Contents

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

1 INTRODUCTION 1

2 CHANGES IN THE WORKING CLASS SINCE THE SECOND WORLD WAR 6

3 LABOR’S ATTEMPTS TO ADAPT 13

4 SHIFTS IN PARTY MEMBERSHIP 26

5 IMPLICATIONS FOR LABOR’S ELECTORATE 53

6 PROSPECTS FOR THE PARTY’S RENEWAL 66
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INTRODUCTION

Our renewal is not only a question of programmes and policies — though these are clearly important — but is more importantly about the relationship between the people and the structures...which have alienated...people and left them with the pain of their own powerlessness.


The Australian Labor Party’s hundredth anniversary year provides an opportunity to explore the past, not just for the purpose of celebration, but also for the purpose of assessing the Party’s future viability. There are compelling reasons for doing so. At the 1990 Federal election, although Labor was returned to office for a record fourth term, a smaller proportion of the electorate voted for it than at any time in the previous sixty years. Since then, following major departures from traditional policies, its standing in the opinion polls has fallen to its lowest ever depths. Membership of Labor’s kindred organisations, the trade unions, has been declining severely as a proportion of the paid workforce ever since the mid-1950s, and has recently fallen below what it was at the end of the Second World War. It is not surprising, then,
that many ALP supporters feel pessimistic about the future.

There is no ready-made cure for the present malaise, and attempts to develop one are only likely to succeed after a wide and open interchange of ideas. However, the prerequisite for any effective cure is an accurate diagnosis of the problem. The purpose of this publication is to draw attention to a long-term weakness which has been developing in Labor's relationship with the working class. Considerable discussion has occurred in recent times, among political scientists and among media commentators, about ways in which the ALP has changed, but little light has been cast on the sociological dimensions of this change.

The political scientists have been more concerned with the policy pursued by the Hawke administration and how it compares with the approach of earlier Labor administrations. Such comparisons show that the current government has taken a more conservative course than any of its predecessors, particularly in its economic policies. As some correctly point out, however, there is considerable continuity between the Hawke government and the changes to the ALP's organisation and orientation which were introduced in the late 1960s, under Gough Whitlam's leadership.¹

What is largely absent from this strand of the debate, and what needs to be present in order to help explain the widespread feeling among Labor Party supporters that the very nature and identity of their Party has changed, is an understanding of the shifts which have occurred in the composition and constituency of the modern ALP.

A major transformation of Labor's social base over the postwar period underlies the Party's present fragility, yet it has received only fleeting attention, and usually only in the context of enquiries into electoral behaviour. Very little has been written about the changing characteristics of the people who become ALP members, and how these compare with changes among Labor voters and in the population at large. In Britain, by contrast, these issues, and their implications, have received quite comprehensive attention. A debate, which began there in the early 1970s, about
an apparent long-term decline of working-class participation in the Labour Party took on new significance in the 1980s, when deep cracks appeared in the Party’s foundations of electoral support.

Media commentators in Australia have at times discussed the Labor Party’s changing social base, but they have tended to do so on a basis of assertion rather than firm evidence. This includes bold generalisations about social change as well as unsubstantiated claims concerning the Party’s past and present membership levels. Michelle Grattan, for instance, argues that the Hawke government’s retreat from the traditional Labor policy of economic intervention has occurred simply because nowadays ‘the classes are less sharply divided; [and] the so-called “battlers” are often well up the social scale’. In order to advance the debate about the Labor Party’s direction, it is necessary at the outset to balance these kinds of assertions with some evidence about how inequality, and the working class, have actually altered in character since the Second World War.
CHANGES IN THE WORKING CLASS SINCE THE SECOND WORLD WAR

According to the key indicators of wealth and income, inequality has in fact increased in Australian society since the War. Studies of wealth undertaken in 1915 and in 1970 have shown that the redistribution which occurred between these dates was confined within the richest 20 per cent, and did not reduce the chasm between them and the rest of the population. According to the latest study, the top one-fifth of Australians owns 72 per cent of all wealth. Another recent enquiry indicates that the share owned by the top 5 per cent of wealth-holders rose from around 45 per cent in 1977 to around 50 per cent in 1984. All these figures understate the true extent of inequality, as the rich tend to withhold information on their affairs. The position of the wealthiest has probably improved further since 1984 if the simultaneous growth in the numbers of millionaires, and of people in poverty, is any guide.5

In terms of income, the disparities have always been less bla-
tant but the trends are similar. Drawing on the information contained in several decades of reports to the Federal Parliament by the Taxation Commissioner (information which, again, tends to underestimate inequality because of the relative ease with which the wealthy can conceal certain types of income), Berry found that while some money shifted from the high to the upper-middle range of (before-tax) income earners between 1943 and 1973, the share gained by low and lower-middle income groups fell. Despite the expansion of welfare in the Whitlam years, official surveys of income distribution indicate that a further slight reduction occurred in the proportion of income gained by the least well-off in the period 1969 to 1979. The gap between high and low incomes widened more dramatically in the following three years as economic recession, and Fraser government policies, took effect; and the relative position of low-income earners continued to worsen between 1982 and 1986. By 1986 it was apparent that, in the previous decade as a whole, Australia's distribution of pre-tax income had been transformed from one of the most even in the OECD to one of the least even.

When after-tax revenue is examined, the pattern of increased inequality in postwar Australia becomes even more stark. Effective tax rates are higher today for those who have relatively little wealth than for others. Through avoidance, high income earners managed to reduce their share of total income tax by more than half between the mid-1950s and the mid-1980s. During the 1970s, companies and the self-employed succeeded in avoiding other forms of tax, and death duties were abolished. Hence the financial pressure on wage and salary earners was greatly intensified. While low-income families with children have, since 1987, been shielded from the worst of this pressure by the Family Allowance Supplement, high income earners in the period 1976 to 1989 have had their tax increased at a much lower rate than people on about average earnings.

The capacity of the Hawke government's streamlining of social welfare administration to reduce income inequality has been
negated by the government's inequitable approach in other crucial areas. Decisions to deregulate the financial and share markets, and to maintain divisions between the wage system which applies to the great bulk of the population, and the 'remuneration' arrangements which apply to the privileged few, have widened the basic chasm of inequality still further. Whereas the income received by senior management rose in real terms by about 20 per cent between 1984 and 1990, real average weekly earnings declined by more than 7 per cent. Although it can be said that aggregate 'household disposable incomes' have risen under the Hawke government, it must at the same time be acknowledged that the actual incomes of the great majority of Australians have declined under this government, once housing expenses have been taken into account.5

The facts on the distribution of capital, and the determination of income, support the view that contemporary Australia is divided essentially (although not exclusively) between two classes: a large working class, defined as all wage and salary earners who do not derive significant income other than by selling their labour; and a small capitalist class, defined by its ability to derive significant income other than by working for a wage or salary.6 Yet inequality is nowadays less likely than ever before to be understood as something arising out of relations in the workplace, or to be expressed in class terminology. Instead, terms which focus on the consequences of class divisions, such as the problems of 'low-income' or 'disadvantaged' people, are used, often without recognition of how such consequences are inevitable in a system based on the sale of labour by the many for the profit of the few.

Opinions differ as to whether current perceptions of inequality in Australia are so vague because of the effective manner in which ruling vested interests have spread the myth that this is a classless society; or whether it is due more to changes within the working class which have undermined the potential for solidarity.7 Both of these are clearly important.

Public debate about inequality certainly continues to be in-
fluenced by a doctrine disseminated during the 1950s, according to which the intrinsic class divisions of Western capitalist nations had been diluted and perhaps even dissolved since the War, in a general sea of affluence. This doctrine implied that any residual inequalities must be quite minor and accidental, and were not worth getting stirred up about. What actually occurred in the postwar period, in the Australian economy as in Britain and the United States, was quite different however. As John Westergaard has pointed out, there was merely a tendency for inequalities of income and property...[to] operate in areas of expenditure increasingly removed from those of bare subsistence living, and against a background of generally rising average levels of real income...The visibility of economic inequality may diminish...Resentment may diminish, or change in character, as inequality is relevant more to the 'frills' of life than to essentials of survival...[But these changes] point, not so much to a transformation of the economic structure of class as such, as to a transformation of the conditions relevant to the formation and direction of class consciousness: it is not the inequalities of class that have been reduced but their 'transparency'.

The assumption that the basic divisions of capitalist society had been superseded nevertheless became so widespread that when, in the late 1960s, the extent of economic inequality in Australia again became clearly visible, it was now understood not in terms of class, but as a question of 'poverty'. Poverty was presented as a phenomenon affecting particular sub-sections of society, such as Aborigines and migrants, and particular age-groups: at that time it was the elderly, while now it is children. It is clearly significant that the proportion of children living below the poverty line has tripled since the 1960s; but the separation of the 'poor' from everybody else has tended to conceal the fact that poverty is but a visible manifestation of the wider, class-structured pattern of inequality in which all wage-earners without career prospects, and all those whose livelihood relies on them, are vulnerable. The
essential cause of poverty is inadequate income, and incomes are determined by the class relations of the workplace. Not elderly people in general but those paid too little during their working lives to save for retirement are the ones who now, as in earlier decades, enter the ranks of the visibly poor. Not children in general but those of low-paid single mothers or of the unemployed are the ones who are financially most at risk. The whole concept of 'poverty' has, unfortunately, tended to divert issues of economic justice from the centre of political debate into the sphere of administrative action, and to focus attention on the alleviation of inequality rather than its prevention.  

A general expansion of tertiary education and a trend towards higher retention rates in secondary schools in the decades since the Second World War have added to the diminishing transparency of inequality. Yet though children from low-income families have stayed on at school and completed tertiary studies in greater numbers than before as a consequence of the overall expansion, they are still far less likely, and are perhaps just as unlikely as ever, to do so than children born into well-to-do families. The introduction of large Federal government financial handouts to private schools from the early 1960s helped ensure that Australia's wider economic inequalities were maintained and reproduced within the school system. During the 1980s the gap between the Federal support provided for private schools and that given to state schools widened significantly in favour of the former. The absence of tertiary fees from 1974 to 1988 enabled the university entrance prospects of manual workers' children to improve noticeably, but because resources within the secondary system were not fundamentally redistributed, this factor alone could not transform the general pattern of educational inequity. With the restoration of fees, disparities in access to higher education have been further entrenched.

People anxious to depict Australia as an essentially classless nation sometimes do so by arguing that the working class has dramatically declined in size since the Second World War. This
argument is based on dubious methods. One involves limiting the working class to 'manual' workers; another involves the exclusion of people from the working class if they place themselves in the 'middle class' in answers to survey questions. However, the labels 'middle-class' and 'working-class', in popular usage, mean such different things for different people that the propensity to accept or reject them can really tell us very little. Many who call themselves 'working-class' reject the alternative term because, for them, it carries vague overtones of elitism or conspicuous wealth which they know they do not possess. Many other people, in quite low-paid and uninteresting jobs, are happy to describe themselves as 'middle-class' simply to convey the fact that they are neither particularly poor nor in any sense rich.

The use of these two terms as opposites is understandably confusing for the many wage and salary earners who see themselves as vaguely around the midpoint on a scale of wealth, yet know they are only there because they work very hard. Equally, people hit by unemployment might wonder how this affects their membership of a class seemingly defined by the fact that it is engaged in paid labour. Part of the confusion arises because the terms belong to two quite separate and incompatible frameworks of analysis. Whereas the term 'working class', in its main line of development through the Marxist tradition, essentially describes the economic situation of people who cannot derive significant income other than by selling their labour for a salary or wage (and thus can be extended to include the unemployed and unpaid domestic workers), the term 'middle class' describes people's standing on a social ladder. In the counterposing of these terms in everyday usage, however, aided and abetted by those sociologists and political scientists who use class analysis as a way to place people in pigeon holes, rather than to elucidate the nature of social conflict, the 'working class' has for many people come to be understood as a category of manual labourers, and the class position of non-manual wage and salary earners has thus been made critically unclear.
This common tendency to divide the labour force into two distinct camps of manual and non-manual, or ‘blue-collar’ and ‘white-collar’, workers itself rests upon a highly artificial distinction, as even the most casual observer of Australian workers can see. The prevalence of repetitive movement injuries among white-collar salary-earners refutes the myth that these workers use their hands inherently less than those who are designated as manual employees. The artificiality of the distinction can be further seen by the fact that one of the few workers who actually wears a blue collar these days, the person who delivers the mail, is classified in the census as a clerk, and therefore is officially counted among the ‘white-collar’ wage-earners who, according to conventional wisdom, are replacing the old ‘blue-collar’ proletariat.

