

# THE GROWTH OF THE RADICAL MOVEMENT:

Dr. Jim Cairns believes that the radical movement begun by students in this university is politically very significant. He said as much, but showed it just as clearly by making a special trip from Melbourne in late January to accept an invitation to address S.D.A. in defence of parliament as an agent of social change. At the end of what amounted to a confrontation he said that he regarded the Queensland movement as more continuous both in theory and in practice than any other in Australia.

This opinion reflects that of many other commentators on the student scene. It is often suggested that the movement here is more serious, capable of embracing more viewpoints without ideological factionalism, more organised and more advanced in respect of its links with the working class movement.

It seems to me that these impressions are not unfounded and in what follows I would like to give my own account of how the present radicalism came to be so strong. I write without any pretensions to the sort of objectivity beloved of my colleagues, not only because that now seems to me a fraud at best and at worst a menace, but also because the views of a participant are more likely to stimulate other participants to put forward alternative analyses or views and more likely to turn pretended "cool observers" into the protagonists that they need to be if this university is ever going to waken to a fuller intellectual life than it has at present.

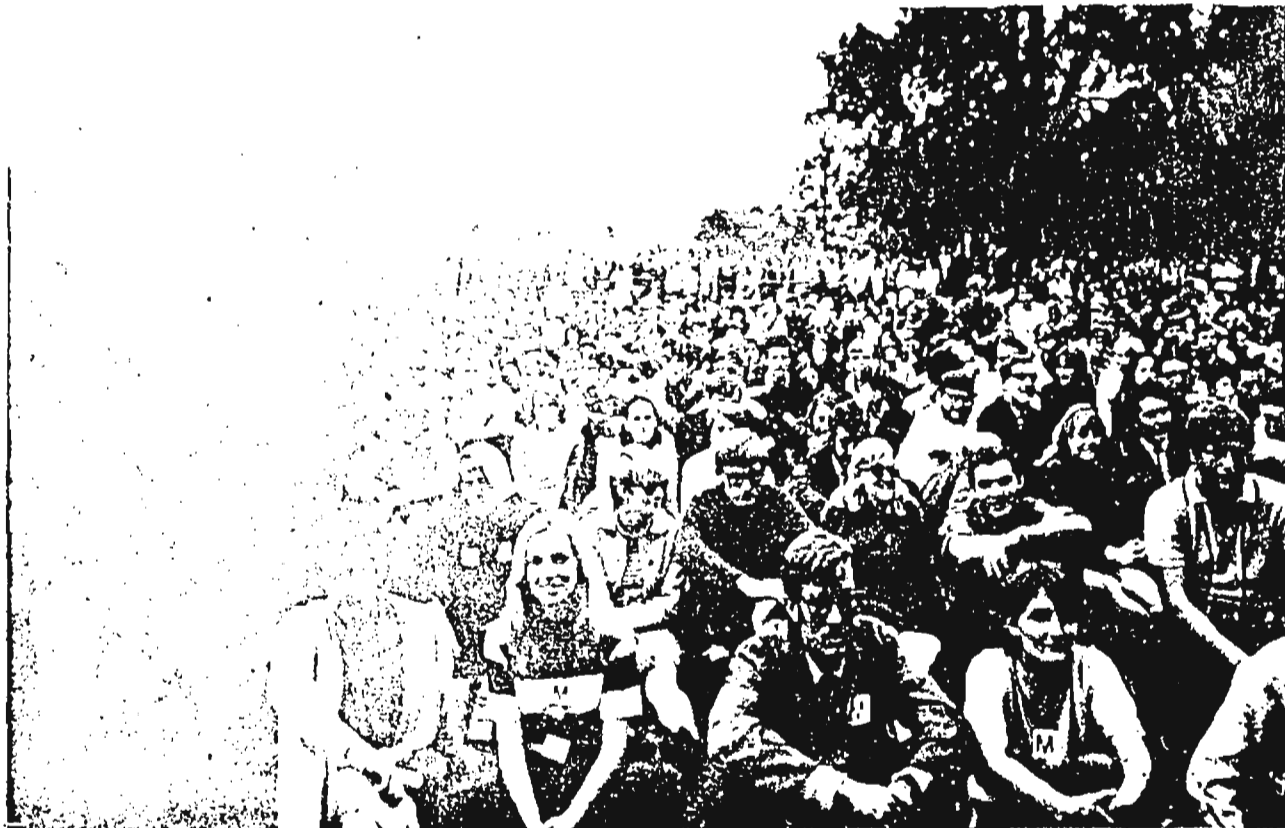
1966 was the year in which a number of independent sources of social criticism upon campus began to converge. Throughout 1965 there was the usual pervasive apathy, lightly dispersed by occasional rowdiness from the bullyboys who set the tone of activism, and even more lightly troubled by occasional remarks of critics to the effect that this wasn't all there was to life. There were, however, a group of intellectually puzzled Catholic students who began to constitute a sort of left opposition within the Newman Society. Preoccupied with the development in their own lives of a form of Christian humanism, they were responding to the new initiatives in the Church after Vatican II. Some regarded themselves as radical Catholics increasingly alienated in the atmosphere of "official" Australian Catholicism. Others, for various reasons, thought of themselves as ex-Catholics, or (as the more "establishment" Newmanites referred to them) "Catholic Atheists." Meeting informally at parties and in the refectory the group emerged with its own ethos and its own brand of commitment to the pursuit of certain intellectual and moral values in modern life contexts. Its main vehicle of expression was a fairly frequent forum, explicitly directed towards bringing about "an intellectual community" to take up and explore questions of religious, moral and social importance. Among the topics dealt with was the nature of the university, a fairly traditional preoccupation for a society named after the founder of the

Catholic university of Dublin.

These forums continued through 1966, with a growing consciousness of many of the students involved that just as the Church in Brisbane did not measure up to their intellectually formed ideals, nor did the university. Berkeley was not much more than a name and they did not usually denounce the university as a capitalist mind-factory but they found the sort of deficiencies that Newman himself might have found—the illiberal, utilitarian conception underlying its structure and course content, over-specialization of professional courses and utter lack of intense intellectual communication or dialectic between disciplines, between staff and students. Essentially a liberal critique of what Clark Kerr has called "the knowledge industry."

