



WORKER EDUCATION AND SOCIAL INQUIRY IN
AUSTRALIA 1913-1929

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SUMMARY

One of the aims of this thesis has been to restore a forgotten chapter in the intellectual development of modern Australia. The period which it spans, 1913 to 1929, has as yet received little attention except from the historians of Australia's participation in the First World War. It is a common but untested assumption that these were intellectually and culturally sterile years but I would contend that this was a period of important transitions and some significant beginnings with regard to the development of social inquiry in Australia and to the introduction of the social sciences into Australian universities. This thesis argues that an important shape and stimulus was given to these advances by the operations of the Workers' Educational Association, a British movement translated to Australia from Britain in 1914. The intellectuals who were the key figures in the W.E.A.'s early phase - Meredith Atkinson, G.V. Portus, F.A. Bland, Elton Mayo, D.B. Copland and Herbert Heaton - contributed to the education of Australia's social democracy in a way that was broader, and perhaps more enduring, than the immediate task of worker education. Their dual role in the university and in the community enabled them to develop their own social science fields within the academy and, outside its walls, to attempt the function of intellectuals in public life, forming the public intelligence that they believed was crucial to true democracy. The business of worker education was central to this intellectual activity because it required the study of contemporary Australia, of her economic and political and industrial arrangements, if the worker was to understand his position both as a wage-earner and a citizen. Thus the social sciences of economics, economic history, political science, sociology and social

psychology were the basic diet of worker education tutorial classes.

Between 1919 and 1926, the W.E.A. group undertook, for Australian students, a remarkable series of publications explicitly labelled "economic, social and political studies". These and other publications are discussed as important events in the intellectual chronology of Australia. I have examined the social theory and the ethical content of this work, explicating their critique of Australia's social order and political economy. The W.E.A. ideology has been explored through the treatment of class conflict and the "industrial problem" which presented the central challenge to worker education.

This thesis is organised around separate studies of the main figures in an attempt to situate their ideas and work in a sociological context and to illuminate the intellectual career and its interaction with the community. By the mid-twenties, this pioneering phase was over: half of these men had left Australia while the others remained to assist the professionalisation of the social sciences they had been instrumental in founding. I have suggested that in all this endeavour during these years the major threads in the modern analyses of Australia were first drawn out under the impetus of worker education ^{of} and those whose academic apprenticeship was served in its cause.

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for a degree or diploma in any other university. All material previously published or written by any other person has, to the best of my knowledge, been acknowledged in the text of the thesis.

Signed:

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Since the main archival materials for this thesis had been only recently deposited in the libraries, there was a special effort needed from library staffs to make the collections accessible in a short time. I am grateful to Mrs Maxine Clapp of the University of Minnesota Archives, to Mr G.L. Fischer of the University of Sydney Archives, and to Mr Michael Piggott at the National Library of Australia for their assistance. Mrs Fay Richardson made available the W.E.A. Files in the Department of Adult Education at the University of Sydney. I also received valuable help from those in charge of the Files and Records of the Universities of Melbourne and Adelaide and from Mr Frank Strahan of the Melbourne University Archives. For their permission to use materials, and for their interest, I would like to thank Mrs Marjorie Heaton and Brigadier and Mrs Joyce Tier. Mr K.A. Green, archivist of the C.S.I.R.O., Mr N.A. Parsloe of the Canterbury W.E.A., Mr L. Urwick and Professor F. Alexander responded generously to my inquiries. Professor W.G.K. Duncan and Mr W.R. Crocker kindly discussed the project with me in its early days.

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ABBREVIATIONS

- A.A.A.S. Australasian Association for the Advancement of Science
A.J.P.P. Australasian Journal of Psychology and Philosophy
A.S.C.I. Advisory Council for Science and Industry
B.C.S. Board of Commercial Studies, University of Adelaide
B.H.A.S. Broken Hill Associated Smelters
C.E.M.R. Chemical Engineering and Mining Review
C.S.U. Christian Social Union
D.A.E. Department of Adult Education, University of Sydney
I.A.M.S. Industrial Australian and Mining Standard
I.P.R. Institute for Pacific Relations
L.S.R.M. Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial
L.S.E. London School of Economics
M.U.A. Melbourne University Archives
N.L.A. National Library of Australia
P.Q.S. Public Questions Society
S.A.A. South Australian Archives, State Library
S.U.A. Sydney University Archives
U.D.C. Union of Democratic Control
W.E.A. Workers' Educational Association
Y.M.C.A. Young Men's Christian Association

Note: Dealing with a period in which the spelling convention was changing, I have chosen to retain "Labour" throughout.

I have also attempted to minimise capitalisation - as in "professor of economics" or "chair of commerce" - but it has proved difficult to make consistent decisions in this area.

PREFACE

At the end of the First World War, an expatriate Australian sociologist, Clarence Hunter Northcott, appraised Australia's development in language that had by then become commonplace in the accounts of the curious travellers, the foreign students of democracy and the social investigators who came to explore the new society in the Antipodes. Northcott wrote,

The Australian colonies have long been designated 'laboratories of political experiment', 'nurseries of practical and fearless idealism'; they have been considered as communities where a definite social principle has become the motive power behind political activity and industrial arrangement".¹

Terms such as "social laboratory", "political and social experiment" and "nursery of idealism" conveyed a complex of realities, observations and impressions, suggesting that in the young Australian Commonwealth a unique social order was being forged. Here was an energetic young people, a fortunate homogeneity of race, a happy climate and natural wealth, a relative immunity from the conservative influences of the distant old world of inhibiting traditions and the rigidities of class. Here was an impressive record of social legislation, ranging from the early-achieved eight-hour day to a maternity bonus, which attested to a consensus-ideal of social welfare and earned for the average Australian a high standard of living. A party of the working-class had gained entry into politics and government and allied themselves with middle-class leaders who were inspired by the new liberalism to use the power of the state in the cause of social amelioration. The arbitration system with its regulation of wages and its attempt to supersede the individual bargaining between employer and employee - Henry Bourne Higgins' "new province for law and order" - was the object of particular

¹C.H. Northcott, *Australian Social Development*, (Columbia, New York, 1918), p. 29.

study by British and American investigators.² Here was a government agency set up with judicial authority and legislative functions both as a mechanism for securing industrial peace and as an instrument for the pursuit of social justice in its wage deliberations. It seemed, in its first decade, a symbol of Australia's "social democracy".

It has been a commonplace of our history that these experiments in social democracy involved little theory and much pragmatism. Métin's felicitous epigram "socialisme sans doctrines" has quite properly alerted scholars to the absence of explicit, conscious design in the early twentieth century phase of social democracy.³ But we have overlooked the degree to which Métin's perception was itself a commonplace at the time, echoed and elaborated with great frequency between the turn of the century and the late twenties. If there was a shortage of doctrine informing the legislative achievement of the early Commonwealth, there was no lack of people pointing that out. There is ample evidence that contemporary thinkers were concerned with the intellectual limits of their society. Associated with the notion of Australia's non-theoretical temper was the criticism that academic expertise in new fields such as the social sciences was not being used either to shape or to evaluate Australia's social experiments. Social analysis and criticism did not appear to be developed in Australia in any way commensurate with the modernising forces in her social and political arrangements. The first professor of economics in Australia, R.F. Irvine, in 1914 commented on this anomalous gap between practice and theory,

²See Victor S. Clark, *The Labour Movement in Australia*, (New York, 1906); "As Others See Us", *Report of the American Trade Commission on Industrial Conditions in Australasia*, 1914; *Arbitration and Wage-Fixing in Australia*, National Industrial Conference Board, Research Report No. 10, (Boston, Mass.), 1918.

³A. Métin, *Le Socialisme sans Doctrines* (Paris, 1910).

nothing strikes visiting economists and sociologists so much as the meagreness of investigation and criticism by Australians of their own social evolution.⁴

In the same year, F.W. Eggleston told the British Association Meeting in Sydney,

Australia has been referred to as a laboratory of social experiment. But it has never been this consciously. Australian democracy has never recognised a science which has formulated exact laws dealing with human wealth and welfare, and which limits the divine right of democracy to achieve its will. It has never consulted professors of economics as to the possible results of its decrees, nor, has it carefully investigated and tabulated the results as to guide its future action.⁵

The curricula of the universities still followed the English and Scottish models of the nineteenth century. Very little attention was given to the studies associated with the general concept of a "science of society": economics, economic history, political science, public administration, social and applied psychology, anthropology and sociology. There was, at the end of war, only one chair in any of these fields which was at the head of a separate discipline - Irvine's chair in economics at the University of Sydney. History, philosophy and law were still the dominant humanities into which was subsumed any inquiry into social, political or economic behaviour, the only exception being the development of education as an autonomous field. At the 1912 meeting of the Australasian Association for the Advancement of Science, Francis Anderson, professor of logic and mental philosophy at Sydney, referred to this failure to cultivate the social sciences,

⁴R.F. Irvine, *The Place of the Social Sciences in a Modern University*, (Sydney, 1914), p. 8.

⁵F.W. Eggleston, "The Australian Democracy and its Economic Problems", address reprinted in *The Economic Journal*, Vol. 25, 1915, p. 347.

asking

Is this island continent, set far apart in southern seas, to be also intellectually remote, as far as its universities are concerned ...?⁶

The point was made again by W. Harrison Moore, professor of law at the University of Melbourne, in 1916, in a submission for funds to the Minister for Education,

It has been a standing reproach to the Universities of Australia that in a country that is recognised as the greatest laboratory of economic experiment in the world, they have done so little to influence these experiments or to test these results.⁷

For these men, the terms "laboratory" and "experiment" were not simply random metaphors drawn from the realm of the pure sciences to illustrate Australia's innovative progress. Their use signified the desire of intelligent Australians to participate in the intellectual movements being established and consolidated in Europe, Britain and North America. Those who urged the "scientific" evaluation and assessment integral to the laboratory method did believe it possible to achieve the accuracy, objectivity and predictability attributed to the physical sciences in the analysis and manipulation of social data. A prestige and a faith attached in this period to the new social sciences as they were being developed, professionalised and specialised in the northern hemisphere. It seemed possible that a rational understanding of society's processes would provide a new efficiency. With the benefit of social science training, new experts could plan - to control social

⁶F. Anderson, "Sociology in Australia: a Plea for its Teaching" address to Australasian Association for the Advancement of Science, 1912, reprinted in *Social Horizons*, July 1943, p. 20.

⁷W. Harrison Moore, memorandum to the Minister for Education in Victoria, University of Melbourne Registry Records, File 1916/347.

and economic forces and so to dissolve the edges of social conflict. The good society of the future could be constructed on the guidelines of empirically-tested fact, on a more reliable basis than the impressionistic or ethical principles of earlier social thought.

Related to this specific plea for the introduction of the social sciences into Australian universities was the more general complaint that the business of intellectuals engaging in the criticism of their society, informing the public, debating and popularising issues, was missing in Australia. Lord Bryce found less learned men in government and public affairs than he was accustomed to identify in older societies and many have echoed him since in lamenting both the poverty of discussion on social and political matters and the lack of organs for contemporary debate - responsible journals, a vigorous press and associations promoting one cause or another.⁸ "It is a disgrace" wrote J.B. Brigden, professor of economics at the University of Tasmania, in the mid-twenties, "that we have not one independent weekly journal devoted to serious literature on social and intellectual questions".⁹ P.D. Phillips, a Melbourne lawyer, spoke of

a crying need in the Australian community for a development of that class vaguely but sufficiently described as 'publicists' which does so much to clarify and assist social discussion in the older countries of the world. Such men as Lord Cecil, Sir Josiah Stamp, Mr Sidney Webb or Dr Nicholas Murray Butler - to take representations of four very diverse social stand-points - illustrate the fine flowering of a well-nourished soil. The resources of Australia are still undeveloped in this sphere as in more material and mundane aspects.¹⁰

⁸James Bryce, *Modern Democracies*, vol. 11, (London, 1921), pp. 271-272.

⁹J.B. Brigden, *Sources of Opinion* (Hobart, 1927), p. 11.

¹⁰P.D. Phillips and G.L. Wood (ed), *The Peopling of Australia*, (Melbourne, 1928), p. 4.

Phillips offered these remarks in 1928, in the editorial preface to *The Peopling of Australia*, published by the new Victorian Branch of the Institute for Pacific Relations. At the end of 1912, one of his examples of that missing class, Sidney Webb, had also been searching out men like himself in Australia who might write for his new sixpenny weekly, the *New Statesman*. He asked for advice from Henry Bournes Higgins on potential contributors:

It is part of our object to bring the thinking men of the different parts of the Empire into closer touch with each other. We want to make a feature of regular articles from Australia (and elsewhere) - say, six or twelve a year - dealing with wise critical appreciation, with intellectual, social economic and political movements, or streams of tendency in Australia, rather than merely cricket or election results, which are all that England gets at present.¹¹

This thesis is a study of the one group during this period which self-consciously set itself the task which Webb outlined. They were "thinking men" who did aspire to the role of critic and publicist, as Phillips defined it. They also articulated the need for the "streams of tendency in Australia" to be shaped by the knowledge and methodology of the modern social sciences. Their vehicle was not a single periodical such as the *New Statesman*, nor a new institution such as the London School of Economics, nor a political party. Their institutional framework was a dual one formed in an alliance between the universities and a transplanted British movement, the Workers' Educational Association. The study is organised around the principal figures on the university side of the alliance: Meredith Atkinson, Herbert Heaton, Garnet Vere Portus, Francis Armand Bland, George Elton

¹¹Sidney Webb to Henry Bournes Higgins, 2 November 1912. H.B. Higgins Papers, MS 1057/201, National Library of Australia.

Mayo and Douglas Berry Copland. It spans the years between 1912 and 1929: from the introduction of the W.E.A. into Australia to the eve of the Depression by which time the initial dynamic impulses of the alliance were well played out. By then, half of this group had left Australia and the others remained to devote their energies to the professionalisation within the universities and outside them of the social sciences which they had been instrumental in establishing in Australia.

PART ONE

CHAPTER 1. Transplanting a Movement



The Workers' Educational Association was formed in England in 1903, the brain-child of Mr Albert Mansbridge. Born in 1876, the son of a Gloucester carpenter, Mansbridge left school at the age of fourteen after a board school and a grammar school education but he ardently attended adult education classes at Toynbee Hall and at University Extension lectures. His passion for learning was matched by a dedication to religion: the gospel of education and the gospel of Christianity were both integrated into the vision that created the W.E.A. A lay preacher in the Church of England, he taught Sunday schools with his wife, formed a study circle in Christian Economics, and counted among his friends evangelical Christian Socialist clerics such as Charles Gore, Canon Barnett and William Temple. To his working-class origins and his religious impulses must be added the influence of the Co-operative movement. Its principles were revered in his upbringing and in 1896 he entered its service as a clerk in the Co-operative Wholesale Society's warehouse in Whitechapel.¹

Co-operation was much more than an economic benefits association to its adherents. One of its veterans, George Jacob Holyoake, expressed its more profound aspirations thus - "Co-operation creates a new person, a new character, and a new policy".² Consumer arrangements alone could not achieve such transformations in men so that from its inception, in Owenite ideas in the 1830's and the experiment of the Rochdale Pioneers in the 1840's, the movement had placed great faith in the power of

¹Mary Stocks, *The Workers' Educational Association. The First Fifty Years*, (London 1953) Chapter 2. See also Mansbridge's autobiography *The Trodden Path*, (London 1940).

²Albert Mansbridge, *An Adventure in Working-Class Education Being the Story of the Workers' Educational Association 1903-1915*, (London 1920), p. 12.

knowledge. It provided self-improvement opportunities to the workers in adult education classes, study groups, correspondence courses, summer schools and local libraries and, by the end of the nineteenth century, had begun to utilise the initiatives towards extra-mural education now coming from the universities. To the numerous voluntary bodies - from the Mutual Improvement Societies to the Trade Union movement - attempting to satisfy the demand for worker education from below, there was added the efforts of men like F.D. Maurice and his colleagues at the Working Men's College, of the founders of university settlements and of the pioneers at Ruskin College, Oxford. Led by Cambridge University, most of the universities had, by 1900, involved themselves in Extension programmes whose organisation was the responsibility of the university.³

Believing that all this effort needed some co-ordination, Mansbridge conceived of an association which might bind these elements into a tight educational alliance. Trade Unionism, the Co-operative movement and the University Extension activities could be woven into a "triple cord" which would foster education among the workers not solely for livelihood but as the basis for the Christian life which he deemed essential to a true democracy. In his own rhetoric, he described the new Workers' Educational Association:

as an organisation for education it stands unique, because it has united for the purposes of their mutual development Labour and Scholarship in and through their respective associations of Trade Unions and Universities, and because of this unity, so secured, the power of the spirit of wisdom has been increased in the affairs of men, and the building of 'Jerusalem in England's green and pleasant land' has become at least a nearer

³*Ibid.*, chapter 1; also J.F.C. Harrison, *Learning and Living 1790-1960. A Study in the History of the Adult Education Movement*, (London 1963) and T. Kelly, *A History of Adult Education in Great Britain*, (London 1962).

prospect.⁴

Suffusing the whole concept was the Christian Socialist evangelism which spoke of the new life accompanying new knowledge, of education "saturated with the ideal of social service", of the informed judgement which meant inward illumination, and of the moral citizenship which was its end. The diversion of working class forces into the "rightly ordered life" through the channels of reason and enlightenment was a conservative measure, or at the most, one allowing only gradualist, peaceful change wrought by the reforming power of education. Mansbridge claimed no less when he explained his idea in 1903:

the deep draughts of knowledge drunk by those within the currents of correct thought will provide that power and strength which, in spite of stressful and baneful days, will divert the strong movements of the people from the narrow paths of immediate interests to the broad way of that rightly ordered social life of which only glimpses have yet been seen even by the greatest of the world's seers.⁵

In 1903, the first committee of the Workers' Educational Association included representatives from the trade unions, the Co-operative movement and the universities. It was funded by affiliations from working-class societies of all kinds and by grants from the Board of Education and the Local Education Authorities, made possible by the Education Act of 1902. Aid and encouragement also came from Sidney Ball at St John's College, A.L. Smith at Balliol and Alfred Zimmern and the Fellows of New College. At the first national conference of the Association, held at Oxford in 1905, William Temple, an Oxford don

⁴A. Mansbridge, *An Adventure in Working-Class Education*, *op. cit.*, Preface.

⁵A. Mansbridge, "Co-operation, Trade Unionism and University Extension" reprinted from the *University Extension Journal*, 1903 in *The Kingdom of the Mind. Essays and Addresses 1903-37 of Albert Mansbridge*, (London 1944) p. 7.

destined to follow his father to the hierarchy of the Church, was introduced to the movement and became its first president. The earliest branches of the W.E.A. were formed in 1904 and 1905 at Reading, Derby, Ilford and Rochdale. Within a short time, lectures were being organised for the workers in conjunction with universities all over England but it was at Rochdale that the new directions of the W.E.A. and its distinctive educational features began to emerge. Impressed by the response of the Rochdale students, Mansbridge was led to consider the possibility of an educational scheme which could offer more than the conventional extension programmes. His plan was for a more intensive, more systematic course of study which would approximate to university standards. He asked the Rochdale students if they would be willing to pledge themselves to regular attendance at classes on a particular subject for two years and to the writing of regular essays. In return, he promised "the best tutor in England" and the virtual provision of university education. The experiment began when R.H. Tawney, then a lecturer in economics at Glasgow, agreed to travel down to Rochdale each week-end to conduct the classes. At Longton, E.S. Cartwright duplicated the venture and a new pedagogical method was born - the university tutorial class.⁶

During the summer of 1907, a conference was held at Oxford on "What Oxford can do for Working People". Dr. Charles Gore presided over the discussion during which the university was asked to enter into a joint body with the W.E.A. to organise further tutorial classes. A joint committee composed of seven representatives from each drew up a report entitled "Oxford and Working-class Education" and as a result

⁶A. Mansbridge, *An Adventure in Working-Class Education*, Chapters III and IV.

a permanent Joint Committee for Tutorial Classes was established in 1908 under the university's Extension delegacy. The Oxford example was quickly followed by other universities and by 1914 almost every British university was engaged in the organisation of tutorial classes with the W.E.A.⁷

It was an essential principle in Mansbridge's concept of worker education that the initiative must lie with the students. They were the ones to determine how, why, what and when they wished to study. This was both a theory about the nature of learning - that it should not be imposed but sought - and an expression of the voluntarist democracy which Mansbridge and his disciples believed in. The demand for a class in a particular subject was to come from the workers in a particular place ; it was the responsibility of the Joint Committee to appoint the tutor and organise the class. Classes were also to be inspected by the Board of Education; Alfred Zimmermann and J. Dover Wilson were appointed in this capacity. Mansbridge set down the constitution for the tutorial class: it was to consist of no more than thirty students who would take a pledge to attend regularly two-hour classes over three years. Twelve essays were to be written each year while the course was to combine a lecture presentation, which the students were to be free to interrupt with questions, and then a discussion period. The classes were to be governed by the students themselves: in the rhetoric of the W.E.A. "each student was held to be a teacher and each teacher held to be a student". The university was therefore not the paternalistic giver of education but a co-operator in a joint endeavour - "nothing must be done for the workers but that which they themselves want, which they reach out to ..."⁸ The emphasis in the subjects taught

⁸Mansbridge, *University Tutorial Classes*, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

fell heavily on political and social subjects. Although there were classes in literature and the natural sciences, the majority of students wanted classes in economics, industrial history or citizenship and these accounted for more than half the classes held in 1913.⁹

This, then, was the English movement that was transplanted to Australia on the eve of the first world war. It had deep roots in a network of local associations and working-class movements in both rural and urban Britain in the nineteenth century, it was assisted by the social conscience of more progressive members of the Church of England and it employed a whole generation of liberal, socially-minded, Oxford scholars.

* * * * *

A visit to Australia by William Temple, in 1910, in connection with the Student Christian Federation, first brought the W.E.A. to public attention here. Temple lectured on "Education and Democracy" expounding the ideals of the new association.¹⁰ The universities of Melbourne, Sydney and Adelaide were also subscribers to the British W.E.A. and, in accordance with their interest in the venture, an item on university tutorial classes was placed on the agenda of the Congress of the Universities of the Empire which met in London in 1912. Among Australia's representatives were H. Darnley Naylor, the professor of classics at the University of Adelaide, and Dr James Barrett, a Melbourne physician, who was a member of the council of the University of Melbourne and later Chancellor of the University. Barrett

⁹Kelly, *op. cit.*, p. 254.

¹⁰William Temple, "Education and Democracy". Report in *Advertiser*, 28 July 1910.

was a supporter of an eclectic array of progressive causes and was deeply impressed when he heard Mansbridge address the Congress.¹¹ His interest was further stimulated when he was invited to Oxford by A.L. Smith, a keen promotor of the W.E.A. As a result, Barrett agreed to fund a tour of Australia by Mansbridge and his wife in 1913. A.L. Smith did much to assist the tour by calling on his many contacts in Australia who were old Oxford friends or pupils.¹² Mansbridge embarked upon a missionary expedition from Perth to Brisbane, by way of all the major cities and industrial areas like Kalgoorlie and Broken Hill. In the manner of Pauline epistles, he wrote back to his followers in England of the warm responses he met from university men, politicians, trade unionists and workers.¹³ There were already harbingers of the English movement in Australia who had belonged to the W.E.A. and the Co-operative movement back home: L.T. Leathley from Leeds was eager to organise the W.E.A. in Victoria while David Stewart, a Scottish carpenter, worked tirelessly in N.S.W. to win the trade unions and the universities to the new experiment.¹⁴ The urgency of educating the new democracy and the hope of alleviating social tension were themes which struck responsive chords in politicians such as Tom Ryan in South Australia and A.C. Carmichael, Minister for Education in N.S.W., while officials of the Departments of Public Instruction - Frank Tate, John

¹¹See J.W. Barrett, *The Twin Ideals*, (Melbourne 1918).

¹²A.L. Smith arranged Mansbridge's visit to the University of Queensland, as reported in *Brisbane Courier*, 17 May 1913. G.C. Henderson was also a pupil of A.L. Smith at Balliol. See D. Whitelock, *The Great Tradition: A History of Adult Education in Australia*, (Queensland 1974), Chapter 6.

¹³Mansbridge's reports on his tour are printed in *Highway*, June to October 1913.

¹⁴L.T. Leathley "The Beginnings of the W.E.A. in Victoria" in *Australian Journal of Adult Education*, Vol. 3, no. 1, July 1963, pp. 32-37, and E.M. Higgins, *David Stewart and the W.E.A.*, W.E.A., Sydney, (n.d.; c. 1958).

Story and, in particular, Peter Board - gave positive support in each state. In the churches, Mansbridge also found encouragement: the Bishop of Brisbane invited the Mansbridges to stay with him and, in Sydney, Bishop L.B. Radford embraced the cause becoming one of the first tutors for the W.E.A.¹⁵ Branches of the Association were formed in cities, suburbs and mining towns. In 1914 the movement in N.S.W. was showing healthy growth as the number of affiliations doubled from bodies which included the Labour Council, the Trades Hall Association, thirty-one trade unions, the Feminist Club, the Association for the Advancement of the Blind, the University Evening Students' Association, the Student Christian Movement and the Balmain Co-operative Society.¹⁶ Only in Western Australia, despite the interest of some like E.O.G. Shann, did the W.E.A. and its tutorial class movement take no root.

To persuade the universities to ally themselves with the W.E.A. in providing tutorial classes, guarantees were needed that the state governments would give additional grants to fund such a new development. By the time Mansbridge left Australia at the end of 1913 such assurances were forthcoming to the University of Sydney from the government of N.S.W. and Mansbridge was able to cable to Zimmern asking him to offer the position of Director of Tutorial Classes to Meredith Atkinson, then a lecturer for the Joint Committee of the University of Durham. The background to the foundation of the tutorial class departments in each university is sketched in the relevant chapters to follow. In brief, the University of Tasmania was able to appoint another Englishman,

¹⁵See Paul Radford, *A Scholar in a New Land: Lewis Bostock Radford*, (Flinders University Relations Unit 1979).

¹⁶E.M. Higgins, *op. cit.*, p. 25.

Herbert Heaton, as its Director in 1914, and in the University of Melbourne, the efforts of Harrison Moore, F.W. Eggleston, Barrett and M.M. Phillips were rewarded in 1917 when the government made funds available. Meredith Atkinson went to Melbourne to take up this position and was succeeded at Sydney by G.V. Portus and his Assistant-Director, F.A. Bland. When the South Australian government fulfilled its promise of a grant in 1917, Herbert Heaton transferred to Adelaide and his position in Hobart was given to Douglas Berry Copland, who had been active in the infant W.E.A. in New Zealand. In Queensland, the institutional framework for the conduct of tutorial classes remained somewhat looser than in the other states until 1921 when the government agreed to fund a full-time Director, B.H. Molesworth. Before 1921, the work was kept going by the volunteer efforts of A.C.V. Melbourne, George Elton Mayo, Henry Alcock and T.C. Witherby. They taught the classes and served on a University Committee of Management which organised them.

The suitability of an English movement like the W.E.A. and its "supreme activity", the tutorial class, to a new country like Australia has been the subject of some debate among historians of the movement. It represents an instance of a common problem in Australian cultural and intellectual history, that of the dialectic between the derivative and the indigenous. Fred Alexander has argued that the marriage of university - directed tutorial classes and a "proselytising association" organised by the workers was not adaptable to rural Australia and that it made little impact on the urban centres or on the industrial trade union movement. Alexander contends that imposed British ideas created only a "passive recreational activity of the middle classes" whereas the North American programmes, as developed, for example, by the

University of Wisconsin Extension Department, might have proved more viable and effective in Australia.¹⁷ Other writers, Derek Whitelock and Eric Williams, counter that the W.E.A. scheme was a positive step forward in the face of a declining university extension movement which was itself copied from the British universities in the 1880's.¹⁸ The extra-mural lectures given under the auspices of the universities in city and country centres had attracted middle-class audiences to evenings out listening to an entertaining talk like that by George Arnold Wood on "Typical Historical Characters" or by G.C. Henderson on "The Exploits of Sir Francis Drake". Darnley Naylor enjoyed great popularity in the South-East of South Australia on "Everyday Life in Ancient Rome". As Henderson put it,

the Extension movement differs from university education in that the lecturer does not expect people to give that attention to the subject as they would do if they were studying at a University proper. All the lecturer may hope is to give results in as attractive a manner as possible of that research and study that he himself has entered into.¹⁹

The intentions of the W.E.A. were expressly the opposite but loftiness of intentions is seldom sufficient guarantee of success. Williams does show, however, the comparative neglect of contemporary issues, of political and social content, in the extension courses offered by the

¹⁷F. Alexander, "Adult Education in Australia" (Melbourne 1959) and "Sydney University and the W.E.A., 1913-19", *Australian Quarterly*, December 1955, pp. 34-56. Other authors on the beginning of the W.E.A. in Australia include A. Wesson, *Formal Adult Education in Victoria 1890-1950* (M.Ed. Thesis University of Melbourne 1971), W.G. Walker, "Sydney University and the W.E.A. - A Reassessment", *Australian Quarterly*, September 1956, pp. 93-104 and Vernon Crew, "The Beginnings of the W.E.A. in Queensland", *Australian Journal of Adult Education*, Vol. 9, no. 2. V. Crew, *Bibliography of Australian Adult Education, 1935-65* (National Library of Australia, 1968) lists other references.

¹⁸D. Whitelock, *op. cit.*; Eric Williams, *The Foundations of Adult Education in Australia: 1886-1916* (B.A. Hons. thesis, University of Adelaide, 1968).

¹⁹G.C. Henderson; interview to *West Australian*, May 1906, quoted in Williams, *op. cit.*, p. 114.

various universities from 1890. The lectures were concentrated on cultural subjects and on the natural sciences such as botany and biology. The W.E.A. classes shifted that basic diet to social science areas and in the history of intellectual development in Australia - as distinct from the history of worker education - this was an important and significant shift which this thesis sets out to examine.

There is no doubt that the W.E.A. fell far short of its idealistic aims in Australia as it did also in Britain. The catastrophe of war interrupted its early and quite promising development, the internal divisions within working-class movements in all countries brought it under attack from radical socialists and its associations with the bourgeois universities alienated many of the proletariat. On the other hand, the chance to explore subjects and contemporary issues not studied in university curricula attracted middle-class teachers, civil servants and others. The leading protagonists of the W.E.A. had no illusions that they were reaching their projected clientele. Leathley acknowledged that there was never much response from organised labour in Victoria.²⁰ Heaton described his classes as full of Scotch or Lancashire accents, of young men back from the war but not persistent in their efforts to know more, and lots of women taking diligent notes.²¹ The English element was strong from the first. Bland reported to Atkinson about his classes in N.S.W. in 1915:

Even here the English element is represented more strongly than the native Australians. It is also the case at Hurstville. It will be interesting to see

²⁰L. Leathley, *op. cit.*, pp. 36-37.

²¹H. Heaton, "Personalities - 1913-1922", *Australian Highway*, Vol. 5, no. 8, October 1923.

later how much the movement is owing its support to English people.²²

Again, in 1919, Bland admitted to Graham Wallas, his teacher at the L.S.E.,

It is doubtful whether we are getting down to even the average worker, rather do we attract the more enlightened Trade Unionists and a good sprinkling of middle-class people. But from my experience of the movement in England, I don't think we are singular in that respect.²³

Enthusiastic support came from members of the Co-operative Society, but this was a case of the emigrant carrying his old links with him to a new land. At the Adelaide abattoirs or the mines of Broken Hill, the Australian trade unionist listened only fitfully. The report of the W.E.A. in Australia to the World Association for Adult Education in 1924 conceded its failure to shatter the apathy of the average Australian, whose material comfort made him part of a "big, mentally-sleeping mass" to whom few causes had any appeal. The W.E.A. intellectuals, however, consoled themselves that they did minister to the alive, mentally-alert minority whose minds could be trained to "scientific methods of thought" and who could carefully examine Australian development and problems in the light of their grasp of the main strands of European and American life and thought:

In a new country affairs move rapidly. It is important that they should move in the right way. And in so far as the W.E.A. helps them to move in that direction, it is playing a useful part in the building up of the nation.²⁴

²²F.A. Bland to M. Atkinson, 25 September 1915, Bland Papers, Sydney University Archives.

²³F. Bland to G. Wallas, 19 September 1919. Bland Papers, S.U.A.

²⁴"Adult Education in Australia" *World Association for Adult Education Bulletin*, no. xx, May 1924, pp. 26-27. The anonymous author is either Heaton or Portus.

The Mansbridge dream of the university standard to be gained through essay writing and regular attendance was no doubt also diluted by Australian conditions. Portus had difficulty finding enough first-class graduates to take classes in the social sciences across the rural stretches of N.S.W. and with typical pragmatism he listed courses with general titles such as "Social Questions" in which the available tutors might use their training and talents with the utmost versatility.²⁵ The following letter gives a rare insight into the actualities of worker education from the consumer's point of view. It is the apology of an itinerant railway worker in N.S.W. for not keeping to his essay pledge:

c/o Timekeeper
Railway Works
Glenreagh,
Sth Grafton,
Feb. 13. 1915

Professor M. Atkinson,

Dear Sir,

I have been guilty of almost unforgiveable callousness in not answering your letter and acknowledging the receipt of book and pamphlet before now. I will explain the circumstances and you can judge if my crime is as black as it would first appear. Unfortunately I suffer from short-sightedness in a very severe form.

I had a pair of glasses but they dissappeared (sic) rather mysteriously. I was recommended to a local sightester but he proved a blank. M^{SSr} Barraclough visited Grafton on the 20th Jan. I called on him and received suitable spectacles. Following railway construction work is not the most pleasant way of earning a livelihood. Working in cuttings 10, 15, 20 feet in depth and over, a man is exposed to the glare of the sun, with very little chance of benefitting by a breeze. It is very irksome for the four hottest months of the year. Shifting camp and depending for delivery of mail on the local Postmaster in some of those small bush towns, he is generally storekeeper or some other business man, letters are sometimes days overdue. I am sorry for having to trouble with so much

²⁵G.V. Portus, *Happy Highways*, Chapter XVI. E.M. Higgins discusses this point in his biography of David Stewart, *op. cit.*, p. 44.

detail, but I do so with the intention of explaining away what would appear to be utter neglect.

I will try to write a fair essay, as your letter of the 1st Dec advises, on the first two chapters of Industriail (sic) English History, this book is very interesting in different ways. It is easy to give a brief sketch of the first chapter, the second I find more difficult.

I have received no copy of The Highway for sometime,

I remain

Yrs sincerely

M. Foley.²⁶

There may have been many a worker like M. Foley to whom the industrial history of England remained a mystery or there may have been many who benefited in immeasurable ways from their encounters with the W.E.A. I have not sought either to ask or to answer the question of how many workers the university apostles reached, whether or not they were listening, and what difference it made to their lives if they were. The legacy of the W.E.A. is not solely to be determined in strict pedagogical results nor in the moral elevation of the labouring classes, assuming that could be gauged. This thesis argues that Mansbridge's transplanted movement did contribute to educating the democracy but in a much broader sense. It was, in fact, a sociological agency for the nourishing and operation of knowledge and intellectual endeavour in a context which was intellectually deprived outside its universities. Within them, it assisted the introduction of areas of learning which the universities had been slow to adopt. The W.E.A. provided a group of young intellectuals with their first footing in academic life and through its platforms and publications it gave them a public role and

²⁶M. Foley to M. Atkinson, 13 February 1915. Bland Papers, S.U.A.

a forum for their social theory and criticism. The funding which supported them, however insufficient, did enable the universities to employ these men and so, indirectly, enabled the basic development of the social sciences to which all of them were committed. Atkinson and his successor J.A. Gunn taught the only sociology courses that the University of Melbourne has condoned; Heaton laid the foundations for economics at Adelaide as Copland did in Melbourne; Mayo did pioneering work in applied psychology and industrial sociology in Brisbane; Bland was the father of public administration in Sydney and Portus developed both economic history and political science. These contributions are explored in the successive chapters of this work.

The dual roles of the W.E.A. intellectuals as university teachers on the one hand and educators of the public on the other were fused in their employment and their affiliation with the W.E.A. Committed as they were to confront the worker in his contemporary situation, they had to engage in teaching relevant to the industrial order and to the society which conditioned it. The challenge of class conflict was, therefore, central to their own arena, forcing them to take account of the implications of industrial capitalism. They spent much of their energies scrutinising alternatives for social reconstruction and popularising the debates which pre-occupied modern intellectuals in the post-war world. The next chapter is devoted to a general analysis of the thinking of this group on the problem of labour and the new social order. It does not focus purely on the main cast of characters but includes others who, like Eggleston and Irvine, were much involved in the W.E.A. and were part of its catchment of concerned "thinking men".

An important function and achievement of all these figures was to lessen the tyranny of intellectual distance between Australia and the world. Although they were acutely concerned to evaluate the distinctiveness of Australian society, they tended to see it as a variant of western democracy, sharing to some extent the problems common to every western society after the War. They urged awareness of the nature and viability of parliamentary democracy, of the relation of the individual to government, of the need to educate the emergent "herd" society dangerously susceptible to opinion formation by demagogue and press. They did not, on the whole, pursue the Australian identity in mythic, cultural or nationalistic terms because they reached out to an internationalist mentality, evidenced in their membership of *Round Table* groups and League of Nations societies, or later on, the Institute for Pacific Relations.

A basic difficulty to be surmounted in the W.E.A. programmes was the lack of "authoritative Australian books on economic, social and political problems". At first, it was necessary to rely on cheap English publications. Hundreds of copies of editions like Brailsford's *War of Steel and Gold* and G.D.H. Cole's *The World of Labour* were distributed through a book service. It was then arranged that Tawney and Zimmern would despatch every month a parcel of the latest books on sociology, economic history, political science, psychology and literature in an attempt to build up a supply of material of this kind which would be better than that held by the local book shops in Sydney.²⁷ At the first Federal Council of all state directors and

²⁷*Australian Highway*, Vol. 1, no. 9, November 1919, p. 3. Report on "The Movement" and W.E.A. book service.

secretaries of the W.E.A. in 1918, it was resolved to embark upon the publication of an Australian W.E.A. series. As Portus explained the enterprise it was not solely confined to the syllabus needs of particular tutorial classes:

Among the professors, lecturers, and tutors, who have so readily assisted the tutorial class movement, some had collected valuable material bearing on these problems. Through the Federal Council it was thought possible to assemble some of this material for publication in a series of monographs intended for the use of students in tutorial classes and elsewhere. Thus has the W.E.A. Series of publications been founded, and it is hoped that its utility will extend beyond the immediate needs of members of the W.E.A. to the growing number of students of social problems in Australia.²⁸

Portus went on to state that the chief aim of the Series was to encourage investigation in fields of study "hitherto surprisingly neglected" in Australia. The Australian student, Heaton said, was interested in European developments but soon became curious about his own continent and attention had thus to be given to Australian economic history and to the story of his own labour movement.²⁹ Thus, the aspiration to provide scholarly studies of Australia's social, economic and political growth went beyond the provision of class texts. It was envisaged as "fathering essays and monographs of a research character, such as would be published in Great Britain by a University Press".³⁰ Five of the nine books in the series are discussed substantially in the chapters on their authors: Atkinson's *The New Social Order*, Heaton's *Modern Economic History with special reference to Australia*, Portus' *Marx and Modern Thought*, Mayo's *Democracy and Freedom* and Bland's *Shadows and Realities of Government*. All of these appeared between

²⁸G.V. Portus, General Preface to books in W.E.A. series.

²⁹H. Heaton, "The Teaching of Economic History in Universities", (IV) on Australia, *Economic History Review*, Vol. 3, 1932, p. 344.

³⁰"Third Annual Report of the Workers' Educational Association of Australia, 1922". *Australian Highway*, October 1923, p. 152.

1918 and 1925. The other four books included the first Australian edition of Henry Bournes Higgins' *Harvard Law Review* essays on the arbitration system, *A New Province for Law and Order*, a reprinting of J.B. Condliffe's civics text written for the New Zealand W.E.A., *The Life of Society*, and two research theses, J.T. Sutcliffe's *History of Trade Unionism in Australia* and F.R. Mauldon's *A Study in Social Economics: The Hunter River Valley*, the last of the series published in 1927. Supplementing the Series were other publications, notably Atkinson's collection of essays, *Australia. Economic and Political Studies* (1920), which he claimed as the first comprehensive and authoritative work on the sociological and economic condition of Australia. Among his contributors were Mayo, Portus, Harrison Moore, W. Jethro Brown and T. Griffith Taylor. It was common practice also to issue W.E.A. lectures in twopenny pamphlets: Heaton's book appeared originally in this form in 1916. Public symposia which the W.E.A. sponsored, such as its conference on Trade Unionism held in 1915, were often recorded in print as were special lecture series given under its auspices: Bernard Muscio's early lectures on industrial psychology were published under the W.E.A. imprint. In 1919, the Australian movement followed the example of the parent association in Britain by establishing its own journal, the *Australian Highway*. Edited for many years by F.A. Bland, this little monthly tried hard to keep in touch with overseas ideas, to review the latest books on sociological and international questions and to write about Australia in informed terms. It is argued in this thesis that these publications - in particular the W.E.A. Series - are themselves events in the little-known chronology of ideas and intellectual life in modern Australia. In current Australian historiography they have been almost completely forgotten.

In 1973, Geoffrey Serle remarked on the primitive state of our knowledge of the history of learning and scholarship in Australia and on the work yet to be done on the sociology of ideas and culture.³¹ His comment came in the context of his own effort to remedy another important gap, that of cultural and artistic history, and, since his pathbreaking *From Deserts the Prophets Come*, there have been further advances in our understanding of the experience of our creative writers set against their own times.³² But, the terrain of intellectual history, especially in the twentieth century, remains still largely uncharted despite an excellent survey of economic thought up to the 1920's in Craufurd Goodwin's *Economic Enquiry in Australia* and some valuable individual studies such as R.M. Crawford's biography of George Arnold Wood, J. La Nauze's study of Walter Murdoch, Don Watson's life of Brian Fitzpatrick and A.J. Baker's work on John Anderson.³³

The only published work which has paid systematic attention to the W.E.A. group as intellectuals, rather than as pioneers in an institutional development, is Tim Rowse's *Australian Liberalism and National Character* (1978).³⁴ In a broad chronological study from the turn of the century to the present, Rowse presents these "secular

³¹Geoffrey Serle, *From Deserts the Prophets Come The Creative Spirit in Australia 1788-1972* (Melbourne 1973) Preface.

³²Recent studies include Dorothy Green, *Ulysses Bound: Henry Handel Richardson and Her Fiction* (Canberra 1973); John Docker, *Australian Cultural Elites* (Sydney 1974); David Walker, *Dream and Disillusion* (Canberra 1976); Axel Clark, *Christopher Brennan, A Critical Biography* (Melbourne 1980).

³³Craufurd Goodwin, *Economic Enquiry in Australia* (North Carolina 1966); J. La Nauze, *Walter Murdoch; A Biographical Memoir* (Melbourne 1977); R.M. Crawford, *'A Bit of a Rebel'* (Sydney 1975); A.J. Baker, *Anderson's Social Philosophy* (Sydney 1979); Don Watson, *Brian Fitzpatrick A Radical Life* (Sydney 1979). Two other valuable monographs are Bruce McFarlane, *Professor Irvine's Economics in Australian Labour History 1913-1933* (Canberra 1966) and Michael Roe, *William Jethro Brown* (University of Tasmania Occasional Paper 7, 1977).

³⁴Tim Rowse, *Australian Liberalism and National Character* (Melbourne 1978).

evangelists" as exhibiting the general failure of liberal intellectuals in modern Australia to challenge the hegemony of the capitalist ruling classes. His basic thesis - that the W.E.A. tutors were the purveyors of a liberal consensus which made them "the organic intellectuals of a rising industrial bourgeoisie" is not new. It repeats in the language of today's French Marxists what the radical left said about the W.E.A. from the beginning. The point was as self-evident then as it is now and it is not the intention of this thesis to contest the fact that these men were not advocating the violent overthrow of the prevailing system. They were classically men of the middle path, anguishing about the social injustice and the lack of free initiative in industrial society but rejecting revolutionary reconstruction. They placed their faith in the potential of human reason and human altruism to solve conflict. They were, as Rowse correctly notes, as much "new moralists" as new social scientists.³⁵ It is important, however, to explore these tensions and, in an analysis of their ideas, their rhetoric and their careers, to discover what we can about the existential condition of being a sociologically-oriented intellectual in Australia in those formative years during and after the first world war.

The studies of each of the principals which make up Part Two of this thesis offer essential, but partial, perspectives on the experience of the W.E.A. group. Only one figure, Herbert Heaton, spans the whole distance from Rochdale England to an eminent career in the social sciences. Heaton's Australian contemporaries in the W.E.A. network held him in distinctive regard as an outstanding scholar among them. In all his

³⁵*Ibid.*, Chapter 2.

enthusiasms and commitments, he serves to define more closely than the others the strengths and weaknesses of the movement. In particular, Heaton's career in Hobart and Adelaide is a revealing and invaluable case-study of the interaction of this intellectual style with the academy and the community in early twentieth century Australia. Heaton's Australian years, therefore, demand separate and extended attention which is provided in Part Three of this study.

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CHAPTER 2. Australian Labour and the New Social Order: the W.E.A. Diagnosis

Two months before the Armistice in 1918, George Beeby, Minister for Labour and Industry in N.S.W. warned Australians that new initiatives were imperative if they were to deal successfully with the major issue of the coming post-War world - the "industrial problem":

after the War, all allied countries and particularly Great Britain, the Dominions and the U.S. will have to face the industrial position from an entirely new point of view, and only those countries which are prepared with constructive proposals will avoid turmoil and disaster.¹

Although the purpose of the W.E.A. was explicitly that of education, the central challenge to its rationale was the "industrial position". The history and condition of the worker was its basic material and given the ever-volatile industrial problem, much of the educational and intellectual energy of its tutors was devoted to the discussion and promotion of "constructive proposals" for solving the conflicts between labour and capital. A basic premise of their thinking was that alternatives must be found to the threat of proletarian revolution. As a consequence, this chapter does not deal with the modes and methods of reconstruction which they rejected, that is, the theory and tactics of Bolshevism and revolutionary syndicalism. It seeks instead to indicate broadly, but by no means exhaustively, the type of discussion and developments taking place in Australia which were compatible with the W.E.A. ethos and with which their thinking was able to make contact.

The constructive proposals which the W.E.A. intellectuals advocated were an eclectic but recognisable reflection of the social diagnoses and ideas of theorists like Graham Wallas, J.A. Hobson, R.H. Tawney and G.D.H. Cole. These were influential against a background of wide

¹G. Beeby in *Industrial Australian and Mining Standard*, 12 September 1918, p. 385.

reading in the new social sciences, especially in economic history, political science, sociology and social psychology. Their conception of society owed much to pluralist theory, and to classic liberalism, so that they were attracted not only to alternatives to revolution but also to alternatives to the present social order connoted in the contemporary term, "the servile state". They preferred, therefore, to urge non-political and non-legislative means of social reform, placing their emphasis on the good of voluntary activity, self-help and local association. The proposals they favoured moved with the times, from the blending of Co-operation and the efficiency movement of the pre-War decade into a concept of co-operative efficiency, through the welfare work phase which munitions production both nourished and required during the War, to the post-War social reconstruction programmes which promulgated the democratisation of industry as the foundation of the new social order. The relation of each of the W.E.A. principals and his work to this complex of ideas is explored separately in individual chapters but it is useful to look first of all at the wider world of discourse within which their thinking was situated.

One of the first forums for this discussion was a conference on trade unionism and the Labour movement in Australia, organised by Meredith Atkinson in mid-1915. Assisted by the Economic Research Society, in which R.F. Irvine was the key figure, and by the Labour Council of N.S.W., Atkinson invited speakers to assess the experience of the trade union movement before an audience of delegates from various unions. Atkinson claimed,

A conference of this nature is entirely new in Australian experience ... There is the desire of the academic mind searching for knowledge, but

above all there is the desire of the Trade Unionists to know and understand their own movement.²

This conference, subsequently published as *Trade Unionism in Australia*, was held in June 1915 and gave the first significant public airing to the sorts of social criticisms and ideas that Atkinson and his colleagues in the W.E.A. spoke about for the next decade. The speakers included Atkinson on the relation of trade unionism to Co-operation, J. Sutcliffe and G. Lightfoot on the history of the movement, F.W. Eggleston on the effect of industrial legislation on the aims and ideals of the workers, F.A. Russell on industrial arbitration and W.G. Spence on industrial and craft unionism. At the time of the conference, Labour was at a high point in government, at the federal level and in all but one state, yet the strikingly recurrent theme of this symposium was the imminent decay of the Labour movement precisely because of its attainment of political power. It was living on an old idealism and bereft of new directions. Irvine declared

In Australia most of the traditional aims of Trade Unionism have been achieved, or nearly achieved ... What, then, is left to occupy the attention of Trade Unionists? Failing new purposes, there seems to be little except to act as a watch-dog or to become political organisations for the support of a particular party.³

Spence also maintained that the heroic days of Labour belonged to the past and that the worker should place his future in greater study of government, philosophy and economic thought. Lightfoot and Sutcliffe called for research into "the prolonged trial of the machinery of representative government" and Eggleston summed up the fundamental

²M. Atkinson (ed.), *Trade Unionism in Australia* (Sydney 1915) p. 5.

³R.F. Irvine, "Trade Unionism and Efficiency", *Trade Unionism in Australia*, p. 34.

criticism of the conference:

We have gone as far as legislation and mechanical means can take us. We have our higher wages, our increased comfort and the like; but we have not inaugurated a new order ...⁴

Much of what the W.E.A. group construed as social progress at this time was conveyed in the slogan "efficiency" which, for them expressed a complexity of ideas, from improved economic and industrial output to the personal and moral development of the citizen. The efficiency movement flourished abroad: German efficiency was admired by all up to the outbreak of War, British efficiency was the object of a campaign from the turn of the century and American efficiency had achieved scientific status in the cult associated with F.W. Taylor.⁵ The W.E.A. speakers were careful to dissociate themselves from crude Taylorism - techniques such as speeding up, card systems and time and motion studies - which they knew to be anathema to the Australian trade unionist. They spoke, instead, of co-operative efficiency, social efficiency and self-efficiency - terms which pruned away the manipulative aspects of the movement. They urged an ideal of common interest between employer and employee, arguing that the higher the national efficiency, the better the standard of living of the worker. There remained, however, the belief in a science of management which could, Irvine argued, neutralise class conflict if it could advance co-operative efficiency above class bias. Defined thus, as the expression of an ideal of rational co-operation, efficiency was readily assimilable to the mainstream ideological inheritance of the W.E.A., from Robert Owen to

⁴F.W. Eggleston, "The Effect of Industrial Legislation in Australia upon the Ideals and Aspirations of the Workers", *Trade Unionism in Australia*, p. 81.

⁵See G.R. Searle, *The Quest for National Efficiency* (Oxford 1971) on Britain and S. Haber, *Efficiency and Uplift. Scientific Management in the Progressive Era 1890-1920* (Chicago 1964) on America.

Albert Mansbridge. But, as Samuel Haber, has suggested efficiency was also a creed which enabled liberals and progressives to evade the real implications of mass democracy. It was, he pointed out,

a standpoint from which the progressives who had declared their allegiance to democracy could resist the leveling tendencies of the principle of equality.⁶

This was because efficiency required the leadership of the competent and the production of new kinds of experts to guide society. Atkinson, Irvine and Harrison Moore addressed this problem at a conference in September 1915 called by the Victorian Minister of Public Works to discuss "National Efficiency". They tempered their anxiety about democratic rule with a call for an élite that would be prepared by a liberal university education based on the social sciences and would also be responsive to the ways in which social and economic forces affected the general welfare.⁷ Irvine described this élite as

a brand of men that this community has hitherto had no machinery for producing: the trained and experienced efficiency expert, who has sufficient intellectual equipment to enable him to take the social point of view.⁸

By the end of the War, the debate about efficiency had been absorbed into much broader discussion. There had been a heady optimism generated in the early years of the War about the evaporation of class conflict. Lloyd George remarked that "industrial conditions are in solution" but the co-operation of labour and capital in war-time disintegrated with the end of emergency.⁹ The eruption of unrest in waves of strikes,

⁶S. Haber, *op. cit.* p. 116.

⁷*National Efficiency*, a series of lectures delivered at the Victorian Railways Institute, August-September 1915. The series included M. Atkinson, "Democracy and Efficiency", R.F. Irvine, "National Organisation and National Efficiency" and W. Harrison Moore, "National Efficiency and Government".

⁸R.F. Irvine, *op. cit.* p. 19.

⁹D. Lloyd George in Preface to E.D. Proud, *Welfare Work* (London 1916).

echoes of syndicalism, and fears of Bolshevism in all the belligerent countries, including Australia, fused with the positive need to take stock after such a war and to build anew. "Social Reconstruction" was the new cry but the reality was a raw conflict that seemed instead to promise revolution. In Britain, this period was marked by creative ferment in socialist thinking: between Fabians and guild socialists the debate continued over the nature of democracy, the role of the state and the status of the worker. In Australia, there was little comparable thrashing out of such issues and there was little systematic reconstruction planning such as Lloyd George's government had set in train. Apart from the reluctance of Australians to theorise, the reduced and bitter state of politics in Australia by the end of the War accounted in part for the lack of much coherent vision of what Australia should be like when the troops came home. There was some government initiative in the foundation of the Advisory Council of Science and Industry, following a British model, but government reaction to industrial unrest largely took the form of a long and extensive wrangle with the Arbitration system that continued through the twenties. To all sides, it appeared that the Court had not been able to deliver the promises of Higgins' "new province" and, in any thinking about the reconstruction of industry in Australia, the place and future of Arbitration was a crucial element. A further characteristic of the Australian social order was the extent of government enterprise and the degree to which social reform and welfare was dependent on the actions of governments. In the many courses, lectures, articles, books and pamphlets produced by the W.E.A. in these years on the problem of industry, non-parliamentary and non-legislative solutions occupied their attention. One of these was the movement to "humanise" industry through welfare work.