Fortunately, the convergence, in recent decades, between the employment conditions of factory workers and those of routine ‘non-manual’ employees such as clerks, bank tellers and shop assistants, has given rise to several more useful methods of workforce classification, more in line with industrial reality. Westergaard, for instance, argues that the key distinction to be made among today’s wage-earners is between, on the one hand, those employees who have little autonomy or authority, scarce promotion prospects, who are relatively vulnerable to redundancy at times of recession, and ‘whose lives are confined within the resources and horizons of routine jobs’; and, on the other hand, people who have some degree of control and authority at work, who have visible opportunities for advancement, who are financially secure and ‘whose lives centre on careers.’ He concedes that

The distinction is rough. It blurs at the edges and glibly neglects gradations and variations on either side. But it makes a good deal more sense than the old ‘manual/non-manual’ dichotomy for identifying those crucial differences in circumstances among the bulk of the population which link with material interests and are likely to affect socio-political outlook.13

The distinction also fits neatly with the scheme of occupational
classification now used in the Australian census. Under the Australian Standard Classification of Occupations, the 1079 distinct occupations which exist in the workforce are aggregated into various broader categories, and finally into eight major groups. These groups are

1) managers and administrators;
2) professionals;
3) para-professionals (who include nurses, police and technical officers);
4) clerks;
5) salespersons and personal service workers;
6) tradespersons;
7) plant and machine operators, and drivers;
8) labourers and related workers.

The most recent data on income distribution in Australian society reveals that the mean income of workers in the first three groups is higher than the overall mean income of the workforce, while the figure for each of the other five groups is lower. These differences in pay reflect real and long standing differences in prestige and prospects, in that whereas most managers, administrators, professionals and para-professionals fill 'career' positions, most of the other workers are in 'jobs'. This is not to say that the vocational position of these workers is synonymous with their class position, but occupation does provide a central indicator of how people are situated within the wide, dynamic pattern which class relations assume under capitalism. In this text, in so far as the terms 'middle-class' and 'working-class' are used together, the former refers to the career sections of the labour force, while the latter refers to people in routine jobs, irrespective of their collar colour or whether they are conventionally described as ‘manual’ or ‘non-manual’.

When evidence concerning the make-up of the Australian workforce since the War is examined, it becomes apparent that, at the same time as inequality has increased, the composition of
the working class has significantly altered. Wage and salary earners have expanded as a proportion of the adult population in the postwar period, but they have also become increasingly fragmented along the lines of occupation, gender, ethnicity and age. Inequalities within their ranks, and between them and welfare recipients, have been visibly multiplied, changing the characteristics of the worst-off and making it hard for the fundamental inequality which separates all of them from the capitalist class to be kept in clear focus.

Whereas tradespeople, plant and machine operators, drivers and labourers made up more than half of the paid labour force in 1947, they represented not much more than a third in 1986, and in recent years have begun to fall in absolute numbers under the impact of structural unemployment, brought about by global shifts in the distribution of capital. There have always been differences among these workers according to their identified skill levels, and, for most of the postwar years, it has been those designated as relatively skilled, that is, Anglo-Celtic men, who have been at the forefront of trade union leadership and who have therefore had their own particular priorities reflected in union wage strategies.

The service industries, by contrast, have steadily grown in size since the War, absorbing much of the increase in women's workforce participation. During the 1950s and 1960s there was always a significant minority of women, both married and unmarried, in paid employment, but it was not until 1988 that a majority of adult females was first recorded as being present in the official labour force. At the same time women continue to carry out the great bulk of work in the home. Most working women have entered sales, personal service and clerical positions, which include work such as child-care which is widely seen as an extension of women's traditional domestic role. Altogether, these positions now amount to about one-third of all paid work. They often involve less pay and satisfaction than 'manual' jobs, and the prospects they once offered for career advancement have in-
creasingly been eroded. However, the physical separation of office and factory employees, even when they are in the same workplace, together with the macho images traditionally associated with trade unionism, have discouraged the acceptance of women as bona fide members of the working class.

Another third of the workforce now consists of managers, administrators, professionals and para-professionals. Approximately 40 per cent are in salaried positions such as teachers, nurses, social workers and technical officers, and all of these have expanded greatly, as a proportion of total employment, since the War. These salaried professionals and para-professionals are increasingly often in stressful work situations, but they remain a relatively privileged section of the workforce in the sense that they have more options than other employees. Rarely have they experienced the financial insecurity which results from retrenchment or long-term unemployment. Instead, industrial militancy on their part has typically occurred when their expectations of a career have been threatened. This fundamental difference in outlook has impeded the development of a sense of shared economic position between salaried professionals and other workers. In some areas, however, this is changing. Women who have entered the professions have found that their wages and career prospects are much worse than those which apply for men of equal or inferior ability. The clash between the hopes inspired by their education, and the discrimination encountered in their employment, has, since the late 1960s, prompted many female professionals to unionise and to campaign for a range of industrial objectives including equal pay, paid maternity leave and childcare. In the process these professions have formally cooperated, to a quite considerable extent, with other occupational groups.

Another factor making for fragmentation in the workforce has been the postwar immigration program. The millions of migrants from non-English speaking origins who came to Australia in the decades after the Second World War have entered overwhelmingly into the least skilled, lowest paid and most dangerous manual
jobs, sometimes at nearly twice the rate of people born in Australia or in other English-speaking countries. The refusal by successive governments to recognise non-British qualifications, and the absence of realistic opportunities to learn English, have ensured that these non-Anglophone immigrants remain stuck in the worst jobs, a distinct and especially exploited segment of the working class. Most disadvantaged of all are the migrant women from non-English speaking countries, who, unlike women born in Australia or in Anglo-Celtic nations, are mostly employed in 'blue-collar' jobs, and often in small, non-unionised factories or as grossly underpaid outworkers in the clothing trade.17

Class describes people's position in the relations of production, but it is also a cultural formation, the existence of which critically depends on these people's values and lifestyles. The fragmentation of the working class goes beyond the evolution of differences in where and how wage and salary-earners are employed. Postwar educational expansion, for instance, and the rise of a distinctive youth culture, have created significant differences within the working class between the experiences and cultural aspirations of different age-groups. A stratification has also evolved between workers buying a home and those remaining in rental accommodation. The goal of paying off, and, in the process, improving, their own piece of property has shifted the personal horizons of many home-buying wage-earners away from workplace concerns, and the fiscal discipline required to pay their mortgage has tended to make them cautious about risking interruptions to their income through industrial militancy.

There has also been a geographical fragmentation of the working class. The 'gentrification' of inner-city neighbourhoods has pushed less affluent people into increasingly far-flung suburbs, which lack the services and support networks available in the old surroundings. In earlier decades, workers came into regular contact with each other as part of everyday community life, and the burden of financial hardship tended to be shared among them. In the new environment the relationships formed at work
have tended to be kept quite separate from life within the home, especially since the advent of television, which has made home life the more important. The mobility made possible by the motor car has reduced individuals' sense of belonging to a local area and being close to its inhabitants. A rapid increase in the availability of hire purchase has given low-income people new avenues for acquiring the goods which previously had been considered out of their reach. With the promotion of acquisitive values in the mass media, and the trend to greater geographical and vocational mobility, the ownership of material possessions has tended to displace occupation as a visible and authoritative indicator of social status. Consumer commodities have also been cleverly marketed so as to console individual workers for the alienation they endure on the job, and so as to divert their discontents away from collective expression."
LABOR’S ATTEMPTS TO ADAPT

How has the Labor Party coped with these considerable changes? The ALP came into existence as a result of the widespread working-class mobilisation achieved in the maritime strike of 1890. In that conflict, marine officers resolved to align themselves with the striking shearers, miners and gas-stokers from whom, until then, they had been socially as well as physically separated. A new awareness of the interests they had in common as wage-earners, against the masters of capital, sustained these and the many other workers who endured that industrial defeat, through their subsequent efforts to transfer the class struggle into the arena of parliamentary politics.19

The ALP’s early successes challenged the ancient tenet that only refined, educated and propertied people could participate in government, and for the first half-century of its existence, Labor remained essentially a working-class party. The great majority of its members and supporters were male manual wage-earners and their families, living in close-knit and culturally homogeneous communities. Their support for Labor evolved partly as a natural extension of the trade union loyalties they formed on the job,
and partly from the concern which the ALP showed to redress bread-and-butter working-class grievances about unemployment, economic inequality and inadequate housing. The ALP's development as a parliamentary force depended above all on the loyalty which it attracted from a core of wage-earners who saw it as inherently better disposed to their interests than the other parties. In the inner suburbs of the capital cities, solidarity and participation were reinforced by 'networks of cooperation between households' and the existence of 'a special social geography of workshop, home, church and meeting places for relaxation and organisation'. In turn, a strong tradition of union involvement, necessitated by relatively intransigent employers, pervaded everyday life among rural workers.20

The leadership of the Labor Party was probably always less proletarian than the membership as a whole, and certainly over time showed that it was prepared to pursue policies inimical to working-class interests, but the Party's essential ethos was shaped by the predominance, among its members and supporters, of the manual workers who then made up a sizeable majority of the paid labour force. This was reflected by the fact that, in the Labor governments elected during the Second World War, and in the immediate postwar years under Ben Chifley, nearly half the Ministers had previously worked as manual workers, while the next largest group had previously been routine white-collar employees, in stark contrast to the predominantly commercial and professional backgrounds of Liberal parliamentarians.21

For people who had always associated the whole concept of a 'working class' with the tradespeople and industrial labourers who had, in their experience, been its visible manifestations, the rapid expansion of the female, migrant and white-collar labour force, in the first decade following the War, proved quite traumatic. This, together with the geographical and cultural changes, led to a sense that the working class itself was disappearing, and the conservative forces were keen to promote this interpretation. The Liberal Party under Menzies was shrewd enough to accept the essential
features of the welfare state and also some of Keynes' economic doctrines, thereby undercutting Labor's expectation that party support would continue to polarise essentially along the lines of class.

Menzies' inclusion of 'skilled artisans' and 'salary-earners' among the 'forgotten people' who he claimed as his constituency enabled him to win support from the many self-employed tradespeople and clerical employees who did not feel part of the culture of organised labour. The appeals which Menzies made to women in their capacity as 'homemakers' contrasted favourably with Labor politicians, whose rhetoric centred exclusively on the needs of the male 'breadwinner' and who failed to extend the concept of full employment beyond full *male* employment, so as to meet the aspirations for economic independence which were emerging among considerable numbers of women.

Many trade unions in the Menzies era continued to work actively against women entering the workforce, and helped push those who did enter into particularly unrewarding jobs. Until the radicalisation of female professionals began to take effect in the late 1960s, this failure by unions to recruit and properly represent women in their capacity as workers, together with the enduring cultural conservatism of Labor's political leaders, ensured that the ALP's support among women stood about 10 percentage points lower than its support among men. The considerable electoral edge which Labor enjoyed over the conservatives among *male* members of the working class was thereby nullified. Arguably, the ALP's failure to orientate itself towards women and their aspirations was the crucial reason for its 23-year absence from Federal office.  

Another key reason was the labour movement's deplorable treatment of non-Anglophone migrants. On entering the traditionally unionised industries, these workers were greeted not with expressions of class solidarity from their co-unionists, but rather with ethnocentric selfishness. To persuade Australian-born workers to abandon their long standing hostility to immigration,
Labor politicians openly encouraged them to use this as an opportunity to gain better positions for themselves. Union officials were keen to accept payment of dues from migrant workers, but not to criticise their segmentation as 'factory fodder' nor to encourage them to overcome the language barriers which stood in the way of their active trade union participation. Few unions perceived the long-term threat to award conditions and union recruitment posed by the prevalence of migrant 'outwork' on outrageously low piece rates, or thought to employ migrant officials to organise and clean up these industries. The racist criteria which governments used to judge non-British qualifications went unchallenged, and hundreds of thousands of overseas-born professionals and skilled tradespeople were therefore condemned to being labelled, and paid, as 'unskilled' or 'semi-skilled' workers for the rest of their lives.