It was in 1966 that the members of this group began meeting and listening to another group who were also in revolt against the provincial climate of Brisbane. The beginnings of this group were not so theoretical, but more after the fashion of the New Left groups in America—gut-reaction to particular issues. Early in 1966 they began to call themselves the Vietnam Action Committee (V.A.C.).

The leaders of this group had begun to be involved in radical politics in the town organisation Youth Committee against Conscription (Y.C.A.C.) but had soon come to see the need for an independent campus-based group with a widened scope of protest against the war. Protest activity of any kind was extremely



unfamiliar to Brisbane and the campus was no exception. The bully-boys and their crude egg-throwing tactics were one form of attack to be surmounted. Another, only slightly more subtle, was offered by the various "critics" who accounted for the protestors by giving profound analyses of their various complexes (ranging from inferiority to martyrdom) which drove them to do things so obviously repugnant to God, man, and reason.

A number of attempted protests soon made it abundantly clear that the police were using the Traffic Act regulations to discriminate against anti-government manifestations, and civil liberties began to be an issue with the group. Meanwhile as their involvement grew they began to be aware that they were not an isolated phenomenon. They began to recognise their concerns as very similar to those of groups, especially in America, known as the New Left. In particular they began to read the literature of S.D.S., notably the newspaper *National Guardian* and began to think beyond Vietnam to a critique of the Australian social system in terms of "participatory democracy," of bringing the social reality in various areas of life into line with the liberal rhetoric.

In the August vacation the crossing of the initials of S.D.S. with V.A.C. led to the new name of the group—S.D.A.—Society for Democratic Action. Along with the new name went an intensified desire to embrace a whole range of social issues in a new social movement committed to radical alternatives. S.D.A. was to be involved in action on Vietnam, conscription, education from primary to university level, civil liberties, aborigines, conservation of natural resources, local government and other topics.

However, not much depth of thought went into the linking of these issues and through most of 1966 and 1967 S.D.A. was

to be mainly concerned with consolidating an organisational infrastructure and sponsoring action on various issues.

The third significant group that contributed to the emergence of a radical movement was a number of younger staff with a range of criticisms against the university both theoretical and practical. They had come into contact with dissenting students in fairly informal ways, some in the context of the radical Newman movement, some in the Labor Club with its vaguely socialist atmosphere, others in the growing S.D.A. ferment and others in discussion with intelligent though fairly individualist students critical of the standards of their own department in the humanities.

These various tendencies within the university needed only an occasion for coming into contact. This was provided by an issue late in 1966. It was alleged that there had been discrimination by the university Administration against an outside Peace movement who were sponsoring a conference on South-East Asia. A protest was held in the Great Court on a platform hastily procured by S.D.A. activists. Staff and students spoke to a crowd numbering nearly 2000 and a petition was signed by hundreds of students and staff.

More important for the radical movement was a motion carried at the meeting that the whole issue of university reform be taken up at subsequent meetings. This gave rise to a series of forums in the J. D. Story room at which the nature of the university was discussed, bringing together all the groups mentioned previously. A loosely structured society was formed known as the University Reform Group (U.R.G.) that had three separate branches of activity:

1. to call series of public debates on the concept of the university
2. to do survey-type research on the nature of the education offered in the university

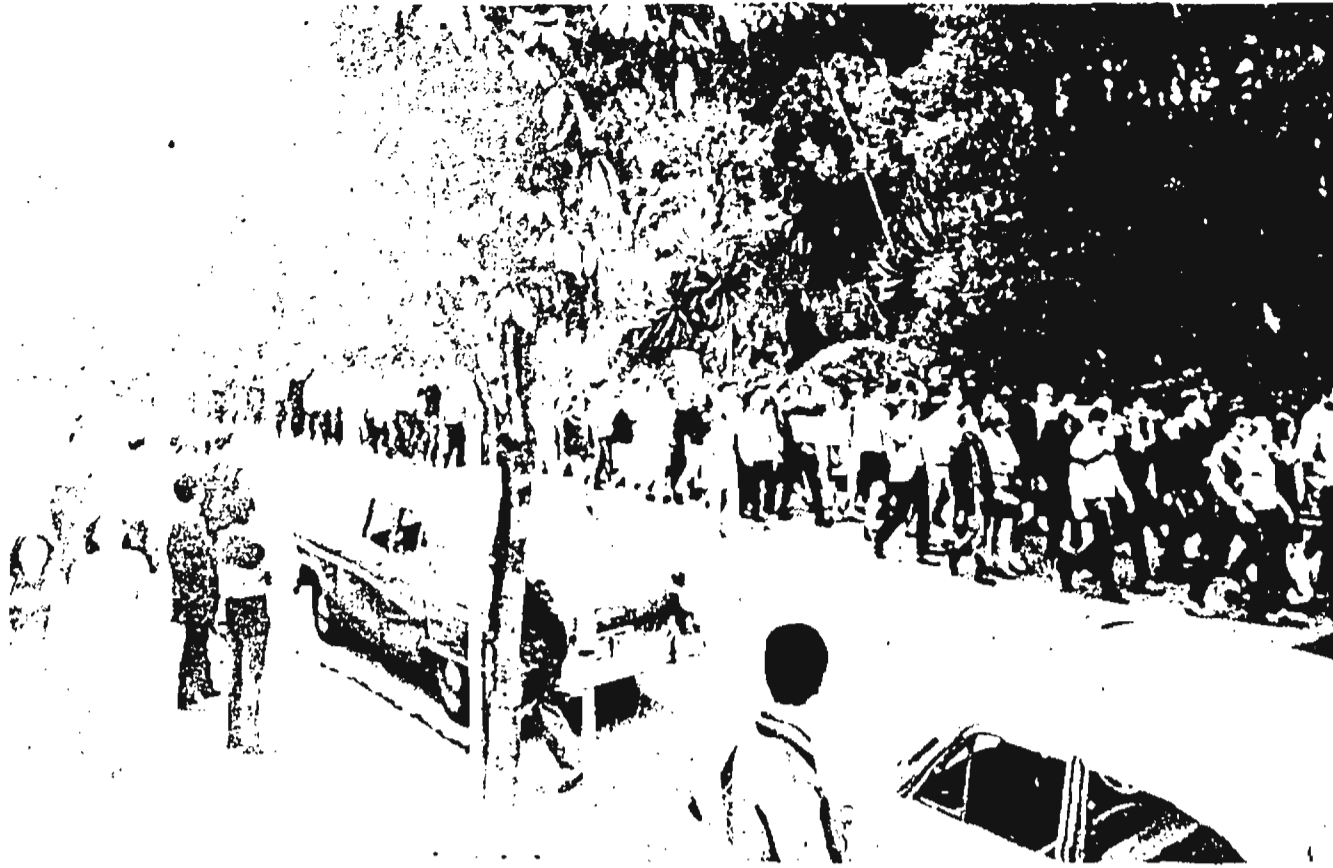
3. to convene fortnightly seminars at which papers would be delivered on aspects of the university and its place in society.