The models for the industrial welfare work movement were the establishments of Rowntree, Cadbury and Leverhulme in England, Krupp in Germany and of firms like Ford, Goodyear and the National Cash Register Company in the United States.¹⁰ Schemes of "social betterment" or "model employment" embraced a wide variety of measures aimed at improving the workers' health, hygiene and happiness: they ranged from better ventilation to provident funds to holiday camps and educational facilities. They were carried out by the "welfare secretaries" or "industrial advisers" who worked in the factory's "labour" or "sociological" department. To the W.E.A. circle, the value of such approaches was the fact that they began where industrial legislation left off. They recognised that the wage contract was not the sum total of the economic relationship between man and master. It was the voluntary nature of the employers' efforts to improve the industrial environment which appealed to them, and this was enhanced by the co-operation of the workers which successful welfare work required. The most controversial aspect of the movement was the motivation of employers which mixed genuine humanitarian concern with the principle that "Humanity is Good Business". Cadbury, in his *Experiments in Industrial Organisation*, stated the essential idea,

the supreme principle has been the belief that business efficiency and the well-being of the employee are but different sides of the same problem.¹¹

In Australia, there was considerable interest in welfare work in several industries. The Advisory Council of Science and Industry

¹⁰For an excellent study of the industrial betterment movement in England through the life of one of its outstanding practitioners, see Asa Briggs, *Social Thought and Social Action. A Study of the Work of Seebohm Rowntree 1871-1954*. (London, 1961).

¹¹Quoted in H. Heaton, *Welfare Work* (Melbourne 1919) Bulletin no. 16, Advisory Council of Science and Industry, p. 13.

considered the relevance of the area to the mandate for the proposed Institute which was basically scientific and technical. The Director, Dr Gellatly, informed the Council that, in the face of the present degeneration in industrial relations, the Prime Minister, W.M. Hughes, wished the new body to give attention to research into matters of this kind. Supported by H.W. Gepp, Gellatly commissioned Heaton to collect information on industrial welfare work from around the world to be published as Bulletin no. 16 (1919) in the Council's series.¹² Informed by his own professional knowledge of industrial practice, Heaton's booklet was a comprehensive survey of developments in Europe and North America, supplemented by an extensive bibliography.¹³ He also drew on the standard work on the subject in Britain which had recently been written by E. Dorothea Proud, a South Australian studying at the London School of Economics. Proud believed that welfare work might be tolerated by Australian workers who would not generally accept either charity or efficiency measures.¹⁴ Heaton announced in his preface what he and his W.E.A. colleagues considered a proper and comprehensive industrial policy - one that looked further than the deliberations allowed in the Arbitration system:

(it) goes deeper and faces such matters as the whole aim of industry, the responsibilities which fall on the shoulders of a man who employs other men, the effect of industrial conditions upon the worker and the work, the well-being of the employee outside working hours, the distribution of wealth produced, and

¹²Minutes of the Advisory Council of Science and Industry, 10 February 1919, 31 March 1919, 14 April 1919, 14 July 1919, 15 September 1919. This information was kindly supplied by Mr K.A. Green, Archivist to C.S.I.R.O.

¹³H. Heaton, *Welfare Work*, *op. cit.* (Heaton's name does not appear on the Bulletin).

¹⁴E.D. Proud, *op. cit.*, Author's Preface. E. Dorothea Proud was a graduate of the University of Adelaide and the recipient of the first Catherine Helen Spence Scholarship in Sociology which took her to the London School of Economics. Her thesis was published in an L.S.E. Series, *Studies in Economic and Political Science*, edited by W. Pember Reeves. She continued her work as assistant to Seebohm Rowntree in the British Government's new Welfare Department in the Ministry of Munitions. See Briggs, *op. cit.*

finally the participation of the employees in the management and control of industrial relations.¹⁵

There were some industries in Australia where moves were being made in these directions, the most notable being in the mining industry.¹⁶

The Broken Hill Associated Smelters at Port Pirie, the Wallaroo and Moonta Mining and Smelting Company, and the Electrolytic Zinc Company in Tasmania were the most exemplary because of the importance of maintaining industrial peace in such important war-time industries and because they were in the hands of men like W.S. Robinson, H. Lipson Hancock and H.W. Gepp who travelled and studied developments in industry beyond Australia. Just as Seebohm Rowntree was a generous patron of Albert Mansbridge in Britain, those employers interested in welfare work in Australia were favourably disposed to the operations of the W.E.A. among their employees. Heaton made particular contact with Gerald Mussen who was appointed by W.S. Robinson as the first industrial officer at Port Pirie.¹⁷ Mussen introduced apparently effective welfare schemes if one accepts his own claim that the Smelters' unbroken record of industrial peace during the War could be attributed to them.¹⁸ By October 1919, however, his ideals of community and co-

¹⁵H. Heaton, *Welfare Work*, Preface.

¹⁶B.S. Cook, *Industrial Co-operation in Australia*, Bulletin no. 17, A.C. S.I. (Melbourne 1920) provides information based on a hundred questionnaires sent out to firms and business around Australia inquiring about welfare measures. Ambrose Pratt (ed.) *Australian Tariff Handbook* (1919) also gathered evidence of welfare enlightenment in Australian industry to support the case for the protective tariff.

¹⁷See G. Blainey (ed.) *If I Remember Rightly, Memoirs of W.S. Robinson* (Melbourne 1967) pp. 159-162. Robinson's slogan became "at least as much care for the man as for the machines".

¹⁸The Broken Hill Associated Smelters Papers, files on industrial welfare 1/12/7, Melbourne University Archives, contain substantial records of Mussen's work at Port Pirie. Writing to Senator Pearce, Minister of Defence, in November 1918, Mussen asked for the loan of 150 tents to house workers at a seaside resort being established by the Company. He justified the request by alluding to the record of industrial peace at Port Pirie during the War: "only with the co-operation of the employees has it been possible to keep up the essential supply of lead for the Allies".

operation were dissipated in a long and turbulent period of unrest. In the meantime, Mussen was anxious to establish tutorial classes at Port Pirie to the extent of offering a donation towards the salary of a resident tutor.¹⁹ Rudolph Bronner was appointed to share his time between Port Pirie and Broken Hill in 1919 but, once the strike broke out at Port Pirie, the W.E.A. message fell on stony ground, reportedly "impeded by the industrial stagnation at that place". By March 1920, operations had ceased as the workers lost interest in the W.E.A.'s economics and political science and only a weekly class in English literature conducted by a local minister could be sustained.²⁰

In his early days in Adelaide, Heaton had also been defended against conservative criticism by the more enlightened management at Broken Hill. When he addressed unionists at the Trades Hall in Broken Hill in 1917, it was "by permission of the L.V.A.", the anti-conscriptionist Labour Volunteer Army. Andrew Fairweather, Underground Superintendent of the Broken Hill South Mine, justified Heaton's appearance at such a venue by arguing that there was no point in the W.E.A. message being directed to the docile grocers and office-men of the town. It was the "firebrands" among the unions who needed an education in the basic economics: furthermore,

Suppose, for instance, the majority of our Union leaders were members of the Workers' Educational Association here (and I believe some are regular attendants), and members of the Mines' staffs joined up, regularly attended, and took interest in discussions; would not good be accomplished? Certainly more good than harm? We might not have any conversions to a new faith, but we should have a better personal

¹⁹Minutes of the Joint Committee for Tutorial Classes, University of Adelaide, entries from 25 September 1917 to 1 November 1918. In July 1919, Mussen requested a full-time tutor for Broken Hill.

²⁰*Ibid.*, letter from the secretary of the Port Pirie Branch of the W.E.A., 28 April 1920.

feeling, and in all probability a growth of confidence on the part of one side in the honesty and purpose and motive of the other.²¹

The co-operative endeavour of management and worker in self-education appeared to gain ground for a time in 1920 under the tutorial guidance of a new tutor, B.H. Molesworth. Molesworth, A Queensland graduate, had been introduced to the W.E.A., in the persons of R.H. Tawney and Arthur Greenwood, by A.L. Smith at Oxford: "this trio", he recalled, "sold adult education to me". After two years at Balliol, he was sent to South Wales to initiate tutorial classes among the miners there. Having met F.A. Bland at the W.E.A. Oxford Summer School in 1916, he became interested in the Australian movement and accepted a post as Copland's assistant in 1918, again working in the mining areas of Northern Tasmania. In 1920, he went to Broken Hill and threw himself into classes in industrial history and Marxian economics. Despite some of his public statements being adversely quoted by a local M.H.R. in the parliament and the consequent anxiety of the Joint Committee of the University of Sydney about the suitability of the study of Marx, Molesworth's classes flourished and perhaps enabled that exchange of opposing views which Fairweather hoped for. Molesworth claimed that in the W.E.A. classes the editor of the miners' union paper debated with his opposite number, the editor of *The Barrier*, that the miners joined discussion with Andrew Fairweather and other representatives of management, while the local teachers mixed with the leaders

²¹Andrew Fairweather to Colin Fraser, 28 January 1918. B.H.A.S. Papers, 1/18/5, M.U.A.

of the unions.²² After Molesworth left Broken Hill to take up the post of Director of Tutorial Classes in Brisbane in 1921, the W.E.A. classes began to fall off. 1921 was a year of industrial depression; Portus concluded that depressed miners had less heart for education.²³

In times of industrial conflagration and economic depression, welfare work and benevolent management showed obvious limitations in meeting the needs of the worker. Delivering the annual Joseph Fisher Lecture in Commerce at the University of Adelaide, which Heaton had invited him to give, Gerald Mussen spoke on "The Humanizing of Commerce and Industry".²⁴ Now the Consulting Industrialist to all the Broken Hill Mining Companies, Mussen clearly revealed his paternalist concept of industrial welfare. He argued that the labour force depended on the directive capacity of superior experts and that production would diminish almost in proportion to the amount of worker participation introduced. All men were not equal in the army of production despite their equality as citizens outside the gates of the factory.²⁵ This

²²B.H. Molesworth to Lascelles Wilson, 27 December 1958, W.E.A. Files, Department of Adult Education, University of Sydney. This letter is an extended memoir. See also Lascelles Wilson, "B.H. Molesworth - A Tribute", *Australian Journal of Adult Education*, Vol. XI, no. 3, November 1971, pp. 151-152.

²³G.V. Portus to C. ff. Marsh-Roberts, 10 October 1921. W.E.A. Files, D.A.E. Sydney. Marsh-Roberts was the tutor for 1922 in Broken Hill. He had been the subject of censure as a W.E.A. tutor in Palmerston, N.Z. because of certain utterances about the War and because of "gossip about his character" which Professor T.A. Hunter of Victoria University College, Wellington, said was to be explained "by the fact that his name is mentioned in footnote in *Red Europe*, a book banned in this country". T. Hunter to G.V. Portus, 16 November 1921, W.E.A. Files *op. cit.*

²⁴Minutes of the Board of Commercial Studies, University of Adelaide. 12 December 1918. Heaton proposed Mussen to the Board to lecture on "Industrial Peace and Welfare Work with special reference to Australian conditions". Also, University of Adelaide Files, Docket no. 97, 1919, for correspondence between Heaton and Mussen on the lecture.

²⁵G. Mussen, *The Humanizing of Commerce and Industry*, The Joseph Fisher Lecture in Commerce (University of Adelaide, 1919), especially pp. 21-23.

was where the W.E.A. intellectuals moved beyond welfare work. They had applauded the actual improvements the movement effected, the exercise of voluntary initiatives, and the good sense and co-operation which it generated, but they insisted on the recognition of some principles of self-government in industry. Heaton moved to this point at the end of Bulletin no. 16:

In short, welfare work aims at humanity in industry, but the recognition of the humanity of one's labour force must involve the admission that one's employees have ideas of democracy, of self-government and self-expression. Therefore, welfare work must take as its aim humanity in industry and must accept as the guiding principle of its method democracy in industry.²⁶

The extent of that democracy, the type of self-government, and the pace and methods by which it was to be reached, occupied the W.E.A. thinking and teaching for the next few years.

* * * * *

While there was a prevailing sympathy among the W.E.A. circle for the aspirations of guild socialists like Orage and Cole, the most proximate and practical hope for the introduction of some form of industrial democracy seemed to them to lie in the Whitley Reports of the British government's Committee on Industrial Reconstruction. The Committee was set up in October 1916, under J.H. Whitley, to work out a plan to secure the "permanent improvement" of industrial relations. The first Interim Report, published in March 1917, recommended that the government propose to employer and employee associations the formation of Joint Industrial Councils, composed of representatives from both sides, which would run the affairs of each major industry at

²⁶H. Heaton, *Welfare Work*, p. 105.

a national level. They would be supported by District Councils and, at the base, by Works Committees in factories and shops. Such co-operative management, it was claimed, would secure to employees

a greater share in and responsibility for the determination and observance of the conditions under which their work was carried on.²⁷

The Councils would negotiate such issues as wages, job security, the training of apprentices, industrial conditions and the use of new processes in production. Works Committees were not a new concept but the Whitley Report saw new functions for them as part of a total scheme moving towards self-government in industry. The second Report, a year later, dealt with the relationship of the Joint Industrial Councils to the state, in the eventual hope of lessening the influence of the government in industry; a third Report elaborated on the purpose and organisation of Works Committees. Although the War Cabinet, and the British Commission on Industrial Unrest which it set up, adopted the Whitley scheme, there were many who correctly anticipated great difficulty in implementing the proposals, especially where the role of the unions was concerned. One strand of guild socialist thought accepted the Whitley idea as an interim recognition of the principle of self-government in industry but more radical theorists rejected it as too much of a compromise with the wage-system and too small a step towards worker-control. But it was the gradualist nature of the scheme and the endorsement of the principle of industrial democracy which appealed to the W.E.A. promoters of the Whitley Reports. The idea that the worker might be educated slowly to his share in a participatory

²⁷The Whitley Report, published by *Industrial Australian and Mining Standard* as Industrial Reports no. 1 (Melbourne 1918).

industrial democracy was fully in accord with an ideology founded on a belief in educated reason and the exercise of co-operation. They joined the architects of the Whitley Report in hoping that a future industrial parliament, which gave the worker his rights as an industrial citizen, would promote amity and "a profound sense of public service" in both employer and worker.

In Australia, the Whitley proposals were aired and discussed in industrial and government circles. The *Industrial Australian and Mining Standard* reprinted the first Report in pamphlet form and continued to follow the experiment in its pages during the post-War years. At Broken Hill in December 1917, Mr Andrew Fairweather suggested a detailed plan for Industrial Councils in the mining industry. He reported to Colin Fraser in Melbourne, that wages policies and welfare work were not sufficient to engage the co-operation of the men and that "something more or something different is needed to secure cohesion in the industrial machine".²⁸ In N.S.W. the Holman government announced its interest in Whitleyism. In his policy speech at Lismore in August 1919, W.A. Holman spoke of his government's intention to introduce a system of Whitley Councils which, in his opinion, were beginning to work with success in Britain. Holman claimed that such a move would

... in many cases reconcile the interests of labour and capital, give the workers genuine concern in the success of the enterprise in which they are engaged and open their eyes to the fact that only by increasing production, and not by decreasing it, can prosperity be secured by both parties in the undertaking.²⁹

²⁸Andrew Fairweather to Colin Fraser, 28 January 1918. B.H.A.S. Papers, 1/18/5 M.U.A.

²⁹*Lithgow Mercury*, 22 August 1919, Newspaper cutting in Bland Papers, S.U.A.

After his visit to England, George Beeby also advocated a trial of the system. Addressing the Employers' Federation in Sydney in 1919, he explained it thus,

the essential idea of organisation under the Whitley plan is to have in every industry permanent little industrial parliaments which will meet regularly and apart altogether from the wage bargain, seek some means of identifying the labour engaged in the industry as part of the industry, entitled to considerations in questions of management, methods of increasing production and the ratio of division of the total product.³⁰

Just as the Minister of Public Works in Victoria, F. Hagelthorn, had promoted the cause of national efficiency in 1915, now J.B. Holme, Deputy President of the N.S.W. Board of Trade and Special Commissioner for Conciliation in that state, popularised the Whitley idea. In 1918, he published two long articles in the *Industrial Australian and Mining Standard* (later printed as two booklets) on "The British Scheme of Self-Government in Industry and Its Counterpart in N.S.W.". He began by describing the urgency of the situation:

the problem of economic readjustment after the war will in its industrial and domestic bearings alone, be of a most formidable character; the nation may win through the war only to find itself involved in a catastrophe of an even more deadly character. It does not follow that a nation which survives assaults from without can maintain its position in world-politics when it is rent by dissensions within its own body. Only those of the nations which seek industrial peace after the war and ensure it, may be expected to stand in the van of economic progress.³¹

His article described the origins and purposes of the Whitley Committee and reported comprehensively on its recommendations. The second article

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ J.B. Holme, *The British Scheme for Self-Government of Industry; and Its Counterpart in New South Wales*, nos. 1 and 2 (Sydney 1919) Preface.

was an attempt to discuss the application of the scheme to N.S.W. where, under the Industrial Arbitration (Amendment) Act of 1918, the N.S.W. Board of Trade was entrusted with the promotion of Industrial Councils and Works Committees. In its communications, the Board acknowledged that the provisions of the Act did reflect "the main purpose of a movement of profound significance which is in foot in England".³² Australian employers were invited to consider testing the principles endorsed in the local legislation in connection with their particular industry. Initially, the Board of Trade recommended the experiment of Industrial Councils within each industry. Shop Committees would require the support of the unions. Holme's stated purpose in adapting the British models was to recognise the paramount importance of the "human factor" in industry but the major trade unions were not interested in such overtures. The first Industrial Council along Whitley lines was set up in the Boot, Shoe and Slipper Manufacturer Association³³ but those who claimed it as a harbinger of a new era in Australian industrial life did not take into proper account the firm rejection of Whitleyism by the N.S.W. Labour Council which advised its members

to resist the adoption in industry of this latest
and most objectionable form of labour exploitations.³⁴

The *Australian Highway*, edited by Bland, was convinced in 1919 that a new era of self-government in industry was at hand in Britain. Their enthusiastic study of industrial history and relations, of guild socialist theory and of the Whitley idea, had given the W.E.A. intellectuals grounds for optimism regarding "epoch-making" changes in the British

³²*Ibid.*, pp. 14-16.

³³Unidentified newspaper cuttings dated 12 September 1919. Bland Papers, S.U.A.

³⁴*Ibid.*

industrial world but, when they turned their eyes to Australia, they were disappointed to find that moves for reconstruction had fallen victim once again to Australian étatism. The *Highway* noted that the government and press had been lately paying lip-service to the principles of the Joint Industrial Council and that legislative sanction had been given to them in the amended N.S.W. Act of 1918 dealing with industrial disputes, but it saw a problem with the way the Holman government appeared to "impose upon industry here, an imported scheme". This was part of the reason, the *Highway* suggested, for the Labour Council's opposition and for the recent rejection of such proposals by the railway employees. The Whitley scheme, it pointed out, was not intended to be formulated by the authorities - its essence was, in fact, the very opposite: it was to be

the fullest and freest participation by the Trade Unions in the framing of the scheme under which they are to work!³⁵

It argued that a conference should have been called to ascertain the views of both Labour and Capital on the re-shaping of industry and to explain the real theory and principles involved. At such a conference, an industrial plan suited to Australia's stage of industrial development could be elaborated: industry must suggest its own course and its own methods. The *Highway* called attention to the recent creation in England of a National Industrial Council in England to advise government on all national industrial questions and it was gratified to see the role played in this body by two leading W.E.A. men, Henry Clay representing the Ministry of Labour and G.D.H. Cole representing the trade unions.³⁶

³⁵*Australian Highway*, editorial, Vol. 1, no. 8, October 1919.

³⁶*Ibid.*

No comparable opportunity eventuated in Australia for the W.E.A. men to fill such active or advisory roles but from their many platforms and in their writings they continued to explain and to promote their version of the industrial state. Their message was not confined to the worker. They addressed the management of industry, employer associations like the Chamber of Commerce, local bodies and brotherhoods, the hierarchy and informed laity of the churches and the general public. It was just as important, in their view, for the owners of capital to understand their role in the present system and to grasp the nature of the class conflict which plagued them all. When the foremost management journals of the mining industry, the *Industrial Australian and Mining Standard* and the *Chemical Engineering and Mining Review* were impelled to discuss the industrial problem in their pages, R.F. Irvine and Meredith Atkinson were among their main contributors. Believing that, at the end of the War, there were "unmistakeable indications that the labour movement in Australia is standing on the threshold of Bolshevism", the *Industrial Australian and Mining Standard* began a series of weekly articles called "The Problem of Industrial Unrest" in its column, "The Sociological Department".³⁷ The *Chemical Engineering and Mining Review* announced that men's minds "were turning to the study of sociology" in the quest for industrial peace and so it commissioned Irvine to write eleven articles entitled "The Roots of Our Discontent" during 1920 and 1921.³⁸ The *Review's* purpose in inviting the professor to its pages was that

³⁷*Industrial Australian and Mining Standard*, 10 January 1919. The series ran for about eighteen months and included Mussen's Joseph Fisher Lecture, an address by J.H. Whitley to Oxford students, and J.B. Holme on the relevance of Whitley Councils to N.S.W.

³⁸*Chemical Engineering and Mining Review*, 5 October 1920. Irvine's articles ran from 5 November 1920 to 5 September 1921.

every business man should know what is involved in profit-sharing, welfare work, national guilds, and other phases of industrial life that are being studied by some of the greatest minds of the period.³⁹

Having the audience of business men in mind, Irvine's articles assessed the role of capital in industry as one of the major factors in industrial unrest. It was not in the natural order, he instructed them, that the possession of capital should give men sovereignty over the lives of others. His views were influenced by Tawney's "Sickness of an Acquisitive Society" and Hobson's analysis of wealth and he deemed the ideas of the guild socialists as worthy of serious attention since, in his opinion, change was essential in the present outmoded industrial system. He predicted the reconstruction of industry along new lines of co-operation and democracy but he never yielded his insistence that this must be consistent with the recognition of expertise and the need for efficiency.⁴⁰ At a W.E.A. conference, held in September 1921 in Sydney, on the question of training for control of industry, Irvine re-iterated this point. He argued that in the co-operative management of industry, which he posed as the alternative to capitalistic control, efficiency of management would be even more important. Whatever form democracy took in industry, it must be representative; the *Highway* reported his warning:

Industry could not be run by crowds ... Would democracy realise that amateurism in industry would be fatal?⁴¹

Not every worker could be an expert but the proper education of each could prepare him to exercise his influence in the shaping of industry and to choose competent representatives.

³⁹*Ibid.*

⁴⁰R.F. Irvine, "The Roots of Our Discontent", *Chemical Engineering and Mining Review*, *op. cit.* Also R.F. Irvine, "The Political Economy of the Masters", *Industrial Australian and Mining Standard*, 27 June 1918 and 11 July 1918.

⁴¹*Australian Highway*, 1 November 1921. Report of conference on "Training for Control of Industry".

During the post-War years, the topic of social reconstruction dominated the W.E.A. programmes. Atkinson in Melbourne lectured during 1918 on various aspects from "Post-War Finance and Commerce" to "The Future Control of Industry"; in the same year, he gave three lectures to the Victorian Railways Union on "Industrial Democracy in State Enterprises". In 1919, his themes included "The Social Outlook", "Democracy in Evolution" and "Co-operation or Revolution?" while at the first national Consumers Co-operative Congress in 1920 he spoke on "Co-operation and Social Reconstruction". In Sydney, Portus and Bland laboured with equal energy to situate the Australian worker and industry in relation to the reconstruction debate abroad. Bland outlined the compelling reasons why the public must become engaged in the issue:

The status of the worker in industry is one of the most pressing problems. The persistent suggestion that the social and economic relationships were to be altered after the war gave an impetus to the belief that this problem of status was to be faced, that the principles for which we felt justified in asking soldiers to die would be translated into reality in our industrial arrangements. A commonwealth is a community designed to meet the common needs of men founded upon the principle of the service of each for all. How far do our present industrial arrangements minister to that ideal?⁴²

In Brisbane, A.C.V. Melbourne enlightened the Chamber of Commerce on Profit-sharing and Co-partnership⁴³ while his W.E.A. colleague, T.C. Witherby, caused a local stir with his lectures on the question "Who Shall Control Industry?". Witherby made his position clear,

There is, one is glad to see, a minority of men among the wage-earners in this country who do desire self-

⁴²F.A. Bland, "The Control of Industry". Lecture synopsis, Bland Papers, S.U.A.

⁴³A.C.V. Melbourne, "Profit-sharing and Co-partnership", *Industrial Australian and Mining Standard*, 23 October 1919.

government in their own industrial destinies, and who know that they must fit themselves for this great responsibility by education and by experiment.⁴⁴

In Hobart, D.B. Copland addressed the annual conference of the W.E.A. in October 1919 on the subject of "Trade Unionism and Industrial Democracy"⁴⁵ and, in Northern Tasmania, Molesworth was anxious to keep up. He was grateful for the receipt from Bland of eighteen books on reconstruction and wanted to know

What exactly is the Reconstruction at which you are aiming in Sydney ... what are they talking about in Adelaide?⁴⁶

The new social order to which all this discussion was directed did not fulfil its promise in England or Australia. The Whitley scheme, the guild socialist visions, the plans for industrial democracy, were all part of the debate in British socialist theory that was brought into focus by the experience of a world war but they did not find any permanently significant embodiment in the decades which followed. For a time, Whitley Councils proliferated in various industries in Britain until the experiments began to dwindle.⁴⁷ The theorists of industrial democracy, notably G.D.H. Cole, turned in the end to politics and the British Labour Party.⁴⁸ In Australia, there were a few interesting legacies of all this post-War ferment: a significant example was the Electrolytic Zinc Company at Risdon in Tasmania where Joint Councils composed of the representatives of workers and management had been set

⁴⁴T.C. Witherby, *Who Shall Control Industry?* (Brisbane 1919). Quoted and discussed in *Fellowship* Vol. 6, no. 4, November 1919, p. 51.

⁴⁵*Hobart Mercury*, 31 October 1919.

⁴⁶B.H. Molesworth to F.A. Bland, 17 September 1918. Bland Papers, S.U.A.

⁴⁷A valuable contemporary assessment of the Whitley Councils is found in E. Halévy, *The Era of Tyrannies*, (New York 1965).

⁴⁸See J.M. Winter, *Socialism and the Challenge of War*, (London 1974) on this point.

up in 1919 and had, even in the face of union opposition, been able to appropriate to themselves some of the wage-determining functions of the Arbitration Court.⁴⁹ While the central idea at Risdon was the devolution of power and collaboration between employer and employee, it did not, however, represent any radical reconstruction and neither was it typical. At the end of the twenties, another W.E.A. figure, F.R. Mauldon, reviewed the fortunes of the co-operative idea in Australia. Whether it was the model of the Rochdale Pioneers or that of the Whitley Committee, Mauldon concluded that it found Australia barren soil. The Australian worker, he decided, was willing to accept the paternalism of the state but he maintained his distrust of any patronage on the part of an employer. He looked to state legislation rather than to the initiatives of employers and workers so that his desire to "universalise welfare through legislation" had weakened the efforts of those who harboured the vision of co-operation.⁵⁰ As Mauldon put it, the problem for Australia was to reconcile the traditional resort to the legal powers of the state with the need in any healthy society for the voluntary contributions of its members. Australia must find, he declared,

the requisite equilibrium between voluntary concession and compulsion.⁵¹

⁴⁹J.B. Brigden, "The Control and Management of Industry and the Question of Giving Employees a Share Therein". Unpublished memorandum to conference on industrial relations called by Prime Minister, Stanley Bruce, 1929. Brigden Papers, MS 730/4. N.L.A. See also R.C. Mills, "Some Factors in Industrial Relations", *Economic Record*, Vol. 5, May 1929.

⁵⁰F.R.E. Mauldon, "Co-operation and Welfare in Industry", *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. 158, November 1931, pp. 183-192. Mauldon was full-time resident tutor for the W.E.A. in Newcastle until he joined Copland's department at the University of Melbourne in the mid-twenties.

⁵¹F.R.E. Mauldon, "Industrial Relations", a review article on Henry Clay, *The Problem of Industrial Relations and Other Lectures*, *Economic Record*, Vol. 5, 1929, pp. 302-303.

In Australia, as for the rest of the world, the quest for a new social order was challenging and relevant under the pressure of world war and the urgency it had created for reconstruction. For a few years, the critical analysis of the small band of W.E.A. intellectuals did make contact with the articulated needs of employers and workers, but, in the face of either rank and file apathy to the large theoretical questions or the overt hostility of sections of the Labour movement, their efforts produced little tangible effect on the structure of industry. Collaborative ideologies which sought to avoid the issue and reality of class had little appeal to most trade unionists. The W.E.A. intellectuals, however, had an interest beyond designing specific solutions to particular issues such as national efficiency, the welfare of the worker or the management of industry. Through these more ephemeral and time-bound debates in a fundamental, but partial, area of the life of society, they were concerned to propagate a theory of the social order itself. They blamed the nineteenth century individualism that had deprived a greedy capitalism of its essential social functions but they could not accept the "servile" collectivist state that had risen in reaction. What they wanted to re-capture for modern society was the one redemptive element in liberalism, the freedom of individuals and groups, in their communities and at work, to share in the responsibility for their own destinies.

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PART TWO

CHAPTER 3. Meredith Atkinson: Sociology in Australia

In October 1913, the journal of the English W.E.A., the *Highway*, announced that Mansbridge's recent visit to Australia was bearing fruit. Mr Meredith Atkinson would soon leave England to take up the first post of Organiser of Tutorial Classes in the University of Sydney.¹ Born in County Durham in 1883, the son of a blacksmith, he had "won his way" from Hartlepool Grammar School to Keble College, Oxford, after holding a scholarship at St. John's College, Battersea, part of the London Training College. He gained a B.A. in 1908, a diploma of education the following year, and added a diploma in economics and political science in 1911.²

Atkinson was introduced to the W.E.A. and to Albert Mansbridge by Miss Madams when he was a member of her correspondence class on Co-operation. According to Mansbridge, it was characteristic of Atkinson that he created his own opportunity to become a lecturer for the Oxford Extension movement. On his own initiative he gathered a tutorial class together, induced the Local Education Authority to make a grant and so became the tutor. From 1911 to 1914, he acted as extension lecturer in economics for the University of Durham. At the end of that year he was chosen to pioneer the W.E.A. in the Antipodes. Mansbridge was moved to describe his departure in epic perspectives: farewelled amid cheers from Tilbury, Atkinson and his "plucky wife and three little ones" were taking enlightenment to the frontiers -

Thus, for the first time a whole W.E.A. family started out to another land, wholly in the interests of the work for which the W.E.A. stands. It is an epoch-making event.³

¹*Highway*, Vol. 6, no. 61, October 1913, p. 71.

²Warren Osmond, "Meredith Atkinson", *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Vol. 7, 1891-1939, pp. 121-122.

³A. Mansbridge, "Meredith Atkinson Leaves for Sydney", *Highway*, Vol. 6, no. 66, March 1914, pp. 111-112.

What had impressed Mansbridge and his colleagues about Atkinson was his organising ability and his boundless enthusiasm. The job in Sydney, Mansbridge wrote, required "sound scholarship, untiring energy and infinity of tact".⁴ During Atkinson's subsequent ten years in Australia, his energy was much admired but his colleagues often doubted that it was always expended in the true interests of the W.E.A. Some were sceptical about the soundness of his scholarship and his apparent lack of the third attribute, tact, caused damage to the movement from its very beginning.

Before Atkinson arrived in Sydney, the infant W.E.A. under its forceful secretary David Stewart, had already begun to establish its association with the university. Atkinson was greeted with ready support from R.F. Irvine and Francis Anderson but others like Mungo MacCallum, professor of English, were suspicious. Stewart had been able to interest the Sydney Trades and Labour Council - on which he was the representative of the Amalgamated Carpenters and Joiners Society - in the new W.E.A. venture. Having successfully enlisted the assistance of influential men like Peter Board, Director of the Department of Public Instruction and A.C. Carmichael, Minister of Education, the W.E.A. gained the support of the government and an initial grant of £1,000 was given to the university to set up the tutorial classes. The amount was far in excess of the money usually granted to the university for its traditional extension activities. On the Senate of the university, A.B. Piddington emerged as another staunch supporter of the enterprise. Prior to Mansbridge's visit, the university had not

⁴*Ibid.*

responded to overtures from the W.E.A. but after his crusading tour it decided to adopt the Oxford experiment and establish a Joint Committee composed of three university representatives and three from the W.E.A.⁵ The W.E.A. of N.S.W. was itself patterned on the English model: a non-partisan educational organisation controlled by its members and governed by representatives from its affiliated bodies such as trade unions, friendly societies, educational and community groups. The central council consisted of members elected from branches throughout the state, representatives from the affiliated organisations and two delegates from the Department of Public Instruction and from the university. It was, therefore, a body outside the university which had been permitted, through its members on the Joint Committee, a voice in shaping the teaching of the university, albeit to extra-mural students. This was a principle which caused concern to more conservative members of the university.

As soon as Atkinson arrived, Irvine handed over the first tutorial class in industrial history, which he had been meeting, and he proposed to the Senate that Atkinson be appointed as a lecturer in economic history in the university.⁶ Atkinson was concerned about the security of his tenure and the level of his emoluments.⁷ Finally, the Senate granted him a position within the Faculty of Arts and resolved that his title would be "Director of Tutorial Classes".⁸ In the future, Atkinson's preoccupations with status, tenure and personal entitlements proved to be one of the factors which alienated his colleagues. The

⁵D. Whitelock, *The Great Tradition*, *op. cit.*, pp. 121-122.

⁶Minutes of the Senate, University of Sydney, 14 May 1914, p. 95.

⁷*Ibid.*, 11 October 1915.

⁸*Ibid.*, 12 December 1915.

first year of his administration was the most hopeful of the decade he spent in Australia. The W.E.A. enjoyed the confidence of the trade unions, there was expectation of increased government assistance and the basis was laid for productive relations with the university. The War had dealt a severe blow to the existing extension programmes especially in country centres. Places like Dubbo and Orange cancelled their projected lectures explaining to the university,

... we will have to decline the proposed course of lectures as we consider that owing to the numerous calls of a patriotic nature that the public have, we would not secure the attention and support that we would wish for.⁹

However, in the same report, the Chairman of the Extension Board, Mungo MacCallum, noted that the work of the tutorial classes was showing gratifying development; classes were being established in Newcastle and Wollongong.

In 1915 the new W.E.A. was optimistic. Of the twenty active classes in N.S.W. seventeen were in industrial history and economics, one studied biology and two in Sydney tackled sociology. Tutors included Atkinson, F.A. Bland, G.V. Portus, H. Duncan Hall, P.R. Cole and C.H. Northcott.¹⁰ The next year saw an increase in the range of offerings: F.A. Russell, a Sydney barrister, took a class on the principles of law, and a course on modern European history and the War was also added. Atkinson reported a growing demand for political science classes and, at the end of 1916, the Joint Committee petitioned the

⁹Report of the Chairman of the Extension Board (Prof. M. MacCallum), University of Sydney, 1914-15, pp. 5-6. The same point is found in the 27th Report of the Melbourne University Extension Board, 1917.

¹⁰Minutes of the Joint Committee for Tutorial Classes, University of Sydney, 8 September 1916.

Senate for more assistance to cope with the "demand for Social and Political Science in tutorial classes".¹¹ In 1917, two classes in another social science, psychology, joined the list - one was conducted by H.T. Lovell, later professor of psychology at Sydney, and the other by Zoe Benjamin who specialised in child psychology at the Kindergarten Training College. On the whole, however, the basic diet remained that of industrial history and economics until, by the mid-twenties, this was supplanted by the popularity of psychology. The texts for the W.E.A.'s central lending library were ordered and shipped through the English W.E.A., Alfred Zimmern and R.H. Tawney having been asked to act as the book-buyers.¹² Atkinson built up a library containing most of the mainstream writers in economic history and theory: Clay, Ashley, Beveridge, Cunningham, Ely, Hobson, Hobhouse, Fay, Hammond, Webb, Tawney, Unwin, Cole, Cannan and Ensor were added to Marx, Mill, Marshall, Pigou and Gide. Atkinson did not have much to choose from in selecting books on Australia in 1916 but he found some works of substance in A.W. Jose's *History of Australasia*, E. Jenks' *History of the Australasian Colonies*, B.R. Wise's *The Making of the Australian Commonwealth 1889-1900*, W. Jethro Brown's *Prevention and Control of Monopolies*, T. Griffith Taylor's *Australia. Physiographic and Economic*, A. St Ledger's *Australian Socialism* and H.L. Wilkinson's *The Trust Movement in Australia*.¹³

Within the Faculty of Arts, Atkinson introduced a course in economic history which was designed for students in Irvine's department.

¹¹*Ibid.*

¹²*Ibid.*, 14 March 1918.

¹³M. Atkinson's book lists. Bland Papers, Sydney University Archives.

It was described as a survey of the "evolution of society from an economic standpoint" and while it paralleled the course taught by Heaton in Tasmania and Adelaide, more time was allotted to the study of primitive, mediaeval and classical systems before moving to the industrial and social development of the nineteenth century. Like Heaton, he advocated the study of contemporary Australian issues such as agricultural and land policy, factory legislation, trade unionism and the economic position of Australia in the Empire and the Pacific. There was opportunity for students to pursue research into other aspects of Australia's history and economic progress.¹⁴ However eclectic Atkinson's approach to such a wide ranging course may have been, it is remarkable that modern Australia was being studied at all. The amount of literature on any or all of these areas was at best sparse so that the direction of students to the economic and industrial development was as pioneering a venture as the consideration given to Australia's relations in the Pacific. Nowhere else in the university in 1916 were these issues being studied in any systematic and substantial way despite the ongoing debate within the university over the importance and need for "modern studies". George Arnold Wood, professor of history, was one who argued that modern languages, history and English literature be recognised, as compared with the traditional emphasis on classical training, and it was he who proposed at the end of 1915 that Atkinson's course, together with a course of Irvine's on the history of economic thought, should be accepted into the Bachelor of Arts Degree. Wood himself was important in the expansion of the

¹⁴M. Atkinson, Syllabus of a course of sixty lectures on Economic History. Bland Papers, S.U.A.

study of Australian history, both at the school and university level, and in his promotion of research collections, but his own work dealt with the discovery and early exploration of Australia. When the events of the War compelled his attention to recent history, he turned his efforts, not to contemporary Australia, but to a course on Europe "from 1802 to the Present".¹⁵ It was Irvine, Anderson and Atkinson, and later Bland and Portus, who argued the significance of the new social sciences and who engaged in the study of modern Australia both within the university and outside it.

* * * * *

During the War, Harrison Moore and other members of the Council of the University of Melbourne - Dr J.W. Barrett, F.W. Eggleston and M.M. Phillips - had been pressing for money to set up a Department of Tutorial Classes. In 1917, the government of Victoria was able to fulfil its deferred promise and follow the example of Sydney, Hobart and Adelaide. A grant of £1,000 was provided for 1918 with hopes of increased amounts in the following three years. A committee of the Council consisting of the Vice-Chancellor, Harrison Moore and Frank Tate, wanted Atkinson for the post of Director, negotiating the matter with the University of Sydney "lest they take it ill if Mr Atkinson were to be appointed in Melbourne".¹⁶ On the contrary, everything indicated or implied in the remembered and written record suggests that many university people as well as members of the W.E.A. in N.S.W. breathed a sigh of relief when Atkinson departed. By the end of his term in

¹⁵R.M. Crawford, *'A Bit of a Rebel' The Life and Work of George Arnold Wood* (Sydney 1975) pp. 273-275.

¹⁶Minutes of the Council, University of Melbourne, 20 December 1916, p. 454 and pp. 502-503.

Sydney, relations between Atkinson and influential professors in the university had become clouded with distrust while, on the other side, the essential bonds between the W.E.A. and the trade unions had also been seriously weakened. Thus, by the end of 1918, the W.E.A. had lost ground with both the university and the workers. Within the university, a group of academics, headed by MacCallum, brought an indictment against the financial management of the Department, against its maintenance of academic standards and against Atkinson's general procedures. After Atkinson left for Melbourne, an inquiry by the Senate was initiated to inquire into MacCallum's charges.¹⁷ The loss of support from the trade unions was, as we shall see, a result of Atkinson's personal and fervent campaigning in favour of conscription.

For his part Atkinson was ready to move to Melbourne on the condition that the university make satisfactory provision as to his status. It agreed to amend its offer so that the Director of Tutorial Classes would have the rank and title of professor and, in March 1918, Atkinson was duly welcomed as a member of the Professorial Board.¹⁸ From the first, he claimed sociology as his field and expected to be appointed eventually to a foundation chair of sociology which would head up a new department. He described his ambitions to D.B. Copland, his fellow Director at the University of Tasmania:

Melbourne has taken me to its bosom - an astonishing reception. Far exceeded my wildest expectations ... I have made a start with the establishment of a school of Economics and Sociology. To avoid rivalry with poor Kelly (lecturer in political economy) I am to take

¹⁷G.V. Portus, Memo on MacCallum's charges, Bland Papers, Department of Adult Education, University of Sydney. This inquiry is discussed further in Chapter Four.

¹⁸Minutes of the Professorial Board, University of Melbourne, 1 November 1917, p. 289; 28 November, p. 290, and 21 March 1918, p. 309.

Sociology and will probably ultimately take that chair, another man taking Economics and Commerce.¹⁹

During his term at Melbourne until he left for leave in August 1921 - then resigning in April 1922 - Atkinson was responsible for the teaching and examinations in sociology which was a subject in the Arts Degree. He expected that when the University Bill, which re-funded his appointment, was passed in 1922 he would become chairman of a new department of sociology especially since the establishment of a chair in economics and commerce was now being confidently projected. He argued that the same status should be accorded to his subject:

As I am well-known to the public as a lecturer and writer upon sociology, the inference that I had been superseded might readily be drawn.²⁰

Indeed, he envisaged an even larger design -

... ultimately, a Bureau of Social Science (perhaps *Commonwealth*). Linked up with all this, of course, is my idea of making my Department through close touch with Economics and Sociology *inside* the University into a sort of External Faculty of Social Science. These are a few of the more *obvious* schemes that occur to me ...²¹

Outside the university, Atkinson had been campaigning for public support of a commerce department. The University Council approved a lecture series to be given to the Chamber of Commerce in 1919 on the "ideal training of business men" and the status of business as a profession.²² Atkinson spoke to persuade Melbourne's merchants that business could be raised to the same specialised status as that of other professions and that the economics of business could be treated

¹⁹M. Atkinson to D.B. Copland, 24 March 1918. Copland Papers, MS 3800, National Library of Australia.

²⁰Atkinson to the Chancellor, University of Melbourne, 3 September 1918. Melbourne University Registry Files 1920/44.

²¹Atkinson to Copland, 24 March 1918, *op. cit.*

²²Minutes of the Council, University of Melbourne, 7 July 1919, p. 306.

as a science within a broad liberal university education. From the study of such subjects as the psychology of labour, current social theory and ethics, and the development of industry and commerce, business men could be equipped with knowledge of "the complex social environment" in which business operated. Such an education could be formulated in an appropriate university curriculum based on economics but extending also to sociology, public administration, history, industrial psychology and perhaps even biology. Such would be the "scientific" preparation of men for the business world. Finally, he declared, that if Australia were to make industrial and commercial progress beside the nations of the world, the business men of Melbourne must assist materially in the foundation of a department of economics and commerce in their university. He concluded,

That we can properly develop this Continent without such a thoroughly scientific school is unthinkable²³

The department of economics and commerce became a reality in 1924 when Douglas Copland was appointed to the chair but sociology did not enjoy the same legitimization. In retrospect, it may be judged that Atkinson's schemes were grandiose but this should not obscure his real ability to diagnose the intellectual needs of Australia at the time. From his arrival in 1914, he had urged Australians to examine their own society and to develop those faculties in the universities necessary for social analysis. His own contributions to the teaching and writing of sociology had certain limitations but he also brought to Australia the entrepreneurial energies and skills to organise the

²³M. Atkinson, "The Economics of Commerce", *Mid-Day Commercial Lectures* (Melbourne Chamber of Commerce 1919) pp. 18-23.

intellectual efforts of others. He arranged conferences, lectures and publications which were themselves land-marks in the study of Australian conditions so that, in the end, his most positive and lasting achievement was the marketing of a social science mentality.

Atkinson pointed to the absence in Australian universities of social sciences that were well established in other countries. Like his colleagues in the W.E.A. work, he saw a fundamental connection between his own vocation of adult education and the teaching of the social sciences. W. Harrison Moore had seen the same connection when he petitioned the government for funds in 1916. He argued that the tutorial classes would give the workers a chance to study economics, an area "in which they consider themselves most deeply concerned". Such an education gained through the W.E.A. programmes would temper the hostility of the workers and make them less vulnerable to propaganda based on class-interest rather than knowledge. Within the university, Moore hoped for a close collaboration between the Department of Tutorial Classes and the future development of economics. As he planned it, the staff of the tutorial classes would attend to "the more socially critical aspects of economics" in the teaching of economic history and industrial relations while the future professor of economics would cover economic theory and commercial principles. Clearly to Moore, at the time, the introduction of tutorial classes into the university was a step forward in the crucial development of economics. He observed how the W.E.A. classes in Sydney had encouraged the study of economics because of the need to train their own tutors. Extending his submission to wider considerations, he appealed to the needs of a new nation. In Australia, he pointed out, the combination of unique industrial arrangements in the arbitration system and the exigencies of war-time

planning had meant an unparalleled extension of government into commerce and industry. This would increasingly require numbers of experts trained, not only in his own field of law, but also in a new type of "economic and sociological training" of the sort which would enable them to investigate facts and to plan intelligently. Thus, Harrison Moore urged on the government the educational and public value of the tutorial class teaching, and the relevance of the disciplines espoused by the W.E.A. tutors.²⁴ Atkinson pursued a similar line of argument. It was a cardinal point in his criticism of Australia that the country had achieved the highest social standards but had contributed to the world no social theory to account for them. His ambition was to remedy the anomaly between progressive social action in Australia and the poverty of sociological thought.²⁵ Sociology was, accordingly, the subject which he deemed most essential to this task and the one which he claimed to profess. In order to locate Atkinson's sociology in the intellectual context of the period in Australia, it is necessary to review the state of the discussion of the field in the preceding years.

The demand for the teaching of sociology in Australian universities, which was heard even before the War, was part of a wider plea for the introduction of the social sciences into the traditional curricula. To its early proponents, however, sociology was not just *one* of the desirable social sciences - it was the "central science", or, as they variously termed it, the "mother-science" and the "fundamental science". Addressing the 1912 meeting of the Australian Association for the

²⁴W. Harrison Moore, Recommendations to the Minister from the Melbourne University Extension Board, 1916. Melbourne University Registry Files 1916/347.

²⁵M. Atkinson, "The Australian Outlook" in M. Atkinson (ed.), *Australia Economic and Political Studies* (London 1920) p. 9.

Advancement of Science, Francis Anderson argued that sociology was the science which gave coherence to all other social sciences: just as the fundamental sciences of physics, chemistry and biology could be described as mother sciences embracing and unifying more fragmented areas of knowledge, so sociology was the counterpart in the social sciences. It welded the knowledge of the other disciplines into the whole. Anderson explained that economics, for example, was one of the social sciences but it did not have the cohesive power of sociology:

it (economics) deals with a fragment, and not with the whole. Its results are valid and intelligible only when brought into connection with the larger life of society ...²⁶

Anderson's view was endorsed by Irvine in his report on his North American tour delivered to the Melbourne University Association in 1914. He too believed that sociology was the subject which alone could make sense of that "one great unity - human experience". Sociology invaded all the territory from which it could get evidence as to the process of human association and social evolution as a whole. In his formulations, Irvine drew on American sociologists, Albion Small and E.A. Ross, quoting from Ross' *Foundations of Sociology*:

Sociology no longer falls apart into neat segments like a peeled orange. State, law, religion, art, morals, industry, instead of presenting so many parallels of development, are studied rather as different aspects of one social evolution.²⁷

Atkinson shared this holistic notion of sociology as the key to the whole of human learning and activity. He expressed its value in these terms:

²⁶F. Anderson, "Sociology in Australia: a Plea for its Teaching", 1912, reprinted in *Social Horizons*, July 1943, p. 17.

²⁷R.F. Irvine, *The Place of the Social Sciences in a Modern University* (Sydney 1914) p. 13.

... today we see politics, economics and ethics being drawn into something like a sociological unity. This is all to the good, for though we may lose something through the vagueness and pretentiousness of the new subject of sociology, its suggestion that the human problem is a complete whole, and can only be solved by our treating it as such, is of real value in the process of reconstruction.²⁸

Sociology in this perspective could claim to be the "science of society". The second claim advanced for the new science was its positive validity. It was to be distinguished from what had earlier passed for social study, from what Anderson called the "a priori constructions of philosophers" selected to reinforce deduced conclusions. The modern sociology, he declared, did not have its links with moral ethics but with the scientism of biology, applied psychology and economics, although, for Anderson, Irvine and Atkinson, this did not absolve social science from its humanistic responsibilities. The great tool and underpinning of the new sociology was to be the use of statistics and the analysis of social data. Irvine announced that the methodology of sociology would conform to that of all the positive sciences; he defined it as the analysis of data to discover relationships, and the evaluation of facts to determine their worth in the dynamics of human progress. As Anderson put it, the great "fact" to be explained was society itself. Sociology would discover its genesis, its growth and the laws which governed it.

What these men meant by the scientific investigation of social progress which they associated with the procedures of sociology was not at all clearly spelled out. Irvine offered suggestions drawn from American models, which he had observed, as the basis for such activity.

²⁸M. Atkinson, *The New Social Order* (Sydney 1919) pp. 63-64.

It must first of all involve the collection and the organisation of data. In America, he had been impressed by the private and public funding of repositories of data in research bureaux and by utilisation of such research for community purposes and for the formation of public policy. He cited the Social Museum at Harvard and the Capitol Library in Madison, Wisconsin, as two examples of the housing of social data on all questions and from all countries. In the collected reports, maps, statistics, newspapers, photographs and so on that were available to experts in such places, one might find out about subjects ranging from experimental town planning in Wurtemberg to the incidence of strikes in Australia.²⁹ Thus, Irvine envisaged a sociology that was at the service of social planning and reform.

The first person to undertake an explicitly sociological evaluation of Australia's progress, Clarence Hunter Northcott, also intended a programmatic mission for sociology. It was the task of the sociologist, Northcott held, to

... evaluate the ideals and estimate the defects revealed in the development of democracy. In so doing, he unfolds implicitly a program of social efficiency.³⁰

His basic assumption was that social forces could be controlled towards a "consciously realised social end" and that it was the duty of the sociologist to discern the positive social forces. In Northcott's terms, the desired end was a more moral social order characterised by harmony rather than class conflict:

²⁹R.F. Irvine, "National Organisation and National Efficiency", in *National Efficiency* (Melbourne 1915) pp. 17-20.

³⁰C.H. Northcott, *Australian Social Development* (Columbia N.Y. 1918) p. 33.

In the last resort the creation of social values, consciously recognised and pursued, into which divergent purposes are transmitted, alone can produce social harmony. The enunciation of these values is the work of sociology.³¹

Northcott gave the first classes in sociology for the W.E.A. in Sydney in 1915 and 1916. As well as being one of Atkinson's first tutors, he had been a student of Francis Anderson at the University of Sydney where Anderson had introduced him to the elements of sociology. At the end of 1916, Northcott went to Columbia University to work under a noted American sociologist, Franklin H. Giddings. Prior to his departure he had also been an active proponent of the social gospel in the Methodist Church. In the setting up of a local equivalent of the English Union for Social Service, he had felt the pressing need for more detailed knowledge about Australian society in order to define Church policy. At the Methodist Church Annual Conference in 1908 he had called for the solid research on which to base social action:

Every well-balanced mind will agree with the necessity for the collection and study of social facts. In Australia we have no reliable data on which to base any worthy opinion upon social questions. Nor do we, except in the most general terms, realise the exact and correct attitude of the Church towards social facts and problems.³²

His doctoral thesis, published by Columbia's Faculty of Political Science in 1918, was entitled *Australian Social Development*. It was both an attempt to analyse Australia's social experiments and an effort to deduce guidelines for continued progress - as such it equated ethical reform with "social efficiency".

Northcott's basic thesis was that the history of Australian social

³¹*Ibid.*, p. 272.