The ALP exhibited a similar indifference in its failure to encourage migrants onto the electoral rolls. In 1966, in the inner-Sydney municipality of Leichhardt, only 15 per cent of Italian immigrants had taken out Australian citizenship and had therefore become eligible to vote. In the late 1970s it was estimated that more than 400,000 immigrants who had resided in Australia for more than three years were not on the rolls. Most of these were southern Europeans who, if they had been able to vote, would most likely have supported the ALP. By contrast, immigrants from eastern Europe, who were much more likely to vote against Labor, had a very high rate of electoral enrolment. In 1981, the rate of citizenship among Polish immigrants in Australia was above 90 per cent, but among Mediterranean nationalities in some working-class areas of Melbourne, it was only half this.

The missed opportunities of the 1950s and 1960s were clearly revealed when some voter enrolment and education campaigns were eventually conducted in the 1970s, to be met with enthusiasm by migrants and to be followed by appreciable increases in the ALP vote. The decades of Labor insensitivity to the ethnic presence prevented the Party from extending its support beyond
male Australian-born wage-earners to embrace the new elements of the working class, and because the old support base was no longer adequate for the Party to win elections, some ALP figures began to canvass the possibility of abandoning any association with the working class. Thus began the Party's long-term drift away from a socialist analysis of society.

In the mid-1950s an active member of Labor's Right argued that the traditional working class was in such terminal decline that Labor had to pitch its appeal to a socially diffuse audience. Within a few years a prominent intellectual associated with the Party's Left was similarly advocating that Labor should no longer appeal to 'the workers' as such, but to the inclinations for social justice of people in general. However, in the growing tension between Labor's traditional conception of the working class and the Party's sense of needing to speak a new language of economic progress and social harmony in order to win at the ballot box, the key Party decision-makers initially inclined towards tradition. They were reluctant to adapt so as to win more support among young voters, whose first impressions of the ALP had been forged in the years of organisational disarray which followed the Split (a bitter internal conflict over attitudes to communism which resulted in many Catholics breaking away from the Labor Party between 1955 and 1957). The upwardly-mobile graduates of the rapidly expanding higher education institutions were potential allies for Labor, and many of them resided in the marginal seats where the Party desperately needed to make headway. However, the parliamentary leaders were ambivalent about approaching these new social groups, as can clearly be seen in the writings of Arthur Calwell, who in the early 1960s tried to define Labor's Role in Modern Society.

On the one hand, Calwell was willing to accept that 'our society has changed considerably in the past two decades'; that 'The people...[have] new hopes, new tastes, new desires...[and that] the age of the “affluent society”...poses a whole new range of problems for the Labor Party'. He agreed, too, that the ALP 'has
to avoid the impression that it is the party of austerity and opposed to material prosperity and material pleasure.' Yet on the other hand he denied that 'our image as a working-class party alienated the middle-class vote' or that there would be any point in Labor trying to appeal to those whom he referred to disparagingly as 'social climbers and status-seekers'. Further, he declared,

We regard many of the values of the so-called 'affluent society' as shoddy and unacceptable. We view with bewilderment the expenditure of vast sums on trivia and gimmicks... [and we deplore] the materialist outlook... [which] is, saddest of all to say, quite marked among many of our younger people.25

At a time when the British Labour Party, under Harold Wilson, had successfully responded to thirteen years of conservative rule by expanding its support base to include teachers, students and other young professionals with progressive views, irrespective of social status, the ALP could not, in good conscience, bring itself to do so. The effect of this indecision was to strengthen the reformist resolve of other elements in the Party. Later in the 1960s, Labor's Victorian secretary, Cyril Wyndham, moved to put the ALP organisationally in touch with white-collar employees, and in this context he contemptuously dismissed 'References to "the workers", the "working class" and the "underprivileged"... [as] just so much meaningless and sometimes offensive jargon in modern society'. Conservative political scientists were by this time busily promoting a myth that the long ascendancy of the anti-Labor parties was the result of a decline in old class inequalities. They interpreted the changes which had occurred in the composition of the underprivileged, and in the characteristics of wage and salary-earners, not as a reason for Labor to update and broaden its conception of who made up the working class, but rather as a reason to abandon foolish, outdated notions that there was such a thing as a working class at all.26

This perspective was to a significant extent shared by the ris-
ing group of tertiary- educated professionals who were urging from within the Labor Party for ‘modernisation’ and a transformation of the Party's social base. Their efforts came to a head after 1967, when Gough Whitlam became Federal Leader. For Whitlam, the well-being of ALP voters was determined less by the income they received as workers than by the services they received as residents. The Party's goal was no longer to make incomes more egalitarian but, instead, to give people greater opportunity outside their working lives. Generally, the changes to policy and organisation introduced in these years have been viewed as bringing immediate and lasting benefits. Whitlam has been credited with broadening Labor's membership base and, in turn, its appeal, to the electorally crucial ‘non-manual’ sections of the labour force and also to the roles people assumed outside the workplace, as residents, consumers, and recipients of public services.

There can be no doubt that under Whitlam the ALP shook off its former indifference to women and adopted many of their political demands, and that in doing so the Party was able, by the 1980s, to eliminate finally its gender disadvantage in the electorate, and thus to begin winning elections with some regularity. Whitlam's concern for the needs of migrants from non-English-speaking backgrounds also marked a major improvement on the labour movement's previous indifference, and was also of enduring electoral benefit. The ALP gained majority support among non-Anglophone immigrants, and particularly among southern Europeans, in the early years of the Whitlam government and has retained this ever since. The government's general idealism and its specific decision to lower the voting age from 21 to 18 also helped to bring large numbers of young voters into Labor's constituency, and youth continue to prefer the ALP to the conservative parties to this day.27

However, there were losses as well as gains in Whitlam's overhaul of the Party. Labor now tended to address the needs of women, of migrants, of white-collar workers, of residents and of 'the poor' as individual issues rather than as interconnected in-
stances of a general inequality, produced within the relations of production. Awareness of the ingrained economic divisions of capitalism was largely lost when Whitlam redefined inequality as merely a problem of unequal access to education and services. As a result, questions about basic disparities of wealth and income were pushed off the mainstream political agenda. It was easier to abandon the idea of being the Party of the working class than it was to expose how, despite its diminishing transparency, class-structured inequality continued to exist.

Since then, Keynesian economics has been displaced by the promotion of 'free market' forces, and the promoters now include nearly all the key bureaucratic advisers to the Federal government. In this new climate, Labor under Bob Hawke has moved to further conceal the reality of class divisions, and to do so has taken refuge in a rhetoric of patriotism. Hawke's period as Prime Minister has been founded on a proclamation that 'the politics of division, the politics of confrontation — the deliberate setting of Australian against Australian... have no part in the true Australian way'.

Proposals for an official inquiry into wealth have therefore been rejected. The characterisation of Australia as a land of consensus has required that evidence to the contrary be kept away from political centre stage.
How has Labor's gradual departure from a working-class identification, and a socialist analysis of society, affected the Party's own social base? The existing literature gives only a vague picture of the socioeconomic changes which occurred in Labor's membership and constituency in the crucial Whitlam era of Party reform, and what their long-term implications really were. However, it is clear that the efforts to transform the Party made by Wyndham, the Victorian (and later National) ALP Secretary, were initially unsuccessful. In the mid-1960s, several studies pointed to a continuing predominance of manual workers among the ALP's grassroots membership. Labor's lack of hospitality to people other than manual workers was widely identified as a cause of its electoral weakness.30

By the late 1970s, however, another Victorian (and later National) ALP Secretary, Bob Hogg, could describe a party quite different from what it had been for his predecessor, Cyril Wyndham: a party whose 'policy is very much determined by the articulate; by the educated; by the middle class' and in which 'input from the work-place has been, and still is, progressively
diminishing'. Indeed, the concern then was that Labor had lost touch with the ‘views and aspirations’ of its working-class supporters.31

In 1982, Professor L.F. Crisp took up this concern. Crisp, the biographer of Chifley, and a lifelong Party member in several States, argued from personal observation that the ALP had become dominated by white-collar and professional people, at both parliamentary and local branch level. In Crisp’s eyes this was a ‘tragedy’ which raised the prospect of Labor losing its electoral base to ‘another party or parties speaking blue-collar language and aspirations’. He presented data showing that manual workers had been thoroughly displaced by professionals in the Federal Parliamentary Labor Party since the Chifley era, to the point where the social backgrounds of ALP frontbenchers were now much closer to those of their Liberal opponents. In this regard, the most recent evidence reveals that, among Labor parliamentarians, there were as many manual workers as professionals in the 1940s, but more than nine times as many professionals as manual workers in the 1980s. Crisp was doubtful, though, that there were historical records still available to substantiate his perception that there had been a similarly disproportionate takeover of local ALP branches by people from the professions.32

In 1987, however, for the first time, hard evidence appeared confirming the extent of change in the characteristics of Labor Party branch members. Ian Ward set out in his doctoral thesis to chart the change in the Labor Party’s social composition in Victoria, and to ascertain its effect on Party doctrine and ethos. His discovery of some membership records, and comparison of these with census data, showed that there was an influx of professionally-trained individuals to the Victorian ALP from the 1960s. In the early part of that decade, manual workers were represented in the Party above their proportion in the wider workforce, while sales, personal service and clerical workers were not greatly under-represented. By the 1980s, however, all these categories of employees were notably under-represented, and particularly among
active members and parliamentary candidates.

By interviewing and surveying a sample of members, Ward found that the 'middle-classing' of Victorian Labor did not favour either Left or Right within the Party, but it did alter the prevailing ethos, and to some degree did discourage the involvement of manual workers. Ward did not, however, seek to develop Crisp's suggestion that the loss of direct input to the ALP from manual workers might erode the Party's relevance to, and electoral following from, these workers. This hypothesis will be explored later in some detail.

Since the appearance of Crisp's essay, access to older membership sources has been enhanced considerably by the cataloguing of New South Wales ALP records under the (Bicentennial-funded) Archives of the Labour Movement project, and also by the lifting of restrictions on access to a National Library collection of Victorian ALP records that date back to the decade before the Split of the mid-1950s. Extensive research into these and other records previously hidden in the basement storerooms of Party offices, or in official archives collections, has made it possible, for the first time, to piece together a clear picture of how Labor's membership has altered since the War, across Australia as a whole, in both size and character. It is unlikely that the ALP's membership figures perfectly record the extent of actual participation in the Party. Nevertheless, they are our best available guide, and it is reasonable to assume that a major shift in the number and characteristics of the members signifies a similarly momentous movement in the number and characteristics of the active members.

The peak of ALP membership came in the decade following the Second World War, amid the euphoric aftermath of the defeat of Fascism. Across the Western world, working people had been inspired by the Soviet Red Army's role in the defeat of the Nazis, and felt determined to erase the bitter legacy of the Depression. Awakened to the need for state intervention in order to achieve
postwar economic reconstruction, they turned in unprecedented numbers to the Left, voting labour or social democratic governments into office in the hope of creating a new world, free from war and exploitation.

In Australia the War years were also a time of unprecedented growth in trade union strength. The expansion of secondary industries helped extend union coverage to nearly half of all wage-earners, compared with little more than a quarter in the previous decade; and the union movement continued to develop rapidly in numbers, coverage and confidence into the 1950s. In each State the sizeable unions were all formally affiliated with the ALP, and in Western Australia the peak union council and the Labor Party were one and the same entity. The consolidation of unionism in the workforce thus considerably boosted the Party’s affiliated membership, as well as creating the circumstances in which many more workers became organised and thus became more likely to personally join a local ALP branch.

However, the social conditions which had for many decades sustained a close nexus between trade unionism and ALP participation began to break down by the second half of the 1950s, and Party and union structures proved slow to respond to the new demographic and industrial challenges. Rural employees, who had formed the core of the Australian Workers’ Union and of the ALP’s activists in country areas, were now drastically declining in number. Because people in the fast-growing white-collar and professional sections of the labour force felt financially secure and often saw themselves as ‘middle-class’, unions found it relatively hard to recruit them as members. The organisations which did gain coverage of white-collar work eventually affiliated with the Australian Council of Trade Unions, but few have ever affiliated to the ALP.

Unions in the postwar period themselves became more bureaucratic and less responsive to cultural changes occurring within their own rank and file. In part this was because of the newly widespread arrangements for automatic payroll deduction of
union dues, and the resultant reduction in regular personal contact between workers and union officialdom. In consequence the ALP in turn became more remote from the modern workforce. The Party's formal connections with wage and salary-earners remained confined to the long-standing, mostly manual and male-dominated organisations which were becoming steadily less representative of the working class as a whole.