This was a broad formation allowing for the convergence in debate and mutual interaction of all sections from the most romantically communitarian to the most politically activist, from those with the most scholarly objections to those with the most immediate frustrations against authority. It was not without tensions but it at least allowed for the unleashing of pent energies and it led to further activity.

Over the holidays people continued to think along the lines sketched out so far. S.D.A. consolidated itself by gaining a local habitation as well as a name, a printing plant, and undertaking what was probably Australia's first summer campaign—involving group activity of various kinds, leafletting, political discussion, door-knocking, on various issues. In January and February of 1967 Brian Laver, Mitch Thompson, Gail Salmon and Barbara Jane Gaines all went to jail rather than pay fines over their participation in the N.U.A.U.S. sponsored march against conscription in October 1966.

1967 was clearly going to be a year of heightened ferment. This impression was strengthened by the orientation week activity. S.D.A. ran its own complete counter-orientation to introduce new students to issues such as the great imbalance between rich and poor nations, the danger of nuclear destruction, the significance of the Vietnam war, the function of the university in a capitalist society and economy. A range of methods were used from poster displays to what became characteristic of S.D.A., the open-air forums in the refectory area.

A part of the official orientation programme also turned out to be, in effect, a radical initiative. Peter Wertheim and I had been invited to give our view of the university to the freshers in



the time-slot usually reserved for a how-to-study lecture. We did this, and a minor storm broke loose in the press, blowing over to reveal that many students were now ready to take seriously the issues of university reform proposed for discussion.

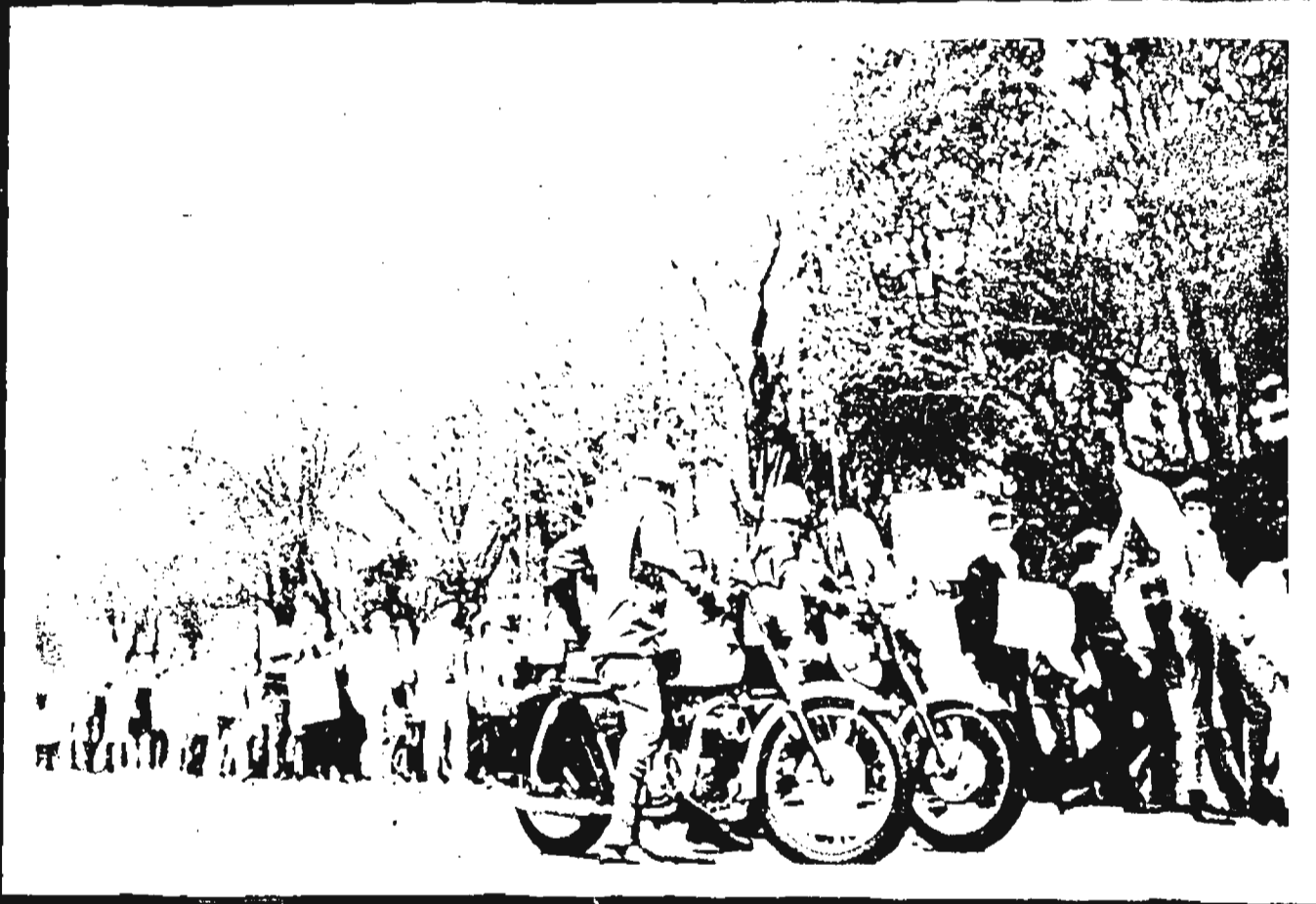
One further effect of the orientation week activities was a growing together in sympathies of the people who were beginning to think in terms of radical solutions. This was the climate in which the University Reform Group renewed its activity.