³²See J.D. Bollen, *Protestantism and Social Reform in New South Wales 1890-1910* (Melbourne 1972) p. 117.

development was the history of the struggle of a social ideal to manifest itself: that of a progressive social democracy. He began by looking at the conditioning forces of that ideal, the interaction between Australia's immigrant population and the environment. In that historical interaction, he discovered two mentalities each associated with region, occupation and the possession of wealth. These broadly translated as "haves" and "have-nots", the one derived from a frontier individualism and property-owning, and the other from a collective urban work-force. Their respective political sympathies found expression, according to Northcott's theory, in liberal and labour parties, the latter being the bearers of social reform. In the conflict between these two crudely designated parties, Northcott believed that progress had been generated, but he warned that the hitherto productive interplay of forces was now in danger of widening the class cleavage, the result being what he called social inefficiency. Since sociology, as he saw it, was concerned with the "stimuli that prompt to collective action", it should both take the measure of social solidarity and advocate the principles and programs which would promote this. The theory of social efficiency may have been that of F.H. Giddings but Northcott's practical recommendations at the end of the book were a blend of conservationism, mild industrial democracy, exhortations to the pursuit of industrial efficiency and a call for worker education.³³

The claims of Northcott's book to any sociological interest lay mainly in his own conception of the task, in the questions he posed and in his attempt to explain progress in terms of groups and classes. He

³³For a discussion of the influence of F.H. Giddings on Northcott see Lesley Dunt, *John Dewey and the Australian Educators* (c 1890-1940) (M.A. Thesis, University of Melbourne 1974) pp. 138-150.

used statistical and legislative materials, such as official year books and arbitration reports, as the basis for his work, considering them "scientific" data compared to the mere impressionism of travellers' chronicles or the descriptive history which passed for much of the study of Australia before the War. However, despite the charts of occupation, strikes, wage-rises and the like that raised the status of the work, there was no attempt on Northcott's part to act as primary investigator and to generate his own social data. Irvine and Northcott both emphasised the collection of data and the analysis of information as an essential tool of sociology but Atkinson's efforts to promote sociological inquiry did not involve techniques of empirical investigation. In the mélange of history, political philosophy, basic economics or political economy, international relations and moral persuasions that constituted his courses and writings, it was difficult to discover the "sociological unity" he claimed for the subject. Atkinson did share with Irvine and Northcott, however, the conviction that sociology would serve social reconstruction, elucidate cohesive social values and assist man's evolution to a higher social state. The key to continued progress, for Atkinson, was the degree to which the base and irrational proclivities of the ordinary citizen could be raised up to the altruistic service of the community. The problem, he proclaimed, was how to "alter the attitude of mind and the character of the masses". The means of this transformation was to be the sociological education.

At the University of Melbourne, the development of sociology has been projected as early as 1912. On the retirement of J.S. Elkington from the chair of modern history, modern literature, logic and political economy, it was proposed to make history a separate chair and to ask

the government to fund a new one for economics and sociology. Disagreement between the university and the Premier of Victoria over whether or not an Australian must be appointed to the position finally led to the collapse of the whole venture.³⁴ Sociology entered the University of Melbourne through the Department of Tutorial Classes when Atkinson appropriated the field in 1918. The subject was offered at pass and honours levels in the school of history and political science and in the school of philosophy; about a hundred students were enrolled each year.

In 1919, Atkinson constructed his course around the development of social theory and the principles and problems of sociology. The first part, called "social evolution", covered the history of society, the underlying principles of western civilisation, the growth of democracy and the "social problem". The second looked at social institutions, the relation between the individual and the state, the relation between sociology and ethics, psychology and education, and the "present task of social science". By 1921, the course had been broadened to include more contemporary issues. Atkinson introduced his students to the theories of society held by what he termed the social determinists, religionists, psychologists and the ethical school. Social institutions such as family, property law and government were studied before the course moved to a series of lectures on theories of social reconstruction - collectivism, syndicalism, guild socialism, liberalism, religion and internationalism. The final section comprised

³⁴See C.D.W. Goodwin, *Economic Enquiry in Australia* p. 580 and also Ernest Scott, *A History of Melbourne* (Melbourne 1936) p. 204.
A History of the University of Melbourne

a study of the "social complex", meaning the class structure, an analysis of interest groups, modern democracy and community, and "the social synthesis". The honours year provided for extended study of the development of sociological theory and of "methods of social amelioration".³⁵ Most of Atkinson's thought was clearly derived from contemporary British and some American social and political theory - there was no trace of the influence of classical European sociological writing - of, for example, Le Play, Durkheim or Weber. Among his British texts were the works of Herbert Spencer, Bertrand Russell, J.A. Hobson, Graham Wallas, L.T. Hobhouse, B. Bosanquet, A.V. Dicey and A.J. Todd. He used American sociologists, Albion Small and F.H. Giddings, for the general principles and elements of sociology; he also drew on R. MacIver's work on community and Mary Parker Follett's *The New State*.³⁶

In his autobiography, *Country and Calling* (1954), one of Atkinson's students, W.K. Hancock, dismissed the course as the "mumbo-jumbo that was called sociology", recalling it as a mixture of "second-hand fact, disputable generalisations and a pretentious vocabulary".³⁷ This was Hancock looking back in the nineteen fifties, yet there is a case to be made that his own seminal work, *Australia*, owed much to the formulation of problems first encountered in that course. What was important about Atkinson's endeavours was its attention to the contemporary - a point which has force only in its historical context where one notes the

³⁵*The Calendar of the University of Melbourne*, 1919, p. 432 and 1921, pp. 507-508.

³⁶M. Atkinson, Memorandum to the Premier of Victoria, 1921, seeks support for sociology and includes a list of reference books used in his W.E.A. course. Atkinson favoured the government with a synopsis of each book. Melbourne University Registry Files 1921/175.

³⁷W.K. Hancock, *Country and Calling* (London 1954), p. 70.

decidedly uncontemporaneous offerings of the universities in this period, and the thinness of intellectual and public debate outside them. Atkinson's sociology reveals a set of contemporary preoccupations about society which he did try to work out in their Australian context. He introduced his students to the problematic of democracy, a troubling and uncertain phenomenon in the post-war years in most countries, to the question of the relation of the worker to industry, and of the citizen to politics and the state, and to the problem of where to locate the life of society itself.

Atkinson's book *The New Social Order, A Study of Post War Reconstruction* contained all of his central ideas as he had already published them in numerous lectures, and articles for *Stead's Review*, the *Melbourne Herald* and the *Round Table*. Published in 1919, it was number two in the new W.E.A. Series and was intended as a text for the sociological and economic courses offered by the W.E.A. Conscious of the eclectic scope of the questions it addressed, Atkinson defended the need for such a book which aimed at a "unified treatment" of the problems of Reconstruction. He announced that sound criticism of the existing order, and a "determination to seek solutions consistent with the principles of the larger humanity", were essential to any discussion of the subject.³⁸ The seven sections of the book - the nemesis of history, the forces of unity and progress, a new era in education, the international problem, post-war commerce and finance, the industrial outlook, the British Empire and the new order - raised issues and questions which were not peculiar to Australia but which, the W.E.A. intellectuals argued, were

³⁸M. Atkinson, *The New Social Order*, Preface.

not being sufficiently examined within Australia.

The problem fundamental to Atkinson's social thinking was the "pathology of democracy": man's evolution to a more refined plane of reason and civic devotion was as yet lamentably imperfect. The people - the stuff of democracy - were still a "dark horse". Motivated by fear and passion, rather than by reason, and oppressed by ignorance, the masses could not understand the complex matters which they now controlled nor could they be trusted to elect those who did.³⁹ How, Atkinson asked, was a society to reconcile freedom with the need for efficiency, and match elective choice with government by men of proper ability, when it had to chance the risks of primitive mob psychology in the democratic process? The people were not yet fit for democracy; they suffered from "insufficient devotion, feebleness of spirit and the lack of knowledge".⁴⁰ If they were not able to run a democracy, Atkinson's logic continued, they were even less ready for a millennial, post-revolutionary Marxist state.⁴¹

both in morality and intelligence, the masses are utterly unfit to build up the new social order.⁴²

To counteract the pessimism of this view of human nature, Atkinson professed a belief in the evolutionary concept of man's progress and in education as the transforming force needed to shape the human material of the future:

³⁹*Ibid.*, pp. 85-87. Also, M. Atkinson "Democracy and Efficiency" in *National Efficiency*, *op. cit.*, pp. 21-23.

⁴⁰M. Atkinson, *Industrial Democracy in State Enterprises*, a series of three lectures given to Victorian Railways Union, November, 1918 (Melbourne 1919) p. 35.

⁴¹M. Atkinson, *The New Social Order*, p. 64.

⁴²M. Atkinson, *Capital and Labour - Co-operation or Class War?* Lecture to the Anglican Social Questions Committee (Melbourne 1918) p. 7.

false ideals, the evils of industrialism, international prejudice and hatred, self-seeking of individuals and peoples, all can be cured through education and through education alone.⁴³

The education which Atkinson advocated was progressive in ethos and method, deriving from Rousseau, Robert Owen, Pestalozzi, Dewey and Montessori. Free inquiry, student-centred learning, and the expression of the individual would accompany a curriculum geared to citizenship: controversial areas such as politics, religion and ethics would be included.⁴⁴ The tutorial class was a microcosm of democratic education characterised by co-operative learning and self-government in its administration. As he conceived it, the tutorial class programme was the most appropriate to a civic education leading men to greater public spirit and advanced efficiency. In all, such an education would act as a solvent of class conflict by modifying class stereotypes in the minds of the workers, and increasing resistance to ideologue and agitator.

* * * * *

When Atkinson turned his sociological analysis to Australia, his assumptions and tests were formulated in a mental framework which he brought with him from England. He saw Australia as a fortunate land and spoke with enthusiasm of the environmental advantages which had helped produce a healthy people with a high standard of living and an inherited freedom from the evils of an older feudal world. Australians had achieved impressive measures in improving their material lot but, in his opinion, the "higher level of social life still eluded them".⁴⁵

⁴³M. Atkinson, *The New Social Order*, p. 107.

⁴⁴*Ibid.*, esp. Chapter 13 "Education for Citizenship".

⁴⁵M. Atkinson, "The Australian Outlook" *op. cit.*, pp. 8-11.

He wondered if the scope and novelty of the "social laboratory" might not have been exaggerated when one looked, for example, at Germany. So Atkinson looked for a further explanation for what he discerned as distinctive in Australia. He concluded that what lay at the heart of Australia's particularity - and what would also limit its future - was the degree to which the ordinary citizen identified with the state and had espoused political reform as the route to social betterment:

Australians probably go much further than any other people in regarding the State as being themselves in community, and in believing that the powers and resources of the State are properly utilised when they are directed to the positive promotion of the welfare of the people as a whole. It is this view, combined with the hopefulness inspired by the possession of a rich young country, that makes Australian social legislation remarkable.⁴⁶

Soon after his arrival, at the W.E.A. symposium which he organised on *Trade Unionism in Australia*, he had been critical of the workers' reliance upon the state. Social advance in Australia was, in his view, to be attributed to the attaining of political power by Labour but he warned that once Labour had gained power it was in danger of becoming atrophied:

In the last ten years especially the workers have learned to lean upon the State to a degree altogether subversive of the finer spirit of positive effort and social idealism which characterised the earlier history of the Labour movement.⁴⁷

Like Lord Bryce, Atkinson regarded Australia as a case-study in advanced democracy but he feared it was also beginning to encounter dangers which could strangle the democratic process. The identification

⁴⁶M. Atkinson, *The New Social Order*, pp. 273-274.

⁴⁷M. Atkinson, "The Relation of Trade Unionism to Co-operation and Co-partnership" in M. Atkinson (ed.) *Trade Unionism in Australia* (Sydney 1915) p. 22.

of democracy with the power and functions of government, the habit of fusing social community with the state, was, in the social theory to which he subscribed, a distorted and flawed notion on which to build the new social order. His criticism was threefold. First he argued that representative politics, as he observed them in Australia, had failed to be truly responsive to the electorate. Secondly, he denounced the corruptive effect of state intervention on the "positive effort" of citizens to develop their own powers of self-help. Thirdly, he pointed to conservative features of state enterprise and legislative reform which did not essentially alter the relations of capitalist production. His views on the status of politics in Australian life and on the role of Labour had been formed almost on immediate impression. In July 1914, he wrote to Alfred Zimmern that he was repelled by the want of spiritual idealism and the emphasis on material progress which he had detected in his new country:

the emphasis everywhere on the sordidly economic aims of Trade Unionism and Labour Policy is enough to make me shudder.⁴⁸

For him the Labour Party exemplified much of what was wrong with the parliamentary system itself. Tighter party organisation achieved by such devices as the pledge, the caucus and pre-selection ballots, government by inner cabinet, and mediocrity, if not corruption, among its leaders all served to widen the gap between the people and government. He believed that Labour had gained power because it had successfully interpreted the national aspirations but that its early idealism

⁴⁸Atkinson to A. Zimmern, 8 July 1914. Zimmern Papers, Box 1, Bodleian Library, Oxford.

had now degenerated into a "huge and well-oiled machine" which had lost inspiration.⁴⁹ Atkinson was not alone in his diagnosis of the state of politics in Australia. V.G. Childe also believed that Labour had exhausted its momentum by the eve of the War and that the gradualist policies of Labour while being the result of pragmatic necessity in appealing to wide sections of the public were now those of a group of politicians pursuing power and self-interest. Childe wrote of

that state of soulless mechanism which seems to come over all labour activities on the hour of apparent triumph.⁵⁰

and of the estrangement of leaders from the rank and file. Childe's book, *How Labour Governs* (1923) was considered for inclusion in the W.E.A. Series but was rejected by the Federal Council of the W.E.A. as "unsuitable".⁵¹ While no reasons for this rejection are recorded, Childe's political views were probably too radical for endorsement under the shield of the W.E.A.

When Atkinson criticised the decline of politics and Labour, and the suffocating effect of party organisation on leadership, ideas and creativity, his alternative was the exercise of government in a more pluralist structure by diverse, local, private or voluntary bodies. He argued that when the Australian workers turned to politics, their energies became absorbed in political activity at the expense of other healthy social influences and expressions of citizenship. When they placed their faith in parliamentary legislation they ceased to realise, if they ever had, that the political franchise was only one among a richer

⁴⁹M. Atkinson, "Australian Lessons for British Labour", *Nineteenth Century*, Vol. 98, August 1925, pp. 178-187. Also *The New Social Order*, pp. 276-277.

⁵⁰V.G. Childe, *How Labour Governs* (Melbourne, 1964) p. 181.

⁵¹Seventh Annual Report of the W.E.A. in N.S.W., 1921. Bland Papers, S.U.A.

array of freedoms - religious, economic, moral and intellectual - and that democracy was embedded in a variety of human activities and not just in governmental machinery. A passage in *The New Social Order* summed up what Atkinson missed in Australia:

The net-work of local government in England and Scotland, the co-operative societies, the friendly societies, and trade unions, and a whole multitude of political, reformist, philanthropic and educational organisations have long offered great opportunities to the social energies of the average citizen. He has gradually come to avail himself of these in ways which have made Britain more likely to solve her problems than any nation accustomed to a highly centralised government.⁵²

He noted that in Australia the intensity of political interest was accompanied by an extraordinary apathy in matters of local government:

... no democracy can be either educated or successful which does not provide for the increasing application of the powers of the citizen to the development of the local community of which he is part.⁵³

For the two Directors imported from the English W.E.A., Atkinson and Heaton, one of the prominent expressions of local community in their own lives had been the Co-operative movement. For them it embodied positive social effort of the kind which they both believed was needed to revitalise the Australian Labour movement and rescue it from its negative drift. This was the message Atkinson gave to the trade unions in his major address at the Conference of 1915. Surveying the relation of trade unionism to Co-operation and Co-partnership, he recognised how little impact these movements had made on Australian development but he insisted on the value of the voluntarist spirit

⁵²M. Atkinson, *The New Social Order*, p. 125.

⁵³*Ibid.* p. 275 and "The Australian Outlook" *op. cit.* p. 18.

which animated them.⁵⁴ Atkinson defined Co-operation broadly as including forms of production which dispensed with capitalistic ownership and control. This could cover a wide range of industrial arrangements from small workshops to the larger schemes proposed by the guild socialists. Atkinson's attraction to the general principles of guild socialism was consistent with his distrust of state socialism on the one hand and syndicalism or revolutionary socialism on the other. The British compromise developed in Orage's *National Guilds* and G.D.H. Cole's *Self-Government in Industry* appealed to those W.E.A. intellectuals who could see beyond the palliatives achieved by state action and trade unionism to a new industrial system based on the self-determining and co-operative enterprise of the producers. "Industrial democracy" thus became one of the main themes of the W.E.A. in the post-war years.

Under the auspices of the Victorian Railways Union, at the end of 1918, Atkinson delivered a series of lectures which attempted to apply British experiments in industrial democracy to Australian state enterprise. He instructed the railway unionists in the basic guild socialist theory: that man's economic freedom was not guaranteed by his political rights and that it was essential to apply to industry the same principles of liberty and democracy which applied in politics:

the most vital problem now confronting the worker concerns the wage system and its relation to the application of democratic control to industry.⁵⁵

⁵⁴M. Atkinson, "The Relation of Trade Unionism to Co-operation and Co-partnership" *op. cit.* and M. Atkinson, *Co-operation and Social Reconstruction*, lecture to the First Consumers Australian Co-operative Congress, April 1920 (Sydney 1920), *passim*. This point is discussed further with regard to Heaton in Chapter Ten.

⁵⁵M. Atkinson, "State Socialism and the Wage System" in *Industrial Democracy in State Enterprises*, p. 18.

Even under the collective or nationalised state, he reminded them, the wage-system still prevailed and there was no necessary measure of self-government. While the W.E.A. group approved the guild socialist attempt to plan a reconstruction of the industrial state in a way which would satisfy the demands of the producer and yet protect the consumer from exploitation, none of them looked for the immediate realisation of guild socialist schemes. Atkinson shared the difficulties they had with the idea of an industrial parliament and, in the end, upheld the sovereignty and authority of the elected parliament. He also had profound reservations about the abilities and readiness of either the employers or the workers to accomplish industrial democracy in the near future. He found employers lacking in the ideal of "social service" and the average worker too apathetic and ill-equipped to assume his share of responsibility. He regarded the democratic election of those who would control industry with dismay:

Popular election of our political leaders has yielded us but indifferent results. How much worse would it be to rely upon the vote of the workers to give us the economic and administrative experts essential to the proper control of industry?⁵⁶

It was possible, Atkinson feared, to carry democracy to extremes. In the face of such a prospect he resolved the problem into a less threatening question - how to introduce the worker gradually into a share in the control of enterprises? Industrial democracy came to mean a modified process of worker participation which depended once more on the education of the worker. The scheme which as yet best approximated this solution was the Whitley idea and Atkinson suggested

⁵⁶M. Atkinson, "Towards Industrial Democracy" in *Industrial Democracy in State Enterprises*, p. 46.

an adaptation of the British models to Australian industry, making allowances for Australian features such as the arbitration system, the degree of state enterprise and the power of the trade unions. He outlined for the railway workers the structure devised for the National Union of Railwaymen in England. Workshop committees would elect representatives to district councils which, in turn, would elect members to a supervening Industrial Board on which would also sit the nominees of the state railway commissioners. Atkinson proposed an industrial structure controlled by a combination of interests: the state, through the commissioner and his representatives, would protect the consumer while the worker, or producer, had a voice on the industrial council.⁵⁷ Such a set of arrangements, he contended, might have averted the Railway strike of 1917; it might also be superior to the current mechanisms for industrial arbitration. While he applauded the genuine progressive gains of arbitration, he criticised the system as one which perpetuated conflict:

How can we expect industrial peace from a form of industrial strategy that never contemplates the transformation of the contending armies into a co-operative association.⁵⁸

His answer was to widen the functions of Wages Boards into an Australian Industrial Board which would ultimately effect a triple co-operative control of industry, balancing the interests of the state, the employer and the worker.⁵⁹ Thus the message of the W.E.A., as articulated by Atkinson, challenged the basic pivots of the Australian industrial system - the arbitration court, the Labour Party and trade unionism itself.

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⁵⁷*Ibid.*, pp. 57-73.

⁵⁸M. Atkinson, *The New Social Order*, pp. 226-227.

⁵⁹*Ibid.*, pp. 249-250.

An analysis of Atkinson's ideas reveals his struggle to reconcile his dedication to the cause of worker education with his personal fear of their victory and his antipathy to the masses. It has been suggested that one of the reasons he failed was because neither the workers nor his colleagues trusted his loyalty to the "W" in the W.E.A.⁶⁰ It was not surprising that his blend of didactic paternalism, moral imperatives and co-operative idealism did little to endear him to the Australian worker but his first open breach with organised Labour occurred during the conscription crisis, when Atkinson supported conscription. When the Universal Service League began in Sydney in September 1915, it released a manifesto urging conscription instead of voluntary service. The chairman of the Sydney Labour Council, opposing the move, drew attention to the fact that Meredith Atkinson had been elected to the executive committee of the U.S.L. but had not availed himself of an opportunity to address the delegates of the Labour Council on the matter.⁶¹ At that point the Sydney Labour Council opposed any conscription of men that did not involve conscription of wealth, so that Atkinson appeared as the ally of capitalist forces betraying the worker into war. Two anti-conscription unions disaffiliated from the W.E.A. in 1916 to be followed the next year by seventeen more, including the powerful Australian Workers Union and the Federated Engine Drivers. Temporarily, the Labour Council withdrew its support.⁶² The trade union backlash provoked a crisis within the councils of the W.E.A.: Stewart, Heaton and Portus were among those opposed to conscription and were angry at

⁶⁰Fred Alexander to H. Bourke, 30 May 1976. Alexander was an undergraduate at the University of Melbourne during Atkinson's time there.

⁶¹*Daily Telegraph*, Sydney, 1 October 1915.

⁶²D. Whitelock, *The Great Tradition*, pp. 184-185.

the threat Atkinson posed to carefully built-up relations with the unions. On the other hand, in this instance, Atkinson had aligned himself with powerful university figures in the U.S.L., such as Edgeworth David and Mungo MacCallum, and the W.E.A. needed also to preserve good relations with the university as well. Finally, David Stewart inserted an official disclaimer in the Sydney papers, disassociating the W.E.A., as a non-partisan body, from Atkinson's views, but upholding his right as a private citizen to support any public cause.⁶³ But much of the early dynamic had been lost and, in the face of increasing radicalism in the unions as the War progressed, it was never regained.

Atkinson's ambivalence towards the working-class and his personal activities presented a continuing problem within the W.E.A. Intellectually, Herbert Heaton in Adelaide was his main adversary while, institutionally within the W.E.A., both the secretary in Victoria, S.D. Thompson and his N.S.W. counterpart, Stewart, mistrusted him. The reception of *The New Social Order* among Atkinson's colleagues illustrated the tensions between them. When the Federal Council of the W.E.A. in Australia planned the Series, Elton Mayo's *Democracy and Freedom* was to be the first published under Atkinson's general editorship and Heaton's *Modern Economic History* was approved as the next title. The appearance of Atkinson's own book, *The New Social Order*, came as a surprise. It had been authorised by himself and carried a panoply of titles on its front page: Director of Tutorial Classes and Member of the Professorial Board, University of Melbourne, President of the Workers' Educational Association of Australia. On receipt of his copy, Heaton immediately

⁶³*Daily Telegraph*, 21 September 1915. See also G.V. Portus, *Happy Highways* and E.M. Higgins, *David Stewart and the W.E.A.*

wired Atkinson to hold up distribution of the book until a notice could be inserted on the title page pointing out that the book expressed the author's own views and not those of the W.E.A. Heaton was most concerned lest "the movement as a whole be saddled with Atkinson's views" and he objected to his arrogation of the title of "President" of a body which in fact did not exist. There was no W.E.A. of Australia, only a Federal Council of state Directors and Secretaries.⁶⁴ Portus also disliked the reference to professorial status:

If Atkinson does this sort of thing, he cannot expect to live down the charge that he has been angling for this title ever since he came to Australia.⁶⁵

He was concerned that Atkinson should have sole control over what was published, fearing that he would publish too readily and that his "business ways are so casual".

Heaton's main quarrel with the book was firstly its scope, and secondly, with the attitudes he believed informed it. It had been one of the contentions of the 1918 Sydney University inquiry into the W.E.A. that the academic standards of the tutorial classes fell far short of those claimed for them. Heaton felt that Atkinson's text would not dispel this suspicion. He reminded Atkinson that tutorial classes were supposed to spend three years on one branch of knowledge but the range of this "convenient text", over economics, sociology, political science and international relations, was no more than a cursory survey.⁶⁶ The reviewer in the *Australian Highway* (possibly Heaton) referred to it as a catalogue of "an inchoate mass of subjects" and warned against its use with beginning students:

⁶⁴H. Heaton to D.B. Copland, 11 April 1919. Copland Papers, N.L.A.

⁶⁵G.V. Portus to Heaton, 14 April 1919. Heaton Papers, University of Minnesota.

⁶⁶Heaton to Copland, 11 April 1919, *op. cit.*

Let us not do anything to drive down our academic standards of instruction, which professes to be a university one.⁶⁷

Copland in Hobart thought the book did deal with problems that were pressing at the end of the War and that he would find it helpful in his classes on post-war Reconstruction;⁶⁸ Witherby in Queensland thoroughly disagreed with the stance of the book but said he would probably recommend it,⁶⁹ while Portus in Sydney found its interdisciplinary scope suited to the nature of the study of the "social problem" which the tutorial classes embarked on after the War. He agreed that the book suggested survey rather than intensive study of a subject but, recalling the broad range of classes across N.S.W., he noted realistically,

it is alright to proclaim in syllabuses that we study subjects intensively but as a matter of fact we don't. We are prone to range broadly without very much depth.⁷⁰

The present post-War situation compelled the study of so many inter-related problems in all the social sciences that, although Atkinson's book was "too viewy" and "not facty" enough, Portus conceded its relevance to tutorial class courses.

Heaton's telegram to Atkinson had included the words "tone almost antagonistic workers" and, in a subsequent letter, he accused Atkinson of dedicating his book to the worker but of talking in it not to the worker but to an arm-chair audience of comfortable middle-class people. Atkinson's attitude to "all that labour is thinking" would, he said, damn the book in the eyes of the wage-earner and also give force to those

⁶⁷Review of *The New Social Order*, *Australian Highway*, Vol. 1, no. 3, May 1919, pp. 14-15.

⁶⁸Copland to Atkinson, 26 April 1919. Copland Papers.

⁶⁹T.C. Witherby to Heaton, 12 April 1919. Heaton Papers.

⁷⁰Portus to Atkinson, 14 April 1919. Heaton Papers.

who attacked the W.E.A. for its conservatism, a point with which Witherby also agreed. Heaton allowed that the sections on international affairs were acceptable, if scanty, but he aimed his greatest criticism at the whole tone of the economic parts of the book:

You dismiss the class-war, the workers' objectives and general point of view far too contemptuously, with the implication that if only the worker was a little better educated he would know better than to think or want such things. Your remedies proposed create not a new social order, but simply the old one patched up.⁷¹

Atkinson dismissed Heaton's criticism as bias and refused to enter into controversy, remarking

whether my bourgeois opinions or your proletarianism do the W.E.A. more harm, I will not venture to say.⁷²

Heaton's "proletarian" bias was also affronted by Atkinson's alliance with conservative thinking especially on Labour matters. Atkinson's membership of the *Round Table* group and his articles in that journal on Labour issues seemed further proof to Heaton of his point. Atkinson wrote, wholly or in part, at least three articles for the *Round Table*: one on industrial unrest in 1916, one on the railways strike in 1917 and one on the O.B.U. in 1919.⁷³ Heaton told Alfred Zimmern, one of the influential members of the London circle, of his dissatisfaction with the way the *Round Table* presented Australian Labour:

whatever may be the exact significance of the title of the quarterly, most people assume that the Round Table tries to get men of quite different shades of opinion, and that the articles published are therefore the product of such Round Table discussion. Whatever may be the case in the other dominions, the Round Table groups in Australia are far from being complete circles,

⁷¹Heaton to Atkinson, 11 April 1919. Heaton Papers.

⁷²Atkinson to Heaton, 15 April 1919. Copy in Copland Papers.

⁷³*Round Table*, December 1916; March 1918; September 1919. Although collective authorship was the pattern for many of the articles in the *Round Table*, large sections of the above are reproduced in Atkinson's other writings.

and the table is scarcely even a semi-circle.⁷⁴

He singled out, as examples, the articles on conscription in 1916 and the one on the railway strike of 1917. The first, he said, owed nothing to the views of anti-conscriptionists, despite their opinion prevailing in the referenda, and the second showed little evidence of having been submitted for any Labour scrutiny and comment. If the *Round Table* articles were to be fair statement then they must be submitted for the criticism of men whose views differed "from that held by apparently the whole of the members of the Round Table groups". When Atkinson also contributed an article to Ambrose Pratt's *Australian Tariff Handbook* in 1919, it was only further illustration to Heaton of his sympathy with the protection of "the interests of big business". Heaton viewed the book as propagandist and he and Copland contemplated a rejoinder but decided it would be too hard to get it published.⁷⁵

Relations continued to deteriorate between Atkinson and his W.E.A. colleagues until Atkinson applied for leave to return to England in 1921. When D.B. Copland replaced Atkinson as the President of the Federal Council of the W.E.A., he was anxious to alert R.H. Tawney and the English parent body to the sort of account Atkinson might give of the W.E.A. in Australia. Copland and S.D. Thompson asked Heaton to write to Tawney injecting a note of realism into what they suspected would be glowing and self-congratulatory reports. Heaton drafted a letter

⁷⁴Heaton to Zimmern, 13 June 1920. Zimmern Letters, MS 3731 N.L.A. Henry Bournes Higgins also complained to Lionel Curtis of an article on compulsory arbitration being "flagrantly bad" and "brimming with partisan prejudice", based on information from papers like the *Argus* and on the "utterance of speakers of the reactionary attitude".

Higgins to Curtis, 14 July 1923. Higgins Papers MS 1057/497, N.L.A.

⁷⁵Heaton to Copland, 1 September 1919. Copland Papers. The reference is to M. Atkinson, "The Leading Principles of Protection" in Ambrose Pratt (ed.), *The Australian Tariff Handbook*, (Melbourne 1919) pp. 17-21.

for their comment which warned Tawney that Atkinson was given to a certain "exuberance of imagery" and a scorn for "meticulous accuracy in things statistical" so that he should accept Atkinson's version of the Australian W.E.A. with the utmost reserve.⁷⁶ Copland and Thompson encouraged an even stronger note in the final letter. Heaton added that in every state the W.E.A. had to live down the hostility to the movement engendered by Atkinson's association with "sections of the public which have no affection for the wage-earner". He continued

Long ago Atkinson lost the leadership, official or unofficial, of the Association which he had in the early days. Since that time he has sulked in his tent, given no assistance to the federal organisation, contributed not a single article to *The Highway* (although writing voluminously for "capitalist" papers) describing himself as Head of the Department of Sociology (which does not exist) but seldom referring to himself as the Director of Tutorial Classes.⁷⁷

Heaton was a shade reluctant to mail this joint letter under his signature until Atkinson passed through Port Adelaide en route to London and snubbed an invitation to come down to the university from the ship to visit him. Heaton decided to enjoy the irony of dispatching the letter on the same boat:

I got a letter off to Tawney by the "Omar" and so the Rajah is travelling home sitting on top of it at the present moment.⁷⁸

Tawney's tactful reply spoke of similar problems in England since Mansbridge's retirement. Mansbridge and his successor were engaged in a personal rivalry over the direction of the W.E.A., Mansbridge "being extremely frightened of anything which suggests a close connection with

⁷⁶Heaton to Copland, 2 August 1921. Copland Papers.

⁷⁷Heaton to R.H. Tawney, August 1921. Copy in Copland Papers.

⁷⁸Heaton to Copland, 25 August 1921. Copland Papers.

labour".⁷⁹ The dilemma of late Victorian paternalists like Atkinson and Mansbridge had been sharpened everywhere in the post-War world.

Heaton had told Tawney that it was commonly accepted in W.E.A. circles that Atkinson would prefer to leave the W.E.A. for a safe university post but a month before he was due to return from England early in 1922 Atkinson resigned from both the W.E.A. and the university. "I am resigning" he informed the university "to become the Editor and Proprietor of *Review of Reviews* in Melbourne" which he had bought on Stead's death.⁸⁰ The university advised that Professor Atkinson had left "to take up much more remunerative literary work in the commercial world".⁸¹ He left behind a Department that had been entangled in dispute over such matters as the appointment of an Assistant-Director and over the relative powers and jurisdiction of Atkinson and S.D. Thompson, who was both the secretary to the W.E.A. in Victoria and to the university's Joint Committee. In 1924, and again in 1927, the University Council had to conduct inquiries into the affairs of the University Extension Board which were occasioned by the problems which continued to fester between the Director and the W.E.A. In 1927, J.B. Brigden, professor of economics in Hobart and president of the Federal Council of the W.E.A., traced the malady in Victoria to Atkinson's legacy. Atkinson's "easy-going" methods of administration had been "devised to relieve himself of certain drudgery" and the result had been that there were no clear lines of demarcation between the duties of the Director and that of

⁷⁹Tawney to Heaton, 10 October 1921. Heaton Papers.

⁸⁰Atkinson to the Chancellor, 1 January 1922, Melbourne University Registry Files 1922/36.

⁸¹Registrar, University of Melbourne, to the Secretary of the Appointments Board, Oxford University, 15 May 1922. University of Melbourne Registry Files 1922/435.

the W.E.A. whose secretary had then begun to take on executive functions that were not properly his.⁸²

Atkinson had also earned a reputation for dubious financial dealing, for cultivating his social popularity while side-stepping the burdens of office, and for appreciating to the full the "perks" of status.⁸³ Yet, for his part, his position in the university had little security. At first he was appointed for three years and in 1920 this was extended for a further twelve months but he had earlier written to the Chancellor asking for more certain tenure pointing out that he was, by then, thirty-seven.⁸⁴ His venture into business in a precarious enterprise called Quick Gears (in which he unhappily involved the university) and his advent into crusading journalism in *Stead's Review* both failed.⁸⁵ The articles he wrote, however, in his last years in

⁸²J.B. Brigden, Memo on Relations between the University and the W.E.A. in Victoria, 25 May 1927. Copland Papers. This matter is further discussed in Chapter Seven.

⁸³F. Alexander to H. Bourke, *op. cit.*

⁸⁴Minutes of the Council, University of Melbourne, 20 December 1916, refer to tenure "from year to year". In 1918, Atkinson's term was extended to three years. On 30 September 1920, the Chancellor asked the government for a further three year term (Files 1920/437). Atkinson wrote to the Chancellor asking for more security (Files 1920/444) and the Minutes of the Council, 13 December 1920, record that his term was extended for twelve months.

⁸⁵Minutes of the Council, University of Melbourne, 5 December 1921, report the receipt of scrip for 500 fully paid shares in the Quick Gears Ltd donated by Atkinson and others. F. Alexander to H. Bourke, *op. cit.*, recalls that Atkinson "fell a victim (other critics use a harsher word) for some invention promoters connected with what I recall as "Quick Gears" a miraculous new invention. He was encouraged to regard himself as a heaven sent company promoter and when he went to London he was commissioned to sell the invention to British interests (I saw something of this on the voyage to the U.K. and while he remained in London. Indeed, I persuaded my father to put some money into the company as did some University of Melbourne colleagues who subsequently denounced M.A. for swindling them). According to W. Osmond, "Meredith Atkinson", *A.D.B.*, *op. cit.*, Atkinson and his co-directors were sued in the Supreme Court for fraudulent misrepresentation but were acquitted in 1924.

Australia still showed his continued interest in placing Australia in a world perspective and in bringing international discussion into the Australian scene. In 1921 he had visited Russia at the instance of the "Save the Children Fund" to investigate the conditions of the famine and relief so he was able to publish first-hand accounts of Bolshevism in practice.⁸⁶ He continued to support the League of Nations, to promote the ideal of a British Commonwealth and to watch Australia's growing role in the Pacific.⁸⁷ The parochialism of Australia and the "continued remoteness of the Australian mind from participation in world affairs"⁸⁸ was a state which he had genuinely, along with his other W.E.A. colleagues, sought to modify.

In December 1924, *Stead's Review* was acquired by Reviews Ltd. and in the following May, Atkinson left Australia for Europe, the Near and Far East and America, again under the auspices of the "Save the Children and Armenian Relief Fund". *Stead's Review* wished him success in the cause with which he was now associated.⁸⁹ Returning to England, he resumed lectures in economics for the Cambridge Board of Extra-Mural Studies and he wrote back "Our London Letter" to each issue of *Stead's* in Australia. He also became literary secretary to the New Health Society holding this post until his sudden death in May 1929,

⁸⁶See M. Atkinson, "Soviet Russia and the Femine", *Nineteenth Century*, Vol. 91, January-June 1922, pp. 603-612; "with the Kemalists in Moscow", *Stead's Review*, 30 September 1922; "Russian Memories", *Stead's Review*, 28 October 1922.

⁸⁷See M. Atkinson, "The Machinery of the League of Nations" and "The International Spirit" in H. Heaton (ed.) *The League of Nations* (Adelaide 1918); "The Washington Conference", *Nineteenth Century*, Vol. 90, July-December 1921, pp. 941-949; "Empire - or Commonwealth?", *Stead's Review*, 22 March 1924, pp. 28-29.

⁸⁸M. Atkinson, "Empire - or Commonwealth?", *op. cit.*, p. 29.

⁸⁹*Stead's Review*, 15 December 1924 and 5 June 1925.

at the age of forty-five.⁹⁰ It was a sad comment on Atkinson's Australian career that although the subsequent reminiscences of his W.E.A. colleagues always conceded, if somewhat ambiguously, the missionary zeal and energy which he threw into the many causes he espoused, the *Australian Highway*, official journal of the W.E.A. he had founded, did not even carry a notice of his death.

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⁹⁰W. Osmond, "Meredith Atkinson", *op. cit.* and Obituary, *The Times*, London, 16 May 1929. This obituary contains some inaccuracies, among them the assertion that Atkinson held the chair of economics at the University of Melbourne.

CHAPTER 4. Garnet Vere Portus: "Controversial Education"

At the end of 1917, when Meredith Atkinson left the University of Sydney for Melbourne, he was succeeded as Director of Tutorial Classes by Garnet Vere Portus. Portus was appointed jointly to a lectureship in economic history under R.F. Irvine and was assisted in his tutorial class duties by Francis Armand Bland, also a lecturer in public administration. Together Portus and Bland presided over the movement in N.S.W. and were central figures in the Australian W.E.A. until 1934 when Portus accepted the chair of history and politics at the University of Adelaide, which had been vacated by W.K. Hancock, and Bland was appointed to the foundation chair of public administration at the University of Sydney. Their lifelong involvement in extra-mural education ended in both cases only with their deaths.

A study of Portus' early career as Director of Tutorial Classes and of his intellectual ambience reveals some of the central concerns which engaged the W.E.A. intellectuals. There was the assertion of the power of education not only to liberate the personality and assure the individual of greater command over his world but also, by its rationality and objectivity, to transcend class conflict. There was the need to assimilate into their rather uneasy liberal, Christian framework, with all its consciousness of the urgency of social reform, the challenge of Marxist socialist theory. There was also the conviction, born of the experience of the Great War, that Australia must come to terms with the new spirit of internationalism and search out her own relations with the wider world of the Empire and the Pacific. Portus addressed all these issues: he was forced by his institutional role as Director to be an apologist for the W.E.A. vision of the alliance between labour and learning. As both an ordained minister of the Church of England and one of the pioneers of economic history in

Australia he undertook his own personal journey into Marxism. As an Australian member of both the Round Table and the League of Nations Union, he became a propagandist for the cause of international peace and later for the study of Australia's international relations. The title and tenor of his autobiography, *Happy Highways*, reflects a serenity and congeniality for which he was personally appreciated by his colleagues, although some may find it too amiable and tolerant in humour to yield up a truly critical account of his experience. Portus' deceptively simple and unassuming style, however, should not detract from the range and energy he displayed as a teacher and an intellectual during the post-war years in Sydney.

Portus was born in Morpeth in N.S.W. in 1883, the son of a shipping agent and general manager to the Newcastle Steamship Co. After an education at Maitland High School, he had qualified through the Public Service Board for a position in the N.S.W. Department of Mines in 1900. After two years, he became interested in the Anglican ministry, having already a brother who was a curate in the Church in Newcastle. Assisted financially by the Church, he was able to attend Sydney University and live at St. Paul's College. In 1907 a Rhodes Scholarship took him to New College, Oxford, where he studied history and economics with his tutor, H.A.L. Fisher, later minister for education in Lloyd George's government. He continued his preparation for the ministry, joining the Christian Social Union to explore social issues in the light of Christian teaching. In all, he described his English period as an experience which inclined him to

a leftist liberal attitude in politics and confirmed
a tendency to modernism in my religious views.¹

¹G.V. Portus, *Happy Highways*, (Melbourne, 1953), p. 120. I have relied on this autobiography for the basic biographical information in this chapter.

Others whose influence had led him to find liberal democracy a "most inspiring creed" included his teachers at Sydney University, Francis Anderson, G.A. Wood, R.F. Irvine and Edgeworth David. It was Anderson who attracted him most with his progressive pedagogical methods encouraging discussion and discovery, and with his synthetic approach to knowledge. In an era before the specialisation of fields of learning, Anderson ranged beyond the mandate of his chair in logic, ethics and metaphysics to psychology, *education* and some economics; before Anderson's retirement these latter disciplines had been recognised by the foundation of separate chairs at Sydney.² On the other hand, his professor of history, George Arnold Wood, stuck to conventional notions of history, teaching English history with some excursions to the American and French revolutions and to Ireland. Portus regretted that Wood was deflected from writing about contemporary Australia, in preferring to return in his work to the *Discovery of Australia* (1922):

I have always regretted that Wood did not leave this subject to a lesser pen and give us an aloof and sympathetic account of the social and political development of his adopted country.³

The distinction implied between the two professors, Anderson and Wood, reflected Portus' own intellectual directions and preferences. Economic history was his designated field while his vocation to worker education involved him in teaching labour history and in analysis of contemporary social and political issues, towards which Wood in his history courses did not extend. W.G.K. Duncan, an undergraduate in the post-war years experienced the difference: attracted to the current guild socialist fashion which then permeated the student Public Questions Society,

²*Ibid.*, pp. 56-67.

³*Ibid.*, p. 62.

Duncan recalled his enthusiastic presentation of the message of G.D.H. Cole in an essay to G.A. Wood. For a more sympathetic and informed reading of the essay, Wood passed it on to the younger Portus, thus initiating a friendship and influence which eventually led Duncan to the London School of Economics to study Sociology with L.T. Hobhouse.⁴ Duncan followed Portus' footsteps twice, as Director of Tutorial Classes in Sydney and later to the chair of history and political science at the University of Adelaide.

Portus was impressed with the social policies of Asquith and Lloyd George but the collapse of pre-War liberal hopes effected by the outbreak of war was also accompanied for him by a shaking of religious certainties. He submitted his thesis for a B.Litt. at Oxford under the title *Caritas Anglicana*, an historical inquiry into the religious and philanthropic societies in England between 1678 and 1740, and then returned home to the Labour state of N.S.W. in 1911.⁵ Ordained the previous year, he took up a post as a country parson in the mining area of Cessnock where he was able to observe the economics of industry from close range and where he learned a valuable lesson about class relations - "neither side knows the other except as antagonist". In pre-War Australia, however, Portus did not find the same grim Marxism which confronted the W.E.A. after the war. In 1912, he claimed it was the theoretical problems of Marxian economics that were debated, whereas, on his return to Cessnock in 1920 to inspect tutorial classes, he believed the miners to be moved more by Marxian

⁴W.G.K. Duncan to H. Bourke: interview, 11 August 1976.

⁵G.V. Portus, *Caritas Anglicana. An Historical Inquiry into those Religious and Philanthropical Societies that Flourished in England between the Years 1678 and 1740*, (London 1912).

sociology.⁶ Nor, in pre-War Cessnock, did he elicit much response to his offer to enlighten the miners' unions about the "deeper social significance" of the Co-operative movement. They did participate in consumer Co-operation but their interest was more in the dividends than in the principles.⁷ Nevertheless, the mission to the miners and its promotion of movements like Co-operation which skirted the class issue, proved an enduring influence on Portus as he withdrew from the active ministry because of his doctrinal difficulties and moved towards the new secular evangelism of worker education. After a year in Adelaide in 1914, teaching history and English as a replacement for Professor G.C. Henderson, he returned to Sydney to join another old teacher, Professor J.T. Wilson, in the business of Military Censorship. During his stay in Adelaide, however, Portus had met Meredith Atkinson who awakened his interest in the W.E.A. idea. In 1917, he responded to Atkinson's invitation to be his Assistant but when Atkinson left Sydney, Portus found himself in charge of the whole operation.⁸

* * * * *

Within months of assuming his new position Portus was called upon to defend the W.E.A. - Tutorial Class alliance against criticism from within the university. In May 1918, he and Professor Francis Anderson, chairman of the Joint Committee, were summoned before an inquiry of the Senate into the general administration and performance of the Department of Tutorial Classes. The indictment brought against them by one of their chief critics, Professor Mungo MacCallum, concerned the

⁶G.V. Portus, *Happy Highways*, p. 154.

⁷*Ibid.*, pp. 154-155.

⁸*Ibid.*, pp. 162-169.

level of academic distinction attained by the tutors of the W.E.A. classes and study circles, the standards of the teaching, the payment of their tutors compared to that of the university extension lecturers and the status of the department itself in relation to the government of the university. There was also an assertion that the low proportion of manual workers in the W.E.A. classes vitiated the aims of the original movement and so rendered the Australian mission to the workers insignificant beside its English counterpart.⁹ While there was little doubt that much of the criticism was a retrospective attack on Meredith Atkinson, the questions raised did meet head on the problems involved in attempts by the university to reach the worker especially in the widespread rural areas that the movement aspired to service.

There had been a pragmatic adaptation by Portus and Bland of the lofty Mansbridge idealism to the realities of the N.S.W. clientele in the form of preparatory classes introduced to bridge the gaps in the "highway" of education for many workers. This was judged by MacCallum and his supporters to be a concession which sullied the university's standards and one which ought more properly to be conducted by other bodies such as the Education Department.¹⁰ Peter Board rallied to the support of Portus and the W.E.A.:

Should the university concern itself only with such sections of the work as can be carried to a standard corresponding to that reached in an Arts or Economics degree course? Or on the other hand is it the concern of the university to help the student wherever it can reach him to study seriously whatever will help him to a more intelligent citizenship?¹¹

⁹The Registrar, H. Barff, to Francis Anderson, Chairman of the Joint Committee, in the files of F.A. Bland held in the Department of Adult Education, University of Sydney. These files are not catalogued in any way.

¹⁰Francis Anderson to the Registrar, H. Barff, 18 July 1918. Bland Files, D.A.E., Sydney.

¹¹Peter Board to H. Barff, 6 May 1918, Bland Files, D.A.E., Sydney.

Board argued strongly that the university must maintain its joint venture with the W.E.A. as the only body through which the educational aspirations of the workers were expressed. He disagreed that only Honours graduates could be effective tutors and warned that the community would look elsewhere for its teachers if the university continued to define itself so narrowly. The veiled reference was to the rival worker education offered by the Labour Colleges. He spoke of the damage already done by the split over conscription:

it is well-known that the political turmoil through which labour organisations have been passing has cut across the interests of the W.E.A. and the vigour of the W.E.A. today in the face of the political issues that have intervened in its history is ample evidence of a genuine desire on the part of manual workers for the assistance that the university can give.¹²

Bland and Portus stated that education was not a gift from the goodness of the university but a right of people and they defended their employment of Pass graduates as tutors when a "first or even a third class man" was not available on the grounds that it was better to employ a tutor of lower grade than to leave the demand unsatisfied.¹³

MacCallum proposed to alter the Joint Committee and to place it under the University Extension Board, thereby interposing another committee between it and direct access to the university senate. Such moves were intended to dilute the influence of the W.E.A. on the Joint Committee and to weaken the autonomy of the department as a whole. It was a scheme which threatened to emasculate the essential W.E.A. concept and one which was firmly opposed by another champion of the Mansbridge cause, A.B. Piddington. The very essence of the movement wrote

¹²*Ibid.* See also *Happy Highways*, pp. 175-178.

¹³F.A. Bland to H.C.L. Anderson, 16 July 1918, Bland Files, D.A.E., Sydney.



Piddington (from the Inter-State Commission) would be jeopardised if the equal share of workers and university men in the administrative self-government of the classes was fractured. Yet another proposal to demote the status of Portus to that of an Organising Secretary and Chief Tutor was scorned by Piddington as "disdainful". The working classes would interpret the whole scheme as "evidence that they are not to be trusted" and would not accept the "paltry role" of merely assisting in the management of their own classes rather than sharing a dual responsibility for them. Piddington accused the university of wanting to cut off the lesser levels of scholastic effort - the more elementary bridging classes - because it lacked concern for the working class students "in this humble stage of effort".¹⁴ Ranged behind Piddington, Anderson and Portus, were other university figures such as Alexander Mackie and P.R. Cole from education, H.T. Lovell and Bernard Muscio from psychology, R.F. Irvine from economics - all social scientists whose fields the W.E.A. promoted and who had themselves offered courses.¹⁵

The "administrative mistakes" made under the previous director, Atkinson, were admitted by all: as Bland remarked, the "offensive" on the department was inspired more by personal animosity than by a "real critical interest in education."¹⁶ On the broader, more philosophical issues, Portus and his adherents were not prepared to concede. The definition of "manual worker" was a further point contested: Portus claimed that an analysis of student occupations revealed that more than

¹⁴A.B. Piddington to the Chancellor, Sir W. Cullen, 16 August 1918, Bland Files, D.A.E., Sydney

¹⁵Memorandum to the Chancellor from several members of the Staff of the Sydney University, Bland Files, D.A.E., Sydney

¹⁶F.A. Bland to M. Atkinson, 2 May 1918. Bland Files, D.A.E., Sydney

half fell into this category, although no sociological theory of occupation was advanced to support this claim. He protested that the term "worker" should exclude those who did not work only with their hands; the term "wage-earner" was a more useful one. In reality, students must be taken wherever they could be found.¹⁷ Anderson developed Portus' stand, arguing that tutorial classes were not meant for "the labourer of the academic imagination" but for the workers who comprised the great majority of the adult population of N.S.W. He protested against condoning further class distinction by trying to separate labourers out from the majority of workers.¹⁸

The weight of influential members of the University Senate in Board and Piddington and the degree of support mustered behind Portus succeeded in preserving the original arrangements of the Tutorial Class department. Having spent much of the year exorcising the grievances against their predecessor within the university, Portus and Bland had still to defend their operation from attacks mounted on the left of the labour movement. From the conscription crises through the next decade there was pressure on the affiliated bodies which comprised the W.E.A. to sever links with the university and to pursue "working class economics and working-class sociology" in Labour Colleges and along the lines urged by the London Plebs League. The radical socialist critics of the W.E.A. alliance with the university charged that the university was a bourgeois institution purveying doctrines which upheld capitalist society - in short, "capitalist dope". The socialist left argued that the workers must have their own education, financially independent of all capitalist agencies including the state, and after the War, the

¹⁷G.V. Portus, memo on MacCallum's Indictment, Bland Files, D.A.E., Sydney

¹⁸H. Anderson to H. Barff, 18 July 1918. Bland Files, D.A.E., Sydney

efficacy of the tutorial classes was seriously assailed by the withdrawal of many unions in sympathy with the Labour College movement.¹⁹

Portus' main challenge was to persuade the unions and the workers that the university could justify its claims on the minds of the working classes and that there was value in the W.E.A. ideal of non-partisan intellectual inquiry. This did not mean that they should shirk a critique of the existing social order but that controversial questions must be tackled without bias and understood without obligation. Portus could not allow the Labour Colleges to pre-empt the burning question of "what is to be done" so he plunged into a study of Marx in answer to the left "who said they (the W.E.A.) were not game enough to teach Marx".²⁰ The result was a spate of lectures, courses and articles on Marx, culminating in 1921 in the fourth of the W.E.A. publication series, Portus' *Marx and Modern Thought*.

In 1919, Portus displaced Atkinson as editor of the W.E.A. series and his disclaimer in the editorial preface of each publication was a measure of the way the issue of bias dogged the W.E.A.:

The chief aim of the series being to encourage investigation in fields of study hitherto surprisingly neglected in Australia, the W.E.A. does not accept responsibility for the views expressed by the writers therein. Its purpose is to stimulate thought, not to propagate doctrines. A disclaimer of this kind may appear odd in a preface but our experience of the persistency with which our critics insist on attributing to the Association, the opinions of those who happen to be connected with it, has convinced us that it is necessary.²¹

It is to be noted that this was a claim for the *idea* of the W.E.A., for its institutional personality - it was neutral, disinterested and

¹⁹W.E.A. of N.S.W. Seventh Annual Report, Dec. 1920, pp. 7-8.

²⁰G.V. Portus, "The Highway is Born", *Australian Highway*, Vol. 33, May 1952, p. 19.

²¹G.V. Portus, General Preface to books in W.E.A. series.

impartial. However, the precious rights of individual tutors to hold and announce their own views had to be preserved as well. Portus required that they be willing to discuss and defend their views in accordance with a notion of the scientific pursuit of truth which he held dear. The much cited case of Atkinson's espousal of the conscription cause, which was anathema to the unions and therefore destructive of their trust in the W.E.A., had left Portus with a legacy he had constantly to disown. Although few of Atkinson's fellow directors supported conscription and the bulk of their students would have abhorred it, the N.S.W. secretary of the W.E.A., David Stewart, had in principle to affirm Atkinson's right to his own political opinion. It was an example of the freedom the W.E.A. allowed to its tutors since as an institution it had no political platform. However, Portus recognised the limits of rationality in pleading such objectivity; he posed the dilemma as he looked back, years later -

Could a man afford to support a cause in public when such public support on his part might endanger another cause to which he was committed? To answer 'No' in all cases would seem to be a counsel of mere cowardice. But to answer with a categorical 'Yes' seems foolishness.²²

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Portus juxtaposed two types of education, the 'controversial' and the 'dogmatic'. The former, the ideal of the W.E.A., was the mark of the educator while the latter was the work of the ideologue. The faith of the W.E.A., he declared, was that "the extension of controversial education is the hope of the world".²³ The bearer of dogmatic education

²²G.V. Portus, *Happy Highways*, p. 174.