At the same time, the increases in community mobility were reducing the central place which local union and Party structures had previously occupied in people's lives. Private leisure pursuits, as well as replacing the old routines of contact with neighbours, provided new and attractive alternatives to organising and attending meetings. In the suburban environment, day-to-day issues in the workplace began to be seen as separate from the realm of politics. As early as 1950, ALP officials, concerned by these developments, were urging unionists to 'take greater interest in the political movement, as per the ALP's origins'. But, as the 1962 decision to separate the peak union council of Western Australia from the ALP illustrated, the old assumption that people belonged to a common political movement, as a natural extension of their position as workers and trade unionists, was fast receding. Since the mid-1950s, the inability of unions in the key growth areas of the economy to recruit members and to affiliate to the ALP has meant that the labour movement's formal structures have come to represent a steadily shrinking minority of employees. Affiliation arrangements have always varied between States, but the evidence suggests that, overall, in the mid-1950s, Labor's affiliates probably represented more than three-quarters of all unionists in Australia; and about 40 per cent of all workers. Now, however, the affiliates amount to little more than half of all unionists, and no more than about 20 per cent of all workers.

Alongside this contraction of its formally affiliated membership, the Labor Party's individual membership has declined substantially from its postwar peak. It is difficult to determine, and nobody has previously attempted to estimate, the precise level of
the Party's individual membership prior to the 1980s, because of the scarcity of surviving membership records, particularly in Victoria, where few branch tallies were kept during the 1960s, and for the same reasons in Queensland, where, in addition, many official documents went missing following Federal intervention in 1980. Reports of the Party's biennial Federal Conferences have often itemised the amount paid in dues by each State, and these are determined by the number of members in that State, but the reports do not distinguish between the payments which were made on the basis of affiliated trade union members and those made on the basis of individual Party members, and they are thus of little help. Fragments of evidence gathered from the various States, when assembled, do nevertheless provide a coherent outline of the main membership trends.

Figure 1
The number of ALP Members and Voters, 1946–1990 (excluding the ACT and Northern Territory)

Source: ALP membership records and official election statistics.

In the years for which clear-cut statistics are unavailable, it is
necessary to make an estimate which is consistent with all the available primary evidence. Sufficient data has been uncovered in each of the States to make reliable national estimates at five-year intervals from 1948 to 1988; though these figures still need to be treated with some caution. Figure 1 shows the membership estimates, and the number of Labor voters at each Federal election since the War.

Whereas the number of ALP voters rose steadily, in line with the doubling of the adult population, Party membership fell from approximately 75,000 to less than 45,000 following the Split of the mid-1950s, and has never recovered to pre-Split levels. As a result, a wide gap has opened up between the ALP’s membership and its electoral constituency. There was consistent membership growth in South Australia and Western Australia through the 1950s and most of the 1960s, but this could not compensate for a continuing fall-off in New South Wales and Victoria. In the late 1960s, with the advent of Whitlam as Federal Leader, the ALP began to slowly rebuild its ranks, and continued to do so until 1983, when the Hawke government was elected. But, five years later, numbers had slumped in all States but one, and membership overall was at its lowest recorded level since the War in absolute terms, and by far the lowest relative to the number of Labor voters. Although reliable national tallies are not available for more recent years, it is certain that Labor’s branch membership has fallen further since 1988. Whereas around one in every 33 Labor voters was a Party member in the late 1940s, only one in every 65 was in the late 1960s, and only one in every 96 was in the late 1980s.

This sharp decline in the rate of Labor voters’ participation in their Party has not been geographically uniform. We know, for instance, that the fall has been much more marked in non-metropolitan areas than in the capital cities, and that, in addition to the decline of the rural working class, this has been partly due to the loss of support from ‘country-minded’, socially conservative voters following the Split. Peter Hay has shown how Labor
Party membership in non-metropolitan Victoria fell by 76 per cent between 1948 and 1978, compared with a fall of 33 per cent in Melbourne. New South Wales ALP records suggest that the membership decline there between 1948 and 1988 was about 37 per cent in Sydney, compared with 70 per cent outside Sydney (although if 1953 is chosen as the base year, the difference is less stark). The ALP’s once solid rural support in Queensland was also shattered by the Split, and this helped to sow the seeds for decades of Country Party ascendancy in that State.  

The New South Wales branch membership figures are much more complete and continuous than other States, and therefore these have been chosen to determine whether, and if so when and to what extent, postwar changes in ALP membership have also differed geographically within Australia’s capital cities, between less affluent and more affluent areas.

Membership figures were transcribed from the annual returns forwarded by the several hundred Labor Party branches in metropolitan Sydney to New South Wales Head Office between 1952 and 1978. The sum total of these returns is considerably less than the actual membership of the Party in Sydney, because many branches, particularly in the earlier years, did not submit returns. However, there is no reason to doubt that these records give an accurate picture of the geographical distribution of the Party’s membership. More recent, computerised membership listings were also examined, and it was possible to transcribe complete branch tallies for the years 1983, 1986 and 1988. Later, the municipality to which each branch belonged was identified, the branch figures were aggregated into their respective municipalities, and census data were used to classify the 38 municipalities of metropolitan Sydney, for each of the years in question, into two broad socioeconomic categories. There is no single, ideal measure of socioeconomic status available to cover the entire period since 1952, but there are two very accurate options, and by using these we avoid limiting the definition of ‘working class’ to manual employees.
Authoritative studies, conducted in separate decades, have established that the best indicator as to whether an area of Sydney is of high or low socioeconomic status is whether, among local residents who are in the paid labour force, there is a high or low proportion of professional and managerial occupations — in other words, a high proportion of people in career positions as opposed to routine jobs. Statistics on the number of such occupations in each local government area were compiled at all censuses from 1966. Prior to this, the proportion of residents in the paid labour force who were employers was adopted as the best available indicator of a municipality’s socioeconomic character. Therefore, Sydney localities which at the 1954 or 1961 censuses had a below average proportion of employers among their resident workforce, or which at the 1966 and subsequent censuses recorded a below average proportion of professional and managerial occupations were, for the purposes of this analysis, classified as areas of low socioeconomic status or, in keeping with their more customary characterisation, as ‘working class areas’. Conversely, those with above average proportions were classified as ‘middle class areas’.

Due to residential relocation, several inner-city municipalities moved from the first to the second category during the 1960s and 1970s, and there were a few borderline localities which moved in the other direction. In each case, census data were utilised to pinpoint the year in which they crossed the dividing line between the two classifications, and the ALP membership figures were shifted into the appropriate category from then on. Defined in this way, the proportion of Sydney’s workforce living in working-class areas was 67 per cent at the 1954 census, 64 per cent in 1966 and 62 per cent at the census of 1986. If the geographical distribution of Labor Party members mirrored that of Sydney residents generally, we would therefore expect to see the proportion of ALP members in working-class areas decrease by about five percentage points, over the period, while the proportion in middle-class areas would rise by a similar amount. However, as Figure 2 shows, the shift in the
relative importance of these areas was much more substantial.

**Figure 2**

The ALP’s Recorded Branch Membership in Sydney, 1952–1988

![Graph showing ALP's recorded branch membership in Sydney, 1952–1988](image)

- Working-class areas
- Middle-class areas


In 1978, the Labor Party’s recorded membership in working-class areas of Sydney stood at less than half its 1952 levels, whereas in middle-class areas over this period, numbers more than doubled. As a result, the Party’s membership became evenly distributed between both types of municipality. In 1983 and 1986 the recorded membership in working-class areas was up somewhat from the 1978 levels, although most likely this is simply a consequence of the 1980s figures being more complete. In middle-class areas it is evident that membership fell between 1978 and 1983, for the first time since the mid-1960s. In the latest year for which figures are available, 1988, participation in both types of locality was well down on what it had been two years earlier.

The primary reason for the decline in the ALP’s urban mem-
bership since the War, then, is that the Party has lost much of the active support it used to receive from people living in low-income areas. On top of this long-standing weakness, the membership gains made in more affluent areas since the early 1970s have more recently been reversed. Evidently, in the capital cities, the postwar transformation of the ALP has come about through two distinct processes, operating in two distinct periods. A steep, steady decline in Party participation occurred, particularly among people in working-class areas, during the 1950s and 1960s, and has not since been reversed, despite a modest, temporary recovery under the Whitlam government and perhaps also in the early years of the Hawke government. Then, from the early 1970s, there was a swift upsurge in ALP involvement by people from middle-class areas, which was probably first inspired by Whitlam’s reform agenda but which continued into the 1980s, until it began to fall away once the Hawke government took office.

To explain why working-class participation in the ALP fell so sharply after 1954 it must be emphasised that many Catholics from lower socioeconomic groups left the Party in the Split. However, membership decline continued throughout the next fifteen years and particularly in inner-city suburbs such as Redfern in Sydney, and Abbotsford in Melbourne. According to their official returns, branches in Redfern amounted to 714 members in 1953 but only 316 in 1970. The inner Melbourne branch of Abbotsford numbered 429 members in 1948 but only 81 in 1961, according to membership lists held in the National Library. The difficulties of maintaining participation do appear to have been aggravated, then, by the breaking up of the old inner-city working-class communities, and by the failure of Labor Party branches in such areas to welcome the working-class migrants from non English-speaking backgrounds who were steadily moving in. Yet participation also fell in the low-income areas which were demographically stable and which, in terms of ethnicity, remained quite homogeneous. It was in the mid-1950s, too, that trade union strength entered its long decline and that Communist Party par-
ticipation, particularly among manual workers, collapsed. In the wake of the Soviet invasion of Hungary and Kruschev's denunciation of Stalin, CPA membership fell to 5,500, compared with its peak of 24,000 in 1944.42

These trends reflect the ideological defensiveness of the Left in the 1950s, and the great uncertainty as to what the Labor Party then stood for. By the end of that decade, conservative social theorists confidently claimed that social class no longer carried any political implications, because an 'end of ideology' had come about among formerly militant industrial workers owing to a rise in affluence. Some commentators on the Left have also embraced this analysis in their attempts to explain working-class inactivity in the 1950s in terms of 'apathy' stemming from increased leisure. In doing so, however, they have overlooked considerable empirical evidence that feelings of alienation continued to percolate beneath the surface of the Western working class' apparent apathy.43

It seems less likely that low-income people ceased to care about economic inequality than that they found it harder to identify, and no longer felt confident of their own power to alter it through political action. While the rise in average living standards, the restructuring of local communities and the subtle ideological campaigns conducted by conservatives in the 1950s may explain the early fall-off in political mobilisation, the failure of the organised labour movement to adapt to those changes and to counteract those campaigns must also, and in its own right, be acknowledged as a principal factor in the continuation of the trend. Once democratic socialist parties assent to the detachment of politics from the class relations of the workplace, they concede one of the central ideological planks of liberal democracy and capitalist production relations, which is a sharp demarcation between the (limited) rights which most people are granted in the political sphere, and the subordinate position which they are obliged to occupy in the economic sphere.44 ALP and trade union structures could well have been adapted to generate new
forms and styles of political mobilisation in the suburbs, as the separation of work from home represented not so much an insurmountable barrier to radical political consciousness as a challenge to traditional modes of organisation. But it was simpler to go along with the prevailing ideological interpretations.

To further explain changes in ALP membership size, it is necessary to consider a range of additional evidence concerning changes in the membership's character. While the trends in the social geography of Labor’s membership help to pinpoint the chronology of the Party’s changing composition, they do not convey its full extent. Evidence concerning the occupations or activities of New South Wales ALP members in 1961 and 1981, gathered from samples of membership tickets in those years, indicates that the residents of working-class suburbs who nowadays become Party members are less typical of their areas than they once were. That the loss of input from manual and routine white-collar employees is in fact more extensive than Figure 2 suggests, can be seen in Table 1, which sets out the occupations of ALP members, and those of adults generally in New South Wales, for the census years 1961 and 1981.45

**Table 1**

Occupations or Activities of ALP Members, and Adults Generally, in New South Wales, 1961 and 1981 (% of total)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>ALP Members</th>
<th>Adults Generally</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Managers and Administrators</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professionals and Para-Professionals</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The data in the first two columns of the table indicate that in this twenty-year period, manual workers halved as a proportion of the New South Wales ALP; the proportion of professionals and para-professionals nearly tripled; and participation by tertiary students almost quadrupled. Contrary to the common misconception that changes in the composition of the Labor Party simply reflect changes in the community, it is critical to observe, by comparing the trend in the first two columns with the trend in the third and fourth columns, that the Party membership changes far exceeded the occupational shifts in the State's population; and that participation in the Party by clerical, sales and personal service employees stayed static between 1961 and 1981 whereas these groups expanded greatly in the general population.