It was at one of its earliest seminars in the Relaxation Block, that the next significant grouping took place. Don Mannison, who had studied at Berkeley before the 1964 revolt spoke of the style of student activity there, mentioning the formation of SLATE, an intra-university political party to contest student affairs elections. This was the inspiration for the formation of the New Student Movement, N.S.M. It was to be a broad-ranging platform on which all student bodies, all departments, all progressive-thinking groups could co-operate. Its immediate aim was to capture the Union Council in the 1967 elections. Its ultimate aim was to use this institution of student power within the university to bring about various changes in the nature of the university. It produced a five-page platform of detailed requirements for change in five areas of Union concern. It set forth its ideals in an introduction:

"We live in times of crisis and rapid change, and the student body attempts spasmodically in its extra curricular life to respond to this atmosphere. But it cannot do this effectively because it lacks initiative and stimulus from its ostensible leaders.

There are three areas which are of much interest to students, are being allowed to go by default:

1. Students have an interest in the University as a community of staff and students, even to the extent of representation on important committees within the structure of the University.



2. Students have an interest in getting at the facts about education in Australia and particularly tertiary education in this state.

3. Students are citizens not in the making and in the future, but AS students. Consequently they have an interest in the wider community in which the University is an institution. They have an interest in articulating, reserving and exercising certain rights and duties."

This proved to be a set of principles that could rally together the bulk of the radicalism on campus. Over forty candidates stood on the N.S.M. ticket, great numbers turned up to N.S.M. functions, teach-ins, staff-student discussions, weekly policy meetings.

N.S.M. was of course beloured from the beginning as an S.D.A. front, and therefore (seriously) a communist front. Age-old questions were raised such as "where was the money coming from for the series of pamphlets?" In fact N.S.M. was a genuine alliance of the forces I have outlined as active from the beginning of 1966. But the novelty of such co-operation and the inadequacies of their political consciousness made them over-react to the inevitable smears. When Brian Laver won the N.S.M.\* vote at a badly-attended meeting N.S.M. nearly split. It became apparent that, for various reasons N.S.M. was without depth of consensus needed to bring about internal cohesion and resistance to external attack behind a student leader mainly known for his identification with S.D.A., with its largely off-campus image. Furthermore, many N.S.M. members thought there were deep disagreements of theory and style between Laver and the emerging spirit of N.S.M.



\*nomination for president by a narrow vote

Ultimately a compromise solution emerged. Laver was to run as an independent candidate with strong links of sympathy and mutual support with N.S.M. who would not themselves run a candidate for president.

The excitement of the elections, with its mounting pamphlet warfare, and the slow emergence of a coalition of anti-N.S.M. "independents" was, however, soon to be over-borne by the clamour of a more significant movement. This was the civil liberties campaign.

An action committee, mainly Ralph Summy, Brian Laver and Mitch Thompson, had produced an argument against the Traffic Regulations, proposals for change, and a plan of action if no indications were forthcoming from the government. From May 1967, a gradual consensus was building up around this plan. A Civil Liberties Co-ordinating Committee was formed of representatives from staff, the political clubs, the religious clubs and other groups on campus. Forums were held increasingly from early June. It looked as though a march of some hundreds might occur on the stated deadline of 11 July. Then Union President Frank Gardiner began the series of contacts with the Government and the police that were eventually to escalate the movement to the stage reached in September with the Governments' manifest betrayal of the moderate hopes of its own moderate committee.

The September march of 4000 and the year or more of activity subsequent to it on various issues of freedom of speech and assembly are alive enough in public memory not to go into them here. Suffice it to say that the civil liberties issue was, through the stupidity of the government, and the all-too-evident compliance and distortion of the mass media, the main matrix in which student consciousness was formed and directed towards other deficiencies in our society. It still is the main issue which makes apparent to student activists that there are a whole range of topics and minority groups in our society which never get fully discussed either in the media controlled by the rich and powerful, or in the streets policed by the government in the interests of that "traffic" so important to a stereo-typed populace force-fed notions of what is customary and what is not by the media.

The dramatic events of the forum surrounding the postponement of the July march had brought the campus to a new pitch



of political awareness. Especially since some paternalistic remarks of the acting vice-chancellor, Professor Teakle, had almost produced the university's first sit-in. Thus it was that the campaign for the Union elections proved to be such an exhilarating debate over issues. Laced with the usual conflict of personalities, notably that between new-deal type progressive Nucifora and radical Laver, irritated with the traditional Australian utilities of smear and accusation, the campaign nevertheless opened up a new dimension of seriousness in student life and the hegemony of old-style student "professional" politicians was broken. Laver got an astonishing 40% of the popular vote, and the record number of voters (nearly 6500) seemed to have turned out not so much in excessive enthusiasm for conservatism as in fear of the real threat posed by the new radical ideas. N.S.M.'s impact was not to be measured merely in terms of its twelve successful candidates.