²³G.V. Portus, "Half a Loaf or a Whole Bread?" *Australian Highway*, Vol. 3, no. 3. 1 May 1921.

did not, in his view, subject his material to free inquiry or criticism but rather indoctrinated his students with frozen truths. Such were those who allowed only Marxism as the gospel of reconstruction and who accepted the Marxian analysis and solution in toto; these Portus labelled propagandists, not teachers. On the other hand, the educator presented the same material but regarded it his duty to supplement exposition with criticism:

the teacher who approaches his audience with a set of opinions, but, having expounded them, invites criticism and discussion of them by his hearers in the hope that from such discussion there shall arise a combination of his wisdom and theirs, and so the result shall more nearly approximate to the truth about things - such a teacher is not a propagandist but an educator; or to put it another way, he believes not in dogmatic education, but in controversial education.²⁴

Portus was equally opposed to the teaching of history in such a way as to engender the sort of patriotism and nationalism that the horror of the First World War had so exposed. The lesson to be learned from the War, he believed, was that a "rational and sane world" could only be achieved by educating the masses to both knowledge and critical thinking. He did maintain that there was a body of knowledge to be transmitted, acquired and accumulated which was a social inheritance outside the individual rather than latent within him, but it was not to be imposed so much as attained by conscious intellectual effort. This, he said, distinguished the W.E.A. from debating clubs or mere discussion groups and justified the insistence on the trained teacher and the university standard. The influence of modern psychology and the new progressive education was to be seen in Portus' rejection of passively received knowledge and in his plea for the interaction of the

²⁴G.V. Portus, *The W.E.A. and the University*, a paper read to a Special Conference of the Workers' Educational Association of N.S.W., 21 July 1928. Portus Papers, P.R.G. 204, South Australian Archives.

student with the subject in the business of discussion criticism and controversy.²⁵

Controversial education was therefore opposed to the vested interest of both capitalist and Marxist. It was to be conducted with the "disinterested curiosity" of the scientist. In pondering the criterion of the scientific, Portus concluded that it was a quality of the mind of the student rather than of the nature of the material and as such need not be confined to inorganic subjects amenable to experimental verification:

the test of a scientist is the attitude of mind in which he approaches his subject. If he is really disinterested; if he seeks facts in order to form unbiassed, impersonal judgements upon them; if he resolves to follow the facts to what seems to be their logical conclusion, irrespective of how that conclusion affects his cherished ideas, and his material position; then he is scientific. And it does not matter whether his subject is electrons, or earthworms, or ethics.²⁶

Portus maintained that the personal bias which corrupts inquiry could be countered by self-awareness and vigilance and by "an alert willingness to interrogate facts, and to abide by the award of reason".²⁷ This counsel was offered both to the intellectual and the "plain man" to whom he spoke for the belief in the "open mind" of the worker was central to W.E.A. educational thinking. He argued strongly that it was not the mission of the W.E.A. to kindle revolutionary consciousness in the student but to raise his mind to social service and social altruism. The critics on the left charged Portus and his colleagues

²⁵G.V. Portus, "The People's Task", *Australian Highway*, Vol. 4, no. 4, 1 June 1922.

²⁶G.V. Portus, "Some Difficulties of the Social Sciences", *Australasian Journal of Psychology and Philosophy*, Vol. 5, 1927, p. 30.

²⁷*Ibid.*, p. 35

with diffusing the worker's proper anger by presenting him with academic alternatives on the subject of social reconstruction. Portus answered that information was the basis for choice and that if the worker should commit himself to labour activism or even revolution as the expression of his social concern then he would be the more effective as a result of his "scientific" education:

If the desire for social service takes the form of joining the Communist Party, or the Labor Party, or serving on a Free Kindergarten Committee, or preaching in the Domain, that is not our affair. But we do think that our students are better Communists, better politicians, better kindergarteners, and better preachers because they have faced the facts of social life and tried to understand them, because they have not tied their minds to the repetitions of certain formulas and convictions.²⁸

Whether the actual teaching and writing of the W.E.A. intellectuals did or could achieve such an ultimate neutrality, such a divorce of social fact from values and exhortations to social behaviour, was highly debatable. Values such as justice, tolerance, mutual understanding, altruism, service, self-help and self-improvement were deeply embedded in the whole W.E.A. ethos. Almost all the study on social and economic issues stemmed from the premise that the individualist capitalist system inherited from the nineteenth century must be reformed or reconstructed. The confrontation with Marxist doctrine was almost always in terms of approving the Marxist diagnosis and indictments but rejecting or qualifying acceptance of the Marxist corollary of class war and revolution. It is instructive to inspect Portus' own approach to this controversial content in the light of his theory of impartial inquiry into "the facts of social life".

²⁸Portus, *The W.E.A. and the University*, *op. cit.*

It was, in the first place, one of the significant contributions to Australian intellectual life and development that these men did engage in the contemporary debate on social reconstruction and did attempt to involve their students in the theoretical study of socialism and Marxism, albeit in a simplified form. The subject was a minefield, given the conservative anxieties of the wider community. Consistent with his defense of individual conviction and the positive value he placed on controversial education, Portus supported the appointment of tutors with known or suspected "radical" reputations. The two tutors he sent to Broken Hill in 1920 and 1921, B.H. Molesworth and C.ff.Marsh-Roberts, were both the subject of public controversy which worried the university's Joint Committee as their employer. Questions were asked either because of the Marxist content of their teaching or because of comments made which appeared to cast doubts upon their loyalty to King and Empire - the latter usually occurred in discussion about nationalism or Britain's role in the war.²⁹ Portus could live quite comfortably with the appointment of such men and placated the university powers on their behalf, not least because he had entered upon the same dangerous grounds himself.

In the immediate post-War years, eight large unions in N.S.W. had defected to the rival brand of worker education offered by the Labor College. Portus claimed they had been so swept off their feet by indoctrination that they would only "have the doctrine and nothing but the doctrine".³⁰ He resolved to offer his own courses on Marx and, in testimony to academic disinterest, to invite such leftist critics as

²⁹See Chapter Two on Molesworth and Marsh-Roberts.

³⁰W.E.A. of N.S.W. Seventh Annual Report 1920, p. 8.

W. Cleary and the Secretary of the N.S.W. Trades and Labour Council, J.S. Garden, to comment on his lectures at the Trades Hall. The course on economics which he had been teaching in his tutorial classes at the university was labelled Marxian Economics in 1919 and the next year a further series was conducted at the Trades Hall in which Portus, Atkinson and A.B. Piddington enlightened the unionists on topics such as "The Economic Interpretation of History", "Marx and the Modern Proletarian Movement", "Culture and Socialism".³¹ Portus had spent two years studying Marx and reading such commentaries and pamphlets as he could get hold of in Australia in 1918. The twenty-four lectures on the subject did not draw a large attendance but the group which read "Das Capital" under his tutelage mixed wage-earners with a "highly placed civil servant, a retired consulting engineer, a parson and three teachers".³² The publication of his lectures in *Marx and Modern Thought* reached a much wider audience.

As early as March 1919, Portus had begun to publish comment on Marxist thought. The first issue of the *Australian Highway* carried a short article on "Neo-Marxism in Germany" from the pen of a P. Vurgost. This was a pseudonym invented by Portus which he thought sounded "nice and mid-European, if not actually Russian" - in fact, it was merely an anagram.³³ In the first few lines he announced what was his basic intellectual approach to the problems of Marxist interpretation:

Marx has been hailed as the writer of the Bible of Socialism. It is, however, the fate of Bibles to suffer from authoritarian interpretations of themselves which are sometimes mutually exclusive.³⁴

³¹*Ibid.*, p. 9; see also *Australian Highway*, Vol. 1, no. 4, June 1919 and Vol. 2, no. 2, April 1920.

³²G.V. Portus, *Happy Highways*, pp. 240-241.

³³G.V. Portus, "The Highway in Born", *op. cit.*

³⁴G.V. Portus, "Neo Marxism in Germany", *Australian Highway*, Vol. 1, no. 1, March 1919, pp. 9-10.

In an analogy that came readily to him, he viewed the divisions among Marx' disciples - Bolsheviks, Revisionists, German Social Democrats, English Fabians - as a form of "ecclesiasticism" like that reflected in his own church in the High, Low and Broad Church positions. In this early article, he discussed the school of German thought which found in Marx justification for the triumph of the German state, and almost made him an advocate of Pan Germanism. In the next issue, he reviewed Trotsky's denunciation of nationalism and the debacle of international socialism in 1914. He approved Trotsky's peace policy of no indemnities and no annexations and his call for self-determination among nations. In March 1919, Bolshevik peace proposals, like the Bolshevik reconstruction of Russia, could still be viewed optimistically by Wilsonian liberals and British socialists alike since there was little reliable information on Bolshevism in practice. Portus suspended judgement:

The real significance of the Russian situation, nay even the actual march of events, are by no means clear to the outside world. We are depending on what must be often thrice censored news for our information. At present we hear only the voices of Bolshevik apologists on one side and of Bolshevik detractors on the other. When the way is clear for the dissemination of impartial views on the subject, we shall be able to appreciate Trotsky more fully, or criticise him more effectually.³⁵

Marx and Modern Thought appeared in 1921 and was dedicated to Peter Board "in recognition of his great services to the cause of controversial education, in this country".³⁶ The practical purpose of the book was to supply a short and accessible introduction to the

³⁵G.V. Portus, "Trotsky and Marx", *Australian Highway*, Vol. 1, no. 2, April 1919, p. 8.

³⁶G.V. Portus, *Marx and Modern Thought*, W.E.A. series of Economic, Political and Social Studies, no. 4 (MacMillan, Melbourne, 1921). Author's Preface.

subject for W.E.A. students, but it was also Portus' aim to present an "objective account of the Marxian system together with certain criticisms of the leading ideas of that system".³⁷ Marxism, he stated, could be followed, opposed or criticised but it could not be ignored. Nor could it pass unscrutinised as the *vera doctrina*. The study covered four aspects: the place of Marx in the history of thought, the materialist conception of history, the Marxian theory of value and Marx and the modern proletarian movement. The first section dealt with the intellectual influences on Marx - Hegel, Utopian socialists and classical economists - leading on to an exposition of eighteenth century rationalism in order to place Marx in relation to the political theory of his age. Marx' prophecy of the decay of capitalism was set against more modern critiques and his assertion of scientific socialism was appreciated as having removed the "vagaries and fads" of Utopianism but, in Portus' own view, as having replaced the optimism of the Utopians with a certain joyless fatalism. Marx' contribution to modern thought, according to Portus, rested upon his doctrine of historical materialism and his theory of surplus value: the first was valuable to the understanding of the process of historical change and the second provided a moral force to justify reform. Portus found the Marxian principle of change, economic determinism, too exclusive to explain the complex motivations of men but he acknowledged the importance of Marx' insistence on the economic element. Reviewing the debate on this point, he concluded

... a theory of history which pays attention to only one set of motives will present artificially simple solutions of the problems it sets out to solve and will be untrue both in prospect and retrospect.³⁸

³⁷*Ibid.*, Preface.

³⁸*Ibid.*, p. 51.

Similarly, Portus did not deny the significance of the theory of class struggle. He was sceptical about the reduction of all groups and interests in society to a dichotomous model - "the world will not bifurcate at the bidding of a theory" - and he doubted the potential power of class consciousness, at least in the Australian worker. Speaking no doubt from the W.E.A. experience in rallying the worker to a cause, he felt sure that Labour Colleges and Socialist congresses would never compete with the flat at Randwick or the local picture show.³⁹ But when all the qualifications had been aired, he returned to the importance of the class struggle as an expression of the profound problems in the contemporary economic system which had produced antagonisms based on material interest:

Who can deny the real quarrel which exists in modern society over the distribution of what is produced? It is scarcely helpful for well-meaning people to tell us that the interests of capital and labour are one. Such a statement appears to be based on a confusion of terms or else to be substantially untrue to the test of everyday life. Many people deplore class-hatred - and it is deplorable - but, nevertheless, it is inevitable while our economic society is organised in such a way as to emphasise it.⁴⁰

Class animosity was admitted here as a real factor but Portus could not endorse the class war as the remedy. No one theory of social reconstruction was in his view capable of abolishing all the hostilities active in society. Thus, while Marx' analysis of social and economic evolution made sense of history, to Portus, the logic of revolution and the classless society did not make sense of the future.

After a lengthy account of the theory of surplus value, Portus concluded that, despite the problems which the theoretical economist

³⁹*Ibid.*, pp. 58-59.

⁴⁰*Ibid.*, pp. 59-60.

could discover in Marx, both the "vivid humanity of the writer" and the "beastliness of the industrial system" are revealed in *Capital* and that it is this moral weight which attracts such devotees.⁴¹ The last chapter of the book was an explanation of the various responses to Marxism within the Marxist parties of Europe and America, stressing as always the diversity of interpretation:

If we look for this single and undivided allegiance to one undisputed interpretation of the gospel according to Marx we do not find it.⁴²

Reform or revolution? In the spectrum derived from Marx, Portus advocated reform but he maintained that knowledge of Marxist theory and communist practice must be encouraged for men to recognise that communism was a condition in the world and not just a theory or a "handy lump of political mud to throw at an opponent".⁴³

For the Christian, the doctrine of historical materialism should not, in Portus' opinion, cause more qualm than that of biological evolution. He argued that the new social science of comparative religion allowed the influence of contemporary political and economic conditions to shape religious thought and organisation. A belief in the economic interpretation of history was not incompatible; indeed, as a Christian and an economic historian himself he found common ground between Christianity and Marx, in the condemnation of the evils of the maldistribution of wealth. He repudiated, however, the notion that the Bible either endorsed or rejected private property or communism but he upheld the idealism of those wishing to reconstruct the social order

⁴¹*Ibid.*, p. 117.

⁴²*Ibid.*, p. 121.

⁴³G.V. Portus, *Communism and Christianity*, four lectures given to the A.S.C.M. Conference at Mittagong in 1930. (The St. John's Press, Morpeth, 1931). Preface.

on more "generous" principles of equality. Idealism, however noble, was not enough for the reformer: he recommended that hard work, reading and reasoning were needed to give it purpose and direction - in effect, the aspiring reformer "has to go to school with the Marxians".⁴⁴ In all, the only way men could answer the appeal of Communism was to recognise the truth and origins and rightness of its protest. The protest of the Christian social reformer would not lead in the direction of Bolshevism, in Portus' analysis, but it must be directed to a better social order, one that did not

acquiesce in conditions that debase the souls of whole people; but a social order which will somehow contrive a harmony of intelligent co-operation in place of the present idiotic discord of competitive interests.⁴⁵

The determination of the new social order was primarily a problem of the control of industry but intelligence and co-operation were also necessary. These were to be fostered by education and the progressive exercise of reason. To this end, the typical W.E.A. approach to the question of social reconstruction was to trace the evolution of the problem and to present a variety of models, alternatives and critical evaluations. The trajectory of the lectures and courses was summed up in Portus' W.E.A. pamphlet, "The Problem of Industry in Politics", as he reviewed the worker's options for self-expression:

Under Capitalism and Laissez-faire he expressed himself in industry alone through his Trade Union on the old Craft basis, and regarded the State as having nothing to do with industry: under State Socialism he tends to express himself in politics alone, through Trade Unionism organised increasingly on the industrial Union basis, and regards the State as having everything to do with industry. Under Syndicalism he was asked to express himself no more in politics and to abolish the State as a political arrangement altogether;

⁴⁴G.V. Portus, *Marx and Modern Thought*, pp. 65-66 and *Communism and Christianity*, p. 18 and p. 33.

⁴⁵G.V. Portus, *Communism and Christianity*, pp. 66-67.

under Guild Socialism he is asked to express himself, first through his Union, and second through his geographical electorate, so that he can have a voice in politics proper, apart from industry, and in industry proper, apart from politics.⁴⁶

Portus, like most of his colleagues, found the ideals of consumer co-operation morally and economically attractive but he had no illusions about the slender hold of such alternatives in Australia nor about the appeal of an intellectualist guild socialist society in the face of the traditional State collectivism in Australia. Here a strong trade unionism had chosen politics as its medium three decades earlier. Nonetheless, underlying and informing the apparently neutral accounts of each of the many theories of social reconstruction which were outlined to the W.E.A. student, there was the conviction of the need for reform:

perhaps the most pressing of all our social problems are those that lie in the domain of producing and distributing wealth ... the social effects of economic questions are so patent and insistent on our attention, that they may perhaps be thought of as being the most urgent of all.⁴⁷

The role of the W.E.A. was to contribute to the settlement of the problem by providing "Adult Education on Social Subjects".

Portus took the same message to the members of the Anglican Church discussion group when he addressed the Social Problems Committee of the Sydney Diocese in August, 1918. Taking as his theme "Social Unity and Labour", Portus reminded the audience that while his lecture concerned mainly British and European problems and thought, it would be misleading to assume, despite the generally more equitable sharing of wealth in

⁴⁶G.V. Portus, *The Problem of Industry in Politics*, W.E.A. pamphlet, no. 14, Portus Papers, P.R.G. 204, S.A.A., p. 7.

⁴⁷G.V. Portus, *An Introduction to Industrial Reconstruction in Australia with Special Reference to Australian Conditions*, (Sydney May 1919), pamphlet in Portus Papers, P.R.G. 204, S.A.A., p. 3.

Australia, that the evils of industrialism did not exist here:

It is quite a mistake to suppose that there is no grinding poverty, no insecurity of tenure, no shocking housing conditions, and no slums in Sydney. Ask the Rector of Woolloomooloo whether these things only exist in Australia in the heated imagination of the social reformer! Read Professor Irvine's report on Housing, delivered to the New South Wales Government in 1913. And, moreover, the worst charge of this indictment is as true of industry here, as it is in any of the older countries - the worker is still regarded as a "hand" and submitted to the spiritual degradation which that conception implies.⁴⁸

He suggested that there was truth in the notion that poverty was an institution contrived to make the present capitalist system more profitable. He argued that labour was becoming a more consolidated power and that public opinion on the status of labour was changing as a result of the war's precipitation of social thinking. He offered for their consideration the policy of the English Labour Party as set out in *Labour and the New Social Order* which as a programme for reconstruction approximated to the W.E.A. ideas on reform:

it seems to me that in respect to the spirit of Social Unity, the constitutional rather than the revolutionary section promises the better state of things.⁴⁹

Nonetheless, he stressed that however constitutional in method, this programme of the Labour movement was the work of those "profoundly dissatisfied" with the existing state of things and determined on change. New ways must be found to distribute the benefits of the surplus of production, Portus argued, and although proposed changes might prove unpalatable to many, in 1918 he believed that there were signs that they would come to pass. He explained the foundations of the English Labour Party's schemes: the universal enforcement of a

⁴⁸G.V. Portus, *Social Unity and Labour*, (published by the Social Problems Committee, August, 1918, Sydney), p. 12.

⁴⁹*Ibid.*, p. 19.

national minimum, the democratic control of industry, a revolution in national finance and use of the surplus wealth for the common good. He stated frankly that the social unity which he envisaged would be better achieved by such goals than by the efforts of extremists. Legitimate agitation was, he reminded them, the duty of Christians in the pursuit of social justice and he enjoined his educated fellow churchmen to place their talents at the cause of social criticism and reform:

our next business is to become informed about the subject, to appraise remedies, to criticise and finally to construct.⁵⁰

These words were, in broader perspective, a statement of the whole W.E.A. faith in the intellectual process and an outline of both their strategy and the way they perceived their role in achieving the new social order.

* * * * *

In mid-1918 it was not only the influence of the social reconstruction theorists in Britain which coloured the thought of the W.E.A. intellectuals in Australia. Before the War ended, they were attracted to Wilsonian liberalism in their approach to the nature of the Peace, to the war guilt question, to the League of Nations and the cause of internationalism. The excesses of nationalism were condemned and it was recognised, at the risk of outraging local patriotism, that the Allies had contributed their share to the rivalries and tensions that had erupted in 1914. The Wilsonian explanation of the causes of War which were implied in the Fourteen Points were generally endorsed

⁵⁰*Ibid.*, p. 19.

on W.E.A. platforms while the need for the League was eagerly preached: it should be a body, in Portus' words,

strong enough, because it represents all, to coerce a recalcitrant people wishing to determine for itself a course of action that will lead to war, as well as strong enough to assure for all its partners that degree of independence which is necessary for their permanent self-expression.⁵¹

He continued to lecture for the League of Nations Union up till the outbreak of the Second World War.

The new internationalism embodied in the League created certain ambiguities for Australians. As one of the *Round Table* correspondents pointed out, Australia's separate representation at the Peace Conference and her projected membership of the League amounted to a great shift in Australia's stance in the world of nations. It was not clear how this would affect Britain's responsibility for the Dominions and to what extent Australia might forfeit the security of British protection.⁵² Portus' affiliation exemplified this shift in Australia's relations. In 1920 he was invited by a Sydney lawyer, H.S. Nicholas to join the Sydney circle of the *Round Table*, a journal dedicated to imperialist sympathies, and he became a member of the editorial group. Portus conceded the conservatism of the older members like Henry Braddon and Mungo MacCallum but he saw himself as introducing a "little radical leaven".⁵³ On the other hand, his interest in America and the Pacific continued to develop. In 1927, he attended the Annual Conference of the Institute of Politics at Williamstown, Massachusetts, where he acted as secretary to one of the Round Tables on the problems of the

⁵¹*Ibid.*, p. 7.

⁵²"The Return of Mr Hughes", *Round Table*, Vol. 10, December 1919, pp. 179-185.

⁵³G.V. Portus, *Happy Highways*, p. 143; pp. 232-233.

British Commonwealth. Under the chairmanship of his old W.E.A. colleague, Herbert Heaton, the discussion centred on the meaning of autonomous communities, equal in status, within the British Empire. According to the *New York Herald Tribune*, Portus and Heaton, Australian and Yorkshireman, tried to explain to a largely American audience the "rather baffling riddle of just what the British Empire or Commonwealth of the present day consists".⁵⁴ In the same year, however, Portus became a foundation member of the New South Wales group of the new Institute for Pacific Relations which aimed to "study the conditions of Pacific peoples, with a view to the improvement of their mutual relations".⁵⁵ The Institute for Pacific Relations was planned in 1925 by a number of people in Honolulu associated with the Y.M.C.A. in the hope of bringing to the problems of Pacific-Asian relations the internationalist approach of the Y.M.C.A. movement. A permanent secretariat was established in 1927, first in Honolulu and later in New York, and six national councils were set up, including one in Australia. One of the founders of the W.E.A. in New Zealand, and one of the pioneers of economics in Australasia, J.B. Condliffe was appointed international Research Secretary for the Institute.⁵⁶ The I.P.R. intended to promote research, conferences and publications on social and economic aspects of countries in the Pacific region. The Australian Group comprised two branches, one in Victoria and one in N.S.W. In 1928, each produced a volume of essays: the Victorian

⁵⁴Cutting from *New York Herald Tribune*, 2 August 1927. Portus Papers, S.A.A. See also "Australia at Williamstown Institute", *Australian Highway*, Vol. 10, no. 5, 10 February 1928.

⁵⁵P. Campbell, R.C. Mills and G.V. Portus (eds.), *Studies in Australian Affairs*, (Melbourne, 1928). Preface.

⁵⁶John N. Thomas, *The Institute for Pacific Relations. Asian Scholars and American Politics*, (Seattle, 1974).

book, *The Peopling of Australia*, edited by P.D. Phillips and G.L. Wood, examined the problem of Australia's population while the N.S.W. collection, *Studies in Australian Affairs*, dealt with economy and defence. The N.S.W. editors, Persia Campbell, R.C. Mills and G.V. Portus, defined their purpose as throwing some light on the social forces determining the course of Pacific affairs:

If these forces were more adequately known, it might be possible to control and direct them. This latter function of control and direction is the business of statesmen. All that the Institute can do is to try to make clear the existence of the forces and the lines of their activity.⁵⁷

As a result of his five months spent in the United States in 1927, Portus wrote an account of his own social inquiry into America in order to extend Australian understanding of the country that was becoming increasingly important to them. *The American Background*, which also appeared in 1928, was unpretentiously described as a "sketched" introduction to a complex subject but the book is valuable as a reflection of the issues which Portus thought should concern Australians.⁵⁸ Unlike the American tours of his colleagues, Peter Board, R.F. Irvine and D.B. Copland, Portus did not focus on the arrangements of universities and research in America. He cast a much wider glance at American society, analysing in particular the operation of industry and the relations of capital and labour. He placed this discussion, first of all, against what he judged to be the most singular aspect of America - the racial composition of the people and their interaction with the geography of the continent. The racial background, he believed, modified and influenced every aspect of American life. It was also an

⁵⁷*Studies in Australian Affairs*, op. cit., Preface.

⁵⁸G.V. Portus, *The American Background*, (Melbourne, 1928).

issue of relevance to Australia in the twenties when the question of the quantity and quality of her population was being hotly debated. Portus explained the concept of the Melting Pot, and outlined the variety of solutions suggested for the Negro problem. In the end, he rejected ethnic diversity as a model for Australia because it presented hazards to the standard of living:

I do not want Australia to have to face a colour problem. I do not want Australian labour to be hamstrung by a babel of tongues and a diversity of standard of living.⁵⁹

His treatment of industry and labour in America found more differences than similarities between that country and Australia. In such areas as the control of industry, the quest for efficiency, the teaching of industrial management, the contractual agreements between employers and unions, the innovations in industrial welfare, he saw a healthy willingness to experiment that the conservatism of Australia discouraged in industrial matters. The regulation of the conditions of labour and the level of wages by the State to which the Australian was accustomed would appear to the American as "too paternal"; the latter, according to Portus,

must stand up as an individual and make his own terms with life, and not have them made for him.⁶⁰

Portus did not minimise the problems inherent in American society but the book was tolerant, moderate and positive in tone. It appreciated the energy, optimism and initiative of the Americans but was not blind to the evils of the capitalist, competitive ethic. Finally, the book contained some fine writing, lucid and evocative in its descriptions of both sides of America -

⁵⁹*Ibid.*, p. 121.

⁶⁰*Ibid.*, p. 103.

The Americans call their own country the New World, and this not without reason. It impresses one with a new value of old things. It has taken the commonplace of life, like shops and offices and hotels, and given them a new appeal. It throws over the familiar rocking-chair an investiture of new romance. It restores to the traveller a new appreciation of one of the oldest beauties in the world - the countryside. But, with all this, there co-exists new ugliness, new grimness, and the unsightliness of the newer industrialism.⁶¹

Portus' writing about his own country belonged to the beginnings of labour history in Australia, a branch of history which developed, as it did also in Britain, largely outside the academy.⁶² In Australia, it was firstly the province of labour men themselves, like George Black, W.G. Spence, William Morris Hughes and ^{politicians like} A.St. Ledger, or of statisticians such as Timothy Coghlan and later J.T. Sutcliffe. Foreign observers including W. Pember Reeves, Victor Clark and Albert Métin had also contributed to the field and the emphasis of the W.E.A. on industrial history had provided further stimulus. Portus drew on this tradition in his chapter "The Labour Movement in Australia, (1788-1914)" published in Atkinson's *Australia, Economic and Political Studies* and in his contribution, "The Gold Discoveries, 1850-1860", to the Australian volume of *The Cambridge History of the British Empire*. His argument was that, even in early convict Australia, the radical political element in the population had produced a labour consciousness and that the discovery of gold had liberalised the community by introducing a democratic leaven into the population. It was not the economic impetus provided by gold that was its most

⁶¹*Ibid.*, p. 117.

⁶²Stuart MacIntyre makes the same point about Scottish labour history in a review of Ian MacDougall, *Essays in Scottish Labour History*, in *Labour History*, no. 38, May 1980, p. 113.

significant effect but the change in the quality of the Australian people that it indirectly brought about. He cited the injection of Europe's disappointed Republicans and Chartists which acted as a precipitate of the Australian national type - a type which for Portus was always essentially British, but one transmuted by a new environment and a new order. He noted the evolution of the labour movement to 1914, and its achievements in both industry and politics, but he was concerned to explain both in terms of a conditioning matrix of democratic sentiment which characterised the general community as much as the workers. According to his argument, the "contemporary political conditions" in Australia were what made possible the early birth of a Labour party and it was the democratic climate which enabled Labour's progress. The achieving of democratic institutions belonged in his view to the wider community, not simply to a single class:

Australian Labour was a part of a new community whose members had agreed to establish that machinery though they were not blind to the possibilities of its use. This shows that outside the ranks of organised labour in Australia, there was even then a solid block of public opinion that was strongly democratic in tone and likely to be in ready sympathy with the attempts of the wage-earners to secure for themselves betterment of conditions of working and living.⁶³

It was his opinion that the Labour movement owed more to the previous forty years of democracy and to the support of "middle class idealists and sympathisers" - men of radical ideas such as Henry Parkes, David Syme or Graham Berry - than it now acknowledged. Now that Labour was strong and organised he warned that it could only ignore such support outside its ranks at its own peril.⁶⁴ Just as broad-minded liberal

⁶³G.V. Portus, "The Labour Movement in Australia (1788-1914)", Chapter IV in Meredith Atkinson (ed.), *Australia, Economic and Political Studies* (Melbourne, 1920), p. 165.

⁶⁴*Ibid.*, pp. 187-188.

men, prior to the advent of socialism and labour, had nourished "a general conception of well-being" in Australia, Portus hoped that in his post-war Australia there would prevail

the same general toleration of spirit which has hitherto made possible our advance towards social betterment.⁶⁵

This reading of the historical relation between middle-class "tolerants and reformers" and the labour movement was a plea for the recognition of the role of men like himself. It denied that one class alone could achieve social progress (which was not itself questioned) and insisted on the shaping force of liberalising ideas. History, here, served contemporary ends. In the quest for unity and social harmony, as Portus and the W.E.A. conceived it, the alliance of intellectuals and reformists with the cause of labour was crucial. This particular justification was needed at a time when the function of university men in the education of the workers was under attack. Citing such figures as Lord Shaftesbury, Robert Owen, Marx, Lenin and Trotsky, Portus asserted,

I do not believe the workers can do without the intellectuals ... the workers have found their leaders among the ranks of the intellectuals.⁶⁶

The Australian Labour movement has not been noted for its significant response to the cries of intellectuals but R.J. Boyer, in an obituary for Portus in 1954, tendered a wider view which Portus himself would have endorsed:

How much our Australian society, finding its way through political theory in an age of revolution and violence, owes to such men as Portus is beyond our guess. We need only to be reminded that the bloodless political history of our

⁶⁵*Ibid.*, p. 188.

⁶⁶G.V. Portus, *The W.E.A. and the University*, *op. cit.*

country starting as it did with such passionate resentments as a legacy from our early origins, is a triumph of democratic gradualism and British restraint which could never have been achieved without such influences of enlightenment and moderation.⁶⁷

To the transplanted British Tutorial Class movement, Portus gave an Australian voice. He believed that Australia was different in its social outlook - he described it as a "curious compound of empiricism and tolerance". For him it was a country without doctrines where there was a conviction that "a satisfactory solution of social problems involved far more than technical economic considerations".⁶⁸ The decent and humane conscience was as important to Portus as the advance of the applied social science. Unlike some of his colleagues who participated in the mission of the W.E.A. - or the "secular ministry" as he called it - he saw himself as a man with a torch to bear rather than an empire to build or a profession to found.

⁶⁷R.J.F. Boyer, "G.V. Portus - The Passing of an Australian Liberal", *Australian Quarterly*, Vol. 26, September 1954, p. 10.

⁶⁸G.V. Portus, "Wage Fixation in Australia", *American Economic Review*, Vol. 19, March 1929, p. 75.

CHAPTER 5. Francis Armand Bland: The Science of Government

Meredith Atkinson and G.V. Portus are readily identified with the W.E.A.'s early phase but less prominence has been given to Francis Armand Bland. One of the first tutors for the N.S.W. Association, Bland was appointed Assistant-Director to Portus in 1918. He held that post until 1934 when he was offered the foundation chair of public administration in the University of Sydney - the first chair in the country in the field that Bland himself had pioneered. After his appointment to this full-time post, he continued as a member and later chairman of the Joint Committee for Tutorial Classes, defending its interests until his retirement in 1948. He continued also to teach for the W.E.A.: as Portus asked, was there anyone else in Australia who had taken tutorial classes continuously from 1914 to 1944 with only a three-year break?¹ Bland was also the first editor of the W.E.A.'s journal, the *Australian Highway*, established in 1919. It was a task he undertook with great energy and efficiency right through the twenties. His own book, *Shadows and Realities of Government*, published in 1923, was number seven in the W.E.A. Series of Economic, Political and Social Studies "written in Australia".

It is, however, not only Bland's long-term and productive dedication to adult education which demands his inclusion in a study of these early W.E.A. intellectuals. In many ways, although a native Australian, he was the paradigm figure of the type of university man whom Mansbridge had in mind for his "adventure" in working-class education. Bland achieved an integration in his life and work which made him especially

¹G.V. Portus, "Bland and Adult Education", *Public Administration*, VII, no. 2 (new series) June 1948, pp. 135-140. This issue contains a series of articles reviewing the many aspects of Bland's career, written on the occasion of his retirement. There is also a comprehensive bibliography of his writings compiled by Jean Craig.

suited to the W.E.A. task. R.S. Parker, one of his most eminent pupils, remarked that in Bland one found that

the enthusiasm of the specialist, the duty of the citizen and the moral conscience of the individual are inseparable.²

This integration of his Christian commitment, his public and academic career and his involvement in worker education allows us a further perspective on an Australian intellectual type in these formative years.

Although G.V. Portus was the one among the W.E.A. principals who had actually taken Anglican orders, it is through F.A. Bland that the Christian Socialist dimension of the original English movement is best studied in its translation to Australia. Bland was an excellent example in these years of that personal and intellectual temper which, in various ways, characterised these frontiersmen of the social sciences. He combined his certainties about the power of the social sciences to guide the new democracy with a broad moral and social concern that was the legacy of the ethical liberalism of the late nineteenth century. His own social science, the study of the structures and functions of government, was not to be narrowed to the technical mechanics of administrative systems although this was the substance of his work. He believed that a "Christian community is morally responsible for the character of its own economic and social order".³ Mere personal Christianity was not, in his view, sufficient answer to the social

²R.S. Parker, "F.A. Bland's Contribution to Public Administration in Australia", *Public Administration*, *op. cit.*, p. 166.

³Bland quotes these words from the Report of the Archbishop of Canterbury's Fifth Committee of Inquiry into Christianity and Industrial Problems, 1918, in his address "Class Consciousness" delivered at the Cathedral, Sydney, 31 March 1919. Typescript of address in Bland Papers, Sydney University Archives.

problem: it must engage the specific energies of the Church, of voluntary associations and of social scientists. His own contribution to shaping the social order - the promotion of the teaching and training of public administration in Australia - was as much a spiritual and educational matter as a political and economic one. His own social science had for him both a moral basis and a moral end and it would mistake his purpose to interpret his criteria of "economy", "efficiency" and public accountability of government as neutral value-free objectives. Nor was his work with the W.E.A. simply an appointment which allowed him to develop his field of expertise within the university while advancing social betterment among the workers outside. There was a vital continuum which he never ceased to assert between his university work and his extra-mural teaching. As he conceived it, public administration operated for the true development of the human personality - the proper justification of all government - only when public education had produced a citizenry which was able to demand government responsive to its needs. Adult education, he said,

is the direct result of modern political democracy, which assumes that the average citizen is an active and intelligent ruler of his country.⁴

In more specific terms he stated this continuum as a sort of social triad:

... the higher the political intelligence of the voter, the better the type of representative, and the greater the incentive for the official to give of his best to the community.⁵

He saw his task as both contributing to the first of these three factors

⁴F.A. Bland, "Adult Education Programmes and the Community", (n.d.). Synopsis of talk given at Newcastle, Bland Papers S.U.A.

⁵F. Bland, "Local Government". Typed draft of article intended for St John's College (Armidale) Magazine, 26 February, 1922. Bland Papers S.U.A.

in his tutorial classes and public addresses, and, in his professional writing and teaching, as explicating the complex relationships between the second two.

Bland was drawn, in the beginning, to the W.E.A. idea because of two things in his own life - first, his own long and arduous experience as an evening student⁶ at the university and, second, the influence of R.F. Irvine with whom he worked closely for twenty years until Irvine's retirement in 1922. Born in a suburb of Sydney in 1882, Bland attended Kogarah public school and, like Albert Mansbridge, left his formal education behind at the age of fourteen when he became a clerk in a Sydney firm. In 1900, R.F. Irvine was appointed to the position of Examiner on the new Public Service Board set up by a reforming Public Service Act of the Reid government in N.S.W. in 1895. Irvine soon appointed the young Bland as a secretary and until the War Bland studied at the university while carrying an increasing load of responsibility in his work with the Public Service Board during the day. He gained a B.A. in 1909, studying philosophy and sociology under Francis Anderson, an LL.B. with Honours in 1912 and an M.A. in 1914. His excellent achievements in his law studies impressed Sir George Beeby who offered him a career in the law but Bland wanted to pursue his understanding of the work of the public service.⁷ In 1916, in the middle of war, he took himself and his family to London to study public administration under Graham Wallas at the London School of Economics. On his return to Australia, Bland was attracted to the position of Assistant Director

⁶Bland's first contact with the W.E.A. was as the representative of the University Evening Students Association. See E.M. Higgins, *David Stewart and the W.E.A.*, p. 27.

⁷F.E. Barraclough "Professor Bland and the New South Wales Public Service", *Public Administration*, *op. cit.* pp. 145-150.

to Portus in the Department of Tutorial Classes. He took up the appointment in 1918 and once again found himself an assistant junior to Irvine who had been appointed to the first chair of economics in 1912. Bland was to lecture in public and municipal administration in the school of economics which was at that time in the Faculty of Arts.

It was Irvine who had introduced Bland to the new W.E.A. in Sydney. Himself one of the first tutors for the Association, taking classes even before Atkinson arrived, Irvine suggested Bland to Atkinson in 1914 as "one who would be likely to consider favourably the possibility of taking tutorial class work under the scheme of the W.E.A."⁸ Despite the pressure of his public service work Bland was keen: he told Atkinson that he had been reading up on "Industrial Subjects" and felt ready to sign up for the twenty-four lectures of which the courses were to consist.⁹ In 1915 he took industrial history and economics at Hurstville and Wollongong; in 1918 he was the tutor in political science for the classes held at the university and in economics at Drummoyne; 1919 saw him offer a course in public administration and in 1921 he was one of several tutors running courses on "Social Questions".¹⁰ During the War, he and Portus engaged in the first experiments in Army Education with their "W.E.A. lectures for the Troops" while in 1920 he taught salaried officers of the N.S.W. Railways about transport economics and business administration.¹¹ Such courses, according to David Stewart, were taught "from the point of view of citizenship rather than of professional technique".¹²

⁸M. Atkinson to Bland, 17 July 1914. Bland Papers, S.U.A.

⁹Bland to R.F. Irvine, 30 July 1914. Bland Papers, S.U.A.

¹⁰Annual Reports of the W.E.A. of N.S.W. 1915-1928.

¹¹G.V. Portus, *op. cit.*, p. 135.

¹²E.M. Higgins, *David Stewart and the W.E.A.*, p. 44.

During his year in England Bland immersed himself in the W.E.A., attending tutorial classes, study circles, tutors' conferences, branch meetings, joint committee meetings and summer schools at Oxford and Bangor. He lectured on Australia describing its "Life and Labour" to the London workers in 1916. He joined fellow Australians, B.H. Molesworth and H. Duncan Hall, at the Summer School at Balliol in 1917 where they shared the teaching with Henry Clay. The core of the discussion at this conference was the issue of the control of industry so that Bland became involved in the British debate on the reconstruction of industry discussing urgent questions of scientific management, welfare, democratisation and Whitley councils. His own topics covered Australian experiments with social legislation and the principles of administration in a democracy.¹³ He was a member of the Christian Social Union and sufficiently close to Mansbridge to ask him to act as godfather to one of his children.¹⁴ His account of an Australian's impressions of the English W.E.A. written for the *Highway* showed his absorption of the Mansbridge rhetoric as he described the dedication of the English worker-students:

what an intense longing for mental and spiritual food possessed them; and how easily they were prepared to sacrifice themselves to attain their object ... it is from the efforts of these men and women that the new England will arise, for they have seen the vision splendid and have resolved not to be weary in well-doing.¹⁵

¹³Notice of lecture on "Life and Labour in Australia" to London W.E.A. 12 December, 1916; Report of W.E.A. Summer School, Balliol College, Oxford, 1917. Bland Papers, S.U.A.

¹⁴A. Mansbridge to Bland, 23 August 1918. Mansbridge thanks him for photos of his godson. Bland Papers. For further information on the Christian Socialist Union and related movements, see P. d'A. Jones, *The Christian Socialist Revival 1877-1914* (Princeton 1968).

¹⁵Bland, "An Australian's Impressions of the W.E.A. in Great Britain", *Highway*, Vol. 10, 1917, p. 5.

In the classes Bland had taught in N.S.W. in 1915, the "vision splendid" was glimpsed mainly by "those who have known the movement at home" and by the local teachers, according to his reports to Atkinson.¹⁶ The War had diminished the will and the numbers in many local communities but Bland was inclined to a more profound diagnosis: the people of a young country were too busy for things of the mind and the spirit. In Australia, there was an apathy engendered in well-being:

Sheltered alike from the fear of competition and the spur of destitution, it requires a finer moral fibre to shake off the feeling of complacency and satisfaction with existing conditions.¹⁷

He noted also the absence of the sort of historical associations and institutions which stimulated learning in England and contrasted the wealth of intellectual talent he had encountered there with the newness and inadequacies of Australia's universities. Altogether, Bland's exposure to the English W.E.A. had resulted in a thorough conversion. He returned to Australia full of enthusiasm for British reconstruction theory, in particular that emanating from the inquiries of the Anglican bishops into education and industry. The "Social Questions" course and the series on "The Problems of Social Reconstruction" which he taught after the War were more eclectic in the range of issues they engaged than his earlier courses on industrial history and trade unionism. The core of "Social Questions" was, predictably, the control of industry but this was set in the wide context of lectures on White Australia, the League of Nations, the European break-down and Russian communism. The last topic was housing and town planning, with particular reference to

¹⁶F. Bland, Report on the Tutorial Classes of Wollongong and Hurstville, 1915, Bland Papers, S.U.A.

¹⁷F. Bland, "An Australian's Impressions of the W.E.A. in Great Britain", *op. cit.*

Irvine's report for the N.S.W. government on "The Housing of Workingmen" submitted in 1913. The syllabus of the "Social Reconstruction" course covered the whole spectrum of post-war problems which the W.E.A. intellectuals wanted to put before the public. The essential question which Bland posed, according to his outline, was the relationship between liberty and authority - as he phrased it, how to be free without being lawless. His six main sections were Political Questions, Economic Questions, Imperial Relations, International Relations, Social and Educational Problems and Problems of the Pacific. The course began with the theory of representative government and moved to economic problems such as the control of industry, wage fixation and arbitration, unemployment, scientific management and the control of monopolies. Imperial relations raised the nature of the bond between Australia and other Dominions and the Mother Country while in International relations he evaluated nationalism, the doctrine of the balance of power and the idea of the League. The main social and educational questions were the position of women in society and industry, the desirability of apprenticeship and vocational training, and the problem of "society's derelicts" - the mentally deficient, the unemployable and the alcoholics. Finally, the twenty-four lectures concluded with a look at Australia's Pacific neighbours, American and Asian, and the effect of her geographical position on her place in the British Empire.¹⁸ In all, this was a very typical W.E.A. course, attempting to catch up both the pressing contemporary issues and to situate Australia in the wider post-war world. These were the matters on which a self-governing people should be informed.

¹⁸Syllabus outlines and synopses of several lectures are in Bland Papers, S.U.A.

In common with his W.E.A. colleagues, Bland held that the big problem in industry was not wages but the status of the worker. While all the W.E.A. intellectuals argued for the humanisation of industry in different ways, and most of them urged some measures of democratisation of industrial control, Bland saw the problem of the industrial world in terms of morality. His ideal was the Christianising of industry or the redeeming of industry in "the light of the Cross".¹⁹ Such explicitly religious language was probably reserved for his many addresses to the bishops and members of the Church of England, the audiences of Christian Social Problems groups and the readers of Anglican papers like the *Church Record* for which he wrote, but his basic principle of change remained an ethical one. The transformation of the motives of men according to Christian values would obviate the tensions which at present expressed themselves in class conflict:

if the teaching of Jesus Christ can transform industry into a public service, as it ought to do, then the motive for class conflict will be lost.²⁰

His faith was an activist one. He wrote to an English friend, a vicar in Liverpool, in 1919,

I have recently joined the Social Problems Committee of the Church of England here and seem to be getting mixed up more and more with church work. I have been a member of the Synod of the Diocese for some time and am now a member of the board of education as well.²¹

He had been a member of the Sydney Diocesan Synod since 1912, was licensed as a local lay Reader in 1913, and served as lay secretary of the Synod from 1921 to 1927. During that period, he was also a member

¹⁹F. Bland, Address to the Cathedral on "Class Consciousness", p. 15: "We too have a world to win. We have industry to redeem in the light of the Cross". Bland Papers, S.U.A.

²⁰*Ibid.*, Foreword, p. 2.

²¹Bland to Ronald Lees, 14 November 1919. Bland Papers, S.U.A.

of the Diocesan Board of Education, of the Council of Moore Theological College, and of the Council of the King's School from 1924 to 1933. He also became involved in the University of Sydney's social work project, the Settlement House, which was inspired by the example of Toynbee Hall in London.²² Bland admired the social activism of the Church of England bishops in Britain and held them up as a model for his own Synod. The Australian clergy, he maintained, should follow the message of Bishop Westcott, the founder of the Christian Social Union to re-evaluate the problems of each new generation. They ought not "rest indolently content upon the conclusions of a dead past" by which he meant they ought not accept the nineteenth century collusion between established religion and the laissez-faire economy.²³ The bishops must register their emphatic protest against social injustice but to do this they must accept that the social system was not the product of the immutable natural law but that of fallible men and therefore amenable to human reform. He pointed out to his fellow-countrymen that

there has recently come an awakening as to the incompatibility between our economic practices and our religious professions.²⁴

Because of its organisation for personal gain, the economic order of laissez-faire capitalism ran contrary to moral precepts: it enhanced self-interest rather than social service. It was unsound in structure and immoral in outlook. Bland was not denouncing private ownership but the uses and social function of wealth. The recently published

²²S.J. Butlin, note on Bibliography of Writings of F.A. Bland, *Public Administration*, *op. cit.* pp. 91-92.

²³F. Bland, Speech to Synod on "Unemployment" (n.d., c. 1921). Notes in Bland Papers, S.U.A.

²⁴F. Bland, Address to the Cathedral on "Class Consciousness", p. 2, Bland Papers, S.U.A.

findings of the Commonwealth Statistician, George Knibbs, on the distribution of private wealth in Australia based on the census returns of 1915, were frequently cited at length by Bland to vindicate his criticism: he reflected,

it is remarkable that such an extraordinary disproportionate division of wealth should have manifested itself so early in our national life, but it serves to show how completely we have transferred and adopted to our own circumstances the glaring economic imperfections of the Old World.²⁵

There was in his view a moral obligation to distribute wealth more evenly because the accumulation of wealth could only be sanctified by its function for social well-being.

In his analysis of the "social problem" Bland had learned much from the example and the theories of R.H. Tawney who had collaborated closely from 1916 to 1918 with the Anglican bishops on the relation of Christianity to the industrial situation. Tawney's first exposure to adult education had been the University Settlement at Toynbee Hall, his classes at Rochdale had become the model for the W.E.A. everywhere, and his first major work in economic history, *The Agrarian Problem in the Sixteenth Century* (1912), had been dedicated to William Temple and Alfred Mansbridge. In 1916, Tawney was appointed a member of the Archbishop of Canterbury's Fifth Committee of Inquiry into Christianity and Industrial Problems; he worked on the report for several months with Bishop Charles Gore at Oxford. In their report, published in 1918, Tawney and the other members stated their belief that the Church had

²⁵F. Bland, "Distribution of Private Wealth in Australia", *Australian Highway*, Vol. 1, no. 4, June 1919, p. 9.

been too compliant with the "possessing, employing and governing classes of the past". The main indictment of the industrial system was its disregard for human dignity and its unconcern for social service and community need. Tawney located the problem in the control of industry which he argued was, by the end of the War, a more fundamental question than the condition of the people or the role of the state in alleviating it - these having been the issues of pre-War Edwardian England.²⁶ This was a view broadly shared by most of the post-War reconstructionists of the British Labour Party: the worker should not be the subject of industrial autocracy any more than of political tyranny; his status should be that of a "citizen of industry". Bland quoted freely from the Archbishop's Report with particular emphasis on Tawney's view of the worker's place in industry. The lessons learned in the War were highly formative. The War effort had awakened the masses to collective effort, Bland submitted, more effectively than any revolutionary propaganda. They had been reminded repeatedly by governments of their dignity and importance and had of necessity been represented on the councils of state. Then, too, the enumeration of lofty War aims towards the end of the War had created expectations of a new democracy to follow the liberal ideals of the Peace. Bland drew on the much favoured analogy between the crumbling of decadent autocracies which the War had brought about and the need for a similar dissolution of economic absolutism: both had been inherited from the nineteenth century. This was the scenario for the end of the War but within the year the actual Peace had dashed such

²⁶For a discussion of R.H. Tawney and the Church of England see J.M. Winter, *Socialism and the Challenge of War* (London 1974), pp. 172-175.

hopes. In Bland's words, the men at Versailles had wrought "the most damning example of our insincerity whose harvest we shall yet reap". The Peace appeared to indicate, following the same analogy, that men intended to return to their old ways.²⁷

How Bland envisaged the reorganisation of industry and what was to be the exact machinery of any industrial democracy was not spelled out beyond the use of phrases such as "definite partnership" and "share in the direction of industry". He was quick to assure any audience that he did not mean syndicalist control or the leftist "airy persiflage" of the Jock Gardens at the Sydney Trades and Labour Council. He rejected radical socialism and distinguished it from

the real mind of the socialist movement as expressed
by men like Tawney, Arthur Henderson, Ramsay MacDonald,
Sydney Webb and others.²⁸

He directed his listeners and students to Tawney's *The Acquisitive Society*, the works of J. Ramsay MacDonald, and the Webbs' *A Constitution for the Socialist Commonwealth of Great Britain*. Bland, unlike his British heroes, did not articulate systematic proposals for industrial reconstruction. He was much more prone to invoke the "spirit" of reform, the "spirit of democracy", and declare it more crucial than the machinery it would infuse.

Until something of the spirit of democracy is infused into industry, there is little hope that the purpose of industry will be satisfactorily determined. The principle of definite partnership must be conceded. The machinery to give effect to this principle is subsidiary, but it will present little difficulty if approached in the spirit of goodwill ... The exclusion

²⁷F. Bland, Address to the Cathedral on "Class Consciousness", pp. 6-7, Bland Papers, S.U.A.

²⁸F. Bland, Synod speech on "Unemployment", Bland Papers, S.U.A.

of employees from any share in the direction of industry is wasteful and dangerous.²⁹

Palliative schemes like welfare work were endorsed because they expressed the idea of service which he believed should animate industry and they demonstrated the right motivation on the part of an employer to bridge the gulf between himself and the employee. Bland conceded that such schemes worked only in a limited fashion within the industrial system but he maintained that their spirit was most valuable in building up a trust and co-operation which might serve as the foundation for future reform. He was most sceptical about ideas of worker control, whether advanced by Bolshevists or guild socialists, because of his professional belief in the function of expertise. The scheme which attracted him most was the Whitley one. The Joint Industrial Committees which the Whitley Report proposed seemed feasible to him because of the spirit of co-operation embedded in the idea and because of the way the worker would be initiated into the complex business of the government of industry by means of education and gradual participation. His vision was an optimistic one:

admitted to a share in responsibility, employees will learn the soundest lessons on matters where ignorance is now a grave social and industrial danger. Made accountable for results, they will learn the importance of efficient administration, gain prudence in lessening the hours of work, understand the risks of limiting output in a society where there is still an insufficiency of goods, and finally they will appreciate more fully the durability of co-operating with all the other factors in production.³⁰

He deplored the lack of interest in these experiments by employers and workers alike in Australia and condemned Hughes' attempt to examine

²⁹F. Bland, "The Industrial Conference". Typescript of article, (n.d., c. 1921). Also, report of a speech to the Wollongong Brotherhood on "Industrial Unrest". Both in Bland Papers, S.U.A.

³⁰*Ibid.*

the problem at his Industrial Conference in 1921 as a fiasco which did not begin to touch upon the root causes.³¹ Like the rest of his W.E.A. circle, he was suspicious of the claims of the state in Australia to be the architect of reform and social advance. Even the churches were guilty of the habit of reliance upon the state. The bishops may speak of the state as the guardian and the expression of public opinion but Bland argued that there was no informed public opinion, and "no signposts to guide us". The government had never evaluated its experiments and, yet, he pointed out,

we have gone on the assumption that every ill has a remedy if it is sought earnestly enough and have felt that the state was the best agency to effect and enforce.³²

If Bland derived most of his ideas about the industrial problem from his British reading, the economic theory underlying his view about industrial co-operation was very similar to that of his Australian mentor, R.F. Irvine. Essentially, Irvine argued a case for the social dividend which depended on productive efficiency and therefore was enlarged by the co-operation of the worker. It was an argument for the social whole, rather than an admission of trade union ends, which Irvine put before the W.E.A. conference on trade unionism in 1915, and as such it drew a somewhat mixed response. In his talk "Trade Unionism and Efficiency", Irvine had suggested that the traditional ends of trade unionism - fair wages, hours and benefits - had been largely achieved in Australia and that new ideas and objectives were needed to maintain the vitality of the labour movement. In short, unions should shift their concerns towards co-operative efficiency with the employer.