Table 2 shows that a similar kind of transformation occurred after 1961 in the Victorian ALP, but to a more dramatic degree in the case of manual workers, who in the year of the most recent census (1986) amounted to only 13 per cent of all ALP members in the State, compared to 45 per cent in 1961.
Table 2
Occupations or Activities of ALP Members, and Adults Generally, in Victoria, 1961 and 1986 (% of total)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>ALP Members</th>
<th>Adults Generally</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Managers and Administrators</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professionals and Para-Professionals</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clerks, Salespersons, and Personal Service Workers</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tradespersons</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plant and Machine Operators, Drivers and Labourers</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retired</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unpaid Domestic Workers</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is possible that the changes evident in the characteristics of Victorian ALP members by 1986 may well have been equally evident in New South Wales were it possible to examine Party records there from that year.

In the course of this research, details of trade union membership were also transcribed from members’ tickets, and these re-
revealed that, in 1986, among the many retired people in the Victorian ALP, a large number, and quite a few in other State branches too, had maintained membership of their union, which probably means that many of them used to be manual workers. If so, the disproportionately low number of ALP members who were still employed in a trade, or as plant and machine operators, drivers and labourers, indicates that the Party has been particularly unable to attract participation from the younger people in these jobs.

No data is available on the characteristics of ALP members as a whole, other than New South Wales and Victoria, prior to the 1980s, but Table 3 summarises the occupations or activities of Labor Party participants in the other States in 1986.⁴⁶

**Table 3**

Occupations or Activities of ALP Members, and Adults Generally, in the Other States, 1986 (% of total)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>ALP Members</th>
<th>Adults Generally</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Managers and Administrators</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professionals and Para-Professionals</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clerks, Salespersons, and Personal Service Workers</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tradespersons</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plant and Machine Operators, Drivers and Labourers</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retired</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unpaid Domestic Workers</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 3
Selected Occupations of People Joining the Tasmanian ALP and Tasmanian Adults Generally

Source: ALP new members' cards and lists.

Source: Census publications.
The situation varied somewhat between States but overall it is clear that professionals and para-professionals were represented well above, and sales and clerical employees were represented well below, their proportions in the general population. Manual workers, and particularly those without trade qualifications, were also under-represented. There is no reason to doubt that the membership of the ALP in each of these States, like Victoria and New South Wales, used to feature a much higher proportion of manual, and probably also clerical, workers than it does today.

The only comprehensive evidence concerning the occupations of ALP members which survives from census years prior to 1961 comes from Tasmania, and is confined to new members. Despite its limits this material is useful in a number of ways, not least because it helps to confirm exactly when the Labor Party began to attract few manual workers as members, and became, instead, disproportionately attractive to professionals and para-professionals. In Figure 3, one census year has been selected for each decade, and the number of people in particular occupations who joined the Tasmanian ALP, in each of these years, is illustrated, as is the number of Tasmanian adults generally in these occupations.

Although they declined as a proportion of all new members, there was no significant change in the number of manual workers entering the Tasmanian ALP between 1947 and 1961. Their dramatic reduction first became apparent in 1971, when only half as many joined; and they were under-represented to a similarly severe extent in the 1981 intake. It was also in 1971 that the entry of professionals and para-professionals to the Party moved well out of proportion to their numerical importance in the general population. Apart from a brief rise in the number of clerks joining the ALP in 1954, sales, personal service and clerical employees were consistently, and increasingly, under-represented over this period.

The Tasmanian trends, together with the Sydney evidence, suggest that although the Labor Party may have lost much of its
membership in working-class areas during the 1950s and 1960s, its residual membership did not begin to take on a decidedly 'middle-class' character until the Whitlam era of the late 1960s. This interpretation is further reinforced by data concerning the characteristics of the people who joined the Victorian ALP from 1967 to 1969. Professionals and para-professionals dominated the intake of new Party members in that State, to an unprecedented and steadily increasing extent, from the moment that Gough Whitlam assumed the Federal ALP leadership and began changing the Party's public face. By 1971, this new influx had already significantly altered the social composition of the Victorian ALP.47

What do the records indicate about the other characteristics of Labor Party members? Gender details were included in the samples, and non Anglo-Celtic surnames were also recorded in order to gain some sense of how the ALP's ethnic composition has changed. Date of birth details were only present in one of the years, however, so it was not possible to quantify changes in the ALP's age profile. Table 4 sets out the proportion of women in the ALP in the various States and years.

Table 4:
Women in the ALP as a Proportion of All Members

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New South Wales</td>
<td>1961</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New South Wales</td>
<td>1981</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victoria</td>
<td>1961</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victoria</td>
<td>1986</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queensland</td>
<td>1986</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Australia</td>
<td>1986</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Australia</td>
<td>1986</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tasmania</td>
<td>1986</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Evidently, at the same time as the ALP became more 'middle-class' it also became less male-dominated. The female presence
increased noticeably in the New South Wales ALP between 1961 and 1981, and doubled in Victoria between 1961 and 1986. At the same time, the quality of women's involvement improved considerably. Their former, essentially auxiliary functions within the Party were replaced with many new opportunities for genuine participation. Much remains to be done, however, before these modest improvements at grassroots levels translate into an adequate quota of women in parliamentary caucuses and senior Party positions.

It is interesting to note that there is no necessary correspondence between high proportions of women in the ALP nowadays and low proportions of manual workers. In 1986, for instance, Queensland and Tasmania had a significantly larger proportion of people in routine jobs among their members than Western Australia, yet also had a significantly better gender balance. For the presence of women in the ALP to expand to the same extent as their numerical importance among Labor voters, there will need to be many more recruits from the ranks of unpaid domestic labour and from the sales, personal service and clerical jobs where the female labour force generally tends to be concentrated. In the 1980s, like the male members, women in the ALP were drawn disproportionately from the professions.

As for ethnic composition, there are signs that there has been a significant increase in the number of ALP members from non-English speaking backgrounds. In 1961, only 7 per cent of the New South Wales ALP members sampled, and 10 per cent of the Victorians, had recognisably non Anglo-Celtic surnames. In 1981 the New South Wales figure was 14 per cent, while in Victoria, in 1986, it was up to 22 per cent. Again, however, this is less spectacular a change than has occurred in the electorate at large since the early 1970s, and again this reflects the limited occupational sources of the new recruits. Few of the ALP members from non-English speaking backgrounds were drawn from the manual jobs where migrant men and women are most likely to be found. As with women, the increased number of non-Anglophone migrants
in the ALP's branches has not yet been satisfactorily reflected in the Party's higher reaches.

On the assumption that the proportion of manual workers in the ALP prior to 1961 fluctuated much in line with the overall membership trends in working-class areas of Sydney, and that the participation of professionals and para-professionals moved approximately in accordance with the membership trends in middle-class areas of Sydney, the surviving ALP records and census data suggest that, in round figures, roughly one in 40 manual workers was an ALP member in the late 1940s, but only one in 90 was in the early 1960s and only one in every 275 was in the 1980s. As for professionals and para-professionals, as many as one in every 25 was in the ALP in the post-War years. This fell, however, to just one in every 180 in the early to mid-1960s, but thereafter recovered somewhat, and stood at around one in every 80 in the 1980s. There is no means for reliably estimating the rate at which sales, personal service and clerical employees participated in the late 1940s, but in the early to mid-1960s there was approximately one ALP member in these occupations for every 235 in the adult population, while during the 1980s they participated at the considerably lower rate of one in every 490.

In the high membership era of the 1940s and early 1950s, then, professionals and para-professionals, though they were then few in number, were no less likely, indeed were more likely, to join the ALP than were manual workers. In the early to mid-1960s, however, a manual worker was more likely to be an ALP member than someone in a professional or para-professional occupation, who in turn was somewhat more likely to participate than a person from the poorly unionised sections of the working class, the clerical, sales and personal service employees. The very low membership levels of the early to mid-1960s probably came about, then, not just because of the sharp decline in participation which occurred in working-class areas from the early 1950s, but also because Labor couldn't attract those in the fast expanding 'career' positions at the same rate as it had been able to in the im-
mediate postwar years. The few people who remained in the ALP by the 1960s were heavily drawn from the ranks of tradespeople, plant and machine operators, drivers and labourers. Recognition that this was too narrow a social base underpinned the efforts of the Whitlamite reformers of the late 1960s, who pushed for the ALP to again be a ‘mass’ organisation, arguing that

A party which seeks to change society through gaining parliamentary power requires a large and representative membership. Only in this way can Labor fashion and communicate its policies to win acceptance by the electorate.49

Undoubtedly, the introduction of a greater role for ordinary branch members in policy-making and pre-selections, and moves towards a more coherent national structure for the Party, contributed to membership growth in the fifteen years following Whitlam’s accession to the leadership. Since then, however, Labor’s membership has again become very narrowly based, and is in fact less representative of its constituency than ever before.

Several official inquiries conducted within the Party show that the membership slump since 1983 has occurred largely because Labor in office has embraced policies which run counter to the Party’s platform, thereby reversing the democratisation moves of the early 1970s, and making the members feel quite powerless. In 1988, nearly 40 per cent of the ALP rank and file in Victoria who did not wish to renew their membership, and more than 50 per cent of those in Tasmania, indicated that their decision resulted from actions of the Federal government.50 Some people claim that Party membership inevitably falls when Labor is in office, due to the difficulty of turning idealistic policies adopted in opposition into ‘realistic’ programs of government action. A glance at the trend of Party membership under previous postwar Labor governments indicates that this is a mystification. From Figures 1 and 2 it is clear that overall ALP membership was on the rise under both the Chifley and the Whitlam administrations. Evidently, then, it is not being in government which determines
whether the Party will win or lose active support, but rather the policy stance which specific governments take, and how this relates to the views of Party members and supporters.

One of the reasons given by current Cabinet Ministers for ignoring or undermining ALP policies is that the Party’s members are unrepresentative of the concerns of Labor voters. However, the government’s continued embrace of policies which go against the views of most active Labor supporters has caused the Party to become even more unrepresentative, by prompting many ALP members to withdraw and many Labor voters, from a variety of social backgrounds, not to see any practical point in joining. The present crisis in morale is quite unprecedented in its extent. After the tragedy of having to wait so long for a sustained period of national government, Labor’s supporters now experience the bigger tragedy of feeling unable to really improve society through being in government. The fact that the alternative to Labor would undoubtedly be far worse does nothing to justify the government’s position, nor to reverse the spiralling decline of the Party.

The ALP’s membership today is unrepresentative in a quite different sense than in the early 1960s. Now it is the more privileged sections of the workforce who are disproportionately present. A professional is currently more than three times as likely as a manual worker, and five times more likely than a salesperson, personal service employee or clerk, to participate at the ALP’s most basic levels. To comprehend why this change has occurred, why participation in the Labor Party by people in career positions fell following the post-War years and later rose, and why, simultaneously, the involvement of workers in routine jobs has declined so steadily, we need to look more carefully at the socioeconomic implications of the Party reforms of the late 1960s.

In his otherwise very sympathetic biography, Graham Freudenberg notes an ‘unresolved contradiction’ in Gough Whitlam’s approach, in that ‘the equality which Whitlam envis-
ages involves the existence of an elite, either the elected elite of Parliament or the appointed elite of the bureaucracy' to actually bring about social change. The trouble with this approach is that it tends to discourage input from the actual victims of inequality. According to Susan Kennedy, in today's political environment, 'low-income earners suffer a lack of self-esteem and don't feel confident enough to say what their problems are'. There is considerable literature to support her suggestion that different occupations and social backgrounds foster fundamentally different approaches to politics. Barry Hindess, for instance, has argued that 'A feeling of personal security...underlies the basic political orientations' of professional people and enables them to focus on 'general principles...broad policy outlines as the sort of thing that politics is and ought to be'. Whereas the concrete details of financial insecurity and injustice which they themselves experience are the essence of politics for manual workers, for tertiary educated people, who have rarely had harsh personal experience of class inequality, these tend to be seen as mere details, belonging to the sphere of administration rather than policy. The professionals and para-professionals who make up one of the more privileged sections of the contemporary labour force have succeeded in redefining Left politics to reflect their own interests, and in a way which marginalises the more 'boring', bread-and-butter concerns of the less privileged. The language of contemporary politics, the centralised, bureaucratic character of decision-making, the reliance on experts, and the emphasis on professional administration are entirely consistent with their own approach.52

For manual, sales, personal service and clerical workers on the other hand, and particularly for non-Anglophone migrants in these jobs, there is usually little opportunity to develop communication and organisational skills and to assemble information so as to articulate effectively the concerns which arise out of their experiences. While it is of course possible for people from privileged backgrounds to research the needs of the less well-off and
to enact policies which address these needs, unprivileged people themselves are the ones best equipped to know their own needs and convey them to others. Among political activists, it is usually the people from working-class backgrounds who feel most strongly about inequality, and it is usually also they who are the most persistent in trying to do something about it.