The debate and tumult of 1967 persisted in voice, deed and written word until the examination period itself. There was even, especially after the march, some wild talk of boycotting certain examinations, but without going so far there were many students who made almost palpable the feeling that, after all, the examinations were not a central part of the pursuit of knowledge, and the practice of critical reasoning. The forum was held sometimes up to three times a week right into November and a communal breakthrough seemed to have been made. Refectory trivia gave way to serious discussion, and immature groupings based on prejudice broke up in a new climate of serious camaraderie. There was a feeling akin to trade union consciousness abroad. There was something in the atmosphere of the campus that I had recalled to me in reading the Penguin report on the May 1968 "revolution" in France (p.94.):

"The most striking feature of those days was the sight of people talking to each other—not only casual exchanges, but long intense conversations between total strangers, clustered at street corners, in cafes, in the Sorbonne of course. There was an explosion of talk, as if people had been saving up what they had to say for years. And what was impressive was the tolerance with which they listened to each other, as if all those endless dialogues were a form of group therapy. Many French men and women woke up to



the fact that their relationships with each other had been far too stiff and suspicious, far too unfraternal. It seemed as if the system were wrong: children not speaking freely to their parents, employees touching their caps to the bosses, the whole nation standing to attention before the General and his vision of France."

In fact, it seems to me, what happened here in 1967 gave to a whole generation of young radicals a new psychological possession, a new permanently memorable sense of human possibilities that is more immediate and more conducive to action than the "excessive optimism about human nature" with which they are often charged by the disillusioned elitists of the 30s generation. There is now, I am saying, an instinct for a vision of a franker, more open, more communal society abroad, that operates not at the level of theory, of notional possibility, but at the deeper levels of identity-formation, and at the more immediate levels of mutual recognition by young people of disposition, mood and style. They know that these things are possible, in imagination and in fact. They have had experience of them that cannot be rebutted by the arguments of the cynics and "realists" in arm-chairs. Hence they have begun to turn their attention towards all the attitudes in our society that restrict and distort community, that trammel energies of co-operation; they have begun to isolate and attack too the various social structures that reinforce those attitudes. They attack them not ultimately in the name of any theory or alternative worked-out system, but out of the felt communal awareness of forms of human life that cannot be contained in the present institutions, with their impersonality, authoritarianism, and repression of all joy or creative responses to situations.

Once again I am reminded of France, of the words spoken by the philosopher Sartre to Daniel Cohn-Bendit:

"Something which astonishes, something which jolts, something which repudiates all that has made our society what it is today has come out of your movement. I call it extending the range of possibilities: don't give up."

To draw one last conclusion from the experience of 1967, nobody will understand the radical movement here unless they take its emphasis on direct action seriously. For it arises out of the

integral total desire of persons to live in a more open society. It is not just a tactic intellectually adapted to a temporary purpose. It is the product of a constant desire for more communication, more democratic debate, more open attack on admitted but hypocritically dissembled vices of the society. The openness and free public communication of direct action protest and open-air mass meetings are ends as well as means. It is a thrust towards greater social health of the body politic. And that is why violent repression and jailing will not stop it. Because such action merely confirms the intuition in young people of our society's sickness and mean-mindedness.

This was the final legacy of 1967 to the radical movement, a sort of basic orientation, something underlying the separable activities, a dynamic that was compounded of disgust and disillusionment as much as audacious hopes for community. To adapt Mario Savio's words,

"Australian society in the standard conception it has of itself is simply no longer exciting. The most exciting things going on in Australia today are movements to change Australia. Australia is becoming ever more the utopia of sterilised automated contentment. The "futures" and "careers" for which Australian students now prepare are for the most part intellectual and moral wastelands. This chrome-plated consumers' paradise would have us grow up to be well-behaved children. But an important minority of men and women coming to the front today have shown that they will die rather than be standardised, replaceable, and irrelevant."

The student movement, here, and all over the world is now moving beyond that semi-tragic style of determination. But it still remains an important ingredient of the movement, and 1967's events here matured the moral stance of our radicals to the point of real empathy with their international counterparts.

The student movement seems to escalate in rhythms of action and reflection on action, adventure into new concerns and subsequent theoretical consolidation. To those involved in these waves there are the dangers of over-optimism and unwarranted dejection but these are merely growing pains, for the motives for continuance of the movement are built into the structures of the society itself and they will be there in the coming years along with the radicals' incommensurate mentality that opposes structures with a growing theoretical sophistication.

1968, in some ways disappointing to protagonists, can be seen in retrospect as a year of advance upon the front of awareness.

But first a brief catalogue of events:

Over the holidays the Civil Liberties Co-ordinating Committee ran a somewhat less than successful summer campaign on the traffic regulations.

Early in the year S.D.A. founded Foco in the Trades Hall. Along with the appointment of Laver as a research officer, and student involvement in strike action over the Postal dispute this signified the emergence of greater links with the working class movement. Building upon the unions' support of the big march this led to the notion of a student-worker alliance well before the world was made aware of the possibilities of such co-operation in France.

Radical Dip.Ed. students took direct action in the Teacher's College against the Government's "Emergency" Crash Course.

At various times the University Administration took repressive action against student political and intellectual life. This produced a series of protest meetings but no direct action.

There was continued leafletting against the law on pamphlets in Queen Street. The police allowed a number of footpath demonstrations including one on Vietnam. Then there was the fairly successful march of 2000 from Albert Park to the Botanic Gardens. The main feature of all this activity was a new awareness of students that the mass media are not responsible agencies of free information, communication and argument in our society.

Throughout the year most of the students who had been initiators or close supporters of N.S.M. seemed to have disappeared from view, but many of them, not so overtly political in their interests as the S.D.A. activists, were actively involved in movements for student participation in department control and reform of courses.

In the course of S.D.A.s arguing for the July march and for the validity of the N.L.F. cause, a vocal and intelligent opposition arose from the right for the first time. The foolish immature personalities directed at the radicals by the Democratic Club were replaced by pro-Government cases put in the forum.

Possibly more important than this was the re-birth of the Labor Club as a radical group. After going through a succession of presidents early in the year it came under the leadership of Bruce Dickson in the last six months. He sees it as having suffered from the lack of a public spokesman after the S.D.A. mould throughout 1967 and considers its re-emergence to have been due to two initiatives in 1968.