³¹*Ibid.*

³²F. Bland, Synod speech on "Unemployment", Bland Papers, S.U.A.

While the initial stages of Labour's struggles were rightly directed to gaining a larger share of the distribution of wealth, it was, in his opinion, time to realise that what is distributed must be first of all produced and that it was therefore in the interests of the worker to increase production. Measures of efficiency must not be left to the employer alone. He understood the unions' aversion to the spectre of Taylorist scientific management and, like all the W.E.A. speakers, disavowed any promotion of this school of efficiency, but he insisted that efficiency was a much broader concept involving the honesty and skill of the worker, the employer's business and organisational abilities, and the community's acceptance of the co-ordination of industry with the values of civilisation. He took the trade unions to task for their excessive devotion to their own material self-interest and their narrow conception of well-being. The trade unionists in the audience were not particularly moved by the notion of co-operative idealism and accused Irvine of ridiculing the workers' attempts to better their conditions, of scoffing at the labour platform, of not placing enough responsibility on the employer and of underestimating the pernicious effects of the competitive system.³³ Irvine protested that his sympathies were with labour but it was left to Bland to write a subsequent paper which reiterated Irvine's main points, explained them more patiently and tried to reassure the trade unions.³⁴ Throughout his career Irvine indicted the capitalist and the employers in an equally uncompromising manner which won him few friends in that class and he was in general an economist trusted by the workers, but the issues raised by co-operation and

³³R.F. Irvine, "Trade Unionism and Efficiency" in M. Atkinson (ed), *Trade Unionism in Australia*, (Sydney 1915) pp. 31-39. See particularly the transcript of Questions and Discussion, pp. 38-39.

³⁴F. Bland, "Trade Unionism and Efficiency. A Consideration of the Paper read by Professor Irvine at the Educational Conference" 1915. Typescript in Bland Papers, S.U.A.

efficiency were thorny and double-edged. Bland, however, still enunciated the same basic point: he believed that measures of reconstruction and welfare should induce the worker to co-operate. With such concessions, he wrote,

we could ask for maximum production, for after all it is only out of the product of industry that the community get their wages.³⁵

Implicit in this argument was the assumption that the improved output of the co-operative workforce would inevitably lead to a proportionate increase of the improved profit among the workers. Such an assumption was a reflection of the rationalist optimism that trusted to ideals of public service as the reforming forces in the economy. Bland was confident that once the idea of production was related to the idea of service, industrial unrest would cease. Thus the question was resolved in moral rather than economic terms. The relations of production, the interests of divergent classes - the very existence of class - were not issues to be faced so much as willed away by the assertion of community above individuals and by messages of corporate behaviour transcending class ends.

* * * * *

On his appointment to the University of Sydney in 1918, Bland lectured under R.F. Irvine in the school of economics and to the students studying for the Diploma of Economics and Commerce. In 1920 the Faculty of Economics was established and R.C. Mills joined Irvine as his full-time assistant until he succeeded him in 1922 to the chair. Bland's half-courses in public and municipal administration were offered in the upper years of the economics degree and were both the first to be taught in the subject in Australia. Principles of public

³⁵F. Bland, speech on "Industrial Unrest" and on "Welfare Work" given on the occasion of the Jubilee of Waterloo at the Town Hall, Waterloo, 8 September 1920. Typescript in Bland Papers, S.U.A.

administration were applied in the course to specific problems in the States and the Commonwealth; the history, functions and forms of administrative machinery in individual departments were examined together with questions of recruiting and control of the officers of the Public Service. The University Calendar described the treatment of municipal administration as being from a "social and political point of view". In addition to outlining the forms and functions of local government, Bland intended to add an analysis of the social and economic effects. In 1925, the Degree courses were remodelled and Bland's two courses were integrated into a single course on public administration. In 1930, a Diploma of Public Administration was offered as academic training for administrative officers requiring a qualification and, in 1935, Bland's pioneering efforts were recognised in the establishment of a chair of public administration which was offered to him.³⁶

Whether he was teaching in the university, for the W.E.A., or giving a course of lectures at the Teachers' College, Bland was handicapped by the absence of any text which dealt with Australia. There were several studies of the Civil Service in Britain which he used - the writings of W.S. Beveridge, S. Demetriadi, D.B. Eaton, H. Finer, E.G. Heath, R. Moses and the Webbs - and he drew heavily on F. Goodnow's *Politics and Administration* for his American material and examples. The politico-psychological books of Graham Wallas, *Our Social Heritage* and *Human Nature in Politics*, raised many of the questions which he applied to Australia. It was Bland's custom and pedagogical thoroughness

³⁶R.C. Mills, "Bland and the University", *Public Administration*, *op. cit.* pp. 129-132.

to equip his students with a synopsis of every lecture he gave, in effect constructing a text as he went along, until in 1922 he wrote *Shadows and Realities of Government* to serve his basic purpose. Published in 1923 as number seven in the W.E.A. Series, the book was dedicated to R.F. Irvine and, following Irvine's own broad-ranging social concerns, it was aimed at a wider audience:

it is hoped that it will make some appeal to that widening circle which, in every democratic country, is interesting itself in the efficient administration of public affairs.³⁷

The book fell into two parts: the first was addressed to problems of public administration in a democracy and to possible reforms, while the second was devoted to a digest of the history, functions and responsibilities of thirteen different departments of the Public Service of N.S.W. The compilation of such material, essential to any study of Australia's government, was in itself a valuable and pioneering exercise but Bland was not only interested in the production of a useful handbook. It was his aim to contribute to the accessibility of public information which he believed to be a key criterion of good government. The public were aware of the visible doings of politicians but they did not understand the administrative functions which underpinned parliaments. Bland argued that if these functions remained obscure, and the people continued to be preoccupied with politics, then the course of effective government would be vitiated. Thus he declared the purpose of his book was to throw into relief the administrative functions of government. If the administration of government were to be properly responsive to the needs of the community and accountable to

³⁷F. Bland, *Shadows and Realities of Government, An introduction to the study of the organisation of the administrative agencies of Government with special reference to New South Wales* (Sydney, 1923). Author's Preface, ix.

the electorate, then the public must be able to find out about its activities. Bland contended that the "shadows" - the misconceptions about government and politics - must be cleared away to reveal the "realities" or the actual agencies and processes of government. The electorate must be able to assess the performance of its public servants as much as it did that of its politicians, otherwise the silent functions of officials were left susceptible to several evils - ministerial manipulations, corruption, excessive bureaucratisation.

A basic premise of Bland's thinking was the growth of government and the extension of its traditional limited functions to a "ministrant" role. A modern science of government had to be developed to account for and guide the modern social service state and nowhere was this more true than in Australia where government intervened in so many areas of the lives of its citizens. Bland saw that new conceptions of government were required by the "social, intellectual, artistic and economic conditions of modern times" but in his professional writing he did not debate the theoretical desirability of an interventionist state.³⁸ He was concerned with *how* governments might operate more effectively rather than with whether they *ought* operate so widely.³⁹ It was the connection between public service and public welfare that he explored. New ranges of government activity required new departments and new techniques of recruitments, training and supervision. Three facts had to be borne in mind;

First the extent and new direction of Governmental activities, second the evolution of the administrative methods and personnel to meet the new demands, and thirdly the altered character of popular representation.⁴⁰

³⁸*Ibid.*, p. 3.

³⁹F. Bland, "The Administration of Government Enterprises", *Economic Record*, Vol. V. May 1929, p. 1.

⁴⁰*Shadows and Realities*, p. 70.

In *Shadows and Realities* he examined three large questions: the relation between Parliament and the Public Service or that of the responsible minister to the expert official, the internal organisation and running of administrative departments, and the need for research in the formation of public policy. Efficiency and economy were the goals he set, but for him these terms had broad implications, as they did for Irvine. Efficiency, as Bland advocated it, was synonymous with the proper functioning of democracy, ensuring the liberty of individuals and depending on "nothing less than the comprehensive education of the citizen in public affairs".⁴¹ In his view, civic ignorance subverted the popular will as much as corrupt government did.

Reforms in the British Civil Service in the nineteenth century had their counterparts in Australia. Nepotism and the cruder forms of incompetence were substantially diminished and recognition was given to talent and training in the recruitment and promotion of officers. But the increasing complexities of modern society created new problems and posed new dilemmas. Political party systems which had developed with the extension of the franchise to the masses seemed to Bland to present a new danger. With the broadening of the electorate he believed it a fair assumption that "the capacity of the individual representative has deteriorated" - on the other hand, the permanent official had become more expert.⁴² The minister's career in any one area might be short and precarious, his knowledge accordingly superficial, and his energies distracted by party political intrigue. In such circumstances the ascendancy of a silent administration threatened the representative principle. Bland was ever insistent that ministerial responsibility

⁴¹*Ibid.*, p. 7.

⁴²*Ibid.*, p. 73.

must be "real" and not a shadowy "fiction". In the same way that the elected minister must control his department, the minister must be controlled by Parliament and not by party pledges, caucuses and cabinets. The current situation in government in Australia appeared to Bland to be fraught with paradoxes and inconsistencies which demanded study and reform. There was also the danger of improper ministerial influence on the Public Service which the existence of Public Service Boards and Statutory Commissions in Australia was intended to guard against. The relationship between their autonomy and the elected representatives of the legislature was an area which, Bland argued, had yet to be worked out in Australia. This equilibrium between officialdom and the legislature presented Bland with his key problem and provoked his most penetrating and innovative analysis:

How can we secure due weight being given to the latest expression of popular confidence in a political executive, and at the same time ensure that the permanent and abiding will of the people, as represented by the independent official agencies, shall be safeguarded? But if we give these agencies real independence, how shall we avoid not merely the growth of bureaucracy but the rise of a new Despotism?⁴³

In the opinion of R.S. Parker, Bland's most distinctive contribution to thought about public administration lay in his attempt to answer this question.⁴⁴ *Shadows and Realities* showed the initial direction of his thinking. A basic condition for the proper balance in government in any Bland reform was accessibility of information. This alone made popular criticism and public awareness possible:

it will be admitted that the public and Parliament want to know, and ought to know, what the officials are doing, and what their policy involves.⁴⁵

⁴³Quoted in R.S. Parker, *op. cit.*, p. 172.

⁴⁴*Ibid.*

⁴⁵F. Bland, "Economy and Efficiency-II", *New Outlook*, 9 August 1922, p. 195.

Current channels of making public inquiry into governmental activities were in his view cumbersome and inadequate - questions in the House did not elicit enough from inexperienced ministers, Royal Commissions were "too heroic" in the amount of data they amassed, and the annual departmental reports repelled interest with their accumulations of dry, incomprehensible facts. If public opinion were to be educated then government documents must be rendered intelligible. When questions were asked in Parliament, he suggested that the officials might be present to explain their policies, thus sharing their expertise and usefully waiving protective anonymity. He argued that ministers needed assistance in assessing their departments and that Parliament needed more avenues of information. To this end, he proposed bi-partisan standing committees of members of the parliament which could act as watchdogs on the trends and costs of administrative departments. None of these measures was designed to diminish ministerial responsibility but rather to involve the permanent official in salutary experiences of public accountability and to further the education of the public in the "realities" of government. Bland put forward a similar scheme for the multitude of independent Boards and Commissions to which so many areas of government were entrusted in Australia. He would not compromise their independence in the daily routines of administration but he emphasised that general policy must remain the interest of the Parliament. To reconcile the demands of autonomy and popular responsibility, he had in mind a standing committee of the House for each major set of governmental functions to which would be attached representatives from the relevant department. Advisory councils of citizens from community interest groups could make representations to such a committee, thus encouraging alert involvement in the electorate:

what is aimed at is not only the effective execution of affairs in accordance with the popular view, but the systematic education of opinion both in and out of Parliament with regard to the work of public administration.⁴⁶

It was not only the public which required education in Bland's view but also the officials of the Public Service themselves. His work with Irvine and his own experience in devising appropriate examinations within the service gave him a particular interest in the procedures for recruitment, the assessment of performance, and promotion. He accepted the British reform of entrance by competitive examination and the general principle of recruitment from below but he wished the system to be flexible enough to admit older men, especially university graduates, to higher positions. He argued strongly for the value of a broad liberal education as opposed to narrow vocational training if officials were to be able to solve the problems of the increasingly complex modern state. Furthermore, he urged that selected officers be released from their work to attend the university as full-time students, not as burdened evening-students. He was no doubt remembering his own struggles to gain his degrees but he held up the value of the total university experience in the formation of such officials. There was, he conceded, no college in Australia so suited to their particular needs as was the London School of Economics in England but he believed that Australian universities were developing:

their economic, political and social departments need only to be strengthened to provide excellent training for the prospective administrative officials.⁴⁷

It was, in short, time to regard the administration of government as a legitimate social science and not as an ad hoc business.

⁴⁶*Shadows and Realities*, p. 135.

⁴⁷*Ibid.*, pp. 33-34.

The formation of policy - even more perhaps than its administration - would also be enhanced by the application of intelligence and scientific research. The War had demonstrated the capacity to plan and to organise the nation's resources but it was more difficult to summon such purpose in peace-time. Influenced by Wallas' writing on this point, Bland advocated the development of a "thought organisation" for government, by which he meant a department of research which would assist government planning and policy. There was work for such a body in the

continual investigation, of the highest scientific character, into every question of form and function in government with a view to establishing the best correlation between aims, methods, costs and results.⁴⁸

The external research agencies which were already in existence, such as the Statistical Bureaux and the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research, could be enlisted to aid government but Bland favoured the type of idea put forward by Irvine in 1915. Addressing the conference on National Efficiency held under the auspices of the Victorian government, Irvine had outlined a proposal for a national research bureau which would be "midway between the Universities and the State department" and whose interest would be in the gathering and analysis of social data.⁴⁹ Bland agreed with Irvine that such an institute would be able to furnish accurate information as a basis for both the formation of policy and the formation of public opinion. To the work of government departments it would be able to apply "independent and scientific tests" and to the Cabinet it would provide the "thought" that should be

⁴⁸*Ibid.*, p. 166; pp. 163-170.

⁴⁹R.F. Irvine, "National Organisation and National Efficiency" in *National Efficiency*, Melbourne 1915, pp. 17-20.

the essential preliminary to action.

The dangers of bureaucracy and centralisation were never far from Bland's deliberations. He opposed any undue centralisation because it removed any organisation further from its true roots and it led to officialism, formalism and bureaucracy, all of which, according to Bland, were symptomatic of an inert democracy. As far as possible he supported "wise devolution of responsibility" within the structures of the Public Service. The adaptation of the Whitley Scheme to the Imperial Civil Service was an experiment which he believed merited attention. Five years after the Whitley Council idea had been first proposed, it had become clear that there were many limitations and much of the original enthusiasm it had sparked had died away but Bland characteristically defended the spirit of co-operation it embodied. He did not embrace notions of joint control of management but any arrangements for the joint consideration of problems appealed to him:

Although it does not envisage any fundamental change in the present system, the very association of representatives of employers and employees in joint conference is a long advance upon the old ideas of industrial autocracy, and opens up immense possibilities of reorganisation. If "Whitleyism" is looked upon only as a substitute method for arbitrating upon disputes, rates of wages, and conditions of employment, or merely as a device for evoking greater efficiency, then it will simply pass into history as another ideal which we lacked sufficient honesty of purpose to translate into action. But if on the other hand it seeks by genuine co-operative effort to raise the whole standard of industrial life and organisation, on the social as well as the economic plane, then it may indeed effect nothing less than an entire transformation of our economic relations.⁵⁰

⁵⁰*Shadows and Realities*, pp. 154-155.

With its emphasis on motives and ideals, on the spirit rather than the machinery, this passage was typical of the character of the W.E.A. reformist ethos.

Bland was not given to extended theoretical speculation about the society which governments managed but this did not mean that there was no coherent social theory informing his technical work. Following the emphasis in the early work of Harold Laski and G.D.H. Cole, he believed that the life of society lay in its ordinary groups and associations and that at its heart must be the informed, participating citizen. Thus, the vitality and viability of local government was a question which greatly preoccupied him; effective local government was the foundation of the democratic state. In the early twenties he was a vigorous opponent of the New States movement because he saw the creation of further states in Australia as a threat to proper functioning of local government and a resort to a further degree of undesirable centralisation.⁵¹ On the same grounds he opposed the "Greater Sydney" scheme contending that the minicipal life of suburban localities would be endangered.⁵² His passion for the cause of local government went back to his career as an officer in the N.S.W. Public Service when he had been appointed Secretary of the newly-formed Examining Committee under the Local Government Act of 1906. He wrote to Graham Wallas,

I was very closely associated with the reformed system of Local Government in this State from its inception in 1906, until I resigned from the Public Service on my return from England in 1918. We are, of course, very much behind you in Municipal Affairs ...⁵³

⁵¹C.M. Reeves, "Professor Bland and Local Government", *Public Administration*, *op. cit.* pp. 163-164; also D.H. Drummond "From Lecturer to Statesman" *ibid.*, pp. 141-143.

⁵²F. Bland, "City Government and Greater Sydney", *Australasian Journal of Psychology and Philosophy*, Vol. 7, 1929, pp. 204-211.

⁵³Bland to G. Wallas, 19 September, 1919. Bland Papers, S.U.A.

This contrast between the weakness of local government in Australia with the responsibilities undertaken by local bodies in older countries was also frequently remarked on by Atkinson and Heaton. Both of them came from provincial England and both travelled thousands of miles around Australian country centres during their years with the W.E.A. It was striking evidence to them of the Australian citizen's reliance upon the state for services which, in other societies, were provided by private enterprise or local authorities: railways, education, charity and poor relief, public health and police were but a few examples. For this set of arrangements, they offered explanations which combined the circumstances of Australia's history with what might be called the geographical imperative. In a country where from its very foundation, the authority of the state had preceded the natural community and where obstinate environment and sparse settlement presented a peculiar economic geography, the government was compelled into a developmental role. Among the many who have commented on this characteristic of Australian society, Charles Henry Pearson explained:

often against their own will the colonists have ended by a system of State centralisation that rivals whatever is attempted in the most bureaucratic countries of the Continent.⁵⁴

F.W. Eggleston believed that the early Australians were men of independent mind but that the forces of the environment had prevailed:

... whether as controller of gaols or as owner of the land or the gold, the State aroused resentment and opposition in the average citizen. But there was an entirely undeveloped territory to equip, communications to establish; the choice had to be made quickly ...⁵⁵

⁵⁴C.H. Pearson, *National Life and Character* (London 1894), p. 18.

⁵⁵F.W. Eggleston, *State Socialism in Victoria* (London 1932), p. 27.

Bland was in general agreement with this diagnosis that historical circumstances and the absence of strong local centres had forced the government to assume wider roles in Australia than in England and America⁵⁶ but this did not prevent his campaign against further centralisation of public and social duties which he argued could be better carried out at local levels:

It appears to the writer that the path of wisdom will be followed if we give our attention to the developing to the fullest extent the powers conferred on our local authorities by recent legislation and thus developing local capacity, local characteristics and local institutions which up to the moment have been submerged by the surge towards centralisation.⁵⁷

His case was not only an administrative one for the most economic, efficient and least bureaucratic structures of government but also a plea for a revitalisation of Australian society. This, he thought, would be achieved in the engagement of the citizen in local affairs and in the expression of local diversity and local colour. Bland and Portus also traversed many corners of New South Wales in their role as inspectors of tutorial classes and Bland was struck by the unnecessary uniformity of so much Australian culture. Education was a case in point - its content was almost uninfluenced by local conditions while the sameness of school architecture was to him a perfect example of the mentality of centralisation in Australia.⁵⁸ It was a paradox much pondered by the W.E.A. intellectuals that as democracy embraced more of the people, voluntary effort and associationism appeared to decline and state interventionism to spread. The tension between the individualising

⁵⁶*Shadows and Realities*, p. 1.

⁵⁷F. Bland, "Local Government". Typed draft of article for St. John's College (Armidale) magazine, 26 February 1922, Bland Papers, S.U.A.

⁵⁸*Ibid.*; see also Bland, "Unification or Self-Government", *Australasian Journal of Psychology and Philosophy*, Vol. 6, 1928, pp. 112-119.

and the centralising forces in modern society presented him with a central challenge:

Today the State penetrates into the most intimate of human relationships. Is the old machinery and are the former methods satisfactory? Must not centralised administration with its imperative command and rigidly uniform application give way to a consideration of the variable and sensitive human elements which have to be persuaded to co-operate in attaining the general well-being? Will not this mean fostering an administrative organisation whose agents will have a sympathetic and personal contact with local and individual conditions?⁵⁹

The new social order, Bland argued, must find a new interpretation of social obligations and the ends of administration must remain human ones.

Bland was in fact tackling in his own academic field the same problematic which worried democratic theorists everywhere and which preoccupied more conservative intellectuals like Atkinson and Elton Mayo among the W.E.A. group. This was the phenomenon of "mass man" to whose irrational proclivities they had been alerted by the socio-psychological writings of Le Bon and Wallas. Bland's concern about the operation of party politics in the Australian system was further compounded by a view of the people as individuals alienated from community in large urban aggregations and vulnerable to demagogues who "batten upon ignorance". Opposing the Greater Sydney scheme he wrote,

In political and industrial affairs the modern city conduces to restlessness. The individual is submerged in the crowd, which is peculiarly susceptible to mass action and to exploitation by demagogues. Furthermore, the citizen of a modern city tends to feel impotent before the vast administrative machine with which he is confronted. And, when to this sense of impotence is added the suspicion that the political machine is often controlled by low-principled and opportunist cliques, he lapses into cynicism and loses his ideals.⁶⁰

⁵⁹F. Bland, "Public Administration". Review article on L.D. White, *An Introduction to the Study of Public Administration*. *Australasian Journal of Psychology and Philosophy*, Vol. 5, 1927, p. 151.

⁶⁰F. Bland, "City Government and Greater Sydney", *op. cit.* p. 205.

The dangerous susceptibility of the masses was not an inherent or permanent condition in Bland's view. It could be altered by mass education - in the "multiplication of the wise lies the welfare of the world."⁶¹ The education of the electorate was essential if the people were to resist the machinations of the party-boss or the persuasion of the political agitator. As the Peace was being signed in Paris in 1919, he wrote of the increasing disquiet in the world, of the rising social unrest and the mutterings which seemed to presage another storm. The masses, he suggested, would no longer remain passive observers of the stream of events. If their sympathies were to be rallied to the cause of democracy rather than to other "anarchic" movements abroad, then support and funding must be made available for their further education. Education, he argued, should not be the sole responsibility of the state: "are there no men in Australia imbued with the spirit of the Rowntrees, the Carnegies and others ...?"⁶² Again, he insisted,

if electors are to register a rational vote they must be told more than a few platitudes about the efficacy of electing successful business men or the unwisdom of marching under the socialist banner.⁶³

Bland's personal efforts to expand education at all levels involved him in the debate about the school leaving age, in the training of Public Service officials, in the tutorial class teaching, and in the preparation of university graduates. However, as an intellectual, he was conscious of the broader role of enlightening the public mind and assisting the proper formation of public opinion. He was tireless in his commitment to the community, giving frequent addresses to a great diversity of local

⁶¹F. Bland, "Liberty and Discipline", *Australasian Journal of Psychology and Philosophy*, Vol. 8, 1930, p. 204.

⁶²F. Bland, "Our Present Discontents", editorial, *Australian Highway*, Vol. 1, No. 5, July, 1919.

⁶³F. Bland, "City Government and Greater Sydney", *op. cit.* p. 206.

and voluntary groups - shire associations, business brotherhoods, trade unions, church bodies and women's meetings. There was the job of popularising issues, and the responsibility of serious discussion: he was a member of the *Round Table* groups,⁶⁴ the editor and mainstay of the *Australian Highway*, a contributor to the early issues of new academic periodicals like the *Economic Record* and the *Australasian Journal of Psychology and Philosophy*. His own editorials and articles in the *Australian Highway* attested to his concern about the level of public opinion. He aimed at bringing contemporary issues before the minds of his readers, from the question of the Peace or the idea of the Whitley Councils to the state of education in Australia. In a series of articles in 1919, entitled "Figure, Fallacies and Finances", he imparted information about the War reparations, about the distribution of private wealth in Australia and about the vexed questions of prices, taxation and War finance.⁶⁵ Public finance was pre-eminently the sort of subject which Bland wanted the public to understand since it was a matter integral to efficient government.

Another venture in which Bland played an active role was the publication of a fortnightly magazine in Sydney which flourished for about six issues between 1922 and 1923. Despite its ephemeral nature, the *New Outlook* provided a significant reflection of the intellectual aspirations of the group which launched it. It was floated by a small company connected with the University of Sydney. A.B. Piddington was on the Board of Directors, its Editor-in-Chief was R.W.G. Mackay and

⁶⁴F.E. Barraclough, (Hon. Sec. Round Table Group, Sydney) to Bland, inviting him to join, 22 February 1918. Bland Papers.

⁶⁵F. Bland, "Figures, Fallacies and Finance" *Australian Highway*, Vol. 1. May to September, 1919. (Written under pseudonym B.M.A.)

on its editorial committee were E.S. Jerdan and J.A. McCallum, also tutors for the W.E.A. and writers for the *Australian Highway*. Bland assisted with editorial work and with the promotion and distribution of the paper, arranging for publicity and general help to be provided from the W.E.A.'s publication services.⁶⁶ The staff was honorary but the magazine soon fell into financial difficulty. It resisted a take-over bid from Meredith Atkinson, now of *Stead's Review*, but could not establish a reading public quickly enough and soon collapsed.⁶⁷ Nonetheless, its brave manifesto remains of interest to students of Australian intellectual endeavour:

The possibilities of Democracy are new, and the opportunities of the present immense. We feel that much can, and must be done in informing the individual citizens in the interests of true democracy, and here the press must lead. Can we but place in the hands of Australians a paper unafraid to grapple with world and national problems we shall be well content.⁶⁸

It had its origins in the university's Public Questions Society, some of whose members wanted to find a more enduring form for the stimulating discussion of issues debated there. It claimed independence from the university, however, to avoid any restraints associated with the P.Q.S. Bland's announcement of the magazine's birth in the *Australian Highway* indicated its serious ambitions:

The paper will be on the lines of the *New Republic*, and will contain contributions by well-known writers on social, economic, political and literary topics.⁶⁹

There was a youthful self-consciousness about the uniqueness of these

⁶⁶G.V. Portus, "Bland and Adult Education, *Public Administration*, *op. cit.*, p. 140.

⁶⁷*New Outlook*, 27 December 1922, p. 111.

⁶⁸*Ibid.*, editorial, Vol. 1., 5 April 1922.

⁶⁹*Australian Highway*, Vol. 4., no. 1, 1 March 1922, p. 6.

post-War years - "a new world of thought and experience has arrived" - and about their desire to be part of the avant-garde. Among its contents were reviews of the work of Einstein, Malinowski and Pitt-Rivers, Freud, Havelock Ellis and Margaret Sanger, James Joyce and Norman Lindsay. Bland contributed two articles on "Economy and Efficiency" in public administration, F.W. Eggleston wrote on international relations while A.B. Piddington reviewed the burning question of the arbitration system. Also among its pages, at the end of 1922, were two appreciations of the work and influence of R.F. Irvine, teacher and mentor of this Sydney group.

All this was public education, but it remained for Bland to consolidate the foundations of his own discipline within the academy. The universities were long learning the lesson that, in his words, what scientific teaching had done for industry could also be done for politics and civics. The obvious contrast was with North America where public administration was a course of study in all major universities and where voluntary research institutions complemented such teaching with the intelligence they could furnish. Like Irvine and D.B. Copland, Bland argued the usefulness of academic research to the actual policy-formation of governments and municipal bodies, citing the American examples of the public relevance of the universities. The universities had as yet contributed very little to "the wise guidance of civic life" in Australia and this was especially ironic in a country in which there was so much government and so many public servants. It was surely anomalous that in an age when every profession and vocation had its appropriate training and even the Labour movement had its own colleges, the public servants who administer the whole state should have to equip

themselves "in a fortuitous and haphazard manner".⁷⁰

The acceptance of public administration and its professionalisation as a field takes us outside the period of this study but it is beyond dispute that its roots lie in Bland's early work.⁷¹ Bland did not develop his ideas in isolation but as a member of a then dynamic group of people who shared his concerns about the state of society and the future of democracy. When he wrote that "membership of a political party evokes much greater activity than citizenship" he was pointing to a dichotomy which social theorists found profoundly disturbing.⁷² To those critics of contemporary Australian society, of whom Bland was one, the ascendancy and failure of politics went hand in hand with the decay in citizenship which they believed they observed around them. It was to be expected that Bland cast his solutions for reform and progress in terms of his own social science. The proper education of public officials would advance efficiency in administration and so purify government by political parties. The whole would be made responsible to the popular will by the pressure of an informed electorate in which it was hoped that the people could be educated to demand a moral standard in social and political behaviour.

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⁷⁰F. Bland, "Public Administration". Review article, *op. cit.* p. 154 and "City Government and Greater Sydney", *op. cit.*, pp. 207-208.

⁷¹For discussion of Bland's later career see articles in *Public Administration*, *op. cit.*

⁷²*Shadows and Realities*, p. 164.

CHAPTER 6. George Elton Mayo: Psychology and Society

As the first in their W.E.A. series of "authoritative" books on Australia, Meredith Atkinson and the Federal Council of the W.E.A. were delighted to secure George Elton Mayo's long essay, *Democracy and Freedom*, written during 1918. Mayo was never a Director of Tutorial Classes, although he was one of the unsuccessful applicants for that position at the University of Melbourne when Atkinson resigned in 1922. Nonetheless, he was one of the key figures in the early development of the W.E.A. in Queensland. Mayo's own arrival at the new university in Brisbane preceded Mansbridge's 1913 tour of the Antipodes by only two years. His interest in worker education made him one of "two university men" under whose provisional guidance Mansbridge was confident in leaving the fledgling W.E.A.¹

Mansbridge himself had presided over the formation of the first tutorial class at the Trades Hall on 26 August, 1913. Thirty-five students had responded to his call, had chosen economics and industrial history as their subject and organised their regular weekly meetings. In a room provided by the university, Mayo and A.C.V. Melbourne, a lecturer in economics and history, began the lectures in October. With Irvine's class in Sydney, these were the first tutorial classes in Australia. Mayo and Melbourne took up the cause with enthusiasm, advising the Trades Hall on courses and texts and offering their teaching as a voluntary service. For its first few years until 1916, the W.E.A. in Queensland was in a precarious state. The War and the delays in government funds for tutorial classes had resulted in a decline in attendances and in the vitality of the movement. It was

¹A. Mansbridge, "Brisbane and Elsewhere", *Highway*, Vol. 6, no. 61, October 1913, p. 32.

only the efforts of Mayo, Melbourne and Henry Alcock which kept it alive. Alcock replaced Melbourne who volunteered for service with the first contingent of the A.I.F. in 1914 but when the government made money available in 1916, Melbourne was able to be re-appointed after he had been invalided home. The provision of W.E.A. tutors was linked to the expansion of the areas of economics and history in the university so that the grant also made possible the appointment of a temporary lecturer in social economics, T.C. Witherby, an Anglican parson. In 1917, Witherby was made acting-Director of Tutorial Classes but without tenure or increased salary. Prior to this, the affairs of the W.E.A. - Tutorial Classes had been managed by a Sub-Committee of the Teaching Staff which consisted of Alcock, Mayo, Melbourne and Witherby and in 1917 this became a Joint Committee of the kind set up in the other states. When Witherby resigned in 1921, the government funded a full position of Director of Tutorial Classes at the proper salary. This was filled by B.H. Molesworth, one of Queensland's first graduates, an ex-student of Tawney's at Oxford and a veteran W.E.A. tutor in South Wales, northern Tasmania and Broken Hill.² By this time, Mayo was preparing to leave Brisbane and Australia.

Brisbane had seemed to Mansbridge to be particularly congenial ground for the seeds of the new worker education. The Bishop of Brisbane, Dr Donaldson, was the brother of the Vice-Chancellor of Cambridge University, an old supporter of the W.E.A., and from Dr Donaldson's pulpit Mansbridge had addressed a gathering of workers

²"Australian Notes", *Highway*, Vol. 6, no. 66, March 1914, p. 112. For a full account of these developments see V. Crew, "The Beginnings of the W.E.A. in Queensland", *Australian Journal of Adult Education* Vol. 9, no. 2, pp. 72-83. Melbourne returned to active service and in 1919 was appointed a full-time lecturer in history at the University of Queensland.

and scholars from the university. To both Mansbridge and Mayo, the labour movement in Brisbane appeared a virile one, an impression supported by the industrial warfare of 1912 in that city. Mansbridge told his English readers

there is something in the Brisbane workers' movement which is more inspired than the ordinary.³

He attributed the ardour to the legacy of William Lane's socialist idealism. Mayo concluded differently - in his recollection of the same fervour, as he had experienced it at the Trades Hall and on Brisbane's street corners, he diagnosed the radicalism of the workers as nothing less than social pathology.

In background and experience Mayo differed considerably from the recognisable social and intellectual types who were attracted to the work of the W.E.A. A comparison with his partner, A.C.V. Melbourne, suggests the point. Both Mayo and Melbourne were graduates of the University of Adelaide. Mayo studied philosophy and psychology under William Mitchell while Melbourne was a pupil of G.C. Henderson in history. Henderson was a student of Mansbridge's friend, A.L. Smith of Balliol, who had been instrumental in arranging Mansbridge's Australian tour.⁴ A.C.V. Melbourne was the son of an archtypal W.E.A. man, W.C. Melbourne. The latter was well-known as a leading official of the Printing Industry Employees Union, one of the more aristocratic labour unions which supported the W.E.A. The *Printing Trades Journal*, of which he was acting-editor, devoted space to most of the issues popularised by the W.E.A.⁵ When the Joint Committee for Tutorial

³A. Mansbridge, "Brisbane and Elsewhere", *op. cit.*, pp. 31-33.

⁴D. Whitelock, *The Great Tradition: A History of Adult Education in Australia* (Queensland, 1974) p. 177.

⁵See *Printing Trades Journal* 1917-1930.

Classes was established in Adelaide, he was a foundation member as a representative of the workers.⁶ A.C.V. Melbourne was appointed to the University of Queensland in 1913 to replace E.O.G. Shann in the teaching of economics and history.

While Melbourne shared the more modest origins of most of the W.E.A. intellectuals, Elton Mayo was born, in 1880, into one of Adelaide's established families. His grandfather, Dr. George Mayo, had arrived in the early years of the colony and his father, an engineer, had been born in Adelaide in 1845. One of six children, Elton followed his father to Saint Peter's College, where he gained a classical scholarship and matriculated in 1897. Had he not been a somewhat wayward son who refused to follow the medical career desired for him by his father, it is unlikely that his Adelaide sphere would ever have intersected with that of W.C. Melbourne. Mayo's first contact with the workers and their education occurred in London in 1903. After two unsuccessful beginnings in medicine, the first at the University of Adelaide and the second in Edinburgh, Mayo had decided to abandon the study of physiology in favour of his interest in psychology and economics. During what appeared to his family as an idle and desultory period, he spent his time in London reading in these areas, writing a few articles for the *Pall Mall Gazette*, and teaching advanced English to students of the Working Men's College in Great Ormond Street. To Mayo, this venture into worker education was the most worthwhile he had yet undertaken. It brought him into contact with men like G.M. Trevelyan, F.M. Cornford and A.V. Dicey and it

⁶Minutes of Joint Committee for Tutorial Classes, University of Adelaide. Inaugural meeting, 4 June 1914. Records of Department of Continuing Education, University of Adelaide.

engendered the interest in the worker which was fundamental to his life's work. It also enabled him to pursue the broad inter-disciplinary reading which was the foundation and the mark of his later social thought. According to Helen Mayo who visited her brother in London, Elton was a gifted teacher to whom the workers responded: she wrote later,

the men liked him, he loved teaching and was interested in their difficulties. They looked up to him as a man of Education which they also wanted to be but he did not appear to feel superior to them. On his side it was good for him to feel that he was valued ...⁷

Mayo recalled his first excursion into worker education with the same satisfaction,

as a youngster I walked into the Working Men's College and was immediately taken into the confidence of the workers themselves. They put me on every committee etc. possible - to such an extent that Dicey himself interviewed me ...⁸

Abandoning a brief notion of going to Canada, Mayo returned to Adelaide in 1904 and took up a partnership with the Adelaide printing firm of J.H. Sherring and Co. which had been arranged by his father. In 1907, however, he returned to the University to follow his real interests in philosophy and psychology under Sir William Mitchell. He

⁷Helen Mayo, "Concerning Elton Mayo". Biographical notes, Elton Mayo Papers, P.R.G. 127/24, South Australian Archives. Also, see W.M. Kyle's obituary on Mayo in *University of Queensland Gazette*, no. 15, Brisbane, December 1949, and L.F. Urwick, "The Life and Work of Elton Mayo", paper delivered to XII International Management Congress in Melbourne, 29 February, 1960.

⁸Mayo, Letters to Dorothea Mayo, 29 November 1921. Mayo Papers P.R.G. 127/16 S.A.A. Mayo married Dorothea McConnel in 1913. They had two daughters Patricia (b. 1915) and Gael (b. 1921). The marriage was marked by many long periods of separation during the Brisbane years, when Dorothea went south during summer months. All letters to Dorothea subsequently referred to are in this collection.

gained a first in philosophy and the Roby Fletcher Prize in psychology, and in 1911, after a period as the David Murray Research Scholar in ethics and metaphysics, he was appointed as the foundation lecturer in the school of mental and moral philosophy at the University of Queensland. In this capacity he taught all the classes in logic, metaphysics, ethics and psychology, and gave some lectures in the theory of economics, until further appointments were made in 1914. In 1919, he was given the first chair in philosophy which he held until 1922 when he left Australia.⁹ His reflection on his elevation to this position provides a revealing self-perception of personal failure.

Writing to his wife, Mayo reviewed his past, looking back

along the road, eight years, to the solitary devil, an acknowledged failure, travelling gloomily enough, northwards to Queensland. He had the most excellent of mothers and fathers behind him but beyond his own family very little - many acquaintances, few friends. He had tried many things - student, miner, journalist, printer - and given all up. At the age of thirty, he went to a new place to begin.¹⁰

In fact, in 1919, Mayo's real career had not even begun. The sense of uncertain fulfilment, of isolation and indirection, in these lines caused him finally to leave Australia at the age of forty-two, to seek yet another beginning in the United States. His subsequent success as a pioneer in the field of industrial psychology and factory management,

⁹Helen Mayo's biographical notes; Kyle's obituary notice; and *An Account of the University of Queensland During its First 25 Years*, published by the Senate, 1935, pp. 28-29.

¹⁰Letter to Dorothea, 29 March, 1919.

The success of Mayo's brothers and sisters should be noted. His older sister, Helen, graduated from the University of Adelaide in medicine in 1902, was the founder of the Mothers and Babies Health Association in 1909 and had a distinguished medical career. She gained an M.D. in 1926. Herbert Mayo (b. 1885) graduated in law in 1909, became K.C. in 1930, was knighted in 1948 and became a Justice of the Supreme Court in 1942. John Christian Mayo (b. 1891) also became a medical specialist. Mary Penelope Mayo (b. 1889) was the author of *The Life and Letters of Colonel William Light*.

the famous Hawthorne experiments associated with his name, and the research of the group which gathered about him at the Harvard Business School (to which he was appointed in 1926 and where he stayed as one of the most notable figures until 1947) are all part of a well-known and well-documented chapter in the development of the social sciences in industry. Although Mayo's American career is beyond the scope of this study, the social theory on which his empirical research was based and which he expanded in his two books, *The Human Problems of an Industrial Civilisation* (1933) and *The Social Problems of an Industrial Civilisation* (1949), was initially worked out in his Australian years and was given its first substantial publication in *Democracy and Freedom*.

* * * * *

At first glance, *Democracy and Freedom*, is recognisable as a W.E.A. text; it contains all the familiar intellectual preoccupations of the W.E.A. group. Its fundamental problem was that of class conflict and the threat to the social order. It was focussed on the unhappy place of the worker in modern industrial society and on the urgency of social readjustment. It analysed the relation of the individual to the state and to other forms of group life and it discussed the efficacy of Australian forms of political and legislative amelioration. It offered an evaluation of the ideological spectrum of theories of social change - the Webbs, Marx, guild socialists, syndicalists and so on - and it echoed the call for the deployment of the social sciences in the quest for social integration. In its concerns, Mayo's essay appears to fit the W.E.A. frame of reference but a closer look at its theoretical assumptions - and at the solutions as yet only germinating in this early work - reveals a radically different set of propositions. In the breadth of its intellectual contact and the startling transitions it makes, Mayo's essay was distinctive and original. In its long-run

implications, it also challenged the whole rationale of movements like the W.E.A.

In the period in which Mayo had been student, teacher and writer, critical eyes were being cast everywhere on the shortcomings of democracy. The discourse ranged from those who were disillusioned with the mechanics of democratic government, in particular with political parties, to those who were pessimistic about the capacities of the people to act rationally in choosing their representatives. Mayo drew on all this debate, adding to his reading of Burke, T.H. Green and J.S. Mill. He had absorbed the critiques of a wide range of political thinkers: Ernest Barker, Viscount Bryce, Gierke and Maitland, Henry Maine, G.D.H. Cole, the Webbs, Graham Wallas and C.F. Masterman among the British theorists; Tarde and Le Bon in France, Ostrogorski in Russia, and C.E. Ellwood, Woodrow Wilson, Brooks Adams in America. He found that many of his ideas were shaped by his reading but he believed that he had something to contribute to the discussion on the nature and future of democracy. He ruefully reflected on the difficulty of being original,

I am quite hopeful since I believe that the criticism of actual conditions I propose has not yet been done - but the line the book quoted takes is so nearly mine that I must be sure I do not seem to plagiarize.¹¹

The criticism which he proposed went beyond a critique of the workings of democratic government and it was not satisfied with Mill's worries about the rule of "collective mediocrity" nor with the pessimism of the irrationalists about the crowd-mind. Mayo argued that the whole

¹¹Letter to Dorothea, 4 April 1919. Mayo is referring here to Ernest Barker's *Political Thought from Spencer to Today* in which he says that he found his own ideas expressed to some extent in the last chapter - "so little is one original".

concept of modern democracy was miscast because the political science from which it was derived, that of individualist liberalism, had itself misconstrued the nature and organisation of society. Writers from Bentham to Mill, he believed, had seen society as a collection of individuals or an "anarchy of persons" which had no unanimity except that which could only be expressed through the state. He saw it as an irony that such a political philosophy which had sought to locate authority beyond the state in the social will should finally be confronted with ever-expanding state control and the hegemony of politics. The "structureless" model of society implied in individualist liberalism and in laissez-faire capitalism had led in his opinion to a false identification of the social will with the ballot box, and to the equating of social structure with the organisation of political parties. Politics and the state had thus come to distort the original aims of democracy and to ignore the human and social relationships which he believed had evolved historically with the progress of civilisation and which constituted the true nature of society.

T.H. Green's dictum that "will not force is the basis of the state" occupied a central place in Mayo's political theory as it did in the thinking of most contemporary liberals. The problem Mayo posed, however, was how far the present form of democracy did embody or cultivate the general will. This was the basic question of *Democracy and Freedom*. Mayo never questioned the underlying premise of democracy - that the authority of government derives from a source beyond itself - but he argued that the source had been misinterpreted and the result was a confusion between the two terms democracy and freedom. Both terms were possessed by every cause, especially during the War, and Mayo set out to ask if the two were synonymous. Did the one, a political order,

necessarily engender the other, a personal and social state? To what extent did political forms aid or inhibit the freedom that was the true end of social growth? Was social growth an achievement of governments? To these questions Mayo answered in the negative, adopting Henry Maine's view that freedom was a social enfranchisement which was to be gained outside the realm of politics as defined in the action of governments.

Mayo's rejection of the assumptions which he believed informed contemporary democracy required an alternative social model. The model he put forward was one of social integration: society, he argued, was an aggregation of groups collaborating in an understood and communal purpose which welded the social whole. It was characterised by historic forms of systematic co-operation which the liberal philosophers had failed to perceive. This failure had led to the false concept of society as an alignment of classes, of masters and men, whose hostility and competition, had so far tended only to social disintegration. Instead, Mayo offered a world in which work was not the basis of class conflict but the opportunity for constructive social function. Work, according to Mayo, determined the individual's psychological orientation towards the world:

the way in which each of us sees the world is determined in the main by the occupational group which claims us as a member.¹²

Membership of that group involved participation in social custom, inherited tradition, transmitted skills and assigned roles, all of which endowed the worker with a sense of "social function":

¹²E. Mayo, *Democracy and Freedom*, (Macmillan, Melbourne 1919) p. 37.

It must be possible for the individual to feel, as he works, that his work is socially necessary; he must be able to see beyond his group to the society. Failure in this respect will make disintegration inevitable. Social unity must be a conscious unity, known and recognised by every group and individual; the alternative is disruption. The occupational aspect of social activity is, therefore, fundamental ...¹³

If the social community is a web of such occupational groups, then its health and degree of civilisation is measured in terms of the collaboration of those groups. Caste and class, he argued, must be subsumed into community of interest and purpose and the best motivation to collaboration, and therefore social harmony, is the sense of social function.

In the light of this social model, Mayo affirmed that freedom and growth was characteristic of the social life of the community in its many associations and groups - it was not a character of the state. In fact the present democracy, he wrote,

has done nothing to help society to unanimity, nothing to aid the individual to a sense of social function.¹⁴

Democracy, shaped by industrialism and individualism, had deprived man of his ability to see beyond his work to his society and the consequence was social conflict and disorder. He quoted the work of the Hammonds on the evils of industrialism to illustrate how the nineteenth century commercial system had left the worker bereft of any personal autonomy or social purpose and also how laissez-faire economics had overwhelmed the social function of industry. It followed in Mayo's logic, therefore, that if the consciousness of social function were essential to social order then the task before theorists and social scientists was to

¹³*Ibid.*, p. 37 and Mayo "The Australian Political Consciousness" in M. Atkinson, *Australia, Economic and Political Studies*, (Macmillan, London 1920, p. 129). (This essay forms part of *Democracy and Freedom* and was probably written first.)

¹⁴E. Mayo, *Democracy and Freedom*, p. 44.

discover how to restore this sense in a modern industrial society. As Mayo stated it,

when 'work' signifies intelligent collaboration in the achievement of a social purpose, 'industrial unrest' will cease to be.¹⁵

The remedies for social disharmony in the contemporary democratic state were as misguided as the theories from which they stemmed. Reliance upon the state to unify society led, in Mayo's opinion, to another false conclusion - that political means were the only routes to reform or development. Like Heaton and Atkinson, Mayo judged the alienation of classes and the dominance of politics to be "more complete in Australia than in other countries", and the resort to political remedy to be more advanced. He agreed with them that Australian forms of amelioration such as the arbitration system served only to stereotype and harden social division. He was profoundly disillusioned with the level of political behaviour which he observed around him and concluded that the people's will was more exploited by its representatives than given authentic voice:

the orgy of politically-manufactured and irrelevant passion which marks an election is a measure of the debasement of democracy. Our nominal political liberty has become an actual servitude to all that is intellectually futile and emotionally base.¹⁶

Furthermore, the Australian identification of political party with economic interest had sharpened class differences to an almost irreconcilable point. He cited the railway strike of 1917 as an example of the manner in which political division exacerbated industrial difficulties and, as he saw it, the issue of conscription had been

¹⁵*Ibid.*, p. 60.

¹⁶*Ibid.*, p. 27.

inflamed by the same confusion. In Australia, the important distinctions that were useful in laissez-faire policy - the distinction between the political and the economic - had been hopelessly lost.

The "spontaneous growth" towards collaboration and social unity which, Mayo argued, must be recovered in industrial society could not be nourished by legislation or regulation. No increase in wages or improvement in working conditions through government intervention or arbitration could, in his view, atone "for the loss of all autonomy and of all sense of function".¹⁷ Nor would schemes of social reconstruction such as socialism or guild socialism touch the root of the problem because their solutions promised only to strengthen the hegemony of politics. Mayo agreed with Cole that a mechanistic capitalism had taken away all right to intelligent self-direction from the worker but he was critical of Cole's proposed solutions. He applauded Cole's plea for collaboration within industry but he rejected the ideas of industrial democracy and quasi-parliamentary machinery for the control of industry. Along with social function, Mayo prized the preservation of skill and the need for efficiency in organisation and both, he feared, would be jeopardised by political democracy operating in industry:

the highest skill should be sovereign rather than
the opinion of 'collective mediocrity'.¹⁸

In *Democracy and Freedom*, and in the fragment of it which he published in Atkinson's *Australia* essays entitled "The Australian Political Consciousness", Mayo's critique was largely negative and gave no clear indication of how such a state of spontaneous collaboration

¹⁷E. Mayo, "The Australian Political Consciousness", p. 133; *Democracy and Freedom*, p. 41; and pp. 42-50 on arbitration.

¹⁸E. Mayo, *Democracy and Freedom*, p. 57; on Cole, see pp. 55-60.

was to be re-achieved. He spoke of finding a modern counterpart to laissez-faire, without the evils of individualist competition, which would "set each industrial function free to do its best for society".¹⁹ He was definite that the answer lay outside politics and legislation but as yet he could not go beyond a vague faith in human nature:

human nature may be trusted to work out a gradual solution once the attempt to find political nostrums and ad hoc remedies is abandoned.²⁰

What *Democracy and Freedom* contributed to the debate on democracy was an anthropological dimension which extended the pluralist conception of society derived from Gierke, Maitland and Cole, and familiar to all the W.E.A. intellectuals as a preferred social model. The idea of the functional community which was at the heart of Mayo's sociological theory in *Democracy and Freedom* was more fully developed in his two subsequent books, and his debt to social anthropologists more fully acknowledged. This concept of social function is elaborated in *The Social Problems*:

In these simpler communities every individual understands the various economic activities and social functions, and, in greater or less degree, participates in them. The bonds of family and kinship (real or fictitious) operate to relate every person to every social occasion; the ability to cooperate effectively is at a high level. The situation is not simply that the society exercises a powerful compulsion on the individual; on the contrary, the social code and the desires of the individual are, for all practical purposes, identical. Every member of the group participates in social activities because it is his chief desire to do so.²¹

In his later work Mayo makes clear his debt to the social anthropologists, especially Malinowski, G. Pitt-Rivers, A.R. Radcliffe-Brown and W. Lloyd

¹⁹*Ibid.*, p. 49.

²⁰*Ibid.*, p. 50.

²¹E. Mayo, *The Social Problems of an Industrial Civilisation*, (London, 1975, first published 1949) p. 5. This passage is based upon Mayo's reading of Frederic Le Play.

Warner; he also draws on Le Play and Durkheim explicitly on the consequences of industrial and social change.²² Nonetheless, the main ideas of an historic, evolving social growth, of collaborative function and of the disintegrating effects of industrialism were present in his earlier work. His friendship with Malinowski and with Pitt-Rivers also pre-dated his American career, and although Mayo does not cite their work in his early essays it is plausible to speculate on their influence. It is certainly demonstrable that these men were impressed by Mayo's work and intrigued to find, as Malinowski put it, such an interesting scientific mind in a new sub-tropical university in the Antipodes.²³ Malinowski came to Australia, and to New Guinea, as the secretary to Section H, Anthropology, of the British Association for the Advancement of Science on its visit in 1914. He spent six months then in New Guinea and the Trobriand Islands, returning there in 1915-16 and in 1917-18. Malinowski's paper to the British Association in 1914 discussed "A Fundamental Problem of Religious Sociology", quoting Durkheim on the distinction between the sacred and the profane.²⁴ Whether Mayo heard this talk is unrecorded - he was listed as a member of the Association and in 1914 his own interest in psychology and religion, generated under William Mitchell at Adelaide University, was demonstrated in the lectures and talks he gave on the subject to the Anglican Church Conference and the Student Christian Social Union.²⁵ It is probable that

²²E. Mayo, *The Human Problems of an Industrial Civilisation*, (New York, 1960, first published 1933) Ch. VI and Ch. VII.

²³Recounted by Mayo in letter to Dorothea, 9 March 1918.

²⁴*Report of the Eighty-Fourth Meeting of the British Association for the Advancement of Science, Australia 1914*. (London, 1915) pp. 534-535.

²⁵E. Mayo, "Letter of Application to the University of Otago for the Chair of Mental and Moral Philosophy", 12 November 1913 lists lectures and address on religious topics during 1912-13, e.g. to Theological College, "Religion and Psychology" Presbyterian Men's Society, "The Function of Religious Services" Australian Church Congress, "The Attitude of Philosophy to Religion" Student Christian Union, "The Inadequacy of Pragmatism" "Religion and Religious Services" "The Divinity of Christ".

Mayo met Malinowski in 1914 and became his host when Malinowski was en route to the Trobriand Islands. In his Diary, Malinowski recorded their conversations during his visits:

At the Mayo's, heroic intervention in discussion of religion. Then we talked about politics and his activity among workers.²⁶

On Malinowski's death in 1942, Mayo recalled

In Queensland he used to stay with us in the intervals of his Trobriand work - and indeed many of the ideas of his original work were first alluded to and discussed with Dorothea and myself.²⁷

Malinowski was excited about Mayo's work and offered him encouragement in his letters; he urged him to take leave from Brisbane and go down to Melbourne in order to pursue it.²⁸ At the end of 1919, Mayo resumed his friendship with Malinowski in Melbourne, staying with him in what he described as the "slavonic squalor" of his rooms in Grey St., and working with him at the Public Library.²⁹ His other main contact on this visit to Melbourne was Meredith Atkinson who was engaged in promoting the publication of Mayo's work with Macmillans.