The changing character of Labor Party membership since the War corresponds with changes in the ascendancy of these two different approaches to politics. In the postwar years, action by the Chifley government on the bread-and-butter issues of employment and income inequality was encased within a general vision of social reconstruction, and both manual workers and professionals felt that they had an active part to play. By the early 1960s the ALP had ceased to offer a clear vision of an alternative society, and seemed somewhat less committed than before to improving the specific grievances of the working class. Accordingly, active support for the Party had declined, across the community. The revival of Labor Party participation later in the decade relied heavily on an influx of young professionals and tertiary students, many of whom had marched, together with older, blue-collar unionists, against the Vietnam War. While some of these new participants were from working-class backgrounds, the majority evidently were not. They were attracted to the ALP less by a desire to attack the causes of class inequality than by an interest in implementing the policy ideals of the new social movements for feminism, peace and the environment. Some, notably schoolteachers, may also have been politicised around workplace issues, but their participation in the ALP, like their growing effectiveness in the union movement, depended on their being better versed in the discourse of political debate than those who had not undertaken professional training. Like others from the professions, they rarely saw themselves as being in the same social class as tradespeople or labourers, nor did they share the same outlook as shop assistants or clerks.

Many of the people who entered the ALP from the late 1960s,
and many more who have similar activist backgrounds and hold similarly secure career positions, continue to participate at all levels of the Party today, even though some have been frustrated by the Hawke government's failure to adhere to Party policies and philosophies. They are still there because they are less fundamentally alienated from the way the system works than are those in routine jobs, among whom, and particularly among the younger ones, there is now widespread acceptance of the debilitating notion that politics is a career pursuit for suitably qualified people, and something quite separate from their own everyday lives. Labor's great achievement last century in overturning the old, elitist attitude that 'common' people have no place in government has been sadly compromised by the progress, in recent decades, of this doctrine that 'ordinary' people have no real political role. The trade union movement is facing a parallel erosion of grassroots participation, in that the processes enabling rank-and-file workers to become senior officials have broken down in many major unions and peak councils.

What are the real implications of the shifts in Labor Party membership? It could be argued that the loss of working-class participation in the branches is not really a cause for concern, and that calls for Labor to be more working-class are backward-looking in that they seek to erase the organisational and policy reforms of recent decades and return to the male-dominated, monocultural Party of the early to mid-1960s. It could also be argued, by the more pragmatically inclined, that advertising, opinion polling, and direct mailing keep the Party elites in touch with the voters and make the old functions of local branches largely obsolete. The first argument, however, overlooks the significant fact that in the 1940s, which was the ALP's most effective period in terms of actually implementing labour movement policies, the Party had a more broadly-based membership, with much higher levels of working-class participation. More importantly, the argument fails to recognise that to be a working-class Party today
Labor must in fact become much less male-dominated, by recruiting from the sales, personal service and clerical fields in which women predominantly work; and much more multicultural, by involving many more migrants from non-English speaking backgrounds who work in blue-collar jobs.

Pragmatists can hardly deny that the ALP is now deeply in debt, and increasingly dependent on business donations, as a result of its membership base being so narrow; nor that this creates a danger that the Party will become even more beholden to capital, and less in touch with the concerns of its electoral base. To test the notion that new electioneering techniques can achieve success at the ballot-box in the prolonged absence of a healthy grassroots membership, it is necessary to review the changing pattern of electoral support since the Second World War, and assess what is perhaps the most serious of all the implications to flow from the shifts in Party membership, which is the ramifications they have for Labor's voting base.
On the surface, the constriction of Labor Party membership to the more privileged sections of society is consistent with the widespread belief that the class basis of voting has declined since the Second World War. However, this conventional wisdom concerning postwar electoral patterns is now open to serious question.

In 1978 David Kemp presented public opinion poll evidence to the effect that manual workers' propensity to vote Labor had become sharply and steadily weaker since the 1940s. From these trends he argued that, by the 1980s, manual workers would be no more likely to vote ALP than people in other occupations. Don Aitkin, in 1982, endorsed the thrust of Kemp's argument, although his own research dated only from 1967, and his interpretation that there had been a decline in the electoral salience of social class between then and 1979 was based, not on any evidence that there had been a fall in manual workers' support for Labor (on the contrary, his surveys showed that there had been a rise), but on the fact that Labor support had increased among white-collar workers.
The influence of Kemp and Aitkin's arguments can be seen in the way journalists nowadays, when trying to explain electoral volatility, emphasise people's position as consumers rather than producers. Thus we read of swings occurring in the 'mortgage belt', rather than in 'working-class' areas. Indeed, Kemp's influence has even extended into official ALP quarters. For instance, a discussion paper on electoral strategies produced by Labor's National Committee of Inquiry in 1978 uncritically accepted his findings, asserting that 'There has been a slow but steady decline in the proportion of blue-collar workers voting for the ALP since, at least, the Second World War'. The ALP's political direction in the 1980s was shaped by this and the related belief that, to win office, the Party had to concentrate its energies on meeting the concerns of 'middle-class' voters in marginal seats.

However, in other quarters Kemp's figures, and therefore the strategic implications of his argument, have been queried. Bob Connell and Murray Goot have presented alternative public opinion poll evidence which shows that Labor support among manual workers has ebbed and flowed much more than the picture of continuous decline which Kemp presents. F.L. Jones and Ian McAllister, in a more recent and technically more rigorous analysis of similar data to that used by Kemp have found, after eliminating various methodological defects involved in his usage of the data, that the ALP attracted just as high a proportion of votes from manual workers in the early 1980s as it had in the late 1940s, and that the electoral gap between manual and white-collar employees was no narrower in the mid-1960s than it was in the immediate postwar years, though it did close marginally after the 1960s for the reasons that Aitkin advanced: a rise in Labor support among non-manual workers.

All these surveys involve asking individuals how they vote, and then relating their answers to a range of individual characteristics such as occupation, age and gender. A general criticism which can be made of them is that, willingly or otherwise, they equate the popular distinction between manual and non-manual occu-
pations with a distinction between social classes. As we have seen, in their incomes, prospects and patterns of political participation, people in routine white-collar jobs are now much closer to 'manual' workers than they are to the career sections of the labour force. It is difficult, then, to sustain an argument that an aggregate rise in the Labor vote among white-collar workers amounts to a decline in the electoral importance of class, without distinguishing the less privileged white-collar positions from the more privileged. And when Aitkin's evidence on voting patterns is disaggregated into more specific occupational groups, it emerges that, amidst the white-collar labour force, it is the clerks, shop assistants and salaried professionals, rather than the accountants, doctors and lawyers, who have become more likely to vote ALP. Therefore, if we believe that the essential class division in Australian society lies not between those who supposedly work with their hands and those who work with their minds, but between, on the one hand, those who cannot derive significant income except by selling their labour for a wage or salary and, on the other, those who derive significant income elsewhere, then Aitkin's data can be cited as evidence not of a decline but of an increase in the impact which people's class position has upon the way they vote. What has actually happened since the War is that the most unambiguously working-class sections of the white-collar labour force, including the many women who have entered paid work, have become increasingly pro-Labor. Far from weakening in its electoral importance, then, class has become more potent.

The Kemp thesis has been questioned by James Jupp on further grounds: namely that it conflicts with the obvious pattern whereby the socioeconomic status of a geographical electorate continues to be the essential determinant of its political allegiance; with solid working-class seats being safe for Labor, and affluent seats safe for the Liberals. To assess, from a new angle, how the class basis of voting has in fact altered since the War, and also to have a framework for comparing changes in branch membership with changes in the Party's electoral support in this period, Jupp's
criticism has been tested in some detail. A close study of the electoral redistributions conducted since the War revealed that in all elections most seats in Sydney were wholly based on either working-class municipalities or middle-class municipalities (as defined above). Figure 4 shows the actual strength of the Labor vote, at each House of Representatives election from 1949, in these electorates.

**Figure 4**
The Labor Vote in Sydney, 1949–1990
(Primary votes as a proportion of total votes in general elections for the House of Representatives)

![Graph showing the Labor vote in Sydney, 1949-1990](image)

Source: Official Election statistics

When these trends are compared with those in Figure 2 (see page 33), it becomes clear that, between the 1940s and the early 1980s, Labor's vote in working-class areas declined much less severely than did its membership, and that in middle-class areas the growth in electoral support for the ALP was less spectacular.
than the growth in membership. Accordingly, any suggestion that changes in the Party’s composition simply reflect changes in its electorate is quite wrong. Since the early 1970s, there has been a stark and unprecedented contrast between ALP members, who have become disproportionately ‘middle-class’, and Labor voters, who remain predominantly working-class.

Figure 4 also makes it clear that the fall in voter support for the ALP in working-class electorates was, prior to the 1980s, much less severe than Kemp’s argument would suggest. Evidently, Labor loyalties among working-class people were fading, rather than vanishing. Apart from the exceptional circumstances of the 1966 ‘Vietnam’ election, ALP support in working-class Sydney was comfortably above 50 per cent, and the difference in the voting preferences of the two classes stayed substantially intact. These findings support Jones and McAllister in that the 1983 Labor vote in working-class electorates was only minutely less than in 1949. They are also consistent with Aitkin’s research in that the rate of Labor support in middle-class areas has been consistently higher since the late 1960s than previously. For although the electoral gap between the two types of area did not close to anywhere near the same extent as the membership gap, the difference has been significantly less since Whitlam’s accession to leadership than it was before, as the third column of Table 5 makes clear.

Table 5:
The ALP’s Proportion of the Total Vote in House of Representatives Elections in Sydney, 1949 to 1990(%)
The reasons for this narrowing gap vary, however. In the period of Whitlam's leadership, that is, elections held from 1969 to 1977, the reason that the difference between the areas declined sharply was that support for Labor rose sharply in middle-class areas, while working-class support remained constant. By contrast, in the post-Whitlam period, the difference between the areas diminished because support for Labor fell more sharply in working-class areas than in middle-class areas. Although relatively few people in working-class areas participated in the ALP during the Whitlam era, they continued to give the Party strong support at the ballot box. There are several possible explanations for this apparent paradox. One is that electoral support for the ALP would have risen among migrants, women and young people in such areas. Another is that the residents of working-class suburbs would have been content with the essential thrust of the Whitlam government's policies, even if they no longer felt that they could play an active part in formulating them. In many ways the Whitlam government did draw on Labor tradition and, in contrast to the present administration, its ministers were not seen as being too close to prominent business figures and their interests. However, the paradox may also be explained simply by the fact that there is a time lag involved in the transformation of the ALP's social base.

In the British context the idea that change in Labour Party membership prefigures similar, subsequent change in the Party's constituency has been put forward by Barry Hindess. In 1971, Hindess argued that, since the 1950s, there had been a significant fall in active support for the Labour Party in working-class areas, which had reduced the Party's capacity to mobilise voters in these areas in the short term, and made leaders remote from the issues they needed to tackle to retain the loyalties of these voters in the longer term. Hindess' book was criticised at the time for relying on limited evidence, but the course of electoral events in Britain since the late 1970s has tended to vindicate his analysis.