Firstly it called for a Conscriptio Committee in June to take anti-Government action in time for the second call-up of the year in July-August. This committee responded to a growing need on campus among young men in danger of being conscripted. Many students became activists around this issue, including the bulk of the Liberal Club executive, who revealed themselves in distinction from the membership of their Club as small "l" theoretical liberals, some of whom put forward the proposition that socialism is the completion of liberalism in twentieth century conditions. The Labor Club gained a fair number of the younger members of S.D.A. too, partly out of disappointment with the decline in action by S.D.A. partly out of the desire to "work through the A.L.P."

The second action of the Labor Club was the leafletting of High Schools around the time of the N.L.F. solidarity march in October. The original leaflet written by Dick Shearman and distributed at his former school, Kedron High, was an account of how he had come to doubt the Government propaganda about the war and the N.L.F. This leaflet was copied and distributed by other ex-high school students to their own schools. Then in the face of criticism by the newspapers, the Education Department and the school masters and parents, other leaflets were distributed attacking the bias of the education system in favour of certain ideas to the exclusion of others. It was pointed out that Government departments, the R.S.L. and other bodies (such as the N.C.C. in Catholic schools) were allowed to propagandise their

# n i c e

ideas without hindrance, to say nothing of the in-built assumptions and procedures of many courses and school practices such as the Cadet Corps.

Throughout this period of the latter half of 1968 the Labor Club met constantly on Sunday nights in informal discussion of theory, policy and strategy. However President Bruce Dickson sees a lack in theory as one of the inadequacies of the Labor Club. He believes that there tends to be a rather too inclusive and unexamined acceptance of "socialism" as an all-sufficient perspective.

In the meantime S.D.A. was beginning to feel the need for greater theoretical hacking. At the Socialist Students Alliance meeting in the first vacation in Sydney the idea of a student radical newspaper for all campuses had been put forward, to be published and circulated from Brisbane. This was *The Brisbane Line* which ran through three editions from late August to early September and then folded. The reasons for its failure are probably too complex to be gone into here but a not-too-inconvenient summary is that the movement had neither the intellectual productivity nor the mass involvement with the project to keep it going.

The collapse of *The Brisbane Line* merged with increasing criticism by campus radicals of Foco as a good idea gone wrong to represent a fairly total challenge for the re-thinking of S.D.A.s direction. It seems to me that with the absence of Brian Laver on an overseas trip and the virtual absence of Mitch Thompson for periods as an A.L.P. private secretary, S.D.A. had been exposed to one of its weaknesses, lack of capacity for initiative, often even lack of intellectual understanding by the rank and file of the rationale and inter-connexion of S.D.A.s involvements. It could be charged against Laver and Thompson that they had over-led the movement, but then it could also be charged against several S.D.A. activists that they had not sufficient commitment, understanding or responsibility to live out the ideals they professed—of dispersal of power, of participatory democracy, of the primary of critical reason and creativity over custom. In any case, from September onwards S.D.A. went through a crisis of self-definition which involved the decision to carry through an intense self-education campaign until the beginning of this







academic year, a period of self-criticism in which the existence of a leader-syndrome was diagnosed, accepted, and reversed, and the consequent emergence of some dozen or so more intellectually committed, capable student leaders, or perhaps I should say leading non-leaders.

S.D.A. has now emerged as a far more organised movement. It has absorbed the more dynamic elements of the young workers' movement, the Young Socialist League, and has continued to build up contacts with the militants in the Queensland trade union movement. It has come to a recognition that it is simultaneously a student movement within the university, and a student-worker movement within the institutions of society. There is growing in more than the few spokesmen a theoretical perspective enabling members to preserve an over-view of the movements different areas of interest and current direction. With this goes a new tolerance of and capacity for prolonged intellectual debate and a burgeoning recognition of the validity of separate individual interests within an over-all concern for radical social change.

It seems to me that S.D.A. now has four distinct areas of concern, inter-related by different members in different ways. There is not an all-encompassing ideology, though all would probably agree to being anti-authoritarian, in favour of increased democracy in the political and social field, supported on the basis of decentralisation of power. Many would argue that the completion of the trends of S.D.A. thinking is the adoption of a form of workers control in all institutions. Some would see the underlying philosophy of the movement as a form of socialist humanism. Some would see S.D.A. as a transitional grouping in advanced capitalist conditions, tending towards an eclectically Marxist form of revolutionary socialism. Others tend, at this level of generality, to organise their perceptions and actions in terms of less political creeds, emphasising the socio-cultural and moral content of the revolution fought for. Some see forms of non-violent revolution as the soul of all revolutionary movements, the inner principle of all attempts at really radical social change. Some profess to be theoretical anarchists who consider any State power ultimately illegitimate.

It is indicative of the new maturity of social thinking in S.D.A. that theory is seen not as a polemical conflict of ideologies but as a method of guiding a body of concerns towards fruitful future development. There is a genuine dialectic of general views that liberates participants for action and does not manipulate them in the interests of an abstract model of reality. So far as I can see, it is this which makes the Brisbane radical movement so different from the movements in Sydney and Melbourne. There is more openness to the complexity of theory and practice and consequently the ability to co-ordinate more interests into a continuing movement.

At the moment S.D.A. has four major fields of interest.

1. It has continued the support of social revolution in the third world, and now takes a comprehensive anti-imperialist stand against the USA with its global economic and "strategic"



interests. Similarly it is opposed to the bureaucratic deformations of socialism in Soviet influenced countries and in support of the democratisation of socialist régimes.

2. It concentrates on the university as a crucial institution within western capitalist society, posing student-staff control at all levels as necessary to recapture university education for the development of individuals rather than the efficient perpetuation of the social and economic goals of the status quo.
3. It extends the principle of producer democracy beyond universities to all work places within society, from the public service and the schools through to the factories. To this end it seeks links with the working class movement and hopes to influence it away from its current economism and compliance.
4. It seeks structural involvement with the forms of under privilege in our society, whether it be racial, educational or economic. Forms of organising with the underprivileged must be found similar to American S.D.S.s formation of community unions and rent-strikes. This is necessary not only in itself, for the sake of the present underprivileged, but because there is plenty of evidence to show that poor people are a necessary part of the advanced capitalist economies (over 30 million in America, seven million in Britain, one million in Australia). They are the internal colonies that correspond to the economic colonies of the Third World. The same "pluralist" system impoverishes internationally and domestically.