Mayo made the acquaintance of another social anthropologist, Captain George Pitt-Rivers, also on his way north to field-work in Papua and the Bismarck Archipelago, in 1921. Pitt-Rivers, invalided out of the War, had been a research student under McDougall at Oxford in psychology and anthropology and he had come to Australia as a member of the Governor-General's staff. He too was surprised to find work of

²⁶B. Malinowski, *A Diary in the Strict Sense of the Term*, (London 1967) p. 108 and p. 178 refer to correspondence with the Mayos. It is interesting to note that the editor has not identified the Mayos as he has most of Malinowski's other contacts in the Diary.

²⁷Letter to Herbert Mayo, 18 June 1942. P.R.G. 127/17, Mayo Papers, S.A.A.

²⁸Letter to Dorothea, 9 March 1918.

²⁹Letter to Dorothea, undated, probably summer vacation 1919-20 written from Malinowski's room in the Public Library, Melbourne.

the type and quality of Mayo's in so remote a place, while Mayo for his part welcomed the diminution of his isolation that such encounters represented. He wrote of Pitt-Rivers,

What I feel is that he, like Malinowski, is very quick to jump to the conclusion that my work is of value. They both came to this conclusion before they knew what my work was like. In my case I think I have a new friend. It was rather exciting.³⁰

When Mayo did take leave in Melbourne in 1922, he developed his contact with Pitt-Rivers when both gave lectures in a series for the Victoria League at the Assembly Hall during the winter. Atkinson also participated in the series and there was suggestion of the lectures being published with a Preface by Mayo. Pitt-Rivers' paper on "Primitive Communism and its Relation to Modern Developments in Russia and Elsewhere" bore relation to the themes of Mayo's work, as he explained it in an appendix to Mayo:

The chief moral of course being that it is as mischievous and futile to force individualism on primitive natives still psychologically capable of communism and therefore still within the limits of their organisation socially integrated, as it is futile and mischievous to try and force communism upon a community psychologically *no longer* capable of it, the only result being further disintegration in a *pseudo-communistic* organisation which is really an intensification of individualism arising out of democracy. Perhaps it may suit you to dot the eye of this conclusion?³¹

The conjunction of political and economic theory and social anthropology in Mayo's critique of democracy introduced a new set of ideas into any Australian discussion of the subject but it must not obscure the fact that *Democracy and Freedom* was, before all else, the work of a psychologist and that it was Mayo, the psychologist, who

³⁰Letter to Dorothea, 4 April 1921.

³¹G. Pitt-Rivers to Mayo, 2 July 1922. This letter accompanies an abstract of the lecture, intended for publication in a proposed book which did not eventuate. Mayo Mss. File 3085, Baker Library, Graduate School of Business Administration, Harvard University.

interested Malinowski and Pitt-Rivers. It was to the new social science of applied psychology that Mayo looked for the solutions to problems diagnosed in his theory.

* * * * *

Before the War, Mayo had studied and taught the principles of psychology which were then treated as part of the broad catchment of philosophy, metaphysics and logic. His reading of William James had led him to a school of French medical men connected with the Salpêtrière Hospital in Paris, among them Charcot, Binet and, in particular, Pierre Janet. These men were engaged in medical psychology rather than in philosophy, just as Freud and Jung were devising techniques for the investigation of the mind in order to validate theory. Mayo learned from all of these: his notion of the "mental hinterland" owed much to Janet's work with neurosis, hysteria and obsessive thinking and to Janet's concept of sanity.³² While not a Freudian in doctrine, Mayo found the techniques of psychoanalysis of both Freud and Jung useful in his own ventures into medical psychology.³³ In England, practical classes in experimental psychology had been conducted at Cambridge since the end of the nineties by another pioneer of anthropology, W.H.R. Rivers, who then applied his expertise to investigating the Torres Strait Islanders.³⁴ The War provided a great stimulus to psychological research in presenting the challenge of War neuroses and shell-shock as well as requiring inquiry into the psychological factors affecting the

³²See E. Mayo, *The Psychology of Pierre Janet*, (London 1952, published posthumously). Mayo makes clear the influence of Janet in all his writings.

³³E. Mayo, lecture to Victorian Branch of the British Medical Association on "Psychology in Relation to Psychoanalysis and Applied Psychology", 24 February 1922, *Medical Journal of Australia*, April 1922, no. 13.

³⁴See W.H.R. Rivers *Psychology and Ethnology*, (London 1926) esp. Introduction.

output of munitions. Rivers and his pupil, Dr Charles Myers, conducted research on war neuroses in British Military Hospitals. Myers went on at the end of the War to develop the field of industrial psychology in Britain, which flowed out of the Health of Munition Workers Committee formed in 1915 (later, in 1919, the Industrial Fatigue Research Board).³⁵

All of these strands - experimental psychology, war neuroses and industrial fatigue research - coalesced in Mayo's own charting of the industrial territory. To his study of James, Janet, Freud and Jung, Mayo had added some experimental practice of psychoanalysis in a part-time and informal collaboration with a Brisbane physician, Dr Mathewson. His patients included shell-shock cases as well as other "neurasthenics" who came to them as their reputation spread. Mayo believed that he and Mathewson were perhaps the first to begin therapeutic practice of this kind in Australia - their methods included "free association" tests to elicit childhood memories, dream analysis and hypnosis.³⁶ During 1919 and 1920 Mayo became very excited about clinical work. His courses began to show the subordination of philosophy to the practice of psychology as he included demonstrations of the methods of Freud and Jung in his lectures.³⁷ He was in particular interested in the nature of nervous breakdown and the re-achievement of sanity. He believed that sanity was to be equated with the individual's capacity to master his

³⁵For a discussion of the development of industrial psychology and industrial management in Britain see John Child, *British Management Thought*, (London 1969).

³⁶Letter to Dorothea, 6 April 1919. Several letters during this month describe various cases treated by Mayo and Mathewson. In Melbourne Dr J.W. Springthorpe had been treating "the psychological factor in disease" before the war and was in charge of Australian war neuroses in England where he exchanged ideas and experience with other authorities such as Myers. See *Medical Journal of Australia* no. 14, October 1919 for J.W. Springthorpe, "War Neuroses and Civil Practice".

³⁷Letter to Dorothea, 3 March 1921.

environment and himself and that neglected capacities do not disappear but live on "in the dark background" of the mind causing anxiety, fear and dangerous dissatisfactions. The mind has areas over which the individual has little control as evidenced by day-dreaming, or what Janet called 'reverie', and the sane man is one who can maintain the equilibrium between the realm of his conscious "concentrated" thinking and the phantasy world of his uncontrolled "dispersed" thinking. Those unable to hold this balance are prey to obsessions, neuroses and hysteria.³⁸

Early in 1921, Mayo withdrew from the practice with Mathewson.³⁹ The University of Queensland continued the work, however, when a research chair of medical psychology was endowed by the British Red Cross in 1921. Mayo claimed that this was the result of his pleas for funds to support the investigation of war-shock, neurasthenia and kindred mental disorders.⁴⁰ Mayo himself turned his attention to the application of his theory and his experience to the field of industry, seeking the relationship between the unconscious operations of the mental hinterland and the social phenomena of industrial unrest. Mayo argued that the forces which produced both civilisation and anarchy took their rise in the human mind and that it was therefore necessary to understand the well-springs of behaviour. Political palliatives, wages rises, the

³⁸E. Mayo, "Industrial Unrest and 'Nervous Breakdown'" in *Industrial Australian and Mining Standard*, part 2 of the series on "Industrial Peace and Psychological Research", 12 January 1922, pp. 63-64.

See also "The Irrational Factor in Human Behaviour" - the 'night-mind' in Industry" in *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. 108, November 1923, pp. 117-130 and E. Mayo, "Civilised Unreason" in *Harper's Magazine*, Vol. cxlviii, December 1923, pp. 527-535.

³⁹Letter to Dorothea, 23 March, 1921.

⁴⁰Letter to Dorothea, 10 November 1921 refers to the university treating his leave ungenerously even after getting £10,000 "as a result of my work". See also Kyle's obituary which endorses this point. The chair was filled by Dr J.P. Lowson in 1921.

panacea of worker participation or worker control, or the enlightened measures of welfare proposals could not touch the roots of what Mayo deemed to be maladjusted behaviour:

Industrial unrest is not caused by mere dissatisfaction with wages and working conditions but by the fact that a conscious dissatisfaction serves to 'light up' as it were the hidden fires of mental uncontrol.⁴¹

The human irrationality which he observed in industrial discontent was closely akin to that which he had seen in shell-shock victims. He drew an analogy between the successful treatment of war neuroses and the potential correction of industrial conflict. The research in military hospitals was reinforced by what had been learned by Myers and others about the problems of fatigue and monotony in munitions productions.⁴² He concluded that

in sport, in war, and in work it is morale, the mental factor, which in the last resort determines every issue.⁴³

Only the techniques of psychology could reach the discontents in the "twilight" areas of the mind and could repair damaged industrial morale.

In a series of articles for *The Australian Industrial and Mining Standard*, edited by Ambrose Pratt, Mayo explored further the connections between his social theory, his psychology and the industrial problem. As *Democracy and Freedom* had made clear, Mayo saw the individual as a member of society and as a worker but this did not mean that he recognised

⁴¹E. Mayo, "Industrial Unrest and 'Nervous Breakdown'", *I.A. & M.S.*, 12 January 1922, p. 64.

⁴²E. Mayo, "The Irrational Factor in Human Behaviour", *Annals of the American Academy*, *op. cit.*, p. 125: "I was guided in my first approach by experience of psychopathological clinic and 'shell-shock' hospital. The event proved that there is an extraordinary resemblance between a 'shell-shock' hospital and a factory where the morale or will to co-operate is low. In a factory where the morale is low the incidence of hysteria is high."

⁴³E. Mayo, "Civilisation and Morale", *I.A. & M.S.*, 5 January 1922, p. 16.

him as a member of a working class. Class to Mayo was a wrongly conceived, divisive and dangerous category to which he gave no analytical significance. He sought to dissolve the class concept in his alternative social construct and to supplant it with a notion of social function. Again, he advanced the thesis that to achieve social integration, the worker must have a consciousness, not of class, but of the value of his work in the social pattern. He defined this sense of social function as a "psychological orientation" towards his work, a disposition or a "morale" which was not rationally exerted by the individual but was located in his subconscious. In a pre-industrial world the sense of social function had been traditionally determined and expressed in communal purpose, but the modern worker, enslaved in industry and perceiving his work-place as the scene of class war, had lost touch with his social function, and Mayo would say, with reality itself. Psychological research must and could discover what industrial civilisation was doing to the worker; it must understand the hidden resentments in the "submerged mentality" of men which would, if unchecked, finally wreak vengeance upon the whole social order. The immediate problem was to evaluate the symptoms of unrest such as sabotage, strikes and the inability to work steadily, in order to find the deeper causes of the malady.⁴⁴

Mayo had derived much from the ideas of French crowd-psychologists like Le Bon who argued that non-rational factors predominated in human thinking and collective behaviour.⁴⁵ He felt he had observed the irrational at work in Australian political situations such as the conscription crisis, or the Queensland election of March 1918. This had

⁴⁴See Mayo's five articles published in "The Sociological Department" of the *I.A. & M.S.*, January-February 1922.

⁴⁵See *Democracy and Freedom*, pp. 25-30 for the discussion on the election and pp. 31-35 for comment on 'irrationalist' theory.

provided him with empirical field-work as he wrote *Democracy and Freedom*.

He noted at the time,

Assuming that an electorate at election time was 'psychasthenic' (as neurasthenic) I applied my variation of Jung's method and discovered that the Nationalists lost because in the endeavour to be logical they took no account of the 'phobias' (anxiety-neuroses) motivated from the 'unconscious' (Jung's words, not mine). This of course suggested at once a companion volume to Machiavelli's 'Prince' entitled "The Politician". I have two sides of a foolscap sheet covered with notes - and it will go very well with the French crowd-psychology (an improvement on it) as a chapter on 'electoral psychasthenia and twilight thinking' (or something of that sort) in the book to be.⁴⁶

He agreed that

of the great majority of men it may be said that their motives are largely determined by feeling and irrationality⁴⁷

but he did not share the ultimate pessimism and despair of the irrationalists. The work of Freud and Jung and his own clinical experience had convinced him that while irrationality existed and moved the behaviour of men, it did not follow that man was doomed never to be rational.

He argued instead that

civilisation was progressive rationalisation or nothing - that democracy, as at present constituted, exaggerates the irrational in man and is therefore an anti-social and decivilising force.⁴⁸

Mayo declared human unreason to be as much open to inquiry as any other social fact, his basic premise being that sanity was a condition that was continually achieved in civilised society.⁴⁹ Psychological research

⁴⁶Letter to Dorothea, March 1918.

⁴⁷E. Mayo, "Civilisation and Morale", *op. cit.*

⁴⁸Letter to Dorothea, March 1919 recounts an argument in Sydney on the subject of human rationality. Mayo writes from the Wallangara Camp in N.S.W. where he and Witherby were in quarantine during the influenza epidemic.

⁴⁹See E. Mayo, "Civilised Unreason", *Harper's Magazine*, Vol. 148, December 1923 and "The Great Stupidity", *Harper's Magazine*, Vol. 151, June-November 1925.

would assist man's capacity to be rational more effectively than any reliance upon a priori theory about human nature.

Mayo believed that in all this he was working towards the discovery of the "psychological causes making for revolution" since he identified the forces which made for social upheaval with those which produced mental breakdown. In his hypothesis, only those dominated by irrationality readily responded to "suggestions of revolutionary destruction".⁵⁰ The agitator and the revolutionary were in his opinion as much the victims of disorientation as any other neurotic. His psychological profile of the agitator was explicitly based on his experience in Brisbane with the extreme supporters of the I.W.W. He recalled more than once that during his work for the W.E.A., the back rows of meetings were "haunted" by the representatives of the irreconcilable left, men "without any sense of humour" who posed implacable opposition to the university's attempts to educate the workers. Mayo followed them closely and claimed to be on familiar terms with them. He categorised them as social isolates, incapable of easy human relationships, and unable to converse except on the "compelling topic" of revolution. They regarded the world as hostile, were suspicious of all leadership and were always in a state of crisis induced by fears of conspiracy. When one of the agitators sought medical help (no doubt from Dr Mathewson, although Mayo does not name him) it was revealed under psychoanalysis that his resistance to authority and his inability to hold a job could be traced to a miserable childhood and a drunken brutal father who had forced the child to frightened night-wanderings in the streets.

⁵⁰E. Mayo, "The Mind of the Agitator", *I.A. & M.S.*, 19 January 1922, p. 111.

Psychological treatment led to the patient's recovery and to changes in his personality and his attitude to society. According to Mayo, he gave up his resentments, his former political associates, and his revolutionary activities.⁵¹ This case-study encouraged Mayo to generalise the mental state, the infantile history and the social incapacities of revolutionaries. They were, he concluded, very unhappy people and were "usually communists". In 1922 he speculated that the Australian Labour Party was burdened with many such agitators.⁵²

Mayo's definition of the revolutionary as neurotic, as one whose "phantasy" life dominated his "reality" thinking, left little room for the intellectual, economic or moral validity of any revolutionary ideology. His psychological determination reduced ideology to phantasy compensation:

To any working psychologist, it is at once evident that the general theories of Socialism, Guild Socialism, Anarchism and the like are very largely the phantasy constructions of the neurotic.⁵³

The appeal which revolutionary ideas had for the worker could also be explained in terms of the loss of social function. The worker was unaware of the deeper causes of his alienation and was therefore vulnerable to the revolutionary's conspiracy charges against the capitalist. He was easily seduced by the illusions of control which systems such as socialism appeared to offer him. Thus, Mayo confidently asked,

What else is Socialism but an endeavour to regain a lost sense of significance in the scheme of things?⁵⁴

* * * * *

⁵¹*Ibid.* See also Mayo, *The Psychology of Pierre Janet*, pp. 10-16 where Mayo recalls his experience of these men during his W.E.A. work.

⁵²E. Mayo, "The Mind of the Agitator", *op. cit.*

⁵³*Ibid.*

⁵⁴E. Mayo, "The Will of the People", *I.A. & M.S.*, 26 January 1922, p. 160.

In the years before he left Australia, Mayo devoted much of his efforts to the promotion of psychological research into industrial unrest. This was the theme of talks to bodies from the Advertising Men's Institute to the Brisbane Trades Hall; he held conversations with members of the Chambers of Commerce and Manufactures urging their support.⁵⁵ He took his message to the Churches when he was invited to address the Anglican Church Conference in Sydney in 1921. The bishops had gathered to deliberate on the church's role in relation to the "Social and Industrial Problem". In common with most of Mansbridge's followers, Mayo was an Anglican and a frequent attender at the Cathedral. He held that the individual must have an "orientation to the Universe, beyond the present to the Infinite",⁵⁶ but he had reservations about the churches' failure to understand the human material with which they dealt. He suggested to the bishops that the current political and industrial system served to intensify mental instability and, consequently, social disintegration and he argued that those like themselves who would pursue social harmony must not neglect the forces which lurked in the dark background of the mind:

our social, political and industrial institutions must ultimately be based upon the scientific understanding of human nature and of the human mind. And yet, as a society, we make no co-ordinated attempt to study psychology and to apply the findings of psychology to the human problems before us.⁵⁷

He related the increase in unhappiness and mental breakdown which he

⁵⁵Letter to Dorothea, 1 June 1921.

⁵⁶Letter to Dorothea, 27 March 1921 recounts a long conversation with Dr Mathewson on religion. In his letters mention is often made of visits to Cathedral and contact with Anglican bishops.

⁵⁷Mayo's address reported in *Sydney Morning Herald*, 23 June 1921. Other W.E.A. men asked to speak were B.H. Molesworth and G.V. Portus.

discerned in society to the decline in the influence of the church. Asked to deliver the second Douglas Price Memorial Lecture to commemorate the leader of Brisbane's progressive Christianity movement (Meredith Atkinson had given the first) Mayo chose as his topic "Psychology and Religion", recommending that the churches should avail themselves of the knowledge provided by psychology and anthropology. These social sciences could help the churches to distinguish between what he called mentally sound and mentally unsound religion.⁵⁸ In his own psychoanalytic cases, he had uncovered the destructive effects of unsound religion in the emphasis on such things as sin, guilt and punishment which he believed could produce neurosis.⁵⁹ Mayo found, therefore, that failure in religion stemmed from the same ignorance and misconceptions which afflicted politics and industry - the inability to understand what really motivated human behaviour.

In a final lecture in Melbourne in 1922, Mayo re-stated his thesis about the "functional disorders of civilisation". The problem of the rage expressed in industrial conflict was a human one and its resolution must lie through the understanding of the interaction between the mind of the individual and his work:

Research should not begin with politics. It should begin with factory, production, trade. Difficulties should be investigated and classified and then be unnecessary if research were undertaken.⁶⁰

⁵⁸E. Mayo, *Psychology and Religion*, Douglas Price Memorial Lecture, (Macmillan, Melbourne) 1922.

⁵⁹Several of Mayo's letters contain accounts of his psychological treatment of particular cases, in particular, the intense therapy work with three of his wife's sisters. One example was his sister-in-law, Barbara, who had "a compulsion neurosis with the conviction of sin (repressed) making religion horrible, God an avenger and Sundays impossible". He described how association tests and the investigation of her infantile period finally brought back a "vision of an Avenging God" she had at nineteen under an anaesthetic - a so-called ether-vision. Letter to Dorothea, 22 June 1921.

⁶⁰Lecture given under the auspices of the Melbourne University Association entitled "Social Psychology", *Argus*, 5 July 1922.

Mayo argued that the individual had no more real notion of the industrial ills from which he suffered than the person who suffered melancholia or nervous breakdown. At the same time, he insisted that he was capable of achieving rational, happy and productive behaviour. Thus the diagnosis and the cure belonged in the end to the professional expert. Well-intentioned solutions to industrial unrest such as arbitration, welfare measures or Whitley Councils were, in Mayo's logic, as inappropriate as calling a conference of relatives or politicians to treat a case of typhoid. The analogy was extreme but the point was crucial - it served to exalt the expertise of the social scientist in the organisation of industrial relations.⁶¹ Mayo developed the role of an élite of managers in industrial organisation later in his career in America but he had been struggling with the problem since the early days of the war, when he took an active role in the University War Committee's inquiries into the organisation and production of war munitions in Queensland. The issue at the time was the harnessing of local resources and labour to the making of shrapnel shell in order to secure both the maximum output and the minimum dislocation to local industry. This raised the controversial questions of the control of labour, of negotiations with the trade unions, and of centralisation in the management of war industries. Mayo was in favour of central organised planning to obtain efficiency, but he emphasised the importance of collaboration on the part of individuals in the war effort rather than the compulsion of labour.⁶² The debate on conscription also focussed the tension between collaboration and organisation which Mayo

⁶¹E. Mayo, "The Irrational Factor in Human Behaviour", *op. cit.*, p. 120.

⁶²E. Mayo (unsigned), *Some considerations Affecting Organisation for the Production of the Munitions of War and Industrial Organisation and the Cost of War*, two pamphlets written for the University of Queensland War Committee by Mayo, 1915. P.R.G. 127/26 Mayo Papers, S.A.A.

confronted in all his later work. He tried to define the conscription issue as one of organisation in the quest for efficiency. He was not happy with the element of compulsion by political means because, in his view, it was not possible to organise the general will effectively if it did not already exist:

the force which moves a man to seek the general interest comes from *within*: if the individual or the nation has no desire to undertake a plain duty then the application of compulsion will effect little.⁶³

He plainly thought the vote should have been "Yes" and he was interested in the motivation of those who said "No" but in the end the ultimate issue remained unresolved in his argument that conscription should be based on popular consent rather than imposed by politicians. The central question was germinating here, however: how to re-create and to organise the collaborative forces in men that were by his definition "spontaneous" rather than voluntary? There was no simple nostalgic, arcadian note in Mayo's plea for the restoration of the impulses of the co-operating community. He did not urge a return to the past but a way of adapting to the industrial present. The agents of adaptation, of adjusting the worker to his society, were to be the industrial sociologists and psychologists.

The distinction between spontaneous and voluntary behaviour in Mayo's theory is what logically separated him from the core idealism of the W.E.A. movement. Certainly, he was an energetic participant in the cause, serving on the Joint Committee and giving lectures at the Trades Hall until the eve of his departure from Brisbane. When the tutorial classes came under socialist fire in 1919 from those who wanted

⁶³E. Mayo, "The Referendum and After", unidentified newspaper report, P.R.G. 127/26 Mayo Papers, S.A.A.

to transform the system into a Workers' College, Mayo rallied to support Atkinson and Witherby in the struggle to defend the university's role in worker education. He contributed a long public lecture series on psychology to boost the university's standing. "It is no joke being a professor in a younger university, keen again on extension work", he confided to his wife at the height of the turmoil within the W.E.A.⁶⁴ When he left Brisbane, the *Australian Highway* recorded its thanks for a decade of his involvement:

only those who have an intimate knowledge of the history of the W.E.A. in this state can appreciate to the full the services rendered to the W.E.A. by Professor Mayo.⁶⁵

Mayo's concern for the health of democracy included a belief in the education of the masses but the logic of his thought did not allow that this was a primary and fundamental route to social order. Useful and interesting work as it was, the unconscious mind of the worker rather than his rational intellect remained Mayo's arena. It was more important to manage the worker's behaviour than to enlighten his mind, or to uplift his moral attitudes.

The W.E.A. intellectuals, however, had certain things in common with Mayo. Heaton approved *Democracy and Freedom* because it showed that "there was nothing infallible about democracy".⁶⁶ The critique of industrial society and the status it accorded the worker was consistent with the standard W.E.A. analysis, as was the anxiety about the proper

⁶⁴Letters to Dorothea, 23 March and 26 March, 1919. *Australian Highway*, Vol. 1 no. 3, May 1919 reports on proposals at the Queensland Annual Conference of the W.E.A. to change the character of the movement by making it into a Worker's College. Vol. 1 no. 5, July 1919 carries report of well-attended classes on psychology given by Mayo. See also V. Crew, "The Beginnings of the W.E.A. in Queensland", *op. cit.* The W.E.A. conference rejected the proposal. A Workers' School of Social Science was then founded but it did not gain enough support from the unions.

⁶⁵*Australian Highway*, Vol. 111, no. 11, January 1922, pp. 5-6.

⁶⁶H. Heaton, review of *Democracy and Freedom*, *The Herald*, 6 February 1919.

relationship of the state to community. It examined another favourite theme in the Australian disaffection with politics and it endorsed Heaton's own belief in Australia as an "over-regulated land". Heaton thought Mayo's discussion of guild socialist proposals the best he had so far read on the subject (on the other hand, R.C. Mills recommended the book to Graham Wallas as a "suggestive" account of Australian conditions but he expressed some reservations about its verdict on guild socialism).⁶⁷ In Heaton's words, what was needed to replace the intrusiveness of governments was

a dose of laissez-faire - not laissez-faire plus individualism but plus voluntary co-operative effort.⁶⁸

For Heaton and the W.E.A. this voluntary, co-operative effort might be elicited through education in persuading men to these ideals and through institutions such as the Co-operative Movement, which was so much a legacy of his own Yorkshire upbringing. Collaboration, in the W.E.A. logic, was the product of enlightenment and rational understanding which assisted men to control their own destiny. They looked to the social sciences - sociology, economics, political science - to render the world intelligible to the worker and they looked optimistically on the power of intellectuals like themselves to transform the attitude of people. Mayo, however, distrusted the political and economic sciences: in his view they had provided the misguided theories of individualism and unbridled capitalism. Economics, furthermore, was a representation of the logic of business and as such assumed human motives based on clear reasoning, the operation of which Mayo fundament-

⁶⁷R.C. Mills to G. Wallas, 28 October 1919, Wallas Papers, Box 6, London School of Economics.

⁶⁸Heaton to Mayo, 14 February 1919, File 1061, Mayo Mss. Baker Library, Harvard.

ally questioned.⁶⁹ Mayo did call repeatedly for the development of the social sciences in Australia but it was psychology, anthropology and sociology that in his view were needed to counteract "the irrational forces of political party spleen and class bias". As a conclusion to his essay in Atkinson's *Australia* he wrote,

Beyond the shores of Australia, the world-storm rages with increasing intensity; our will to internal cohesion is constantly disturbed by social disorder and a class-hatred that is fast becoming stereotyped. Yet we alone, of all the civilised nations, give no serious consideration to the deeper social causes of disorder.⁷⁰

This passage occurs within the context of a comparison with departments of social study and research in American universities. Bland, Irvine, Copland and Heaton would have approved the American model but in Mayo's terms it was a plea for the education of experts in these fields rather than for worker education. The implications and direction of Mayo's theory before he left Australia could not have been fully appreciated by his W.E.A. colleagues. Heaton, for example, saw a distinction in Mayo's work which indicated a failure to understand the key transitions of the theory; he wrote to Mayo,

I hear you are on something big in psychology at present. Good luck to you in it; but don't let the political stuff slide. There is enough work in political science here, waiting to be done, to fill the lives of a dozen Mayos.⁷¹

For Mayo, psychology created its own politics by its power to diminish the "suspicion, dislike and fear" in the industrial worker and thus to amend civilisation but it did so by manipulating men within their natural work-groups rather than in their parliamentary and governmental institutions.

⁶⁹E. Mayo, "Civilisation and Morale", *op. cit.*

⁷⁰E. Mayo, "The Australian Political Consciousness", *op. cit.*, p. 144.

⁷¹Heaton to Mayo, 14 February 1919, *op. cit.*

By 1921 the conditions of intellectual life in Australia had become increasingly frustrating for Mayo. His sense of singularity as a practitioner of applied psychology was sharpened by his feeling of geographical isolation even within Australia. In Brisbane he was burdened with administrative loads, heavy teaching duties and anxieties about money and security, all a "sad hindrance to work". After ten years he had begun to feel that the heart had gone out of his work and that he was wasting his life, yet at other times he looked on his Brisbane phase as a "period of probation" and was hopeful:

at the present moment if I could express what I know
on paper I could lift myself out of this soul-destroying
university regime.⁷²

and again,

I do feel as if I could do something to help the world
if I got a chance. It is difficult to get a chance.⁷³

He had considered liberating himself several times before, applying for a post in New Zealand not long after he arrived in Brisbane; anguishing over whether to take Atkinson's advice to apply for Francis Anderson's chair in Sydney in 1921; putting in his name for the position of Director of the new Council for Science and Industry to which George Knibbs was appointed.⁷⁴ He finally determined to risk his future again outside Australia, leaving behind his family until he could re-establish himself abroad. He took leave from Brisbane to go south to Melbourne in 1922 where he spent some stimulating and successful months giving

⁷²Letter to Dorothea, 23 April 1921. Also 10 March 1920, and 19 March 1921; 27 March 1921: "May we have many happy Easters together in a home of our own in some civilised part of Australia".

⁷³Letter to Dorothea, 1 November 1921.

⁷⁴Application to University of Otago, 1913, *op. cit.*; on Sydney: Letters to Dorothea, 3 March 1920, 23 March 1921, 11 October 1921; on C.S.I.R. position, March 1921. Bernard Muscio, who worked in industrial psychology in England with C.S. Myers, was appointed to Anderson's chair in 1922.

public lectures on psychology and psycho-analysis to audiences as far apart as the Free Kindergarten Union and the Victorian Branch of the British Medical Association.⁷⁵ Had he been successful in his application for Meredith Atkinson's post at the University of Melbourne,⁷⁶ he might have found a more congenial home in Australia but there was still little response here to his call for research into the psychological origins of industrial conflict.

At the end of July, 1922, Mayo set off alone for the United States, hoping to support himself from the paid lecture circuit until he could become known.⁷⁷ His first opportunity for empirical research came soon after his arrival when he was granted a Rockefeller Fellowship at the Wharton School of Finance and Commerce at the University of Pennsylvania. This enabled him to investigate the high labour turnover at a textile mill near Philadelphia. His experiments with the working conditions there reduced the rate of turnover and improved the output. They also attracted the attention of Wallace B. Donham of the Harvard Graduate School of Business Administration to which Mayo was then invited in 1926 as an associate professor of industrial research.⁷⁸ He joined the group conducting research into the industrial environment at the Hawthorne works of the Western Electric Co. on the west side of Chicago,

⁷⁵*Argus* reports the following lectures by Mayo in Melbourne - lecture to Victorian Institute of Advertising 9 March 1922. Six lectures at Queen's Hall on psychology and psychoanalysis in March and April 1922; Address to Melbourne University Association 1 May 1922; Address to Free Kindergarten Union 27 June 1922; Lecture to Victorian Branch of B.M.A. *op. cit.*

⁷⁶Melbourne University Registry Records File 433/1922.

⁷⁷Letters to Dorothea, 1 August and 8 August 1921 from the San Francisco Hotel give details of newspaper interviews on arrival in U.S. of attendance at a psychology conference at Stanford, and of arrangements for paid public lectures.

⁷⁸See J.H. Smith, Foreword to the 1975 edition of *The Social Problems of an Industrial Civilisation* for an account of Mayo's work, an assessment of Mayo and a note on his critics.

the findings of which became synonymous with his name and the subject of a wide and controversial literature.⁷⁹

In broader terms, Elton Mayo is recognised by both his admirers and his critics as one of the seminal figures in the history of applied social science. He never revisited his native Australia.⁸⁰

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⁷⁹Apart from Mayo's own two books which describe his work, the official accounts are found in F. Roethlisberger and W.J. Dickson, *Management and the Worker*, (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1939) and T. North Whitehead, *The Industrial Worker*, (Oxford, 1938). For a review and criticisms see H.A. Landsberger, *Hawthorne Revisited*, (Ithaca, N.Y. 1958). Other critics include "The Fruitful Errors of Elton Mayo" *Fortune*, Vol. 34, November 1946, pp. 181-183; R. Bendix and L.H. Fisher "The Perspectives of Elton Mayo", *Review of Economics and Statistics*, Vol. 31, 1949, pp. 313-321; and L. Baritz, *The Servants of Power* (Wesleyan Uni Press, Conn. 1960).

⁸⁰Mayo remained at Harvard until he retired to England in 1947 where he died in 1949.

CHAPTER 7. Douglas Berry Copland: Economics and the Social Sciences

When R.F. Irvine called in 1915 for a new brand of trained experts to guide the future Australian democracy, he specified that their education should enable them to take "the social point of view". They would see beyond the view of industry and business as mechanisms for profit and productivity to an appreciation of them as economic forces which "may or may not increase welfare".¹ Even Adam Smith, he maintained, had been aware that economic processes were but "incidents of a larger moral order".² During the twenties, a new brand of experts did begin their rise to public prominence and power but their very dedication to the scientism of their trade insulated their work from the wider humanistic and ethical deliberations which Irvine deemed so essential. In the new breed of economists, of whom Douglas Berry Copland was the archetype, the experts in whom the W.E.A. intellectuals professed so much faith had arrived. They were able to use the methodology of the social sciences to evaluate the "social laboratory", and to plan its development by the application of impartial scientific formulae, but they no longer defined their task as including such non-material variables as the ideals which animated a social democracy. This chapter is not directly concerned with Copland's contributions to the field of technical economics but with his definition of the role of economics and the nature of the social sciences.

Unlike his W.E.A. contemporaries, Atkinson, Heaton, Bland, Portus, Mayo and Molesworth, and fellow economists like Brigden and Mills, Copland was entirely a product of the Antipodes. It was not until

¹R.F. Irvine, "National Organisation and National Efficiency", *National Efficiency*, *op. cit.*, p. 19.

²R.F. Irvine, *The Place of the Social Sciences in a Modern University*, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

1926, when he was over thirty and had held two foundation chairs of economics and commerce in two Australian universities, that he went abroad to make the acquaintance of the mentors of this group at Cambridge, Oxford, the London School of Economics and the provincial centres of Leeds and Birmingham. He did, however, have the benefit of a training in economics in his native New Zealand that was more advanced than any being offered at the time in Australia. Born in Timaru in 1894, Copland attended lectures at Canterbury College while training as a school-teacher at the Christchurch Training College. He studied pure and applied mathematics, Latin and education. In 1915, under Professor James Hight, he gained an M.A. for his research on the agricultural economics of wheat production, a pioneering work in this area.³ Hight described him as a brilliant student whose particular ability, unusual at the time, was his mastery of mathematical principles: he had distinguished himself

by developing the math. side of Pure Economic Theory to a degree higher than attempted by any of my previous Honours students.⁴

During the War, Copland worked as a temporary compiler of agricultural and pastoral statistics in the Census and Statistics Office and also as a mathematics master at Christchurch Boys High School. From the beginning, then, before he came to Australia in 1917, Copland's education, interests and experience were in the quantitative, statistical and theoretical practice of economics rather than in the economic history orientation of Heaton or the political economy mould of Irvine.

³Copland to Registrar, Canterbury College, Christchurch, N.Z., Curriculum vitae, 4 December 1915. Copland Papers, MS 3800 N.L.A.

⁴J. Hight to Secretary of the Board of Governors, Waimate High School, 14 January 1916. Another reference from Dr F.W. Hilgendorf of Lincoln College, 21 November 1915, describes Copland as "quiet, convincing and authoritative". Copland Papers.

In 1915, Copland became one of the first tutors in the infant W.E.A. in Canterbury. The foundations of the movement in New Zealand followed much the same patterns as in Australia. Albert Mansbridge had visited Auckland, as well as Australian cities, and his project of worker education had caught up efforts and impulses towards the Christian uplift of the masses which already existed. The W.E.A. gave new direction, new shape, new organisation, to the evangelical ministry to the working classes especially in the Anglican Church but it also wedded evangelism to the early teaching of the social sciences. James Hight was the university's leading figure on the Joint Committee for Tutorial Classes in Canterbury and among his first tutors were economists, J.B. Condliffe and Copland.⁵ Condliffe recalls the "pristine vigour" of the fledgling W.E.A. whose classes he and Copland shared in Christchurch and Wellington. The clientele included active trade union secretaries, Marxian agitators, leaders of women's movements, political organisers and members of the Labour Party who became influential in later years. The discussion was vigorous and the attendance faithful.⁶ During 1916 Copland took over Condliffe's classes when he volunteered for war service, Copland himself being exempted on health grounds.⁷ He was elected treasurer to the W.E.A. in 1917 but, soon after, left New Zealand to fill the post at the University of Tasmania which had been vacated by Heaton's move to Adelaide.

⁵I am indebted to N.A. Parsloe of the Department of Extension Studies, University of Canterbury, for providing me with information and material on Copland's career with the W.E.A. in 1916. A picture of the social, intellectual and religious milieu in which the Canterbury W.E.A. was founded is given in N.A. Parsloe, *Eveline Willett Cunningham and the Origins of the Canterbury W.E.A.* (Wellington 1971) and in *The Lectures and Letters of Eveline Willett Cunningham*, edited by her children, (Christchurch 1918).

⁶J.B. Condliffe, "Training of an Economist", *Economic Record*, Vol. 36, March 1960, pp. 128-129.

⁷Certificate of Exemption from War Service, 8 December 1916. Copland Papers.

Once in Australia, Copland set out to make contact with his few colleagues in economics, notably Heaton and Irvine, and to develop the teaching of his subject in the University of Tasmania. At the core of his work, inherited from Heaton in 1917, was a long general history course largely attended by teachers into which Heaton had inserted a large segment on Australasia. Political science, economics and economic history made up the rest of his teaching. Heaton had made drastic changes in the teaching of economics which had, prior to his arrival, been conducted in lectures by E. Morris Miller under the general heading of philosophy. He had drafted his new course in economic history, had modernised the texts, and had introduced work in statistics and public finance.⁸ On these foundations Copland built up the areas of economics and commerce. In 1918, he was successful in gaining the support of the Hobart Chamber of Commerce and of the Institutes of Accountancy in persuading the university to establish a school of commerce. Economics was to be the central subject in the curriculum and at the same time the teaching of economics in the Arts course was improved.⁹ In the design of his new commercial Degree, Copland was eager to seek the advice of Hight, Heaton and Irvine. Hight was impressed by his pupil's design, deeming a few of its features to be superior to those in his own courses.¹⁰ Heaton was full of encouragement and advice, urging Copland to look particularly to Japan and America, not only to Europe, as fields for study. Perhaps, he ventured, Copland's course was a "little ambitious" for students who were still mainly part-time.¹¹

⁸Heaton to Copland, 11 June 1917. Copland Papers.

⁹Craufurd Goodwin, *Economic Enquiry in Australia*, *op. cit.*, p. 588.

¹⁰Hight to Copland, 24 October 1917. Copland Papers.

¹¹Heaton to Copland, 24 October 1917. Copland Papers.

Irvine responded in terms that indicated the divergence of emphasis between his orientation and Copland's: the course was

a little too professional. A little more humanism would, I think, be an improvement.¹²

There was also a heavy legacy of W.E.A. teaching. Heaton's first class had completed their three-year course of economics - "historical, descriptive and theoretical" - but Copland, in his lectures for the tutorial classes, followed the more theoretical course which Condliffe had taught in New Zealand. The word, and the dimension, "historical", was dropped from the title of his course. His aim was the introduction of students to the study of "positive economic science" and to the analysis of the organisation of the present economic system, having special concern for Australian conditions. The course moved through economic definitions of factors such as wants, values, utility, demand, production, consumption, organisation and distribution, then on to money, finance and banking. Ely, Cannan, Marshall, Hobson, Fisher and Taussig were the main texts.¹³

In his early years in the W.E.A. Copland embraced its moral and missionary aims as fervently as Bland or Portus or Heaton. He had been ready to assist in the "truly spiritual work" as it expanded in New Zealand after the War, promoting the establishment of a new branch in his birthplace on a return visit in 1918. He spoke of education as the path to self-realisation; it was, he said, a way of giving the workers a "glimpse of the beauty and power of life", a means of raising

¹²Irvine to Copland, 13 August 1917. Copland Papers.

¹³D.B. Copland, Syllabus for Tutorial Classes in *Courses of Study in Tutorial Classes* (Hobart, n.d.). Copland Papers.

the masses to a higher plane of thought and life.¹⁴ Quoting Charles Gore, he held out that fusion of humane learning and the new social science education which characterised the W.E.A. teaching, and he preached the gospel of social responsibility, self-less citizenship and co-operative self-help as expressed in its ethos.¹⁵ In his analysis of the modern industrial problem, Copland also followed the same lines as his colleagues. He criticised capitalism as a system which treated labour only according to the laws of supply and demand but he also believed it was amenable to reform in the light of more advanced understanding of economics.¹⁶ In 1919, like his W.E.A. colleagues, he admitted to seeing some hope in guild socialist ideas about industrial reconstruction and to some interest in the Whitley Councils; these were, as yet, "the most recent and hopeful of socialist movements" because their critique was based on a condemnation of the commodity nature of labour and because they advocated schemes which tried to integrate labour into economic institutions in a democratic way.¹⁷ He was a stern critic of the Peace Treaty and a supporter of the League of Nations, and, in particular, of the labour clauses in the Covenant of the League. He gave academic lectures on the origins of Bolshevism and attempted to raise the level of public understanding on the problems of War finance.¹⁸ In all, the W.E.A. programme in Hobart mirrored the

¹⁴Annual Report of the W.E.A. Timaru, N.Z. 1918, and newspaper report of Copland talk at Timaru, 29 January 1918. Newspaper Cuttings Book, Copland Papers.

¹⁵D.B. Copland "Education As It Affects Democracy". Report of talk, (n.d.). Newspaper Cuttings Book. Copland Papers.

¹⁶D.B. Copland, "Education and the Social Problem". Report of talk at St. John's Church, June 1918. Newspaper Cuttings Book. Copland Papers.

¹⁷*Hobart Mercury*, 31 October 1919. Report of Copland lecture "Trade Unionism and Industrial Democracy", an address given to W.E.A. Annual Conference.

¹⁸D.B. Copland (under pseudonym L.P. Bodcand) "Labor and the Peace Conference", *Australian Highway*, Vol. 1, no. 5, July 1919, pp. 9-10, and D.B. Copland, *The Origins of Bolshevism*, pamphlet published by the W.E.A. of Tasmania, 4 March 1920. Also, talks on "The League of Nations" and "The Cost of Living and The Fixing of Prices", June 1918. Newspaper Cuttings Book, Copland Papers.

interests and attitudes of those in Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide, but the orientation of the treatment of these subjects was always economic, emphasising the operation of economic factors in both the problems and their solutions.

Copland couched his aims in the rhetoric of the W.E.A. - "the inculcation of the spirit of democracy", "serving the community" or a "higher moral tone" - but his curricula for the proper education was definite and concrete. He held the view that education meant primarily the understanding of the social organism according to the laws and procedures of the positive science of economics. More than once he declared that the social sciences were the way to "the stimulating vision of what social welfare means" but his educational agenda was basically the study of economics. He advocated that such a study should replace the moralistic approach to social problems found in the schools and that the teachers should first of all lead their pupils to an understanding of the system in which they lived and worked. He suggested trade policy, public finance and industrial legislation as the sort of problems towards which students should be directed. Economics was not, he maintained, a colourless subject but one which could fit progressive educational ideals:

it will leave the student with the fine sense of unfinish and expectations of future explorations which has already been acclaimed as the ideal before the successful school.¹⁹

At the university level, Copland found a deplorably low level of interest in economic and commercial education.²⁰ Like Heaton and

¹⁹D.B. Copland, "Education As It Affects Democracy", *op. cit.*

²⁰*Hobart Daily Post*, 23 May 1918. Report of Copland talk on the establishment of a school of commerce: "a really sound bureau of economics and commerce could only be established by a live interest in the Universities".

Irvine, he recognised that economics had had an unfortunate history in Australia, having been used in the past to further the interest of one political group against another and thereby incurring the suspicion of both the academic and commercial worlds. The dichotomy which existed between the theoretical economist and the practical man of business was yet another source of mistrust to be overcome. The business men of Hobart, however, did respond to Copland's suggestions that their growing power and their role in the nation's future made it imperative that they not neglect the "higher thought on economic problems". He persuaded them that increased productivity, efficiency, the improved conservation of resources, the handling of the human element in industry, all required a better general education and a more sophisticated grasp of the social and economic system. His design for such an education included areas of economic history, economic geography, and public administration as well as the subjects for commercial training. Such a course, he emphasised, would still serve practical needs like the training of public servants or the development of efficiency among primary producers.²¹ In response to Copland's persuasions, the business men donated funds to the university appeal to subsidise the future establishment of a chair in economics and commerce. In making his own claims to the chair, Copland could point to his successful initiation of commerce courses and to the expansion of the tutorial class movement which accorded a central place to the teaching of economics. The six tutorial classes and two branches of the W.E.A. which he had found in 1917 had, by 1920, increased

²¹D.B. Copland, "Economics for the Business Man". Address to the Victorian Institute of Accountants, Hobart, 24 October 1918. Also, D.B. Copland, "Commercial Education. What Tasmania Proposes". Lecture to Launceston Chamber of Commerce, 6 December 1918. Both in Newspaper Cuttings Book. Copland Papers.

to eleven classes, two study circles and nine branches. He now had two lecturers to assist him: B.H. Molesworth took the classes in the north of the state and J.B. Brigden shared the teaching in the university. His students were now conducting research projects on Australian economic problems, a measure of the development of that subject during his tenure.²² Copland himself had been promoted in 1918, formally made Director of Tutorial Classes in 1919 and, on the establishment of the school of commerce, had been appointed Dean. Heaton wrote in support of Copland, attesting to the high quality of the examination papers he had read from Copland's students and noting that Copland had been able to build up a wide base of communal support:

Mr Copland's thorough, impartial and fearless treatment of his subject has won for him the respect and admiration of all sections of the community, and he is persona grata alike in the Chamber of Commerce and the Trades Hall.²³

By the end of the year, Copland had been invited to the new chair.²⁴

Heaton thought highly of the young Copland. He was an unexpected discovery in the Antipodes with his thorough grounding in economics and his ability to develop his subject, both institutionally and in the community, while remaining apparently free of the snares of controversy that had impeded several of his predecessors and contemporaries in Australia. The only thing needed, Heaton believed, to produce a "first-rate fellow" in Copland was a couple of years in England.²⁵ When C.R. Fay inquired from Toronto as to who were the

²²Copland to Vice-Chancellor, University of Tasmania, 25 February 1920. Copland Papers.

²³Heaton to University of Tasmania, 15 March 1920. Copland Papers.

²⁴Registrar, University of Tasmania, to Copland, 24 December 1920. Copland Papers.

²⁵Heaton to A. Zimmern, 13 June 1920. Heaton Papers, University of Minnesota Archives.

leading economists with whom he might make contact in Australia, Heaton placed Copland foremost, despite the fact that he was "a bit orthodox and text-bookish in his economics".²⁶ Orthodoxy and the rather remote dryness of his technical research on which Copland's colleagues remarked, were, however, the very qualities needed for survival and success in the pursuit of economics as a field in Australian universities. And, in his research, Copland was making significant advances in his profession, applying the new marginal theory of economics to Australian problems. He analysed Australian economic conditions in the post-War years of boom and depression by examining the components of economic fluctuation and emphasising the role of monetary factors.²⁷ He continually insisted that only the technical expertise of the trained economist could explain current economic problems and the forces underlying the manifestations of industrial unrest:

It is not enough to say that the abnormal events of the war and post-war periods are responsible for the bad times we entered upon in the middle of 1921. The general effect of these events was to impoverish us, but for many years there was a great outward show of increasing wealth. The underlying effects were discernible only to those who examined the situation closely and impartially.²⁸

It was, therefore, not only in the universities that a proper recognition of the skills and knowledge of the economist was needed. Copland joined the W.E.A. intellectuals in their criticism of the failure of governments and public bodies to utilise the expertise of

²⁶Heaton to C.R. Fay, 20 April 1922. Heaton Papers.

²⁷See D.B. Copland, "Currency Inflation and Price Movements in Australia" *Economic Journal*, Vol. XXX, December 1920, pp. 484-509; *Currency and Prices in Australia, The Joseph Fisher Lecture in Commerce* (Adelaide 1921); "The Economic Situation in Australia, 1918-23", *Economic Journal*, Vol. XXXIV, March 1924, pp. 32-51; "Some Problems of Taxation in Australia", *Economic Journal*, Vol. XXXIV, September 1924, pp. 387-397; "The Australian Income Tax", *Quarterly Journal of Economics* Vol. 39, 1925, pp. 70-95.

²⁸D.B. Copland, "The Economic Situation in Australia, 1918-23" *op. cit.*, p. 36, and *passim*.

social scientists in the formation of policy. He argued that economics was the crucial deposit of wisdom which governments must tap and frequently complained that no professional economist had been called to serve on important Royal Commissions, although his advice might be sought in testimony. Two examples of this neglect which prevailed until the mid-twenties were the Basic Wage Commission, chaired by A.B. Piddington in 1919, and the 1920 Royal Commission into Taxation, on which the Commissioners were representatives of commercial, farming and labour interests. The Piddington Royal Commission had dealt with complex economic matters: it was charged with determining the "just" basic wage, a matter which economists believed related not only to the "needs" of an average family as Higgins had decreed, but also to the cost of living and to the fundamental question of the productivity of industry. Both Commissions collected masses of data upon matters of public finance, trade and productivity, but Copland noted that there was no expert economist on these bodies to interpret them.²⁹ It was generally the case in Australia, he told readers of the *Economic Journal* in 1924, that although the average man showed great interest in economic problems, the study of economics was still "backward". A further example of the failure to use expert knowledge occurred, in Copland's view, at the Industrial Conference called by W.M. Hughes early in 1922. The Conference collapsed in disarray because according to Copland, popular opinion, erroneous impressions and the exchange of experience between employers and employees could be no substitute for a "thorough quantitative analysis" of the features of the Australian economic system which were under discussion. But, Copland conceded,

²⁹D.B. Copland, "Some Problems of Taxation in Australia", *op. cit.*, p. 388.

until the Universities have developed a greater respect for the conclusions of pure economics, and our economists have provided data for the study of our leading problems, we cannot expect political and industrial leaders to be greatly influenced by the principles of economics.³⁰

There was no want of theory about what he called "social economics" in Australia but this was beginning at the wrong end: data and analysis must precede social action. Such an approach was not popular in Australia because, he suggested,

... there is a tradition that economists are dull and theoretical, and a young democracy can ignore them with impunity.³¹

He asserted, to the contrary, that the objectivity of the economist was to be valued because it was not subject to the "clash of interests" which usually prejudiced the decision of economic issues in Australia. In 1923 he declared to the Australasian Association for the Advancement of Science meeting,

... just at the moment it so happens that the economist is (or should be) king in this as in every other country.³²

At the next meeting of the A.A.A.S. in 1924, the economists took a major professional step forward in the foundation of a national Economics Society and the launching of its journal, the *Economic Record*. Copland, its first editor, welcomed the professionalisation evidenced in these developments:

³⁰D.B. Copland, "The Economic Situation in Australia, 1918-23", *op. cit.*, pp. 48-51. See also D.B. Copland, "The Trade Depression in Australia in Relation to Economic Thought". Paper read to A.A.A.S. 1923. *Report of the Sixteenth Meeting of the Australasian Association for the Advancement of Science held at Wellington 1923*, pp. 555-557.

³¹D.B. Copland, "The Trade Depression in Australia in Relation to Economic Thought", *op. cit.* p. 555.

³²*Ibid.*

There is an urgent need for some organisation to promote economic knowledge, and, more especially, to encourage a respect for such knowledge, and for the scientific approach to economic problems which bulk so largely in the political life of Australia.³³

At the same time, economists were beginning to emerge as public figures and shapers of policy. In 1925, J.B. Brigden, R.C. Mills and J.T. Sutcliffe were appointed to the Queensland Economic Commission on the Basic Wage whereas, five years earlier, the important Commonwealth Basic Wage Commission had been entrusted to a lawyer in Piddington. Brigden, who had succeeded Copland in Hobart in 1924, also became closely associated with the Tasmanian State Treasury in an advisory capacity and was consulted by the Bruce-Page government on industrial relations. His work on the Tariff, which appeared in the first issue of the *Economic Record*, impressed the government and led directly, according to Copland, to the establishment of a committee of five economists (Brigden, Copland, Wickens, Giblin and Dyason) to advise on the problems of the Tariff. Brigden went on to investigate the movements of shipping as Deputy-Chairman of the Australian Overseas Transport Association in 1929, while Copland and fellow economists served on the Development and Migration Commission. Between the wars, the role that Copland envisaged for economists became a reality, particularly as a result of the Depression. The evidence of economists was decisive in the 1931 decision of the Commonwealth Arbitration Court to reduce the basic wage. Thus, the expertise of Copland, Dyason, Brigden, Hytten, Giblin, Shann and Melville played a crucial part in

³³D.B. Copland, "The Economic Society - Its Origin and Constitution", *Economic Record*, Vol. 1-2, November 1925, p. 142.

analysis of the factors leading to the Depression and in the strategies adopted for economic recovery.³⁴

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At the point where he had placed economics and commerce on a secure footing in Tasmania, Copland was contemplating a move abroad, hoping to study at Cambridge or the L.S.E., but his plans were frustrated by recurring ill-health.³⁵ He had returned to New Zealand for an extended visit and, during 1919 and 1920, had applied for chairs of economics at Otago and Christchurch.³⁶ In 1922, he was one of the many unsuccessful applicants for Meredith Atkinson's position of Director of Tutorial Classes at the University of Melbourne. Although he and Heaton were the runners-up, the post went to John Alexander Gunn.³⁷ In 1924, however, Copland achieved his translation to Melbourne when he was appointed to the foundation chair of commerce.

The development of economics at the University of Melbourne had been made difficult by its earlier traditional links with political economy and the problems of maintaining a satisfactory separation of economics from politics. When W.E. Hearn held one of the four original chairs in the university, which covered history and political economy, the free-trade doctrines which he expounded had brought him and his subject under political attack from protectionists and forged in the minds of many an inevitable connection between economics, political

³⁴See D.B. Copland, *Australia in the World Crisis 1929-1933*, (Cambridge 1934) and C.B. Schedvin, *Australia and the Great Depression* (Sydney 1970) esp. pp. 218-225.