In a more recent and empirically more solid study, the decline
of involvement in the British Labour Party by manual and routine white-collar employees has been identified as both a signal and a cause of the subsequent, catastrophic loss of votes from these sections of the population. According to Paul Whitely, the erosion of active Labour support in working-class areas not only reduced the Party’s capacity to mobilise voters, and to act in accordance with their concerns; it also meant losing the considerable electoral benefits which flowed from having a large number of activists transmitting political ideas within their local communities and in their day-to-day personal contacts with other workers. Further, it caused Labour activists to be so unrepresentative of Labour voters that they became unlikely to preselect anyone for parliament who lacked the polished communication skills of the professionally-trained, and thus the parliamentary party became particularly out of touch with the people it was supposed to be representing.59

When we return to examine the Australian electoral trends illustrated in Figure 4, we can see that it is only since 1983, and in spite of (some might say because of) an increasingly sophisticated approach to electioneering, that the working-class vote has fallen in three consecutive elections. At the 1987 election, despite a major split among the conservative parties, the Hawke government was returned to office with considerably less support in working-class Sydney than Whitlam had received in Labor’s massive electoral defeats of 1975 and 1977 and indeed with less support than at any time since the War, save for 1966.

In 1990, the ALP’s proportion of all votes in these areas went down further and poised precariously above 50 per cent, even though the Party fared much better in Sydney than in Australia overall, where its primary vote was at its lowest ebb since the Depression of the 1930s. Furthermore, since 1988, there have been unprecedented protest votes recorded against the ALP by voters in working-class electorates, when the opportunity has been presented, in several Federal by-elections. In the House of Representatives electorate of Adelaide, for instance, the Party’s primary vote fell by 23 per cent between the general election of 1984
and the by-election of 1988 in low-income, public housing areas.60

At a State level, too, the loss of support for Labor governments during the 1980s has generally been greater in ‘safe’ electorates than in the marginals. In the New South Wales elections of 1988, the average swing from Labor in Sydney’s western suburbs and in the industrial, manufacturing and coal-mining centres of the Hunter Valley and the Illawarra exceeded the State average of 10.6 per cent. Both then and in the South Australian elections of 1989, several official ALP candidates were dumped from ‘safe’ seats in favour of independents standing on ‘traditional’ Labor platforms. There was also an extraordinarily high movement from the ALP to the Australian Democrats among the working-class electors of the Victorian seat of Thomastown in a by-election held early in 1990. Western Australian Labor came third in the 1991 Geraldton by-election, after holding the seat for more than 40 years, following allegations of corrupt contact between ALP parliamentary leaders and some of the State’s largest corporations. At the local level as well, in numerous and diverse instances, what were a few years ago regarded as rock-solid Labor councils have recently passed from the Party’s control, for the very first time.

These trends suggest that the changes in the ALP’s composition and orientation over recent decades have produced a party which is unlikely to sustain the long-term loyalty of working-class voters. ALP supporters have become cynical of the rhetoric about creating a fairer society which the Party’s leaders use at election time, in view of the increase in economic inequality which they have themselves experienced under Labor government policies during the 1980s. Slick, uninspiring campaigns offering little policy choice have reinforced their disposition to view politics as utterly irrelevant to their lives, and to therefore now look upon Labor politicians as undeserving of their continued loyalties.

It may seem odd that the Federal Labor government has managed to be re-elected three times, given that its primary vote has de-
clined steadily in both working-class and middle-class areas since it was first elected in 1983, and given the extent of the ALP's simultaneous membership decline. One well-known reason for the government's survival is that the drift in Labor's primary vote has not been fully translated into a fall in its two-party preferred vote. To date, the failure of the coalition parties to present a credible administrative alternative, and the absence of other parties on the Left, has seen many disenchanted Labor supporters make their protest by voting informal, or for independents and minor parties with their effective preference returning to the ALP.

Another reason is compulsory voting, which protects the ALP from low turnout among less privileged voters, in contrast to Britain and the United States. The current enthusiasm among conservative politicians in Australia for a new system of voluntary voting stems from their recognition of the advantages which this system has conferred upon the parties of privilege elsewhere.

A further crucial reason for Labor's electoral ascendancy in the 1980s is that while working-class support for Labor was weakening overall, it was distributed much more advantageously than ever before. Several commentators have observed that the ALP vote during the 1980s become far more evenly spread, especially in Melbourne. However, despite indications that the location of poverty in that city has altered considerably, these commentators have persisted in assuming that the Party simply attracted new levels of support among 'middle-class' voters living in the marginal seats. They have not explored the possibility that Labor's more even spread of votes could be the result of residential shifts by working-class voters.

Until the mid-1960s, Labor won a much smaller share of the seats in Melbourne than it did of the votes. Huge majorities amassed in a handful of electorates in the inner, northern and western working-class suburbs were outweighed by the smaller majorities which the Liberal Party was consistently able to gain in the electorates spanning the city's relatively affluent southern and eastern suburbs. However, Labor's disadvantage began to break
down in the late 1960s, as young families from working-class backgrounds began to move to the outer fringes of the city in search of affordable housing. Ann Forward has shown, by correlating data drawn from the 1966 and 1971 censuses, with changes in the Labor vote between the 1966 and 1972 elections, that this widespread movement created new electorates in the outer northern and north-western suburbs, and that the enthusiasm of residents in these suburbs for the Whitlamite agenda of urban renewal was crucial in putting the Labor government into power. Subsequent censuses indicate that, since the 1970s, a residential shift to outer fringe suburbs has continued to proceed rapidly in Melbourne, particularly towards the outer east. The question is: has this altered the socioeconomic character of House of Representatives electorates in these suburbs to the extent that the electoral success of the Hawke government in the 1980s may have depended, much more than is generally realised, on the fact that many Labor supporters from working-class backgrounds have simply moved house?

For the purposes of assessing, in broad terms, whether this is so, Melbourne can be divided into three geographical regions: a ‘safe Labor’ region; a ‘safe Liberal’ region, and a ‘volatile’ region. Crucial to the ascendency of the Hawke government in the 1980s was the fact that all but one of the House of Representatives electorates in the ‘volatile’ region, that is, the outer eastern and south-eastern suburbs of Melbourne, swung from the Liberals to the ALP in the 1980 and 1983 elections, and most continued to be held by Labor until 1990, in stark contrast to their previous, almost uniform and uninterrupted Liberal allegiances. Precise examination of the changing demographic character of these regions is complicated by the changes in electoral boundaries which occurred between the 1971 and 1986 census. However, the regional classifications have been determined in a way which makes the data closely comparable.

As with the Sydney municipalities, the socioeconomic character of the electorates in each region of Melbourne has been
measured according to the proportion of the local labour force engaged in professional and managerial occupations at the time of each census. Table 6 shows that the proportion of people in these 'career' occupations, in the region which became electorally volatile after 1977, was virtually static between 1971 and 1986, whereas in the safe Liberal and Labor electorates, the proportion grew rapidly.

**Table 6**

Melbourne Residents in Professional, Para-professional, Managerial and Administrative Occupations as a Proportion of the Local Labour Force, 1971 and 1986(%)$^6^4$

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1971</th>
<th>1986</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Safe Liberal electorates</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volatile electorates</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safe Labor electorates</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In other words, the relative socioeconomic status of the electorates which swung to the ALP from 1980 had declined significantly since the early 1970s. Demography was now on the Party's side. The 'gentrification' of the inner suburbs was insufficient to overhaul Labor majorities there, while the dispersal of low and middle-income workers helped tip the scales for new Labor majorities elsewhere. While a more in-depth research project would be needed to quantify the precise correlations between population movement and changes in the ALP vote, there can be little doubt that working-class relocation in Melbourne (and probably also in Sydney and other centres) has played a much bigger part in the election of Labor governments in the 1980s than the conventional analyses, undertaken outside a geographical context, would allow.

Contrary, then, to the idea that Labor's electoral success in the 1980s has simply flowed from a greater 'middle-class' follow-
Fading Loyalties

ing, the demographic evidence suggests that Labor has depended more heavily than ever on the residual loyalties of working-class voters. The recent election of Labor governments has occurred largely because the Party has managed to maintain much of its working-class vote, in spite of its increasingly ‘middle-class’ membership and orientation. The process of suburbanisation has, in the short term, aided the ALP’s electoral prospects even though, at the same time, it has tended to erode the Party’s active support base.

It is doubtful, however, that the growing contradictions between Labor’s membership and its constituency can continue to be reconciled. The geographical advantages which the Party enjoyed during the 1980s, along with the absence of alternative parties on the Left, may now be drawing to a close. Key Liberal figures have signalled that they are now prepared to compete head-on with Labor for the votes of blue-collar workers, migrants from non-English speaking backgrounds and the young. They also plan to capitalise on the continuing gentrification of inner-city suburbs. The Democrats are establishing themselves as a serious alternative for disaffected Labor voters and they intend now to raise environmental issues in their campaigns in the industrial suburbs.65 Green activists in general appear likely to strengthen their position in Australian party politics in the next few years. Much has been made of the supposed dichotomy between environmental protection and the interests of blue-collar workers. However, for the millions of wageearners who reside in the polluted, hazard-ridden western suburbs of Sydney and Melbourne, and for all those who are employed in dangerous workplaces, these two objectives are quite compatible. The fact that workers are the biggest victims of environmentally unsafe industries needs to be more widely understood within the Australian labour movement.

Although the transfer of low-income groups to the outer suburbs is likely to continue in the future, in the most recent Federal election voters in these suburbs showed a marked preparedness
to defect from Labor over the imposition of high mortgage payments, and the absence of adequate community services. The Party’s eleventh-hour promises to lower interest rates and to provide modest amounts for more services were greeted with scepticism, and not without reason. The imaginative social policies and major increases in community infrastructure needed in order to overcome the poverty, isolation and loneliness of these outer-suburban residents is not likely to materialise as long as the key Federal economic Ministers remain ideologically committed to the contraction of the public sector.

ALP leaders have clearly underestimated the extent to which their Party depends on continued working-class support. Unless the ALP reorients its structures and policies towards the people whose loyalties it has been taking for granted, then its electoral base may erode as its membership has already. Advertising, opinion polling and direct mail can be used in stemming short-term losses among peripheral voters. However, in Britain during the 1980s, and in New Zealand more recently, these techniques have proved quite inadequate in shielding labour parties from the erosion of support within their core constituency.
PROSPECTS FOR THE PARTY'S RENEWAL

Those who believe that there is no constituency among the majority for any new politics know nothing of the human roots that feed politics...[and] are blind to the hidden injuries, the unexpressed suffering, and the deep fears and frustrations and longings that are constantly suppressed, held down below the threshold of public political discussion. Those who can fashion a public language for these private sorrows and unarticulated needs may be amazed by the pent-up feelings that will rush into the new channels that have been opened up.


It is easy to succumb to despair about the prospects of revitalising Labor as a party which filters the aspirations of working people into the councils of political power. However, it is important to emphasise that the present crisis does not arise inevitably from
social change so much as from the ALP's failure so far to diagnose
the nature of this change and to act against its negative effects.
The widespread recognition within the Party now of the need for
structural reform and an expanded, more representative mem-
bership holds out the possibility that an effective reorientation of
the ALP can be accomplished. National Secretary Bob Hogg, for
instance, has acknowledged that Party 'membership is too low'
and that this 'problem...will become critical over the next decade'
without effective steps to 'broaden the Party's base' and widen its
channels of policy formulation.68 Once several misconceptions
have been tackled, such acknowledgements may prove to be the
seeds for eventual regeneration.

The first misconception is that broadening Labor's base means
nothing other than moving away from, or reducing the impor-
tance of, trade union affiliation. Proponents of this view portray
the ALP's individual membership as quite representative, but the
affiliated union membership as no longer relevant due to the
dwindling of union numbers in the general workforce. The evi-
dence in previous chapters shows this analysis to be seriously
flawed. In reality, the decline in ALP branch membership over
the postwar period has been much more severe than the decline
in union membership. Unionists as a proportion of all wage-
earners have fallen by up to one-quarter since the mid-1950s, but
ALP branch members as a proportion of Labor voters have fallen
by more than two-thirds. Any further loss of union involvement in
the Party would thus be particularly demoralising.

While it is far from perfect, trade union affiliation means that
the ALP retains an absolutely crucial organisational connection
with the millions of blue-collar, and considerable numbers of the
white-collar, wage-earners who continue to make up the core of
the Party's electoral support. Because active working-class par-
ticipation in Party structures has been so thoroughly eroded, the
more that membership is confined to the branches, the less
contact of any kind the ALP will have with the people who make
up most of its constituency, and the further detached it will be-
come from their needs. A sustained revival of the ALP’s working-class vote requires a revival of the close nexus which used to exist between work, trade unionism and active political participation. For all their imperfections, the affiliated and non-affiliated unions represent the best available means by which the ALP can regain touch with those sections of its electorate which have not been participating in the Party’s branches and whose views most need to be heard. It is not a question of going beyond the old affiliated base, then, but rather of going back to it, and of using it to broaden and revitalise the ALP’s union links along the lines of real rank-and-file participation instead of along the present, bureaucratic lines whereby only an oligarchy of senior officials comes to have a say.