I go into this detail over S.D.A. not because I think it is the only focus of radicalism on campus but because it seems probable to me that it will continue to make the intellectual pace and to take the initiatives of action which will require other groups to respond for or against.

One hears much criticism of S.D.A. from people who find it too crude in its analysis or too unconcerned with individuals as individuals. In the absence of more evidence that such people are building the serious, more intellectually complete and more humanistic and compassionate movements that they apparently invoke as standards, I must conclude that they are rationalising some reluctance on their own part to engage in the sort of direct action and public critique that is often needed. Much of their opposition to S.D.A.s "methods", as they call them, rings fairly hollow beside Martin Luther King's words about young radical groups:

*"Whether they read Gandhi or Frantz Fanon, all the radicals understand the need for action—direct self-transforming and structure-transforming action. This may be their most creative, collective insight."* (The Trumpet of Conscience, Hodder & Stoughton p.52.)

There is a particular need to emphasize this point at this time, because it seems that 1969 will be a time when dialogue and mutual interplay of the strengths of different groups will result in communal and consequently individual development.

I have met a number of people over the last three years or so who share many of the critical attitudes of radicals and of S.D.A. in particular, who started out in defence of Christian humanism



or intellectual values, who looked forward to the building of some kind of intellectual community and of a movement of social concern, but who currently adopt a fairly individualistic line or make ambiguous and partial affirmations of solidarity with radicalism that stop short of common action or even public dialogue to sort out differences. They convey sometimes the impression that they believe, there is some "nicer" way of pressing for change, some more refined, spiritual and subtle way of working that they would of course join in with, if only it were offered to them. I think Christian liberals and radicals in particular have a tendency to this kind of thinking. At its best it strikes me as wishful musing about the state of the world or a form of self deception, at its worst it is a failure to witness to beliefs and values out of a deep fear of being identified with a body of people conveniently regarded by the majority as "extremists".

I conclude on this note because it seems to me that after a number of years during which radicals were continually expected to demonstrate their sincerity, the position is now reversed. It could be argued that the people whose sincerity is currently in doubt are the liberals, the "moderate" sympathisers, the non-activist intellectuals and critics and the selectively activist and occasionally revolutionary Christian humanists. In some ways the future growth of radicalism in this university depends on whether or not they meet the demands of the time.

It may appear to you that I am on the one hand idealising the present state of S.D.A., over-playing its maturity and so on and on the other hand, cracking down too hard on the critical non-aligned students who do after all, take an intense interest in humane concerns. I am conscious of both possibilities and yet I do not retract my remarks. For both tendencies arise together out of a continual sense of frustration that I feel about the intellectual life on this campus. In 1966 it looked as though a creative interaction might occur here between three vigorous traditions of social and cultural philosophy. There were lively groups representing various strains of what we might call Christian humanism, secular liberal radicalism and a sort of benevolent rationalism. There was every promise that if insights were continually validated by free communal discussion and values reinforced by the decision to act out common beliefs, then there might arise an intellectual and activist community of great seriousness and unusual spiritual depth for Australian conditions. The process of mutual influence in action and in dialectic would have matured individuals and groups to a new intellectual, moral and political development.

That this has occurred so meagrely and in such a truncated form seems to me less attributable to the intellectual shortcomings of S.D.A. than to a failure of nerve by the Christian and intellectual wings of the original groupings. If I idealise S.D.A.'s theoretical growth it is because I am conscious of the difficulty of political radicalism's developing a viable social philosophy without the necessary contribution of day-to-day dialogue and enrichment by other relevant traditions. That it has come so far with so few resources is to its great credit. If I seem too hard on the Christian and other intellectuals, both student and staff, it is because they seem to me to have allowed themselves to become less serious than the radicals, while maintaining for themselves and others the immense illusion that they are more serious. Their objections to the radicals strike me as excuses (disguised as explanations) for their own failure to either transform the movement to their own intellectual satisfaction or create a more adequate movement. To put it quite bluntly, may it not be that some of them are simply afraid to buck authority? There is after all, ample historical precedent for such fear among both Christians and intellectuals.

Finally, it will not do for any of us to stand upon the debating ploy of calling the existing anti-authoritarian movements just as authoritarian or manipulative as the status quo. For that does not excuse us from either joining and democratising such movements or attempting to create our own non-authoritarian movements towards real democracy. Whichever way we turn at the present time we are confronted by the need for action. Now is the acceptable time.

Dan O'Neill



## Is the New Left Ageing?

The New Left represented in this university by S.D.A. and the new-look Labor Club, is and has been a much criticized phenomenon. Apart from highly unoriginal criticisms relating to the alleged lack of originality of the Australian New Left, and suspect exhortations regarding sincerity, it is often mooted within more sophisticated circles that the New Left is not analytical enough. During the summer vacation, S.D.A. has been conducting a fairly intensified self-education programme. New Left ideologists like Marcuse, the Australian economy, the French Events, Australia's "radical" history, Anarchism, and a whole lot of highly relevant topics were presented in papers which were of high enough academic quality to please even the most "objective" bourgeois analyst. Perhaps the most unimportant result will be that those of us who consider ourselves to be Left-Liberal or Left-Radical of the "intellectual" variety will no longer be able to accuse the New Left of lack of analysis. We will have to find other ways to justify our existence. This is not to say of course, that the self-education programme has reached the grassroots of S.D.A.'s diverse membership—a majority of them remain largely ignorant and anti-intellectual, although "committed" in rather a compelling way to all that the New Left holds dear. This is important, because it means that the S.D.A. leadership is far above the grassroots as far as analysis and political awareness goes. It is my opinion that the ideologising that the New Left leadership have been engaged in recently have put them out of contact with both their rank and file, and the student body on campus. The jargon of "revolution", "worker control", "participatory democracy" have ceased to have any meaning or relevance to anybody outside the leadership. This is not to say that they have no meaning to the articulators of the jargon; but it does mean that S.D.A. can no longer pretend to be an anti-ideologist organisation.