³⁵A.W. Hodgart, *The Faculty of Economics and Commerce. A History 1925-75* (Melbourne n.d.) p. 5. Hodgart refers to a letter from R.H. Tawney to Copland on this matter, 26 April 1923.

³⁶Hight to Copland re Otago, 20 July 1919; re Christchurch, 21 July 1920.

³⁷Melbourne University Registry Files 1922/433.

interest and controversy. But, from the turn of the century, the subject of economics also had powerful advocates in university circles. In their efforts to modernise the curricula of the university, W. Harrison Moore, Henry Bournes Higgins and James Barrett, had long argued for the inclusion of more social and applied sciences, following the example of the North American universities which they admired. As early as 1903, Harrison Moore was quoting the programmes of German universities, the Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania and William Ashley's new department at the University of Birmingham - all were models of the alliance between business and the university which gave economics a functional status. Under J.S. Elkington, who succeeded to Hearn's chair, the popularity of political economy declined until, after his retirement in 1912, it continued only as a subject in the Arts Faculty, taught by E.C. Kelly.³⁸ It was not until 1930 that a school of economics was established in the B.A. Degree and this was to be controlled by Copland's Commerce Faculty.

As Copland conceived his new Faculty of Commerce, it was to reinforce the links between the university and the business world. The interests of business and commerce, finance and manufacturing, were firmly represented on the Board of the Faculty. Outside members included G. Swinburne, E.C. Dyason and D.G. Paterson among those sent from the Associated Banks, the Stock Exchange, the Insurance Institute and the Joint Council of Accountancy to sit on the Board. However, Copland, as Dean, was the shaping influence: his drafts, proposals

³⁸See Craufurd Goodwin, *Economic Enquiry in Australia*, *op. cit.* pp. 568-581. Also J. La Nauze, *Political Economy in Australia* (Melbourne 1949).

and appointments were generally acknowledged and endorsed by the Faculty.³⁹ In turn, he respected the initiatives and interest in the outside community that had made his chair a reality. He paid tribute to the men who had seen beyond the old controversial distinction between theory and practice in the training of commercial men. In his Inaugural Lecture, Copland redefined that old dichotomy as the true relation between practical affairs and science, asserting that it was reciprocal. He defined science as

a body of knowledge derived from experience of its material, and co-ordinated so that it shall be useful in forecasting and, if possible, directing human behaviour.⁴⁰

Although he was always confident about the marshalling of facts and the potential of their scientific analysis, he did allow for some understanding of the actions of men but these, too, could be observed and studied. Human and cultural possibilities were not to be ignored in the name of science, and Copland approved Dewey's dictum that a course of study must have "appreciation value" and aspire to the personal enrichment of the student, but, to his patrons, the main appeal was tangible results. Copland had to convince them that the scientific qualities of a university education made it superior to the pragmatic experience of a practical apprenticeship. His course must be justifiable in terms of what it could add to business efficiency and the handling of the economic affairs of the nation. In general, he believed it would contribute to man's ultimate mastery over the economic system by which he gained his livelihood.

³⁹A. Hodgart, *op. cit.* pp. 5-6.

⁴⁰D.B. Copland, *Commerce and Business. Inaugural Lecture* (Melbourne 1925) p. 5.

There were, therefore, much broader concerns in a university education in commerce which arose from the complex nature of modern society. Business men would need to understand the whole economic organisation - in short, to study economics. Copland was careful to allay the suspicions of his audience by distinguishing the new economics from the old political economy. The latter, he explained, had been based on abstract theory and was of mere academic interest but his own subject could now claim to be the most exact of the social sciences. He spoke to persuade the business men of Melbourne of the respectability, reliability and scientific utility of economics, drawing their attention to the sophisticated methods of data collection and statistical analysis and to all the refined techniques which achieved the accuracy of the subject. Exactitude and objectivity now replaced vagueness and abstraction. The rest of his lecture gave, as an example, the operation of all the above in his own studies of the Australian currency.⁴¹

Under what Herbert Burton called Copland's "characteristic vigour and breadth of outlook", the fields of economics and commerce grew steadily.⁴² Copland had a particular skill for relating what was taught and done in his Faculty to the university. In its early years, G.L. Wood and F.R. Mauldon joined his staff and, in 1929, there was a notable coup in the establishment of a research chair in economics to which L.F. Giblin, a staunch ally of the W.E.A. in Hobart, was appointed.

⁴¹*Ibid.*, *passim*.

⁴²H. Burton, "Sir Douglas Copland and the Melbourne Commerce School" *Economic Record*, Vol. 36, March 1960, pp. 139-142. Several accounts of Copland's work are contained in "Essays in Honour of Sir Douglas Copland" in this volume.

Bland summed up Copland's path to progress in a letter to Heaton and Portus in 1927:

I had a look over Copie's School of Commerce. He has a School with staff and students which would be the envy of anyone. He is a little king over there. Newspapers listen to his oracular statements, business men and financiers worship at his feet, and from afar, students are drawn as moths to a flame, and other Professors have not yet become accustomed to the blaze of the new luminary. This is not satire, it is sheer realities, and so far Copie has no Shadows to contend with.⁴³

Allowing for the playful hyperbole among friends, Bland was nonetheless correct in remarking the extent of Copland's conquest at the University of Melbourne.

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In the advancement of the social sciences in Australia, Copland was able to extend his activities beyond the University of Melbourne and the W.E.A. of Victoria. In 1926 he was asked by Beardsley Ruml, Director of the Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial, to assist their programme of developing the social sciences in various parts of the world. The L.S.R.M. had originally promoted social welfare programmes but under Ruml, who was convinced that the problems of society would be solved by scientific social research, its interest was directed to the social sciences. Its aim was to create centres and institutions in several countries which would concentrate on such research and teaching and to begin an extensive Fellowship programme which would enable social scientists from around the world to work at the centres.

⁴³Bland to Portus and Heaton, 30 May 1927. Bland Papers, D.A.E. University of Sydney. This long and informative letter was written to both while Portus was visiting the United States.

The University of Stockholm and the London School of Economics were two prominent institutions thus funded by Rockefeller money.⁴⁴ Copland's task was to assess the needs of the social sciences in Australia and to develop the Fellowship programme to take Australian scholars abroad. It was a scheme which Copland believed offered

unique opportunities to Australia of improving the quality of instruction in social science and of establishing closer connections with the great centres of learning in other parts of the world.⁴⁵

In the same year Copland went abroad to study the operations of the L.S.R.M. in Europe and America, meeting all the leading academic economists and taking stock of the teaching of the social sciences and the arrangements for social science research in the countries he visited. It was, in many ways, the same tour taken by Peter Board, James Barrett and R.F. Irvine in pre-War years but, in Copland's case, the results were more productive - a measure of the distance already travelled by the social sciences in Australia in the intervening years.

Copland's report on his tour, containing his subsequent recommendations for Australian universities, was published in 1927 by the new Melbourne University Press.⁴⁶ The report, entitled *Studies in Economics and Social Science* was based on two premises: one, that Australia had hardly begun to provide for the systematic study of the social sciences which had been flourishing in universities abroad for at least the past three decades, and two, that the social sciences

⁴⁴For an account of RumI and the L.S.R.M. see D. Fisher, "American Philanthropy and the Social Sciences in Britain, 1919-1939; the Reproduction of a Conservative Ideology", *Sociological Review*, Vol. 28, no. 2, May 1980, pp. 277-315.

⁴⁵Copland to Chancellor, University of Melbourne, 25 April 1927. Copland Papers. A memorandum reporting on his tour abroad.

⁴⁶D.B. Copland, *Studies in Economics and Social Science*, Economic Series no. 2 (Melbourne 1927).

themselves had now reached such a degree of accuracy and reliability that man could look forward to an increasing control over his world. He was impressed by the efforts being made overseas to co-ordinate research in the social sciences which aimed at

bringing the more exact methods of measurement now available to the solution of social and economic problems which hitherto have been considered in the light of crude observation only.⁴⁷

Australian public life, he pointed out in the manner of Irvine and Barrett before him, had taken little account of the benefits available to it through the expertise of the social sciences. Trained graduates had yet to be appreciated and preferred in employment and there existed, as yet, no privately funded or government supported research institute devoted to the social sciences such as those he had seen abroad. A new country like Australia, he argued, must extend its understanding of its own political and economic organisation as thoroughly and scientifically as possible. The training of graduates was a matter of particular interest: he favoured the general education of American undergraduate programmes and the specialisation at graduate level. Within that education he was impressed by the empirical approach to sociological questions and recommended the adoption of "case study methods" in graduate seminars and the "social survey" as a way of collecting research data.

The uses of social science research for private and public policy formation interested him particularly, as it had Irvine. He saw in other countries how much data could be gathered on facets of social

⁴⁷*Ibid.*, p. 2.

life - crime studies, child welfare, local government, transportation or industrial relations. Public and private endowment of such research made possible in America the uses of knowledge elaborated, for example, by Charles Merriam in his *New Aspects of Politics*, a book which Copland quoted in support of his ideas. Copland recommended the development of the standard social sciences - geography, anthropology, psychology, economics and political science - but he gave added attention to those subjects like public administration and industrial psychology which, like commerce, furthered the interaction of the university and public life. It was anomalous, as American visitor Carter Goodrich from the University of Michigan had recently pointed out, that in a country in which trade unions and labour politics had been so influential, the study of labour management was barely initiated. In the same way, in a country where government was so extensive, there had been little encouragement given to the study of public administration in more than one university. There was no agency in Australia for investigating the operations of government or specific social and economic problems except the Royal Commission. Except for the valuable efforts of the Bureau of Census and Statistics, Copland did not believe Australia had advanced in understanding her own social and economic life since Henry Bournes Higgins had lamented the absence of such expertise in arriving at his Harvester Judgement in 1907. It was now even more essential to assist the deliberations of new national bodies like the Council for Science and Industry, the Tariff Board or the Migration and Development Commission.⁴⁸

⁴⁸*Ibid.*, *passim*. Goodrich is quoted on p. 18.

Although there was an emphasis on economics in the programmes of the L.S.R.M., the Fellowships were not restricted to economists. It was Copland's intention to award the first fellowships to those already in the universities who had not yet been able to go abroad and then to extend the scheme to younger post-graduates. The awards were not advertised but made by "informal co-operation" between Copland and the universities who advised him of potential candidates. In the early years of the operation, Copland nominated the Fellow after consultation with colleagues in economics and W.E.A. counterparts like Bland and Portus. The professionalisation of the social sciences thus took a step forward as young Australian social scientists went abroad to study in a way that Copland himself had not been able to.⁴⁹

A comparative reading of Copland's *Studies in Economics and Social Science* (1927) and R.F. Irvine's *The Place of the Social Sciences in a Modern University* (1914) illuminates the passage of the early W.E.A. mentality regarding the importance of social inquiry to the specialised professionalisation of social science disciplines. Both reports followed the study of European and American models and both argued against the "cloistral", "Olympian" detachment of universities from the community, as Irvine called it, urging the foundation of research institutes which would bridge the two worlds. Irvine's main point, however, was the "anthropocentric" nature of the social sciences: all natural and human scientific endeavour was abortive

⁴⁹General Correspondence on L.S.R.M. business, 1928-9. Copland Papers. Among the first recipients were F.C. Benham, A.L.G. Mackay, W. Macmahon Ball, and A.C.V. Melbourne. Copland also negotiated a grant for the W.E.A. from the Carnegie Corporation on his U.S. tour.

unless it ultimately resulted in the better
 "realisation of ends to which human beings can
 reasonably attach value"⁵⁰

The social sciences, in Irvine's definition, were scientific in spirit and method but humanistic in that they dealt with human beings. They wedded scientism to what he termed Practical Humanism which interpreted and valued the social origins and effects of the present social and economic system and applied research to society's problems. Social reform, human value systems and a moral order were all part of Irvine's faith in the social sciences but there was none of this rhetoric in the Copland discussion. Copland celebrated the triumph of methodology and the mastery it would give man over his social environment - its ends were no longer elaborated in ethical terms. There was also a fundamental difference in Irvine's and Copland's thinking on the co-ordination of social inquiry which was exemplified in their respective attitudes to the subject of sociology. Indeed, the fate of sociology at the University of Melbourne was a telling indication of the directions which the social sciences in Australia were to take for the next thirty years. To chart, in this one episode, the displacement of Irvine's mentality by Copland's, it is necessary to return to 1922 to the appointment of Meredith Atkinson's successor, John Alexander Gunn.

Among the diverse array of forty people who applied for the post of Director of Tutorial Classes at the University of Melbourne in 1922 were Mayo, who left for the United States in that year, C.H. Northcott who did not return to Australia but went to Rowntree's in England as a pioneer in industrial management, R.C. Mills who withdrew to take

⁵⁰R.F. Irvine, *The Place of the Social Sciences in a Modern University*, p. 20. Irvine's quotation is from L.T. Hobhouse, *Social Evolution and Political Theory*.

Irvine's chair in Sydney, Heaton in Adelaide, H. Duncan Hall who was appointed to a chair at Syracuse University, and Copland, still in Hobart. The job specified the special importance of economics and industrial history and the responsibility for the teaching of sociology in the university. All these applicants had been involved in the W.E.A. movement but only Northcott had any formal training in sociology. The man selected was a scholar in French philosophy from Liverpool, John Alexander Gunn. Gunn's education was in philosophy and classics, his Ph.D. was gained for a study of Bergson and he had been a tutor for the W.E.A. at the University of Liverpool in social psychology, economics and economic history. He was warmly recommended by the English advisory committee of A.L. Smith and Albert Mansbridge.⁵¹ Copland was the second on the short list; he was also the friend and favoured candidate of S.D. Thompson, the powerful secretary of the W.E.A. in Victoria, with whom Gunn had to work in organising tutorial classes.

Gunn immediately identified his sociology as serving "Social Progress", which was the title of his Inaugural Address. It was, he instructed his audience, the positive study of the social groups of mankind with reference to the psychological, physical and biological factors involved in the process of social evolution. Social progress was defined as the strengthening of social solidarity, and sociology was the subject which most advanced this because it preserved the wholeness of social knowledge.⁵² The sociologist, according to Gunn, should present society as a complex of four factors: Breed, by which

⁵¹Melbourne University Registry Files 1922/433.

⁵²J. Alexander Gunn, *Social Progress. Inaugural Lecture* (Melbourne 1923) pp. 1-20.

he meant the biological factor, population and family; Livelihood, which was the economic element; Government, which covered the nature and purpose of the state, and Culture, or "social mentality", which included ideas of citizenship and morality. What Gunn called Breed and Culture were in his theory governed by assumptions based on Darwinian selection and on current psychological theories about intelligence. The "group mind" was central to this discourse and Gunn drew on the writing of McDougall, Wallas, Le Bon, Tarde, Trotter and Lippman, who in various ways raised the irrationalist spectre of the herd-crowd which was susceptible to press and demagogue - the same ignorant masses who worried Mayo and Atkinson. The other two factors, Government and Livelihood, were also to be understood in terms of contemporary group theory: MacIver, Cole, Laski and Follett were cited among others.⁵³ Gunn projected a four-volume work entitled *Human Society* to deal with each factor but only one, *Livelihood*, appeared in 1927.

Gunn's sociology course reflected the same organising ideas. It was a compound of political philosophy, rudimentary economic history, social psychology and biology (here to be translated as eugenics). He announced the course as a study of community as the "expression of life", with R.M. MacIver's book, *Community*, as the text. Lectures on Comte, Spenser and Darwin put forward the claims of positivism and the notion of social evolution. This was followed by a survey of group organisation from primitive man, through manor and guild and factory system, to present social groupings from the family to the League of

⁵³J. Alexander Gunn, *Livelihood*, (Melbourne 1927). Preface.

Nations. The economic factor was treated next: the rise of industry, the division of labour, trade unions, trusts and the problems of distribution of wealth. Theories of the state from Aristotle to Hegel were then expounded and the nature of sovereignty explored. After a brief discussion of Marx, Sorel and the guild socialists, the final lectures dealt with population quantity and quality, the psychology of the group, comparative religion and the influence of the press.

Besides MacIver's works, the main reading was to be Hobhouse, Tawney's *Acquisitive Society*, Hetherington and Muirhead's *Social Purpose*, Jenks on *State and the Nation* and Barker, *Political Thought from Spencer to Today*. Essays might be done by students on either industrialisation, or womanhood and the ethics of feminism, which was part of the study of sex and the family. The Honours year was an intensive study of political theory devoted again to the nature, purpose and organisation of the state. The last term of the course testified to Gunn's belief that the progressive society must be concerned about the quality of its population. He invited the professor of zoology, W.E. Agar, to give a series of lectures on the outline of genetics and its application to the human race - it was termed eugenics in the university's Calendar. Complete with scientific tables and equations, the course in eugenics pondered the urgency of matters such as the propagation of the unfit, the havoc of venereal disease, the evils of alcoholism and prostitution, and the threat of mental deficiency.⁵⁴ A new element had entered the teaching of sociology in Gunn's identification of social progress with better breeding and high intelligence. Eugenics

⁵⁴Melbourne University Calendar, 1923, pp. 559-560. I am also much indebted to Professor N.D. Harper for the use of his lecture notes from Gunn's sociology courses, 1925.

was as important as education.

The claims for the legitimacy of sociology in the arguments of Anderson, Irvine, Northcott, Atkinson and Gunn had all rested heavily on the interdisciplinary nature of the subject. Each had asserted its organic wholeness which integrated the insights of other social sciences. But as the professionalisation and the specialisation of those other sciences became more advanced, Gunn's sociology incurred the charge of being superficial and old-fashioned. The old accepted nexus between sociology and economics came under particular fire when Copland began his highly professional school of economics and commerce in 1925. As a technical economist and an exponent of the scientific accuracy of his discipline to business and governments, Copland believed that each area of the social sciences should be discrete, empirical and trustworthy. The exception was sociology which he had found to be, in his experience, eclectic and amorphous. His hostility to sociology at Melbourne was undoubtedly coloured by a deep personal animosity to Gunn, which he shared with his friend, S.D. Thompson, the secretary of the W.E.A. One of Atkinson's legacies at Melbourne had been an internecine war between Thompson and the W.E.A. on the one hand and Gunn and the university on the other. It was, in essence, a struggle over who should run the extension programme of the university. Because of his neglect of duties, Atkinson had allowed Thompson to become the university's executive officer in these matters, a situation that was not acceptable to Gunn nor to the university. In two inquiries into the affair, in 1924 and 1926, Gunn was vindicated and the power of the W.E.A. was limited. As a member of the Federal Council of the

⁵⁵Melbourne University Extension Board. Report of Committee of Enquiry, 14 February 1927. Registry Files 1927/257.

W.E.A., Copland was very involved in the in-fighting and supported Thompson, even against the cooler judgements of W.E.A. colleagues, J.B. Brigden, G.V. Portus and F.A. Bland. All were convinced, however, that Gunn was a personal disaster for the W.E.A. cause.⁵⁶

Since Gunn's appointment, other efforts had been made to strengthen the social sciences in the universities. The newly formed Australasian Association for Psychology and Philosophy called for the development of psychology and for the foundation in each university of a department of social sciences.⁵⁷ In 1925, under the chairmanship of A. Boyce Gibson, the professor of philosophy, the University of Melbourne set up a committee to consider the viability of these motions. Gunn argued the need for a chair of sociology to this committee in the following terms:

The existence of a professorship of Sociology (or Civics, Social Science, Social Philosophy, or Political Science, the choice of name is not a vital matter) would raise the standard and status of this important subject not only in the

⁵⁶Bland to Portus and Heaton, 30 May 1927, gives the following appraisal of the impasse:

Gunn you will remember was not the selection of Thompson. He wanted Herbert and failing him Copie ... Gunn knew nothing of what a Director ought to do, is slovenly in his administration, and very interested in Philosophy. His own incompetent administration was not helped by Thompson's ineptitude, and in 1923 he wrote a private memo to the University Council urging Thompson's sack. Thommie got off at the inquiry because the University people did not know what to look for, and Gunn did not know how to present his case. That sealed Gunn's doom. Ever since Thommie has been on his track. Thommie wants complete control of the Tutorial Classes.

Further on in his letter Bland reports that he "saw Copie who poured out his contempt for Gunn". Copland Papers.

⁵⁷A.H. Martin to the Registrar, 15 January 1925, Melbourne University Registry Files, 1925/408. Also, Editorial, "The Pan-Pacific Scientific Congress and the Study of Sociology", *Australasian Journal of Psychology and Philosophy*, Vol. 1 no. 3, September 1923 pp. 159-161.

University but in the community and appears a necessary step to the attainment of that informed citizenship which is necessary in our democracy.⁵⁸

Gunn's vagueness about the name of the subject perfectly encapsulated Copland's objections to it. However, the dilemma did not last long. Within the month, the chairman of the Professorial Board made it clear there was no financial hope of any such developments and even hoped to avoid the costs of circulating the copies of Boyce Gibson's report to the thirty members of the Board.

The publication of Gunn's economic text, *Livelihood*, in 1927 did nothing to redeem his reputation. He maintained in the book that the status of sociology as the central social science cast no reflection upon the autonomy of economics. Sociology took under its purview the whole of society while economics dealt only with wealth and livelihood in the light of statistics. His own attempt to handle this fragment of human experience drew scornful appraisal from economists. Reviewers in the *Economic Journal*, the *American Economic Review*, and even the W.E.A.'s own journal, the *Australian Highway*, concluded that the book was useless, too elementary, out-of-date, poorly organised, ill-balanced, carelessly written and badly punctuated. H. Sanderson Furniss pointed to Gunn's real problem, in remarking that economics had now reached the stage where it was doubtful if the whole ground of economics could be satisfactorily covered in a small text.⁵⁹ By 1927 there was a substantial amount of pioneering research complete on Australian

⁵⁸J. Alexander Gunn, Report to A. Boyce Gibson's Committee, 29 May 1925. Melbourne University Registry Files 1925/408.

⁵⁹H. Heaton, review of J.A. Gunn, *Livelihood*, *American Economic Review*, Vol. 17, 1927, p. 686; H. Sanderson Furniss, review, *Economic Journal*, Vol. 37, December 1927, pp. 643-644; F.A. Bland, review, *Australian Highway*, 10 August, 1927, p. 111.

economic problems, a body of work which did not exist when Atkinson began his course in 1918. Gunn could list, for example, Sutcliffe on *The National Dividend in Australia*, Copland on *Commerce and Business and Monetary Policy and Its Application to Australia*; Mills and Benham's *Principles of Money Banking and Foreign Exchange Applied to Australia*, Brigden's study of *Employment Relations and The Basic Wage* and Mills's *Taxation in Australia*. It was clearly galling to Copland that Gunn should presume to include amateur economics in his sociology teaching and, furthermore, bring the subject into disrepute in his writing. Copland was not in favour of the amalgamation of economics into any department of social sciences as envisaged by Gunn or Irvine or Atkinson. He believed such a department would encroach upon the domain of the separate disciplines - the very antithesis of their holistic argument. Moreover, he warned of intellectual dangers in such schemes:

this tendency to treat the social aspect of a problem before its economic basis has been thoroughly examined would be encouraged.⁶⁰

When Copland made his tour for the Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial, one of the areas he studied with acute interest at each port of call was sociology. He wrote to G.L. Wood, his deputy in economics at Melbourne, that MacIver himself had little time for the vagueness of sociology although he was well disposed to the social sciences; from Yale he reported that he had "a little more light thrown

⁶⁰Copland to the Registrar, 31 July 1925, Melbourne University Registry Files, 1925/408. Copland argued in this comment on Gunn's proposal to establish a Department of Social Science and a chair of sociology that both economics and psychology should be further developed before any such moves were made. He noted that topics in sociology were already included for study in higher levels of economics courses.

on the sociology problem" while, at Birmingham, his doubts were further confirmed:

I found here as elsewhere great scepticism about sociology and it is clear that some reconsideration must be given to the situation in Melbourne. No doubt I shall have a plan on my return.⁶¹

His return coincided with the university inquiry into the W.E.A. affair when Gunn was reappointed and sociology therefore remained intact.

Copland's report on his tour and his recommendations on the social sciences suggested, however, that sociology not be an undergraduate subject because of its vagueness. Other social sciences provided, in his view, sufficient effective synthesis.⁶²

The dénouement occurred the following year, when the requirements for a new Honours school of economics within the Faculty of Arts were being worked out. This course was to be under Copland's jurisdiction from the Faculty of Commerce and he emerged as the convenor of a committee of the Faculty of Arts inquiring into the future of sociology in relation to economics, philosophy and a course called modern political institutions. The report concluded that the actual teaching in sociology did not "correspond with the present title of the subject" - without specifying what that might mean. It recommended that sociology be dismantled and the content of the course be re-organised into three new subjects: political philosophy, which was to cover the history of political thought and be grouped in the philosophy school; constitutional history and international relations to be taken in the

⁶¹Copland to G.L. Wood, 31 August 1926. Copland Papers.

⁶²D.B. Copland, *Studies in Economics and Social Science*, op. cit., p. 33 and p. 36.

history school; and modern political institutions which would be an evening course combining constitutional law and political science.⁶³ Gunn's two former tutors, W. Macmahon Ball and P.D. Phillips, were to be in charge of the new subjects while Gunn, no longer having a field to profess, was relegated to his extension teaching and ad hoc work in sundry departments like education, philosophy and French. The changes came into effect in 1928 and, by 1929, Copland wrote of Macmahon Ball's work to Portus:

he has lifted the subject (sociology) on to a decent academic plane. He turned it from a flotsam and jetsam of everything into a well co-ordinated study of the history of Political Philosophy.⁶⁴

In this instance, at the University of Melbourne in the post-War years, sociology had a "personal" history in the characters of these protagonists which hindered its permanent rooting. Both Atkinson and Gunn made enemies quickly even among their W.E.A. colleagues. But this does not adequately explain the ultimate failure of the subject in this period nor why, as Warren Osmond perceptively asked, it left almost no direct progeny.⁶⁵ The problem went deeper into the very nature of the subject as it was conceived and practised, and, beyond that, to the condition of Australian intellectual life itself. Sociology was viable when Anderson proposed it, in 1912, and when Atkinson introduced it, in 1918, precisely because the questions it raised and the contemporary nature of its concerns were not being studied coherently in the universities, but,

⁶³Report of Committee of the Faculty of Arts on Sociology, 1929. Melbourne University Registry Files, 1929/561.

⁶⁴Copland to Portus, 3 April 1929. Copland Papers.

⁶⁵W. Osmond, "Australianism and the Sociologist", unpublished paper given at the S.A.A.N.Z. Conference, August 1972.

as this changed with the increasing professionalisation of other social sciences, it became more difficult to make out a case for what was distinctive or indispensable in that sociology. There was no practice of the social measurement in which Anderson, Irvine and others had proclaimed so much faith and which Copland insisted on as the essence of social science inquiry. Gunn was not ignorant of empirical sociology - he had alluded to plans for a university settlement house where applied study of social problems might take place - but nothing was ever done towards this sort of research. And, if there was no methodology or research to identify the specific nature of the field, there was also no legitimacy deriving from European sociological theory. Early sociology in Australia, like the W.E.A. which promoted it, was much more indebted to British liberal social thought.

Certainly, beyond the conflict of powerful and hapless personalities and the problems of definition inherent in the subject, the failure of sociology to take root may also have been due to its failure to speak to the realities of Australian political and social life in the way that, for example, economics was able to. The pluralist emphasis of Atkinson's and Gunn's sociology endorsed the devolution of authority - political, economic and industrial - and stressed the vitality and autonomy of groups, yet the dominant political culture in Australia valued none of this. In the *étatist*, over-governed and centralising Australia of these years and after, the theory of this sociology would have had as little bite as the appeals of the W.E.A. intellectuals urging the trade unionists to embrace moral citizenship. On the other hand, the economics of D.B. Copland and his colleagues achieved their ascendancy in the social sciences and in the national life because they did serve the existing and growing needs of central governments. Copland himself predicted the shift in his report on the

social sciences:

In every field of economic and social life it is the group that predominates, whether it be the company organisation of industry, the trade union or employers' association representing special interests, the political party in government, or the friendly society, or other group in social life. We are therefore witnessing a development of social control through these agencies quite apart from the actions of the State. It is not necessary to refer to the fact that such group control is not new in history. We have it at present in a form which emphasises the special interest of groups, sometimes in opposition to the general interest. In these circumstances it is not difficult to see the importance of further control by the authority of the State in many spheres. It is not intended here to offer an exposition of the functions of the State. Suffice it to say that it cannot ignore the need for some conscious effort at directing economic forces towards the public interest when they are being diverted by special groups in their own interests.⁶⁶

The first half of this statement described a condition of which the W.E.A. intellectuals would have approved, at least in the early years of their careers. The pluralist devolution to which Copland referred was, in their social theory, evidence of the growing health of society. But, by the end of the twenties, Copland had arrived at the paradigm Australian answer. The power of the central state was reasserted as paramount over the potential of devolution, and the science of economics was to be directed to its service.

⁶⁶D.B. Copland, *Studies in Economics and Social Science*, op. cit., pp. 66-67.

PART THREE

CHAPTER 8. Herbert Heaton: Hobart, 1914-1916

The writer of Herbert Heaton's obituary in the *American Historical Review* began with a brief declaration: "Herbert Heaton was a Yorkshire-man".¹ If this were seen to be a telling epitaph after his fifty years in America, it must have indicated much about his personal and his intellectual style in his early days in Australia. Born in the town of Keighley in 1890, he was educated nearer to Leeds at Batley Grammar School and then at Morley Secondary School. Although he was an Honours student in history at Leeds University from 1908 to 1911, he regarded his education in economics as crucial and his teacher, D.H. Macgregor, as something of a mentor. Macgregor, one of the pioneers of economic history in England wrote later, when he was Drummond professor of political economy at Oxford, that Heaton was the ablest student he had taught and that he had guided him to the study of economics. Graduating with first class honours, Heaton was awarded a Rutson research scholarship of £70 for a thesis on industrial life in 18th century Yorkshire and, for the first time, the West Riding Education committee supplemented this with a special fellowship of £40. Thus he was able to spend the next year at the London School of Economics working under the direction of Dr Lillian Knowles on the Yorkshire textile industry and taking courses in economics, commerce, sociology and political science in the University of London. His work there gained him an M.A. from Leeds and he was then appointed in 1912 as assistant lecturer in economics in the Faculty of Commerce under Sir William Ashley. In 1914, he was awarded the degree of Master of Commerce from Birmingham and, when his extended research was published as *The Yorkshire Woollen and Worsted Industries*, he was admitted to the

¹Obituary, *American Historical Review*, Vol. 78, 1973, p. 1171.

degree of D. Litt. from Leeds University.²

When Heaton arrived a few months later in Hobart as Director of Tutorial Classes and lecturer in economics, he found an already formed class of forty students willing to spend their Friday nights on the study of economic history.³ Within a fortnight he had added two more classes in the city and then he began extensive travelling into every part of Tasmania giving lectures which were often preparatory to the establishment of a WEA centre.⁴ In 1919, the government funded a second full-time tutor and B.H. Molesworth was appointed to look after the north of the state. Heaton stayed in Hobart for three years until, in 1917, he moved to Adelaide where he again filled the post of the first Director of Tutorial Classes and lecturer in economics. The South Australian government had been slower than was hoped in making money available. In August 1925, Heaton left Adelaide, and Australia, to take up the chair of economics and political science at Queens University in Kingston, Ontario. He made a final move two years later to the University of Minnesota where he was professor and chairman of the history department in his later years. After a career which gained him international recognition and professional honours - he was secretary of the Social Sciences Research Council's committee on research in economic history and from 1948-50 president of the Economic History Association - he retired in 1958 and died in Minneapolis in 1973.⁵

²H. Heaton, Curriculum vitae, Melbourne University Registry Files 1924/124 (from Heaton's application for the chair of commerce).

³*Highway*, Vol. 6, no. 61, October 1913. A section called "The Finger Post" kept track of W.E.A. developments in English districts and Overseas.

⁴Heaton to A.J. Grant, 26 May 1919. Heaton Papers, University Archives, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis. At the time this material was consulted, it was organised in only a preliminary way so that the categories for citation are extremely general. This is an eight page letter reviewing his first five years in Australia.

⁵Obituary, *American Historical Review*, *op. cit.*, p. 1171.

Although he maintained his interest in Australia for many years, he never returned here.

The two men on whose recommendation he was appointed to the University of Tasmania - William Ashley and Albert Mansbridge - represented shaping forces in Heaton's life. The way in which economic history developed as a field in England in its own right owed a great deal to W.J. Ashley who occupied the first separate chair of economic history in the world, created for him at Harvard in 1892. Ashley had been inspired by Arnold Toynbee at Oxford and then by Schmoller at Berlin. He had left Oxford to become professor of political economy and constitutional history at the University of Toronto. In 1901, he returned to England to occupy the Chair of Commerce at Birmingham University and to establish a Faculty of Commerce there. Although economic history had been added as a subject at Cambridge in 1875, as a field it found its strongest roots in the new universities and in particular at the new London School of Economics.⁶ Heaton had graduated from a university that was only four years old when he began there and he was appointed to one that was only twelve years old when he joined Ashley at Birmingham. In Australia, the University of Adelaide prided itself in being second only to Birmingham in the Empire in establishing a course in commercial training in 1902. It had been set up in response to moves by the Adelaide Chamber of Commerce and had been modelled on the example of Birmingham and London.⁷ It was, therefore, particularly apt and fortuitous for Adelaide to have Heaton's services in the commerce

⁶See N.B. Harte (eds.), *The Study of Economic History*, (London 1971) esp. Introduction. Also, T.C. Barker, "The Beginnings of the Economic History Society", *Economic History Review*, Vol. XXX, no. 1, 1977, pp. 1-19.

⁷H. Jones, *The History of Commercial Education in South Australia*, M.A. thesis, University of Adelaide, 1967), p. 186.

course as a by-product of his appointment to the Tutorial Classes. He became immediately responsible for the teaching of economics and commerce at Adelaide and so brought to the task knowledge and experience acquired at the very source.

At Birmingham, Heaton had been jointly appointed to the Faculty of Commerce and the WEA, about half of whose classes in those years were devoted to 'industrial history' or to economics. Ashley, accepting the recommendations for Heaton from A.J. Grant, Lillian Knowles and Albert Mansbridge, felt sure that this would be the beginning of a useful and distinguished career. He gave Heaton responsibility for a weekly seminar with commerce students, over which Ashley himself presided, and for a commerce course which, Ashley instructed him, was to begin with an outline of commercial history and then survey present industrial conditions and problems in the United States. For the WEA portion of his work, Ashley specified a course in industrial history - twenty-four lectures and twenty-four classes followed by ten more intensive lectures.⁸ Although Heaton was appointed in October, he could expect no salary before Christmas but was given permission to lecture further afield in such places as Gloucester, Wolverhampton and Shewsbury. In 1913, the WEA in Yorkshire was an infant institution - J. Dover Wilson recalled it as a "feeble flame, little more than an inspiration" where not more than half a dozen men might be found sitting at Tawney's feet. The heroic efforts of men like Tawney and Clay, Arthur Greenwood and a joiner, George Thompson, nourished the movement there into its healthiest phase by the end of the War.⁹

⁸W. Ashley to Heaton, 27 to 30 June 1912, Early Correspondence, Heaton Papers.

⁹J. Dover Wilson, "Adult Education in Yorkshire", *Journal of Adult Education*, Vol. 111, October 1928, pp. 47-50.

Ashley advised that Heaton should try to manage on his small salary and limited work for a year so that he could work on his book on the Woollen Industry which Ashley believed was an important contribution and would fill valuable gaps in a new expanding field.¹⁰ Heaton's aim in the book was to link up the fourteenth century with the eighteenth and to throw light on the period between - the rise of industrial society, the expansion of local manufacture and its organisation and relation to the State. In particular, he hoped to place Yorkshire industry into a proper perspective in relation to other parts of England.¹¹ The manuscript was not completed until Heaton had settled in Adelaide although the original thesis had been accepted by the Oxford Historical and Literary Studies series in 1915. Ashley was excited by the book and offered to edit and see it through the press for him: "such a book ought to give you a deserved reputation among economic historians, and among the people of the West Riding."¹² The final publication was delayed by the War but when it appeared in 1920 it was greeted with appreciative response. Tawney wrote to Heaton, "I thought it was extraordinarily good and in fact the best work on economic history that has appeared for the last ten or twelve years".¹³

Heaton was a product of a working-class Yorkshire heritage. His father, Fred Heaton, was a member of one of the oldest and well-known trade unions, the Engineers Association. This was one of the first things Heaton spoke about to the Trades and Labour Council on his arrival in Tasmania.¹⁴ Back in Yorkshire, the Co-operative movement was proud

¹⁰Ashley to Heaton, 30 June 1912, Heaton Papers.

¹¹H. Heaton, *The Yorkshire Woollen and Worsted Industries*, Oxford Historical and Literary Studies, Vol. 10 (Oxford 1920).

¹²Ashley to Heaton, 18 May 1914 and 15 August 1915, Heaton Papers.

¹³R.H. Tawney to Heaton, 10 October 1921, Heaton Papers.

¹⁴*Hobart Daily Post*, 6 July 1914.

of Heaton as one of its contributions to the new Australian W.E.A. The movement was an indigenous force in the lives of Yorkshire people. Its adult education classes, Sunday schools, women's guilds and libraries were as integral to the social life and structure of West Riding towns and villages as the Co-operative Wholesale Stores. Meredith Atkinson had been a student of a correspondence class of the Co-operative Union before going on to Oxford and now Herbert Heaton was off to Tasmania. "For the production of Herbert Heaton", said the *Co-operative News*, "Emmanuel Booth of Huddersfield deserves the praise". It was through Mr Booth's classes that Heaton won the Co-operative Summer School Scholarship in 1908 and, while at Oxford that summer, he had encountered the newly formed WEA and met Mansbridge. From then on, the paper continued, Heaton turned his whole life to working-class education and to the study of economic and industrial history. Professor MacGregor, under whom he studied at Leeds, was also well-known to Co-operative audience.¹⁵ Heaton's own views on Co-operation and the economic order will be explored later in this account but it is worth noting here that he spoke of it in a long letter to the *Hobart Daily Post* soon after he arrived, recalling the pervasive role that it played in the part of England that he knew. In the Yorkshire village in which he had lived, he estimated that there were 480 households and that from these 440 members were enrolled in the village Co-operative society. There was not a side of the lives of the working-classes, he wrote, for which that movement did not make some provision in its variety of social and educational activities.¹⁶

¹⁵*Co-operative News*, 14 April 1914, Newspaper Cuttings Book, Heaton Papers.

¹⁶*Daily Post*, Heaton to editor, 10 May 1915.

From the early Chartist days through the consolidation of working-class organisations like Fred Heaton's trade union, his friendly society and his Co-operative group, to the young late-nineteenth-century socialists who formed the Socialist Democratic Federation and then the infant branches of the Independent Labour Party, Heaton's Yorkshire was a nursery of northern radicalism. Philip Snowden had addressed his first socialist meeting at Heaton's birthplace, Keighley, in 1894 and Ben Turner, one of the S.D.F. founders, was elected in 1892 as an I.L.P. member to the school board at Batley where Heaton received his early education.¹⁷ Religious radicalism, too, flourished in the area. At the turn of the century, Charles Gore, who later presided at the crucial 1907 W.E.A.-Oxford Conference, established a community of monks called the Community of Resurrection at the nearby working-class village of Mirfield. It had among its members active socialists, and a movement more radically committed than the Christian Social Union grew out of its ranks. This was the Christian Socialist League which had as its slogan "Christianity is the religion of which socialism is the practice". It was active till just after the First World War when many of its members began to fragment into the various nuances of guild socialism at that time challenging liberal and labour minds.¹⁸

One ought not to conclude from these observations that Heaton came to Australia as a radical socialist. Indeed, he referred to himself as a sort of pre-war Lloyd George Liberal in upbringing and education.¹⁹ Nor in his religious affiliation was he as orthodox in his commitment to the institution of the Church of England as his fellow W.E.A. Directors

¹⁷J.F.C. Harrison, *Learning and Living 1790-1960*, esp. Ch. VII.

¹⁸See P.d'A. Jones, *The Christian Socialist Revival 1877-1914*, esp. Ch. VII.

¹⁹*Advertiser*, 10 August 1925. Heaton's Farewell Speech.

G.V. Portus and F.A. Bland. Nevertheless, he came out of the related traditions of Co-operative socialism and Anglican evangelical reformism which informed the provincial English W.E.A. Together with his training in economic history this background led him to ask certain questions about Australian society and to raise for discussion, in Tasmania and Adelaide, the kinds of questions which excited earnest debate in his intellectual worlds of Yorkshire and London.

Heaton had addressed the Christian Social Union several times in England. In Australia, he continued to talk to groups like the Anglican Diocesan Social Union or to address the Sunday evening congregation in the Anglican cathedral. But his own inclination was towards "true social religion". The pulpit, he maintained, had no right to silence as long as the squire's tenants were housed no better than his dogs. How many clergymen busied themselves with trade unions or Co-operation, he asked - "let them try to make Christianity mean something in everyday life".²⁰ In 1913, he had spoken to the Morley Friends Adult School on "Some Conceptions of God" making clear that as far as he was concerned the Fatherhood of God must imply the brotherhood of man and that this fact alone should negate class, birth and race and so make for revolution in the social relationships of the world. This was the type of theological justification to which the Christian Socialist bishops appealed in their adoption of the term, socialist. Rejecting the notion of a personal God in his Heaven, Heaton preferred to think of a theist force which guided the universe but which was yet able to attend the individual. He did not see formal Anglican ritual as intrinsic to direct communion with

²⁰Newspaper Cuttings Book, Heaton Papers, contains detailed reports of a series of lectures (c. 1913) to Cheltenham Christian Social Union and Birmingham W.E.A. on "Strikes and Conciliation Boards", "Sweating", "Some Alternatives of the Present System" and "The History of Wages".

God; worship did not mean for him the "long or beautiful spoken prayers or grand music or an ornamental service". Mighty cathedrals and pompous Sunday religion did not satisfy his demand for a more socially relevant church, one which, in his view, required both more Christian action and more inward conversion.²¹ Even on the occasion of his marriage he was not at ease with the Anglican service and wrote to his minister expressing his difficulties. They were not, however, so profound as to deny him the ceremony or the Anglican blessing.²²

* * * * *

What moved Heaton to accept a job in the farthest corner of the Antipodes? There was a likely inducement to a young man of professional advancement in England via the stepping-stones of a colonial university - it had been Ashley's path via Canada. There was also some suggestion that that old benefactor of new countries "the threat of weak lungs" may have added cause,²³ but it is clear that Australia itself had an obvious attraction at this time to a student of industrial conditions and an historian of labour problems. At the time of his departure he believed that Australia was "a country which had solved her Economic and Political problems" and her medium of solution, wages policy, was his particular field of research.²⁴ When he worked in London, his research had yielded up hitherto unknown Wages Assessments from the West Riding in the 17th and 18th century which Ashley urged him to publish.²⁵ His lectures to the Birmingham W.E.A. and the Cheltenham C.S.U. had also been concentrated

²¹Newspaper Cuttings Book, Heaton Papers. Report on "Some Conceptions of God", talk to Morley Friends Adults School (c. 1913).

²²Rev. T. Carr-Moyle to Heaton, 4 April 1914, Early Correspondence, Heaton Papers.

²³Ashley to Heaton, 1 September 1912, refers to inflammation of the lungs. Obituary in *American Historical Review*, *op. cit.*, also suggests that "weak lungs" took Heaton to Australia.

²⁴Heaton to Grant, 26 May 1919, Heaton Papers.

²⁵Ashley to Heaton, 30 June 1912, Heaton Papers. See also H. Heaton, "Assessment of Wages in Yorkshire in 17th and 18 Centuries", *Economic Journal*, June 1914.

on industrial conditions, strikes and conciliation boards, the minimum wage, the standard of living and the wage system.²⁶ At the conclusion of one lecture, he gave his opinion that the insecurity of voluntary agreements must be removed: "Settlement by arbitration or conciliation must be made compulsory as in Australia, New Zealand and Canada where it was working with fairly beneficial results."²⁷

In retrospect, he was both disappointed and amused at his own naivete. Five years later, writing to one of his old teachers, A.J. Grant, he reviewed his time in Australia and admitted that he had come here full of ideas drawn from books:

I expected to find a land where there were no strikes, where relations between labour and capital were harmonious, where democratic sentiment was keen and political idealism strong.²⁸

Again to a Canadian professor who wrote asking about Australia's economic experiments, he replied,

I came to Australia ten years ago largely on the strength of the reports, and found myself as much deceived as the immigrant who lands here expecting to find employers waiting for him on the wharf and government officials begging him to take up a farm free.²⁹

He went on to say that he had spent much of his time here studying actual conditions and that he hoped soon to publish a book on the subject that would particularly look at land settlement problems. No such extensive study reached the public but shorter articles on Australia,

²⁶Newspaper Cuttings Book, Heaton Papers.

²⁷*Ibid.*, lecture on "Strikes and Conciliation Boards" to Christian Social Union.

²⁸Heaton to Grant, 26 May 1919, Heaton Papers.

²⁹Heaton to MacGibbon, 3 May 1923, Heaton Papers. MacGibbon was professor of political economy in Alberta.

which were based on ground-breaking research, appeared in the *Economic Journal*, *Economica*, and the *Harvard Quarterly Journal of Economics* before he left Australia.³⁰ He also contributed a lengthy study of land settlement to Meredith Atkinson's *Australia. Economic and Political Studies* and published two editions of *Modern Economic History with special reference to Australia* by 1925.

As soon as he arrived, Heaton was enthused by the possibilities for research in the exploration of the achievements and problems of a new country. His first venture into the area was a long paper read to the Royal Society of Tasmania just a year after he came. Entitled "The Early Tasmanian Press and its Struggle for Freedom" it was a study of the fortunes of the first established paper in Tasmania, Andrew Bent's *Hobart Town Gazette* which first appeared in June 1816. The content of the early issues of the paper was acutely observed but Heaton was also looking at the paper with the eye of an economic historian for a picture of the social and economic conditions of the settlement as reflected in government notices, advertisements, shipping and tradesmen's notices. He traced the rise of a flourishing little commercial society looking at its economic fluctuations and its currency problems. Bent's own problems began when he opened his paper to letters from correspondents in 1824, the same year in which Governor Arthur reached Hobart. Veiled criticisms of the administration began to appear in the *Gazette* and, as these grew into outright criticism, the government set up a rival paper

³⁰H. Heaton, "The Basic Wage Principle in Australian Wages Regulation", *Economic Journal*, September 1921, and
 "Some Australian Evidence in Increasing and Diminishing Returns", *Economica*, Journal of the L.S.E. 1924, and
 "The Taxation of Unimproved Value of Land in Australia", *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, Vol. 39, 1925.

and pressed a libel suit against Bent who was eventually fined and imprisoned for six months. Arthur did not think Tasmania ready for a free press and tried until his recall in 1836 to regulate newspapers by legislation, a struggle which Heaton pursued in his article.³¹ The themes of censorship, the struggle for free debate and the state of the Australian press, which emerged from this initial foray into Australia's past, would prove prescient ones for Heaton both in Adelaide and in Hobart but, at the time when he gave this paper, July 1915, his lively interest was to demonstrate another of his continuing preoccupations - the need to study and teach about Australia, past and present.

In Hobart, Heaton joined a university staff of eleven and a student body of one hundred and fifty. He described the amount of work he had to accomplish as 'killing' but it was stimulating because he had the freedom to innovate. Amazed that nowhere in Australia in 1914 was there any course of Australian history, and that the study of European history did not yet come up to the 19th century, he began a course on Europe from 1815 to 1914 and enjoyed introducing Australian history as well.³² When he was elected to the Council of the Royal Society of Tasmania, along with L.F. Giblin, a firm patron and supporter of the W.E.A., Heaton immediately moved that a new Section F be formed to cover and promote the study of Australasian history, geography and economics.³³ "This country" he wrote later to Grant, "abounds in subjects for original work and I dearly wanted to get someone to work on the documents".³⁴

³¹H. Heaton, "The Early Tasmanian Press and Its Struggle for Freedom", *Papers and Proceedings of the Royal Society of Tasmania for the year 1916*, Hobart 1917, pp. 1-27.

³²Heaton to Grant, Heaton Papers.

³³Minutes of the Council, 10 April 1916, *Papers and Proceedings of the Royal Society of Tasmania*, 1916, pp. 273-274.

³⁴Heaton to Grant, Heaton Papers.

In his capacity as lecturer in economics and history, he assessed the current teaching of economics at Tasmania as about the standard of "Mrs Fawcett's notorious little primer". He introduced a course of forty lectures on economic history and upgraded economics to a more substantial sixty lectures.³⁵ Outside the university, Heaton argued, the value of economic history could not be overestimated. It was part of a broad and liberal education which could enlarge "the petty bounds which mar our politics".³⁶ The worker should have more than an understanding of the history of economic development: he should appreciate the working of the economic factor in history. Heaton was happy to lecture on subjects like "The Value of History" and "The Evolution of the Idea of History" as well as his main subject, the growth of modern economic society. By the time he left England, economic history was fairly well established as a legitimate area of inquiry, but, in 1915 in Tasmania, it was probably no understatement of the sophistication of the art which led Heaton to explain that there was more in history than simply dates and battles and that one must consider how men earned their livelihood and lived in their towns. Adam Smith and Marx, he told his audiences, had turned men's minds to the economic causes behind the progress of nations and that, as an example, even the present war was undoubtedly caused by economic factors.³⁷

The W.E.A. course in economic history spanned the period 1760 to 1914. It began with a study of industrial and social conditions in Europe, moved through the agrarian and industrial revolutions and added the commercial revolution in trade, transport and communication development, followed by the organisation of capital in joint stock companies,

³⁵*Ibid.*

³⁶*Daily Post*, 16 July 1914. Interview with Heaton.

Daily Post, 2 October 1914. Report of lecture on "The Value of History".

³⁷*Daily Post*, 9 April 1915. Report of lecture on "The Evolution of the Idea of History".

trusts and combines. Students then studied the economic and social philosophies of the 19th century from Smith to Marx and the Socialists. A lecture on free trade and tariff reaction both in Britain and in new countries like Australia led on to a consideration of the State in relation to industrial laws and wage regulations. Three lectures were given to the history of the trade union movement and then a series was delivered on alternatives to the status quo, to socialism and its development in Australasia, to syndicalism, to the Co-operative movement and Co-partnership. After a brief discussion of the economic development of Ireland, an account of the wage system and the standard of living led up to a final recapitulation which posed the question of the future of political and industrial democracy. A short reading list included Toynbee and Beard on the industrial revolution, D.H. MacGregor on the evolution of industry, J. Clayton on trade unionism and Co-operation, Ramsay MacDonald's *The Social Movement* and Philip Snowden's *Socialism and Syndicalism*. On Australia, he could only recommend, in 1914, Victor Clark's 1904 work on *The Labour Movement in Australia* and recourse to the Commonwealth Quarterly Bulletins on Labour.³⁸ Another lecture series for the University Extension Board again concentrated on the history of wages. He explained the wage contract and surveyed wage regulation from mediaeval times to the twentieth century. He dealt in detail with Australia's wage mechanisms, the Arbitration system, and the inter-relation of wages and prices and the standard of living.³⁹ In the next year, 1915, Heaton gave, among others, six public lectures

³⁸Typed Syllabus of Heaton's course *Economic History 1760-1914*, for Tasmanian W.E.A. 1914. Bland Papers, Sydney University Archives.

³⁹*Daily Post* reports this series of lectures through September 1914.

outlining the history of trade unionism and six lectures on more controversial matters in "Some Aspects of the Great War."⁴⁰

The question of the political stance of the W.E.A. was raised in an interview with Heaton almost as soon as he stepped off the boat. He replied confidently that the W.E.A. was "non-party" political: "We face politics as a science, just as we face economics as a science".⁴¹ Political neutrality was easily asserted but not so readily conceded. Heaton's first experience of the problems involved in the public discussion of current issues suggested strongly that some Australian communities did not unequivocally share his faith in academic objectivity. At the end of 1914 Heaton addressed himself to the pressing question of the Initiative and Referendum. The lecture was advertised thus:

Mr Heaton will be dealing with a problem in Government which he will consider Historically, Scientifically, and in the Abstract. NO ATTEMPT WILL BE MADE TO MAKE THIS LECTURE THE OCCASION OF A PARTY DEMONSTRATION. Mr Heaton will deal NOT WITH POLITICS, but with this instrument of Government, scientifically or economically considered. There will be no politics on the platform BEFORE OR AFTER. This is a lecture for knowledge and knowledge only.⁴²

This was a lecture for "SCIENCE NOT POLITICS" - for information, "not a call to Arms!". Heaton approved the Initiative and Referendum in his lecture on the understanding that the people be educated to use it effectively. He explained the example of the Swiss cantons and how the system worked in America. It arose, he said, from dissatisfaction with the remoteness of parliaments, from the people's desire for more direct control of their representatives. Intelligent and

⁴⁰*Mercury*, 22 April 1915.

⁴¹*Daily Post*, 16 July 1914.