Within the union movement there is also a misconception — and that is the assumption that amalgamating current organisations into new industry-based structures can in itself, or with the aid of some public relations measures, overcome membership decline. The experience of most Western European nations has been that centralised bureaucracy, and a remote relationship with the rank and file, tend to be exacerbated by large industry structures, and that these weaken the capacity of unions to recruit and retain members. Many trade unions in Europe are turning to new, more localised recruitment strategies in a bid to increase the proportion of the workforce which they cover, which in most cases is lower than the proportion covered in Australia today.67

The formation of industry-based structures here may, in the long term, enhance recruitment and participation, by enabling more resources to be put into personal contact between officials and members. However, it may also, in the long term, impede recruitment and participation, as it has done in parts of Europe in the past, by reinforcing the perception of unions as large and distant centres of power. For the ultimate outcome to be positive, unionists need to insist that industry-based structures are a means to an end, the end being a broader, more democratic movement in which grassroots input by ordinary members is constantly
maximised. The attainment of this end will depend not so much on amalgamations as on what is done in addition to amalgama-
tions.

In so far as the Labor Party needs to extend its membership base, it needs to do so in conjunction with the union movement. To be viable in the future, both the ALP and the trade unions need to foster a new culture of participation among female clerical, sales and personal service workers, among migrants from non-
English speaking backgrounds, and among young workers. Both unions and Party need to restore active involvement among manual workers generally, and also to shift power and resources out of the inner city and into the fast-growing yet culturally bar-
ren outer suburbs where most non-unionised workers, and po-
tential ALP members and voters, now live or work. It is more logical to tackle these tasks together than it is to draw an artificial distinction between the twin sociological challenges facing the unions and the Party, and thus to weaken the prospects of either of them defeating these daunting challenges.

Within the ALP there is a third misconception — to the effect that membership can be increased without new initiatives to alter the power relationships of the Party so as to give rank-and-file members a greater voice in the formation and implementation of policy, in the selection of candidates and in the election of leaders. To assert that Labor’s present problems are ‘political’ rather than ‘structural’ is true in one sense, but structures nevertheless are crucial in determining who actually comes to ex-
ercise, and who ends up being excluded from, political power. Labor voters cannot seriously be expected to flock back into the Party if the Federal parliamentary leadership can continue to ignore the policies they put up, and can, indeed, continue to go against their most basic motivations, such as their desire for the State to intervene in the economy so as to redistribute wealth from rich to poor, and to expand the provision of free education. Neither can the Party seriously expect to retain effective control over its supporters if at the same time it denies them any effective
control over the Party and its actions in government. Changes to policy, preselection and leadership election processes seem mandatory in order to break the present cycle of disillusionment and, together with new recruitment initiatives, to make the ALP’s parliamentarians and elite decision-makers properly representative of, and accountable to, the people who constitute their electorate.

The official agenda for organisational reform within the Party includes many commonsense proposals, such as greater uniformity between the States in their rules, simplified procedures for joining, incentives for recruitment, and closer contact between the Party’s local and national structures. However, it also includes some manifestly retrograde steps such as a proposal to allow the national conference to meet only once every three years, and for the conference’s powers over policy to be diverted to a national executive several stages removed from the full Party membership. As Lindsay Tanner has pointed out, there is a pressing need for national conference and executive delegates, Party leaders and officers and Members of Parliament to, in future, be elected by direct ballots of Party members rather than through the tortuously indirect mechanisms which have applied until now. Without such reforms the senior Party decision-makers cannot be made more accountable, and the futility felt by local ALP activists cannot be overcome.

Tanner has also proposed that much stronger affirmative action provisions be introduced to guarantee that, from now on, women enter Parliament in proportion to their importance among ALP voters. A further proposal that issue-based ALP branches be allowed, in addition to locality branches, could be useful in revitalising input from the young people and activists in social movements who have been an important and constructive part of the ALP in the last twenty years, but who more recently have become disillusioned and have drifted towards the environmental movement and the minor parties. In addition to these suggestions, a greater role for ethnic branches needs to be
incorporated into the reform agenda, and the concept of affirmative action may need to be applied more broadly, to ensure that the Labor Party does not treat its members and supporters from non-English speaking backgrounds as the political equivalent of 'factory fodder' — denying them real opportunities to proceed into Parliament or into other positions of power.

The task of revitalising input from the people whose alienation from ALP structures has been deepest and most sustained of all, that is, manual workers and the predominantly female sales, personal service and clerical workforce, requires much more than just changes to rules. The concept of issue-based branches may not be helpful in this regard, as it tends to assume that everyone approaches politics in the manner of the professionally-trained, and it may underestimate the degree of distance between many working-class people, especially those who live in outer suburbs and rely on public transport, and the central forums of political discussion and power. The crucial questions for this disenfranchised section of the working class are how to overhaul local political activity, so that it is, geographically and in other respects, in tune with their contemporary needs and lifestyles; and how to foster interest and confidence among them so they can again transmit their aspirations into Party structures.

To answer these questions, the ALP will need to extend its research and technological resources beyond short-term opinion polling, so as to find out more about who its supporters and potential supporters actually are; what, deep-down, they want the ALP to do; and how barriers to their participation might be overcome. Political education programs will need to be developed, not just to equip working-class supporters with greater confidence and communication skills, but also to broaden 'middle-class' supporters' notions of what constitutes politics. The extensive common ground which does exist between the concerns of the social movements and the needs of wage and salary-earners should be more extensively charted. Labor must be prepared to confront class inequality, whether it is encountered
in the form of unemployment, inadequate housing, a hazardous working environment, unaffordable education or in any other form, as its prime policy concern. This does not simply mean a return to an old-style and limited labourist agenda. On the contrary, it is vital that the Party should dispense with the view that government is all about narrow economic management. The reintegration of politics with people’s working lives should lead to an extension of the political realm into many other dimensions of their everyday lives. Nowadays, financial hardship manifests itself not so much in outright material deprivation as in family breakdown and violence, in alcoholism and drug abuse, in loneliness and alienation. The parameters of political discussion need to be pushed outwards accordingly.

The path to ALP renewal proceeds from a recognition that the malaise of small, volatile membership and shrinking electoral support will ultimately be cured not by vague or superficial attempts to regain support from ‘the community’ in general, but rather by a genuine attempt to put power into the hands of those particular elements of the workforce which, since the War, have been alienated from any real democratic role. It appears that it is only by rebuilding a full and fruitful relationship with the social forces which first brought it into being that the Labor Party can be assured of emerging from its present crisis of morale and purpose, and of living to enjoy another major anniversary year.
Notes


11. Don Aitkin even suggests that you also have to be an early school leaver, a trade union member and live in rented accommodation if you are to be included in the 'working class! Aitkin, 'The New Electorate', in Woodward, Parkin and Summers (eds), p 215.


15. This demographic data is reported in P. Smale and J. Whelan (eds) *Australia Unveiled. The Changing Face of a Nation*, Syme Print, Melbourne, 1989, p 5.


Fading Loyalties


22. On Menzies and his strategies, see J. Brett, 'Menzies' Forgotten People', Meanjin, Vol 43, No 2, June 1984; and for an incisive and relevant analysis of British Labour's weakness among female voters in this period, see B. Campbell, The Iron Ladies. Why Do Women Vote Tory?, Virago, London, 1987. Little research on the voting gender gap was carried out in Australia during the 1950s and 1960s, but in 1967 Aitkin found that 44 per cent of men identified with Labor but only 35 per cent of women. See Aitkin, Stability and Change in Australian Politics, second edition, ANU Press, Canberra, 1982, p 327.


28. See research into the attitudes of Canberra's senior public servants conducted by Dr M. Fusey and quoted in the Age, Melbourne, 27 September, 1990.


34. A detailed list of the sources of membership and census data used in this text, and the methodology
adopted, can be found in my BA thesis ‘Fading Loyalties: Working-Class Participation in, and Electoral Support for, the Australian Labor Party since World War Two’, which is available in the History Department library at the University of Melbourne.

35. Circular letter from F.E. Chamberlain to trade unions in Western Australia, 1950. Australian Labor Party (Western Australian Branch) records, State Library of Western Australia, MN 300/2890A File 159.


39. At the 1966 census, 90 per cent of the Sydney municipalities which housed below average proportions of professionals and managers also housed below average proportions of employers; and 94 per cent of the municipalities with above average proportions of these occupations also recorded above average proportions of employers.

40. On the socioeconomic characteristics of those who broke away from the ALP, see P. Reynolds, The Democratic Labor Party, Jacaranda, Queensland, 1974, pp 58-60, 64.


42. A. Barcan, The Socialist Left in Australia, 1949-1959, Australian Political Studies Association Monograph, Sydney, 1960, pp 7, 15. Trade union trends have been calculated from the figures provided in Vamplew, pp 148, 164.


45. The ALP membership percentages in Tables 1 to 4 are subject to sampling error: up to a maximum of 2 per cent.

46. The figures provided by the South Australian ALP relate to all people who joined the Party in 1986, while the Queensland, Western Australian and Tasmanian figures are drawn from samples of the total membership in that year.

47. As evidenced by the occupations listed in the applications for ALP membership in 1967, 1968 and 1969, Australian Labor Party (Victorian Branch) records, State Library of Victoria, MS 10508, items 422, 446 and 480; and by the results from the examination of 1971 Victorian ALP membership tickets undertaken by Ward, ‘A “New Look” ALP?’, p 75.

48. In this table, the South Australian figure does relate to the total membership, not just the people who joined in 1986.


the 'Campaign Review Committee Interim report to the National Executive', unpublished Federal ALP

51. Senior Minister Senator John Button frankly stated this on 6 May, 1988, according to a report three
days later in the Age, Melbourne.

52. See Freudenberg, A Certain Grandeur, p 80; the comment by Susan Kennedy, a single mother of two
and participant in a Brotherhood of St Laurence media workshop for low-income people, quoted in the
Sunday Age, Melbourne, 21 October, 1990; B. Hindem, The Decline of Working Class Politics, Paladin,
London, 1971, pp 136, 140–141, 166; and also P. Whitley, The Labour Party in Crisis, Methuen, London,

53. See Ward's report on the results of his interviews with a sample of middle-class Victorian ALP

54. D. Kemp, Society and Electoral Behaviour in Australia. A study of Three Decades, University of Queensland
Press, St Lucia, 1978; Aitkin, Stability and Change.

55. Australian Labor Party National Committee of Inquiry Discussion Papers, Australian Political Studies
Association Monograph No 23, Adelaide, 1979, p 79.

Jones and J. McAllister, 'The Changing Structural Base of Australian Politics since 1946', Politics, Vol 24,
No 1, May 1989.


60. These figures were compiled by South Australian Labor Senator Graham Maguire and reported in the

61. Among the commentators in question are C. Bean and J. Kelley, Directors of the Australian National
University's National Social Science Survey. See, for instance, their comments in the Age, Melbourne, 14
February, 1990.

62. K. Grigg documents the extent to which Labor voters were effectively disenfranchised during the
1960s by the system of single-member, localised electorates in his publication, How Representative is the
pp 5 and passim.

Geography No 13, Melbourne, 1978; and Victorian Government Planning Office, Melbourne. Facts and

64. The figures in the table are computed from 1971 data in Commonwealth Bureau of Census and
Statistics, Bulletin 8, Characteristics of the Population and Dwellings in Commonwealth Electoral Divisions,
Reference No 2.90; and from G. Newman and A. Koprak, Comparisons of 1986 Census Characteristics.
Commonwealth Electoral Divisions, Parliament of Australia, Legislative Research Service, Current Issues

65. The shift in Liberal Party strategy was spelt out by several organisational and parliamentary leaders
at the Party's Federal council of October, 1990. See also Michael Kroger's comments in the Melbourne
Times, 29 August, 1990; and Australian Democrats statements in the Sunday Herald, Melbourne, 20 May,
1990.

66. R. Hogg, 'The Labour Movement and the Political Process', speech to Evatt Foundation Conference,
September 1990.

67. See D. Rawson, 'Is Unionism Everywhere in Decline?', unpublished Australian Political Studies

68. The agenda is set out in R. Hogg's 'Review and Recommendations on the Reform of the Party's