it has become clear that western leftist intellectuals stand in need of a new political vocabulary ... it is going to take a long period of readjustment for us to comprehend that the word 'socialism' has been drained of force - as have been all the other words that drew their force from the idea that an alternative to capitalism was available.

'Not only are going to have to stop using the term "capitalist economy" as if we knew what a functioning non-capitalist economy looked like, but we are going to have to stop using the term "bourgeois cultures" as if we knew what a viable non-bourgeois culture in an industrialised society would look like.'

So far, Rorty may sound like another economic rationalist in the making. But he is far from being an evangelist for resurgent capitalism. Indeed, he would regard economic rationalism as sharing a metaphysical delusion with classical Marxism: that there is a set of categories, viz that provided by economics, which is somehow more basic than other categories of social explanation. What Rorty is trying to do is challenge others on the left to rethink their politics in a way that avoids the arrogance, and potential tyranny, of any theory that claims to be able to chart the course of history.

He puts it this way: 'I am saying these things not as a triumphant Reaganite but rather as someone who kept hoping that some country would figure out a way to keep socialism going after getting rid of the nomenklatura. Even now, I am unwilling to grant that Friedrich von Hayek was right in saying that you cannot have democracy without capitalism. All I will concede is that you need capitalism to ensure a reliable supply of goods and services, and to ensure that there will be enough taxable surplus to finance social welfare.

'We will have to work hard to free ourselves of the Marxist vocabulary to which many of us in academia still cling. But I hope that we shall go further. I hope we can admit that we have practically nothing in the way of a "theoretical basis" for action, and may not need one. I hope we can learn to get along without the conviction that there is something deep such as the human soul, or human nature, or the will of God, or the shape of history which provides a subject matter for grand, politically useful theory.

'I think that we western leftists can best acknowledge the revolutions of 1989 and 1991 by resolving to banalise our vocabulary of political deliberation. I suggest that we start talking about greed and selfishness rather than about bourgeois ideology, about starvation wages and layoffs rather than about the commodification of labour, and about differential spending on schools and differential access to health care than about the division of society into classes. I hope that we can stop using notions like "mystification" and "ideology", notions that suggest that we are in a position to see through mere social constructions and discern something that is more than a social construction.

'And yet many of us are still, alas, on the look-out for a successor to Marxism - for a large theoretical framework that will enable us to put our society in an exciting new context. We hope that this new context will suggest something to say that will be less banal than "people ought to be kinder, more generous, less selfish". My own hunch is that there may be nothing less banal to say.'

I have quoted Rorty at length not because I endorse all of what he says - I do not - but because he has stated certain current intellectual problems very clearly. He is correct, I believe, in arguing that there is no foundational social science; in other words, the phenomena we ordinarily describe with evaluative terms such as 'greed' and 'selfishness' are not better explained by being incorporated into some supposedly systematic notion such as 'bourgeois ideology'. But I think Rorty and other advocates of a postmodern leftism will be disappointed in their hope that we can get along without any theoretical basis for action ~ without, as he says, 'something deep - such as the human soul, or human nature, or the will of God, the shape of history'.

The shape of history? The example of Soviet communism and other societies patterned on it suggest that language of this kind is a recipe for tyranny. The will of God? So far as human knowing is concerned, this is a notion that can only have content in retrospect. (Used prospectively, it becomes as dangerous as talk about 'the shape' of history.) But human nature? An extremely plastic notion, to be sure, yet one that is also extremely difficult to dispense with. Consider, for example, whether two of the terms that Rorty uses, 'greed' and 'selfishness', would retain any coherent meaning if we did not also have some minimal transcultural notion of human beings as embodied agents, i.e. beings capable of having certain sorts of desires and making certain sorts of choices in pursuit of those desires.

I think there is an opportunity here for those who have been schooled in what I shall loosely call the Catholic tradition. 'Loosely', for two reasons: because in the present context I think this tradition may be claimed by anyone interested in developing that blend of Christian and classical thought which has been especially characteristic of Catholicism; and because I want to emphasise that I am not proposing an exercise in nostalgia - a revival of that medieval civilisation which Niebhuur recognised to be such a numbing legacy for Catholics.

What I am suggesting, however, is that our tradition is well-placed to help nurture something like the new political vocabulary that Rorty talks about. This is not a matter of the Pope or national hierarchies issuing pronouncements on various social questions, though no doubt it is proper for them to do so. Still less, one hopes, is it a matter of forming political parties and associations along denominational lines. It is rather that our tradition of moral theology has the basis for a theory of human agency that may be shared and further developed by people

of goodwill, whether or not they are also drawn to the whole spectrum of Catholic belief. And, as I have suggested, it is the lack of an adequate theory of agency that will hamper attempts to develop a postmodern, post-Marxist socialism.

Finally, let me commend the work of a contemporary Anglican theologian, John Milbank, who is already engaged on this task. Milbank is the author of a rather blandly titled work, *Theology and Social Theory*, which, however, is anything but bland to read. It is erudite and densely argued but its central thesis is simple: theology and social theory are not separate disciplines, for theology already contains an implicit social theory (or theories), while the social sciences retain unacknowledged theological frames of reference. This is not another version of liberation theology, for Milbank is concerned with social theorists who take their cue from Nietzsche rather than from Marx, and who discard the Marxian notion of the priority of the economic base over the ideological (and hence theological) 'superstructure'.

Another Oxford theologian, the Dominican Fergus Kerr, glosses Milbank's thesis in this way: 'While post-Nietzschean social theorists become suspicious of allegedly secular rationality, post-Enlightenment theologians go on innocently working under the constraints of their respect for precisely that. Theologians accept the autonomy of secular reason, and thus place themselves under the rule of methodological atheism, whereas social theorists now recognise the practical inescapability of theistic or anti-theistic elements, however disguised and displaced, in any social order they study.' (New Black Friars, June 1992)

The bulk of Milbank's book is an historical account of the development of sociology in the wake of the Enlightenment, and of the attempts of liberal theology to respond to that development. His arguments are, on points of detail, often contestable. But, whether or not they sustain the book's particular historical claims, I believe that they offer a theologically fruitful way to think about society in the present age - modern, late modern, postmodern or however you choose to characterise it. The challenge, I think, is to fill out Milbank's broad perspective with a theory of human agency, a theory that overcomes the difficulties raised in Rorty's rather bleak view of the prospects for the left.

Ah, but that's for yet another road to Galway ...