Does this mean that the rank and file will fall away from the main ideologically committed body? No, these will gather around anyone who articulates a doctrine of dissent against the established order. What is going to happen, is that S.D.A. will no longer be able to relate to and win support from the student body, as it has been able to do in the past.

What was attractive about S.D.A. in former years was the fact that they articulated in forceful and idealistic language, the bourgeois myths about freedom, justice, and equality, which everyone believed in, with a bit of dedication, and compelling argument, it was not very difficult to convince students to march for Civil Liberties in the name of Democracy, or be up in arms against the Senate in the name of Academic Freedom. Now, however, they are being asked to do the same in the name of Revolution—which is not a term attractive to the bourgeoisie.

Unless S.D.A. is able to reorientate itself to the level of student consciousness that now exists,

and which it helped to create, I doubt if we will see mass student action under New Left leadership in the future. Incidents of student direct action will, of course, continue to take place in the near future, but they will become increasingly the work of isolated minorities. It is hoped that the Queensland New Left, which is probably the only authentic radical movement in Australia, will not isolate itself from the rest of the campus by an over emphasis on ideology and revolution, as have the other Left-Student movements in Australian Universities. It is not too late to stop the ageing process.

## FASCIST AND REACTIONARY OVERTONES

"Now that the march is over, it is necessary for those of us who were involved—students and staff—to assess how things stand in order that our actions in the future will be reasonable, resolute, and effective." (Semper Floreat, Friday September 15 1967.)

This was the editorial comment of Semper when it was sold on the streets of Brisbane in 1967, just after the now-famous "march of September 8". Its advice is something which continues to be most vibrant. Civil liberties seem to have died down a little, University reform to have taken on more importance. But whatever the issues, it seems inevitable that much of the debate which will be conducted on campus in 1969 will centre on the strategy to be adopted. Because this debate has so far tended to be a parasite on the pressing substantive issues at stake, weakening the argument and dividing its forces, it would seem better to remove the debate on strategy from this platform, so that when issues arrive which command the respect of large numbers of students, there will be no "false opposition" to weaken the movement, nor, hopefully will there be any "fake strategists" to destroy its chances of success.

It is my belief that the forces of radicalism on this campus (principally the Labour club and S.D.A.) have adopted attitudes, reactions and strategies inappropriate to their goals, and irrelevant to their context.

If there is one word that characterises the "Left" attitude toward radical action, that word is "impatience". The campus radicals tend to see things very much in terms of day-to-day events; to ignore the historical background and the institutional structure in which they are working. The Left at Queensland University is, at least among its leadership, an educated and perceptive group of people. As such they inevitably see many things around them which do not measure up to their picture of a "good society". Being aware of these things, they are also "activists" in the purely objective meaning of the word. If they see something they believe to be wrong, they feel a social obligation, an idealistic compulsion, to see that thing righted. These two attitudes, awareness and activism, are often criticised but usually from the point of view of those who have some interest in seeing that "The Boat" is not "rocked". It is my belief that there is no just ground for such criticism. A democratic society assumes "eternal vigilance" and demands (not merely permits) social involvement from its citizens.

However, the campus radical adds to his awareness and his activism an impatient assumption that all things wrong in his view

can be put right in a space of time, measured more in months than in decades. The radical chooses to ignore, because he does not like several important facts about social change. The first is that most people want to be fully aware of, and prepared for any important changes in their living habits, or in their every-day assumptions about their world. The second is that, unless they are aware of, and understand the motives behind such changes, they will automatically oppose them, whether their opposition is rational or not. Indeed it is true to say that the radical demand for immediate changes without the accompanying widespread understanding must take the form of a challenge to the "happiness" of society; and this is valid irrespective of the difficulties of communicating such understanding. I believe that the "happiness" of society (not the academic idea of right or wrong) is the ultimate value by which all social activity should be gauged.

The second fundamental attitude of the Left force on campus is their disposition towards the use of naked power. They cite Paul Goodman as their prophet: "Anarchic incidents like Civil Disobedience are essential parts of the Democratic Process." This is the creed of those who, frustrated by their narrow view of the process of change resort to the "paw" of direct action, as opposed to the "influence" of negotiation. I would not deny that situations may arise where a "paw elite" can so oppose the majority, can so detract from their ultimate right to enjoy their life, that direct action, indeed revolution can be justified. Martin Luther King pointed out rightly that "Non-violent direct action seeks to create such a crisis and foster such tension that a community which has constantly refused to negotiate is forced to confront the issue." It is a simple question of weighing up the social costs and gains of such action. There have been times when the costs in terms of disruption, destruction, and misery have been far outweighed by the social gains to be made when the wrongs have been righted, and the social order restored to a position where social "happiness" takes on bright prospects.

Radicals have tended however to exaggerate the existing evils and hence inflate the social gains to be won from direct action while ignoring almost completely the social losses that can be incurred, costs which include a drastic overall reduction in student and graduate influence both within and outside the campus. More importantly, a predilection for direct action will consolidate and sense to justify the anti-intellectual anti-student and anti-University attitudes of a great many people within our society.

The discussion so far on and about direct action has centred around an accounting conception of profit and loss. At University there is one further consideration to be looked at. The use of direct action seems to be the complete rejection of certain values of a tertiary education. Tony Bowen in a pamphlet last year complained: "The often incoherent mumbling of 'respectable' clean-cut establishment orientated people is generally of more interest to the press than articulate objection to government policy voiced by a group, many of whose members exhibit socially unacceptable tendencies in relation to pot, sex and hair." Direct action seems to be the very epitome of incoherent mumbling.

The pursuit of knowledge, and more importantly the channelling of knowledge to produce desirable goals, are the principle works of true education. If direct action achieves ends at all, it does so without regard to the merits of its cause. If a University should concern itself with power, it should be the power of knowledge, the influence asserted by an informed point of view, not the childlike demonstration of contempt and annoyance when faced with an unpalatable refusal, but the more commendable approach of working to undermine the rationale of that refusal, and imposing by force of argument one's own concept of rationality. This is the norm of the educated society.