⁴²*Daily Post*, 4 December 1914.

informed citizens must be the basis of such a system and the average voter must become more politically interested. As to whether the Initiative and Referendum would work in Tasmania, Heaton pointed out the difficulties of the Tasmanian electoral provisions in that the Legislative Assembly and the Legislative Council were elected on different franchises. To make the Initiative and Referendum truly responsive, he suggested that the Council should be elected by adult suffrage as in the Lower House.⁴³

The lecture provoked a hostile editorial from the *Hobart Mercury* and was the beginning of the *Mercury's* suspicious opposition to Heaton and the cause of worker education. A "Professor" of the University, announced the editorial writer, had attacked one of our Houses of Parliament. He had referred to the example of the Swiss cantons that was much favoured by Labour proponents of the Initiative and Referendum and had gone so far as to advocate adult suffrage for the Legislative Council. The *Mercury* then ventured to inform Heaton that "there are a great many influential people in Tasmania who regard such a step as neither desirable nor reforming".⁴⁴ The writing of explanatory, clarifying and self-defensive letters to newspapers was to absorb much of Heaton's time in Australia. This time, he patiently reiterated that his lecture was only an explication of a system and its problems. He also politely disclaimed the honorary title of 'Professor' instructing the *Mercury* rather mischievously that "not every journalist in your offices is an editor and not every university teacher is a professor".⁴⁵ He had a few weeks earlier queried a *Mercury* report on

⁴³*Daily Post*, 8 December 1914.

⁴⁴*Mercury*, editorial, 9 December 1914.

⁴⁵*Daily Post*, 12 December 1914.

the 8-Hour Day celebrations which gave the impression that the 8-hour day was prevalent in "Merrie England during the palmy days of the trade guilds". Quoting a 1495 statute which decreed long arduous hours of work, he urged an end to such romantic views of the past.⁴⁶ The *Mercury* became highly cynical about the whole concept of educating the worker and devoted an editorial to its anxieties, on the occasion of the first annual conference of the W.E.A. in April 1915. Why, the editorial asked, should the worker have special treatment in the matter of education and what of the content of that education?

They ask for the bread of a higher spiritual culture and they are fobbed off with such stones as the history of unions ... Does any Australian worker really languish and yearn for the dry-as-dust details of sordid and by-gone industrial struggles in the Old World?

What good did it all do them, especially as expounded by an "English theorist"? Art, science and philosophy would do more to uplift the worker in his hard-earned leisure:

Here in Australia, if not in Europe, our 'workers' have surely 'attained' and can now turn their minds to something nobler than the past- and -done-for squabbles of Capital and Labour in countries under far less happy conditions.⁴⁷

With more money and lecturers, Heaton replied, the W.E.A. could provide the more 'spiritual' courses the *Mercury* yearned for, but he would disagree that all unionists in Australia were informed of their situation and happy in it - "from your editorials I have often learned that Australian trade unionism is chock full of faults, tyranny etc." Perhaps, he added, the struggle to gain industrial rights was as heroic as that of those who earned the V.C. on the battlefield.⁴⁸

⁴⁶*Mercury*, 25 November 1914.

⁴⁷*Ibid.*, editorial, "The Education of the Worker", 17 April 1915.

⁴⁸*Ibid.*, Heaton to editor, 22 April 1915.

At the Inaugural Conference of the W.E.A., Heaton alluded briefly to the War and the need for men to study all the conditions arising from it. He was doubtful that this would be the war to end all wars but he agreed that the world was certainly in a melting-pot that would test the future of democracy as a form of government.⁴⁹ He developed his analysis of the War in the series "Some Aspects of the Great War" which he gave in the winter of 1915. Among the general causes of the War, he listed the groupings of Powers in alliances and ententes and the growth of national rivalries but he insisted on the importance of economic factors in the struggle. He mentioned trade rivalry between Austria and Serbia, Russia's need for a southern port, Germany's economic expansion in her colonies. He explained Norman Angell's theories that it would not pay any nation to win the War and that the country which received an indemnity might be poorer than the one which paid it. The costs of the War were now becoming apparent and both sides would feel it in taxation, high prices and unemployment. He claimed that the reports from England about the attitudes of the workers to the War were distorted when he compared the English papers which he received to the cables which filled Tasmanian newspapers. These he regarded as coming from the British papers which were antagonistic to the trade unions, and, in the case of the Welsh miners' strike, inclined to exploit patriotism for the benefit of armaments firms. He concluded this lecture with the hope that the War would give impetus to democracy and to the proper control of foreign affairs.⁵⁰

Heaton lectured on the War in more remote corners of Tasmania than Hobart, and when in late August, he addressed an audience at

⁴⁹*Daily Post*, 10 April 1915.

⁵⁰*Daily Post*, Report of lecture on "Economics and the War", 20 July 1915.

Scottsdale, a small town in the north-east, he drew down upon his head a rain of censure and accusations of unpatriotic utterances. The objectionable remarks concerned the problem of how to end the War. He was quoted in the *Scottsdale Advertiser*, and the *Mercury*, as having said

... sad though it might be, perhaps a better effect would be made on the nations by the ending of the present war in a draw than in a decisive victory to either side, as countries engaged in conflict would then see that they had sacrificed their best manhood, spared no money or effort and were no better off, and would determine that a calamity like this would never happen again.⁵¹

This reaction of the conservative section of Tasmanian opinion to these views might have been anticipated in the words of the Hon. A.W. Loone M.L.C. as he closed the Scottsdale meeting: "he would rather see the War last five years than not see a nation which had committed such atrocities in Belgium absolutely crushed." The Chairman of the University's Extension Board telegraphed Heaton that he had better send a full explanation of the lecture and his reported censure by the chairman of the meeting, and warned him to "abstain from expressing personal opinion reflecting on national policy".⁵² According to Mr. J.B. Hayes, who led the attack on Heaton in the Parliament soon after, Heaton was reported as saying that the Allies had probably been as guilty of as many atrocities as the Germans and that the best thing would be for War to end in a draw. Another M.P., Mr Payne, added that his sources at Scottsdale remembered Heaton as preferring a 'draw' because if the Allies won "there was a danger of their suffering from

⁵¹*Mercury*, 25 August 1915.

⁵²Telegraph in Newspaper Cuttings Book, Heaton Papers.

a swelled head". Mr Hayes was satisfied that the people of Tasmania "were not sending their sons to the Dardanelles to fight for a draw". The House decided on the Minister of Education's proposal to examine the reports of the investigation of the affair carried out by the University's Extension Board and by the University Council.⁵³ The Extension Board had however accepted Heaton's own written explanation. He admitted that he canvassed the three possible outcomes of the War, defeat, draw or victory, maintaining that he had "plumped for the third" and had based the rest of the lecture on that assumption, even to redrawing the map of Europe at Germany's expense. He failed to see how he had given the impression that the Allies should not fight to the end.⁵⁴ The *Hobart Daily Post* noted that the University Council had received the Extension Board's report and that Mr Heaton was exonerated from any serious offence. It did, nevertheless, suggest that Heaton would do well to avoid the subject in such a "delicate and perilous" time.⁵⁵ The *Mercury* was not so easily satisfied and demanded that the House should inquire into the report. Its editorial stated

Mr Heaton is being paid by Tasmanian taxpayers and certainly if he made such remarks is out of place in Tasmania and should be dismissed without delay.⁵⁶

A joint meeting of the W.E.A. classes, addressed by L.F. Giblin, then voted a motion of confidence in Heaton⁵⁷ and, a week later, the Minister for Education made a statement on the matter incorporating Heaton's own explanation which convinced members of the House that he was "loyal".⁵⁸

⁵³*Mercury*, 16 September 1915. Report of discussion in the House of Assembly on 15 September.

⁵⁴Heaton to Chairman of Extension Board of the University of Tasmania, 9 September 1915. Newspaper Cuttings Book, Heaton Papers. *Mercury*, 24 September 1915. Report of Ministerial statement on matter to the House.

⁵⁵*Daily Post*, 16 September 1915.

⁵⁶*Mercury*, editorial, 16 September 1915.

⁵⁷*Daily Post*, 18 September 1915.

⁵⁸*Mercury*, 24 September 1915.

However, Mr Loone, in the Legislative Council still wanted to move for a Select Committee to inquire into Heaton's "disloyalty". In the University Senate, Dr Bottrill demanded that the University pass a motion of regret at Heaton's lecture.⁵⁹ This move was defeated as Heaton maintained the support of the University and the W.E.A. while the *Daily Post* condemned Bottrill for his "heresy hunt".⁶⁰ By now, the episode had reached the *Bulletin* which accused Heaton of hoping that the Allies would not win. In the same issue, "The Red Page" carried lurid atrocity stories in its review of Verhaeren's *Belgium's Agony* and, on the opposite page, Heaton was described as an "imported person, who doubts whether any good purpose would be served by walloping the apostles of Kultur who ravished Belgium ...".⁶¹ On the other hand, he may have been briefly consoled by a letter from a teacher at the Hutchins School in Hobart who reminded him that other professors like George Arnold Wood and Walter Murdoch had spoken out on public matters and dared to suggest some "blemish on the national spirit".⁶² When it had all subsided, Heaton collected all the reports and cuttings, pasted them into his scrap-book and headed the whole thing, "The Scottsdale Smell". Whatever else, he concluded, it was good advertisement for the W.E.A.

The kind of discussion of the War in which Heaton engaged in his lectures in Hobart, and continued to engage in when he moved to Adelaide, reflected his own identification with the debate on the War that was

⁵⁹*Ibid.*, 27 October 1915 and *Daily Post*, 30 September 1915.

⁶⁰*Daily Post*, 2 October 1915.

⁶¹*Bulletin*, 16 September 1915.

⁶²S.C. Smith to Heaton, 16 September 1915. Newspaper Cuttings Book, Heaton Papers.

raging in Britain and in the United States. Justifying himself to the University Council and the Minister, he acknowledged that he had considered the origins of the War. He had raised as an open issue the problem of how the War might be brought to an end and had questioned publicly if it would be the war to end all wars. In his own words, he had taken a "detached" view of the atrocity stories, advocating a commission more "neutral" than Lord Bryce's to inquire into them, and he had been critical of the old diplomacy and the conduct of foreign policy. All of this is recognisable as an echo of the position of the British Radical Liberals whom Heaton read and whose books he recommended - Bertrand Russell, G. Lowes Dickinson, Norman Angell, E.D. Morel, J.A. Hobson, Graham Wallas - and of Labour leaders, Ramsay MacDonald and Philip Snowden. These men belonged to a long tradition of dissent from official British foreign policy and they questioned the orthodoxies which supported the War.⁶³ Before the War they had condemned secret diplomacy and advocated fuller publicity of foreign policy and more parliamentary control. They tended to the view that Germany did not want war but had been forced into it by Franco-Russian hostility and by the British Foreign Office suspicion of Germany which had drawn Britain closer to France. At the end of 1915, they had begun to discuss openly a peace by negotiation, an ending of the conflict by compromise rather than by military victory. Almost as soon as hostilities were declared they had set up the Union of Democratic Control as an organ of opposition to government policy and their aims, as they were developed and modified, were eventually those adopted by Woodrow Wilson and progressives in Britain and the United States. They wanted a more open

⁶³See A.J.P. Taylor, *The Troublemakers* (London 1957).

diplomacy, a more internationalist approach to problems which would mitigate the power of national governments to declare wars, and, from the beginning, they insisted on peace terms which would not humiliate the defeated nation nor arrange artificial barriers which would only cause further wars. From 1916, spokesmen like H.N. Brailsford and J.A. Hobson worked on drafts of the peace they wanted while others, like Lowes Dickinson and Leonard Woolf, pushed for a League of Nations.⁶⁴

The official policy of the government, of Lloyd George and conservatives such as Bonar Law, Curzon and Milner was that the War must be fought to the finish and Germany must be annihilated. It was these views which, Heaton complained, dominated the Australian papers because they took their cables from conservative British papers. He felt the absence of debate within Australia, not just on international matters but also on appraising Australian society. This was what he had in mind when he wrote to A.J. Grant in 1919: "We have no free lances such as Hobson or Brailsford in Australia".⁶⁵ He was also pointing to the sort of position which these left-liberal intellectuals occupied in the spectrum of debate. If Heaton himself was not in direct sympathy in 1915 with the U.D.C., he certainly developed his attitudes to the settlement of the War along their lines. A.J.P. Taylor remarked that the U.D.C. launched a version of international relations which gradually won acceptance far beyond the circle of those who were aware that they were being influenced by it. Heaton was an example of that influence but in Australia he was in a context which was far

⁶⁴See Marvin Swartz, *The Union of Democratic Control in British Politics During the First World War* (Oxford, 1971).

⁶⁵Heaton to Grant, Heaton Papers.

less tolerant of such influence than the intellectual world from which he came. In Australia, the prosecution of the War was enthusiastically supported by the government, the press and influential and conservative sections of the public - and, probably, by most ordinary people.

Dissent from this support was aired in the Labour press along socialist-internationalist lines so that, as in so many other issues, the debate in Australia was polarised along class lines. In England, the U.D.C. decided not to express its dissent on the question of conscription but to concentrate on the larger issue of the settlement of the War and its implications. In Australia, the conscription battle consumed all the intellectual energies that might have played on the wider problem and so internalised the War debate in bitter social struggle.

Uncharacteristically, Heaton does not appear to have become publicly involved in controversy over conscription for he had probably seen the dangers in the example of his counterpart in N.S.W., Meredith Atkinson. Atkinson had taken up the cause of conscription as a founder of the Universal Service League even before conscription threatened to become a necessity and his activities did serious damage to the W.E.A. in the eyes of the trade unions. The W.E.A. supported Atkinson's right to a private opinion, but, in fact, his pro-conscription stand permanently alienated many of his W.E.A. colleagues.⁶⁶ Heaton was predictably anti-conscription - and anti-Atkinson. On the eve of the second referendum he speculated in a letter to Portus,

I suppose by next Christmas, if 'yes' wins tomorrow, it will be Private Portus, Brigadier Heaton, and Generalissimo Atkinson. Or perhaps as an alternative, Citizen Portus will be presiding over the Revolutionary Tribunal, Citizen Heaton will be leader of the South

⁶⁶Portus, *Happy Highways*, pp. 173-175.

Australian Bosheviks, whilst Atkinson will be rattling in a tumbrel down to the guillotine at Port Melbourne.⁶⁷

When Heaton left Hobart in 1917 he hoped for broader horizons in Adelaide. Tasmania was a burrow of "go-slowery" and he found its Anglo-conservative structures both heavy and pretentious. He told the readers of his article on Australia in his old Morley Secondary School magazine that a Yorkshire democrat did not readily understand why a supposedly radical young country entertained such frills and fopperies as those associated, for example, with Government House.⁶⁸ He wrote an account of Tasmanian politics which reminded William Ashley of Ontario in the late eighteen-eighties.⁶⁹ After his Tasmanian experiences, the irreverence of the Yorkshire democrat was not surprising but neither was it the most prudent temperament for one seeking acceptance in Adelaide.

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⁶⁷Heaton to Portus, 18 December 1917. Heaton Papers.

⁶⁸Article written by Heaton for Magazine of Morley Secondary School, 1919. Reprint in Heaton Papers.

⁶⁹Ashley to Heaton, 3 October 1916. Heaton Papers.

CHAPTER 9. Herbert Heaton: Adelaide, 1917-1925

The opportunity to leave Tasmania came in August 1916 when Meredith Atkinson telegraphed Heaton that a substantial grant was now expected from the South Australian government to set up a Department of Tutorial Classes in the university and that he had recommended him for the job at a salary of £600.¹ Heaton supplied his particulars and the post was offered to him, although a brief shadow loomed over his move when, in November, the Legislative Council rejected the budget proposals which contained the W.E.A. grant.² At the same time, Atkinson arrived in Adelaide and after he had lobbied all the appropriate powers of government and university to ensure that the money would not be held up indefinitely,³ Crawford Vaughan, Premier and Minister for Education, did assure the university that a reduced grant would be forthcoming, but not until April, 1917.⁴ Atkinson alerted Heaton to the precarious nature of a tenure which depended on direct government grants subject to political and financial fluctuations. Heaton, however, accepted the appointment in December 1916.

Atkinson also explicitly encouraged Heaton to expect rapid advancement at Adelaide:

... unless some hitch occurs you will definitely be offered the post of Director of Tutorial Classes, and will be the first considered for the Professorship of Economics when the extra money is available.⁵

The allusion to Heaton's chances for a possible future chair of economics must have been based on private understandings following Atkinson's conversations because there was no mention of such a prospect even in

¹M. Atkinson to Heaton, 24 August 1916. Correspondence 1916-36. Heaton Papers.

²Atkinson to Heaton, 23 November 1916. Heaton Papers. University of Adelaide Council Minutes, 24 November 1916.

³Atkinson to Heaton, 23 November 1916. Heaton Papers.

⁴University of Adelaide Files (called Dockets). Docket no. 458, 1916.

⁵Atkinson to Heaton, 23 November 1916. Heaton Papers. The university had applied unsuccessfully in 1914 to the government for a grant to fund a chair in economics. See Minutes of Joint Committee for Tutorial Classes, University of Adelaide, 18 June 1914.

the warm, unofficial letter which the Vice-Chancellor, William Mitchell, wrote to Heaton. He, too, was concerned that Heaton was leaving a certain position for an "uncertain" one but he did not think the W.E.A. venture would fail. He advised Heaton to make contact with the professor of classics at Adelaide, H. Darnley Naylor, who was most interested in the W.E.A.⁶ Darnley Naylor, an influential and respected member of both the university and the community in Adelaide, occupied much the same position as W. Harrison Moore in Melbourne and R.F. Irvine and Francis Anderson in Sydney as active promoters of the W.E.A. cause in the university. Naylor also became Heaton's firm personal friend.

As lecturer in economics, Heaton was taking over from William Mitchell, who, among his other teaching, had provided the little economics that was available to students. Mitchell was very happy to vacate the role and remove the title from his chair. In fact, he assured Heaton, he would find "a clear field practically from the start". He had been able to lecture only once a week in economics and so the students were required to do most of the work privately; the subjects he tried to cover were distribution, foreign trade, consumption and production, money and, if he had time, public finance. He stretched the course over two years but could not begin a new course until the other was complete. He explained that there were two sets of students who took economics, those in the Diploma of Commerce and those taking it as part of a B.A. - Heaton would be responsible for both. Finally, he promised Heaton his support and regretted that this was not the most auspicious time to begin at the university because the War had meant a lack of students

⁶William Mitchell to Heaton, 11 December 1916. Heaton Papers.

and the controversy within the Labour Party over conscription had made the W.E.A. task more difficult and sensitive.⁷

Atkinson also gave Heaton his analysis of the situation into which he was coming. His account of his Adelaide visit was an extraordinary document considering that Atkinson's own pro-conscription campaign would almost wreck the W.E.A. in Sydney:

I attended the annual meeting of the W.E.A. in November and saw every sign of a storm between the local people on the conscription issue. In my opening address I made an appeal to them to sink all party differences. They rose nobly to the occasion, returning most of the old officers, though these appeared to be mainly Conscriptionists. It is a good thing that the W.E.A. should be saved from partisan conflicts ...

The current president of the W.E.A., Tom Ryan, M.L.A., was, he continued, an "Irish wind-bag", not to be trusted with anything. The secretary, Victor Cromer was a good chap but "he is an occultist and a visionary whose views on the New Jerusalem are apt to qualify his W.E.A. utility". Council member, W.C. Melbourne and another, Delderfield, were deemed, respectively, a trade unionist of "ripe experience" and a "dark horse run in the interests of the anti-conscriptionists". As for the governing Vaughan family, Atkinson described them as somewhat bourgeois in their outlook but "quite progressive enough for your purpose with an understanding of what culture means". With somewhat anomalous logic in the light of the above he concluded that Heaton would not have much trouble steering clear of partisan politics - indeed, he thought that since Heaton was himself far from being a conscriptionist "it would do no harm for that fact to become known amongst some of the stalwarts of the Trades Hall". Again, in this letter Atkinson returned to the

⁷*Ibid.*

certainty that Heaton would soon be given a chair:

There is no reasonable doubt that through the new bill to be soon presented to Parliament you will get the Professorship; that is Mitchell's fixed intention, though he will of course expect a period of probation.⁸

This early correspondence of Mitchell and Atkinson contained indications of the potential difficulties which awaited Heaton when he took up his appointment in Adelaide, early in 1917. As in Tasmania, his role was a dual one. In the university he was to define and develop an area of scholarship as lecturer in economics and in his own mind, this appeared as a lectureship with "expectations", however loosely or improperly conferred by Atkinson. As Director of Tutorial Classes, his teaching was directed outside the university to the public, and to the worker in particular. Here within his clientele there were serious divisions, both during the War and after, as minds were turned to the question of industrial and social reconstruction. In his university teaching he had to balance or blend the dual interests of an education in economics with the requirements of business men for a commercial training. He was, therefore, answerable to the government which paid him, to the university which employed him, to the Chamber of Commerce in whose interests the Diploma was largely run and to the W.E.A. in whose cause he had come to Australia in the first place. Outside the university in the public forum, the minefields of partisan politics demanded a trickiness of footwork that the robust and forthright Yorkshireman could not - or would not - master. As a consequence, his career at Adelaide was seriously blighted until in 1925 he acknowledged his position to be finally untenable and left Australia.

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⁸Atkinson to Heaton, 26 January 1917. Heaton Papers.

The Diploma of Commerce had begun in Adelaide in 1902 in response to moves made by the Chamber of Commerce. It was, as noted earlier, the first of its kind in Australia and second only to Birmingham and London. Beginning as the Advanced Commercial Certificate, it was supported from the outset by the Chamber of Commerce whose representatives provided the president and vice-president of the university's Board of Commercial Studies which administered the course. In 1904, Mr Joseph Fisher left a gift of £1,000 to encourage commercial education by providing a prize medal and funding a series of annual lectures, the first of which was given in that year by Henry Gyles Turner. In 1908, the Certificate was elevated to a Diploma of Commerce which was taken mainly by part-time students from business-houses which paid their expenses and gave them preferment on completion of the course.⁹ In 1912, the University of Sydney had led the way in the foundation of a chair of economics, which was given to R.F. Irvine, and, at the end of the War, it was anticipated that the Universities of Melbourne and Queensland would soon make a start in the area but in both cases this was deferred. Hobart was next, in 1920, in establishing a chair of economics, appointing D.B. Copland. At the University of Melbourne there had been a move in 1916 to enter the field of teaching commerce. Seeking the advice of a Sydney business man on the training offered under Irvine at Sydney, W. Harrison Moore had written to Henry Braddon of Dalgety and Co.¹⁰ Braddon had, however, forwarded the inquiry to G.C. Henderson at Adelaide, believing that the courses in commerce there were more appropriate to the equipment he

⁹Board of Commercial Studies, University of Adelaide, to Education Office, Melbourne outlining history of the commercial course, 24 July 1916. University of Adelaide Docket no. 303, 1916.

¹⁰University of Adelaide Docket no.7, 1917. H. Braddon to Harrison Moore, 12 December 1916.

thought that business men needed.¹¹

Despite its reputation, it was clear to the Chamber of Commerce by 1918 that Adelaide's Diploma needed renovation and that higher commercial training wanted more vigorous promotion. Accordingly, the Board of Commercial Studies appointed Heaton, William Mitchell and its president, J.R. Fowler, to a committee to report on the re-organisation of the Diploma Course. The committee was to consider also the extension of the course to students from other professions such as engineering, mining and the Public Service. A third mandate was the question of raising the Diploma to a Degree and the institution of a chair of commerce. Heaton drew up a scheme which recommended these developments and which revised the courses within the Diploma, suggesting the addition of public administration (then taught only by F.A. Bland at Sydney), statistics, Australian industries, industrial organisation and practice, transport and marketing, and insurance. The Degree course would be provided by further study in these subjects and by the addition of other courses as well as a foreign language. In particular, advanced economics would be required along with another course from Arts or Science.¹² The Board accepted the proposed draft for a more intensive education in its future Degree and agreed to forward it to the Council but they were willing to approve the revisions only for the existing Diploma.¹³ The introduction of a Degree was at that point thwarted by the Chamber of Commerce who advised the university that

¹¹ H. Braddon to Henderson, 16 December 1916.

¹² Minutes of the Board of Commercial Studies, 11 June 1918.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 17 September 1918.

the time is not yet ripe for the creation of a Degree Course in Commerce, as the Commerce of the State is not yet of such extensive growth as to provide a sufficient class of leisured young men willing or so circumstanced as to be able to devote the necessary time to such a course.¹⁴

Heaton was therefore eager to cast a wider net for his potential students than those business apprentices of little leisure and means. He approached the Public Service Commissioner to see if the government would recognise work done in the Diploma course in the training of civil servants and, after consultation, it was agreed that the Diploma in Commerce would be a condition for appointment to higher grades in the Service.¹⁵ As an increasing number of teachers began taking the courses in the Diploma, the Department of Education also awarded recognition to the new subjects in economics.¹⁶ It was, however, through the Arts Degree that Heaton was able to extend the range and depth of the study of economics and economic history. Under his tutelage, economics became a three-year sequence with a research essay required for advanced economics. But there was as yet no provision for the Honours fourth year which Heaton deemed essential to scholarly work in the subject.¹⁷

Heaton's most interesting and far-sighted innovation was to be traced quite directly to his W.E.A. role. In 1919, he gained approval for a new Diploma of Economics and Political Science which was to cater for mature men and women who had proved themselves capable students in the three-year tutorial class programs.¹⁸ The first Federal Conference

¹⁴*Ibid.*, 5 November 1918.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, 10 December 1918 and 11 March 1919.

¹⁶McCoy, Director of Education, to Registrar, 7 April 1922. Docket no. 231, 1922.

¹⁷University of Adelaide Calendar 1922.

¹⁸Cable sent 14 October 1919 by Mitchell from Scotland permitting Diploma to proceed; passed 10 November 1919 by University Council. University of Adelaide Docket no. 618, 1919.

of the W.E.A. was held in Adelaide in 1918 and the idea of such a course was discussed with a view to training future tutors for the W.E.A. who would otherwise find a conventional B.A. too "narrow and tortuous" for their special needs. What was wanted was an advanced program which would be more relevant to the current demand for economics, economic history and political science. A second consideration, as Heaton explained it, was that of providing "trained men" for political life. The members of the Liberal Party generally had easy access to education but Labour's candidates needed special facilities for the study of subjects which would prepare them for their political work. The day might even come, mused Heaton, when a political party might refuse to recognise the candidature of an uneducated man:

When that time does come a new atmosphere will pervade our parliamentary halls. One member will quote Hegel - or Heaton - instead of Hughes; another will take as his authority not Ryan, but Rousseau; a third will fall back not on Tudor, but on Taussig, and at political meetings the time-honoured question will be amended to read as follows:- "'What did Adam Smith say in 1776.'"¹⁹

Adelaide, Heaton claimed, had again taken the lead. With the new Diploma, the alliance between labour and learning, that was so much talked about, had taken on a new dimension. Drafted by the W.E.A. executive and approved by the university, the Diploma would offer the same economics and economic history as in the B.A. and, for advanced economics, a lengthy research essay would be submitted on a topic such as trade union organisation or land taxation or perhaps some aspect of state enterprise. Political science and constitutional history would examine modern forms of government and their underlying political

¹⁹H. Heaton, "Training Tutors and Politicians", *Australian Highway*, Vol. 1, no. 11, January 1920, p. 8.

philosophy. In all, the work required would amount to about half that required for the B.A. The total fee for the Diploma was £12 and so the W.E.A. intended to offer - "pending the arrival of a free university" - three scholarships for the adult graduates of its tutorial classes who would be drawn from all walks of life.²⁰

Concerned as he was to strengthen the content of his teaching, Heaton was also extremely interested in experimenting with pedagogical method. In an article in the *Economic Journal* in 1924, entitled "An Experiment in the Teaching of Economics and Kindred Subjects", he outlined a year's teaching in economic history for his B.A. students, which demonstrated his familiarity with "progressive" educational theory and with attempts like the Dalton plan to apply it. He argued that the standard teaching device of the lecture, had serious defects - the ex cathedra teacher, the passive, scribbling student and the lack of personal contact. With his class of thirty-five students, Heaton, and his assistant A.L.G. Mackay, tried an extraordinarily progressive approach: the sixty-lecture course was abandoned in favour of assignment work with topics, selected bibliographies and essay subjects. A short introductory lecture was given but then the students dispersed to work by themselves for two weeks, summarising all the books read, and writing the essay which was then read to a small group controlled by an elected chairman. The group discussed and questioned until finally the essay was graded by secret ballot from each member of the group. If there were any serious differences between the vote of the students and that of the lecturer, then the teacher's vote prevailed

²⁰*Ibid.* On Heaton's departure, the Diploma was abolished by the Council from 1927. See Minutes of Joint Committee for Tutorial Classes, 8 December 1926.

but Heaton maintained that this had happened only once. The book summaries and the essays were given careful attention by the teacher. Thus, Heaton explained, the student could work at his own pace, gain self-confidence and acquire a genuinely curious mind. The students were asked to evaluate the system themselves and they reported in its favour except for the heavy demands it made on them. They were examined but were allowed the use of books in the examination and their assigned work comprised part of their final mark. The teachers believed this method more rewarding although more exacting for them and they were prepared to say that student performance showed marked improvement.²¹

While the teaching of economics and the continued expansion of this area within the university was a source of pride and satisfaction to Heaton, the recognition of his subject, either in an Arts Honours Degree or in the upgrading of the Diploma of Commerce, was still denied. The campaign went fitfully on for the nine years he spent in Adelaide. In 1919, six months after the Chamber of Commerce had advised against the first proposal, Heaton wrote again to the university. He called attention to the great increases in enrolments, now 140 - he was sure a handful of these were ready and able to proceed to a Degree. Pointing out that even a small community like Hobart had established a Faculty of Commerce with provision for post-graduate work, he maintained that Adelaide was slipping back. He expected that Brisbane and Melbourne would soon join Sydney and Hobart in recognising the importance of economics. The experience of the War, he reminded the university, had popularised the view that economic progress "does depend to a large

²¹H. Heaton, "An Experiment in the Teaching of Economics and Kindred Subjects", *Economic Journal*, Vol. 34, 1924, pp. 219-226.

extent on greater efficiency and better technical and commercial training".²² In 1920, this view briefly persuaded the Chamber of Commerce for there was a move to press the University in approaching the government for the money to finance a Commerce Faculty but the initiative was soon lost in the university's more comprehensive development schemes.²³

It was not until 1922 that the question was re-opened and a second committee set up to draft another proposal for a Degree which would embody the best features of Sydney, London and Birmingham. This time the committee was to consider whether the duties of the potential professor should still include those of Director of Tutorial Classes.²⁴ A year later, 1923, Heaton was planning to go home to England and, applying for his leave, he noted that nothing further had been done towards establishing the Degree.²⁵ The Board of Commercial Studies then re-convened its committee and decided to recommend the Degree to the Council a second time. Since Heaton was going abroad, the Board suggested formally that he might investigate commerce programs in England, Europe and America in the interests of planning Adelaide's prospective Degree.²⁶

Heaton was by now becoming increasingly disturbed about his own status and salary. Asking Darnley Naylor, as chairman of the Joint Committee, to support a review of both, he again cited his increased work load in the university and the W.E.A., his growing enrolments, and

²²Heaton to Assistant-Registrar, 16 June 1919. Minutes of Board of Commercial Studies.

²³Heaton to J. Fowler, Chairman, Board of Commercial Studies, 11 November 1922. University of Adelaide Docket No. 640, 1922.

²⁴Board of Commercial Studies Minutes, 18 July 1922; 19 September 1922.

²⁵*Ibid.*, 19 June 1923.

²⁶*Ibid.*, 17 July 1923.

the increased sophistication of his teaching and of the work he had sponsored in economics. He considered his work comparable to that of Irvine in Sydney and Copland in Tasmania while he carried more teaching for the W.E.A. than his fellow-Directors, Portus, Atkinson, Copland and Molesworth. His standing as a scholar was, he submitted, as good as that of any other economist in Australia:

I think it is true that I am the only economist who has a reputation outside Australasia and a recent article in the *Economic Journal* brought me an invitation from Professor Taussig to write for the (Harvard) *Quarterly Journal of Economics*. Yet my status is lower than that of the Director of Tutorial Classes in Melbourne and Hobart, both of whom have been given the rank of professor. My salary is lower than that of any other Director except in Brisbane.²⁷

1922 had been a big year with 250 students enrolled in the university courses and 650 in the tutorial classes. As well as a heavy university lecturing schedule, Heaton took W.E.A. classes in the city and at Port Adelaide. He also travelled thousands of miles around Australia each year in the course of his W.E.A. duties.

In 1924, Heaton returned to England for a year. He had been invited by William Beveridge and Lillian Knowles to give a short course of lectures at the London School of Economics on current Australian economic conditions.²⁸ His syllabus covered environmental factors, problems in land settlement and tenure, industry, commerce and finance, commercial policy, problems of state enterprise, the regulation of industrial conditions and "some unresolved problems" (closer settlement, White Australia, industrial unrest, the jurisdiction of industrial courts,

²⁷Heaton to H. Darnley Naylor, Chairman of the Joint Committee, Board of Commercial Studies, 23 March 1922. Heaton Papers.

²⁸W. Beveridge to Heaton, 13 March 1923. Heaton Papers.

the tropical north).²⁹ Thanking Beveridge for the invitation to lecture, he added the complaint that was beginning to become a refrain:

May I correct one little error ... I have not a Chair here; there is no Chair in Economics at Adelaide although our flock of nearly 300 Economics and Commerce students makes our department probably the biggest of its kind south of the Equator. I am in charge of this flock but have only the status of a Lecturer.³⁰

Heaton gave his lectures on Australia at Leeds University and also at Cambridge. Then, during the year, he was invited unexpectedly to Queen's University in Kingston, Ontario, to assist in the Department of Political Science for four months.³¹ As well as supplementing his income (his two replacements in Adelaide were being paid out of his salary) he was able to strengthen his intellectual contact in Canada with the academics who were already his correspondents. He lectured on Australia in Toronto where a fellow Englishman, C.R. Fay, was professor of economics.

After his return to Australia, Heaton duly reported to the Board of Commercial Studies on the courses he had observed in Britain and Canada, recommending that general courses were needed for Australian universities at the present time, rather than the more highly specialised ones of British and North American universities.³² While he was away, the Board had sought all the particulars relating to the new chair of commerce at Melbourne³³ and, by the time Heaton submitted his report, it had in hand a letter from Melbourne attesting to the initial success of its new Degree course.³⁴ The Adelaide Board now expressed itself

²⁹Heaton's syllabus for lectures at L.S.E. 1924. Heaton Papers.

³⁰Heaton to Beveridge, 28 April 1923.

³¹Bruce Taylor, Principal Queen's College, Ontario, to Heaton, 14 August 1924. Heaton Papers.

³²Board of Commercial Studies Minutes, 12 May, 1925.

³³*Ibid.*, 3 March 1924.

³⁴*Ibid.*, 12 May 1925.

in May 1925, strongly in favour of the "early establishment" of a Degree in Commerce. Yet another committee, consisting of Heaton, William Mitchell, Mr Bruce, President of the Chamber of Commerce, and Mr Perry, President of the Chamber of Manufacturers, was convened to consider the curriculum and the staff requirements.³⁵

Before the Board's determination to press for a Degree could be discussed at that month's Council meeting, however, Heaton received a cable from Queen's University offering him the MacDonald chair of economics and political science, to replace immediately Dr O. Skelton who was resigning to take a position in the Dominion government. The cable precipitated a crisis in the relationship of Heaton to the Board and to the university. The day before the Council was due to meet, Heaton informed Mitchell of the Canadian offer and asked for a clarification of his prospects at Adelaide:

Important as the Chair is, I like my work in Adelaide too much to wish to leave it, especially if there was any prospect that the Economics and Commerce work would in the near future be placed on the same level as it is in Melbourne and Sydney, and that I might be placed in charge of that development.³⁶

He went on to record the developments he had achieved in the last nine years: in Arts there were 90 students taking his subjects and the Faculty of Arts had now resolved for the early institution of an Honours School of economics; in commerce the numbers had grown from 80 in 1918 to 300 in 1925 and economics was now one of the most popular subjects in the university. There were 22 tutorial classes in operation under his administration with fortnightly country classes and a student body

³⁵*Ibid.*

³⁶Heaton to Vice-Chancellor, W. Mitchell, 28 May 1925. University of Adelaide Docket no. 117, 1925. Copy also in Heaton Papers.

of 1000. It was time, he suggested, that the W.E.A. work was separated from the duties of the lecturer in economics. Then the letter asked its central question - was there any likelihood that the Council would make provision for an Honours school in economics and a Degree course in commerce and, furthermore, "if such a provision is to be made, whether I could expect an improvement in my status thereby"?³⁷

The Board of Commercial Studies held a special meeting at the Vice-Chancellor's request a few hours before the Council met, to ascertain if, in the event of a Degree being established, the Chair would be offered to Heaton. As Mitchell pointed out, the two matters would be considered together at the Council. After a discussion, the Chairman of the Board, Mr S.R. Booth, advised the Vice-Chancellor that the Board was divided on the issue and that of the four commercial representatives on the Board, three had stated that the Associations they represented were adverse to the chair being offered to Heaton.³⁸ The Council also considered the matter at length and decided it was not in a position to establish a Degree course at present. Its reason was clearly stated:

It has already affirmed the principle that neither an Honours School in Economics nor a Degree in Commerce should be established unless there is a Professor at the head of the school.³⁹

While Heaton was at Adelaide there would be no such professor. This ultimate reason was not made explicit, but Heaton immediately recognised his position and sent off his acceptance to Canada at once.⁴⁰ He left Australia at the end of August.

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³⁷*Ibid.*

³⁸Board of Commercial Studies Minutes, 29 May 1925.

³⁹Registrar, University of Adelaide to Heaton, 2 June 1925. Heaton Papers. Also University of Adelaide Docket no. 117, 1925.

⁴⁰Heaton to Taylor, 29 May 1925. Heaton Papers.

The South Australian Worker, official organ of the South Australian Labour Party and Trade Unions, pronounced a succinct verdict on Heaton's departure:

It is an open secret that if Dr Heaton had been offered a professorship he would have remained in Adelaide, but it is also an open secret that if he had stayed here till Doomsday he would never have been offered a chair.⁴¹

There is reason to question the *Worker's* opinion that a chair would have kept Heaton in Adelaide but the second point was a pithy statement of the essential situation. Heaton had diagnosed it himself along the same lines as early as 1919 when he remarked to his old Leeds professor, A.J. Grant, "I doubt if we shall ever get a Faculty of Commerce here so long as your quondam pupil remains the teacher of Economics."⁴² During his whole career in Adelaide, Heaton's analysis of why this should be so never varied and he never ceased to underline ruefully the ironies and paradoxes of his own position. To the capitalists and conservatives he was a dangerous Bolsheviek who preached subversive doctrine under the guise of economics; to the left-wing of the Labour movement and to the radical socialists he was a "well-sharpened tool of the Capitalist class". In Adelaide, those on the left had little influence over his institutional career but the university was not so insulated from his other critics and was keenly sensitive to its members engaging in activities which might be interpreted as "controversial". Having looked at Heaton's efforts within the university to secure the study of economics, one needs therefore, in understanding its rejection of him, to examine his role outside the university and to appreciate his interaction with the public and the community.

⁴¹*South Australian Worker*, 26 June 1925.

⁴²Heaton to Grant, 26 May 1919. Heaton Papers.

Heaton arrived in Adelaide early in 1917 at a time when Australian politics were at their most rabid. In the same week that he gave his first tutorial classes, Frank Tudor opened his campaign for the Labour Party for the general election of May 1917 which followed the Labour Party split and was held between the two Conscription Referenda.⁴³ Although he was known as an anti-conscriptionist, Heaton did not involve himself publicly in the heated issue. Later in the year, he did oppose a motion of the council of the Chamber of Commerce, on which he sat as the university's representative,⁴⁴ urging its members to vote Yes. On other crucial issues of the day, however, Heaton continued to seek the role he found so distressingly wanting in Australia - that of the intellectual who enlightened the public, who challenged official policy and who stirred debate on vital questions. The pages of the dailies were filled with news of the War, the Peace, Bolshevism and the League of Nations. These issues frequently occasioned strong editorials, if not actual discussion, but what disturbed Heaton on all these matters was the lack of informed public debate and the partial material on which he felt the newspaper reporting was based.

The isolation of Australia and the dependence on daily cables from what Heaton deemed the conservative press in Britain meant both that Australia took little interest in what was beyond her own territorial waters and that, apart from those who favoured imperial federation, there was little attempt to formulate policies of her own or to understand complex international problems. Heaton did not allude to the constitutional difficulty of responsibility for Australia's official

⁴³*Daily Herald*, 24 March 1917.

⁴⁴Minutes of the University of Adelaide Council, 29 June 1917.

foreign policy within the Empire. His criticisms were directed more to the public apathy which he lamented and to the absence of any ginger-groups or "braintrusts" which could advise and shape the platform of politicians. It was time, he told the annual Labour Conference of South Australia that the Labour Party gave more attention to international issues and followed the example of the British Labour Party whose policy he thought "was wise and statesmanlike, and contained or commanded the best brains in Europe". Labour, not being in office during the vital days of the Peace, had not faced many issues and Heaton believed that both Labour and the Federal Government should have a group or a committee which would specialise on Australian attitudes to international affairs.⁴⁵ No doubt such a role would have greatly interested Heaton himself but the only vehicles for the expression of his opinion remained his public lectures, occasional articles and letters to friends abroad. To Grant, he expounded his views on the poverty of public opinion on international matters:

Hence we never had, during the whole of the war, an official statement of what Australia was fighting for; we never had, apart from many W.E.A. lectures, any campaign in favour of a League of Nations; our Labour Party says nothing concerning allied policy in Russia; and the promises of the Peace Treaty have left us cold ...

Heaton was strongly critical of Hughes and of his claim to speak for Australia in demanding the German colonies, precisely because it was so difficult to know what Australians thought; he told Grant,

We simply have, as a nation, no opinions or policy on any of these matters ... this dominion at any rate has no opinions worth consulting, and so we find ourselves committed to lines of policy by Australian statesmen who go Home and are skilfully doped by the Tory London press.⁴⁶

⁴⁵*The Daily Herald*, 14 September 1923. Report of lecture on "Education and Internationalism".

⁴⁶Heaton to Grant, 26 May 1919, *op. cit.*

A letter in 1920 to Alfred Zimmern reiterated the same points. Most decent people, Heaton was sure, were ashamed of Hughes at the Peace Conference but since Australia was so reliant upon a biased cable service there was little conception of the intricacies of international problems, apart from the opinions of "say, Milner, Curzon and Company snipped from the *Times*, *The Daily Mail*, *The Morning Post et al.*" The Labour and Liberal parties of Britain, he told Zimmern, could well advance their cause and their image in the colonies by subsidising more cables giving prominence to their aims. This might moderate the current conservative projection of them in Australia as tools of Lenin.⁴⁷

His own estimate of Australia's interest in the terms of the Peace was opposed to the Hughes' orthodoxy that Australia must annex the German colonies in the Pacific. It is significant that his trenchant criticisms appeared under a pseudonym, "Anglo-Australian", in the British liberal paper the *Athenaeum*, a few months before the actual end of the War, and a year before the issue was discussed at Versailles.⁴⁸ Apart from a few lone voices in the Labour Party, Heaton maintained, anti-annexationists were not vocal and views which might be safely expressed under a pseudonym would not be tolerated on any Australian platform. Indeed, he suggested, such a speaker might within twenty-four hours find himself a victim of the War Precautions Act. His own thesis was that Australia neither wanted nor needed any more territory to look after - "let us get our own 3,000,000 square miles populated and developed ... at present the Northern Territory

⁴⁷Heaton to Alfred Zimmern, 13 June 1920, Zimmern Letter, MS 3731, National Library of Australia.

⁴⁸See L.F. Fitzhardinge, "W.M. Hughes and the Treaty of Versailles" *Journal of Commonwealth Political Studies*, Vol. V, July 1967, pp. 130-142.

and Papua are a big enough tropical burden on our shoulders". Australia did not have the capacity to handle German New Guinea, even to satisfy Imperialists and "Tory scribes". Another argument for annexation was the fear of Germany re-establishing strongholds at Australia's door. This, Heaton believed, was not likely to be justified unless Germany could fortify her colonies with enough strength to defy the combined power of Australasia and the British fleet. To the *Daily Mail's* appeal to Australians to save the poor natives from the "bloody and brutal rule" of the Hun he responded sardonically that the Australian did know something of the treatment of native races by the white man. One of the strong reasons against annexation was the danger that Australians might develop an Anglo-Indian mind and cast a "slave-master's eye on the negro". Heaton also wondered if there might not be some Australians who would prefer to have a "democratized" Germany in control of the islands in the Pacific than some of those agents of the "Yellow Peril". Australians, he thought, even nourished a silent admiration for the way German migrants had hewn flourishing communities out of the bush in South Australia. Above all, he concluded, Australia could not talk of a new world and a new order after the War and at the same time demand that the spoils go to the victor "in the most approved ancient manner".⁴⁹ Privately, to Zimmern, Heaton was more forthright. Australia, he wrote, did not have a pretty record with the aboriginals, did not know how to develop the tropics, had neither the money nor the experience to deal with a native colony and, in his opinion, her administration of one would probably become in the end the sport of party politics. If the

⁴⁹H. Heaton, "Australia and the German Colonies" in *Athenaeum*, August 1918, pp. 340-342. Heaton identifies this article written under pseudonym "Anglo-Australian" in letter to Zimmern, *op. cit.*

League were to insist on reports from mandatory powers, Australia might soon find its knuckles rapped.⁵⁰

It is as well that Heaton chose anonymity in the expression of his criticisms of Australian policy in the Pacific. The community at large would not have shared his optimism about the future democratisation of Germany. Popular and official sentiment favoured retribution exacted from Germany rather than a tolerance for things German - even those residents of flourishing Germany communities and the descendants of those respected Germany pioneers had been busy changing their own names and the names of their towns.⁵¹ Furthermore, Heaton's article demonstrated an unacceptable scepticism about another contemporary Australian orthodoxy - the belief that Australia had an unlimited capacity to expand and to support people and civilisation right across the continent.

Consistent with his own views about the War and with his concern for public awareness of international issues, Heaton was an early member of, and propagandist for, the newly-formed League of Nations Society in Adelaide. The parent body had been set up in London by G. Lowes Dickinson and its principal members came from the Union of Democratic Control; Leonard Woolf, J. Hobson, Arthur Ponsonby, Graham Wallas, Bernard Shaw and Bertrand Russell were among those who worked out schemes for a League of Nations in Britain during the War. In Adelaide, Heaton's friend, Darnley Naylor, joined several clergymen in founding and promoting the International Peace and League of Nations Society. In June 1918, the Society wrote to the University Council asking

⁵⁰Heaton to Zimmern, *op. cit.*

⁵¹Early in the War, the secretary of the South Australian W.E.A., Victor E. Kroemer, changed his name to Cromer.

permission for the use of the Prince of Wales Theatre for a lecture on the League of Nations Society to be given by Heaton. The Society's secretary, Mr P.H. Nicholls, assured the University that there would be no reference to the "present conflict for Right" except for a consideration of such economic forces as tended to create international jealousy. There would be some explanation of extracts from the speeches of President Woodrow Wilson, Mr Lloyd George and others concerning their ideas on a League of Nations.⁵² An accompanying pamphlet informed the Council of the aims of the Society as outlined in London: "its purpose is to prepare public opinion for a radical change in international relations" which had been foreshadowed in the speeches of Wilson, Sir Edward Grey and Mr Balfour. The Vice-Chancellor, William Mitchell, was in favour of allowing the use of the theatre and told the Council that the lecture would be purely educational and would not refer "to how the War began or when it will end" but the Council voted against it, quoting its policy that during the War representatives of outside bodies were not permitted to speak in the university on subjects pertaining to the War and the Peace.⁵³ When the Society approached the Board of the Public Library for the use of a room, the secretary of the Board required an undertaking that the lecturer "will not touch upon the question of peace, and its relations to the present conflict". Heaton replied again that he would refer only to economic forces which created conflict and to the ideas of Wilson and others on a League: "The mere fact that I shall heartily commend the utterances of these men ought to satisfy the requirements of the Public Library Governors". The Board

⁵²P.H. Nicholls to Registrar, 1 July 1918 and 21 June 1918. University of Adelaide Docket no. 278, 1918.

⁵³Minutes of University of Adelaide Council, 28 June 1918.

was not satisfied and voted not to allow the use of its rooms to the Society, leading P.H. Nicholls to ask in an open letter to the newspapers why all doors must be closed against it. All the best thought in England and America was to his knowledge unanimously in favour of a League but, in Adelaide, "the Public Library Board says 'Hush'".⁵⁴

Not long after, four public lectures entitled "A League of Nations" did finally find a platform and publication under the auspices of the Adelaide Diocesan Social Union, an Anglican group affiliated with the W.E.A. and about to join the recently formed Australian Christian Social Union. In August 1918, it sponsored the lectures by Heaton, Meredith Atkinson and the President of the South Australian Industrial Court, W. Jethro Brown. Giving the first two lectures, Heaton concentrated on the need for a League drawing substantially on the British literature - H.N. Brailsford's *League of Nations and War of Steel and Gold*, G. Lowes Dickinson's *The Choice Before Us*, L.T. Hobhouse's *Questions of the War and Peace* and J.A. Hobson's *Towards International Government*. As usual, he followed the dissenting liberal line on the War: the roots of the conflict were to be traced to the machinations of secret diplomacy, to an armed peace and the balance of power, and to the consequent suspicion and ill-will among nations. It was essential to curb militarism and to ensure a Peace based on "the rule of public right" which would be enforced by "the public will". By 1916, he declared, it had become clear that the War which some had entered idealistically had degenerated into a mercenary struggle for territory and trade. The entry of the United States, and the Russian Revolution, "came as a spring-cleaning": the Americans

⁵⁴P.H. Nicholls to Press, University of Adelaide Docket no. 278, 1918.

had forced a healthy articulation of War aims on the part of the Allies and the Russians had "sent a wave of hope over every land". A revolution in the international order was the only way to avoid the repetition of another war. Perhaps the horror of wars in their modern form had proved a potent deterrent in demonstrating how neither victor nor vanquished could win in the enormous toll that was taken on both sides. He hoped that the League would be able to attend to some of the fundamental causes of war, such as the frustrations of oppressed nationality and the conspiracies of interest which allied the forces of capital, the press, the armament firms and foreign investment. Since Heaton spoke three months before the Armistice, when few people expected an early conclusion to the War, he could still describe two sections of the public in belligerent countries as the "bloodthirsty and bitter-enders" to whom the War had become an end in itself, and those who saw the War as leading to "the destruction of a system which made wars possible". His final plea was for the world to think internationally: "unless we can accomplish it, the War will have been fought in vain."⁵⁵

In 1919, as the possibility of the League took shape, Heaton emphasised the need for the Australian people to become conscious of the problems and of the questions involved in having representation on it. He pointed again to the lack of an Australian foreign policy and to the necessity for public education, beginning in the school-room, in the history and affairs of other countries. Until 1914, he noted, no Australian university gave instruction in modern world history and he now urged some study of Japan and China to supplement the attention

⁵⁵H. Heaton, Jethro Brown, M. Atkinson, *A League of Nations*, (Adelaide, August 1918).

given to the traditional British Imperial history. In this way, he wrote, "the road may be opened up for the formulation of informed and broad policies by the political parties". Reiterating his criticism of Australian dependence on the view from Printing House Square and Park Lane, he suggested that the business of choosing news for Australia should be in the hands of a committee representing various sections and parties in Australia and that the Australian newspapers train their staff in modern political and economic developments. For the moment, however, he concluded, all Australia could offer the League was a purely negative policy on the colour question:

This allegedly advanced democracy of ours has sent out no word of hope of a better world, has barked at the heels of those who visualise a new and better international order, and has subscribed to doctrines worthy of a Machiavelli and a Metternich.⁵⁶

Heaton continued to campaign vigorously for the League in the early twenties, defending it from attacks in the press and giving public lectures on the relevant parts of the Treaty. He was particularly interested in the work of the League's International Labour Office in Geneva and reports of his efforts to educate the Australian public reached H.B. Butler at the I.L.O. who wrote to him with interest. Heaton hastened to consolidate this contact, giving an account of his lectures and his attempts to popularise its work. Heaton asked for as much of its material as the I.L.O. could send for he intended to make himself an authority in Australia on its activities.⁵⁷ Butler replied appreciatively and took up Heaton's offer to act as honorary

⁵⁶H. Heaton, "Australia and the League of Nations", *Australian Highway*, Vol. 1, no. 3, May 1919. Also Heaton lecture on "The Problems of the Peace", *Advertiser*, 2 April 1919.

⁵⁷Heaton to H.B. Butler, 5 December 1922. Heaton Papers.

correspondent for the I.L.O. in Australia.⁵⁸ When he returned to England for a year's leave in 1924, Heaton's dedication to the peace movement made him the choice for Director of Adjudication of essays submitted in Britain for the European Peace Awards on the subject of international co-operation. He sat on the executive committee of the British Peace Award with congenial colleagues in Albert Mansbridge, William Beveridge and Gilbert Murray.⁵⁹

As the War came to an end, patriotic sentiment and nervousness about the Pacific encouraged the prevailing belief in Australia that Germany must pay, although, as the *Adelaide Advertiser* expressed it, no amount of punishment and humiliation could be in proportion to German guilt.⁶⁰ Not surprisingly, Heaton's views on the Peace aroused and confirmed suspicion of him in many quarters, especially after a public lecture he gave in March 1920 explaining J.M. Keynes' controversial book, *The Economic Consequences of the Peace*. Keynes himself had been a member of the British Peace Delegation and had resigned in protest against the severity of the punitive economic clauses in the Peace Settlement. Before a large audience, Heaton outlined Keynes' criticisms and referred to the growing discontent abroad with the terms of the Treaty. Keynes argued that continental Europe was essentially one economic unit and that therefore any settlement which aimed at crushing one member of that unit, Germany, would have disastrous consequences even for the victors. Heaton agreed with Keynes that this was a Carthaginian peace designed mainly to prevent Germany's recovery. He

⁵⁸H.B. Butler to Heaton, 18 February 1923. Heaton Papers.

⁵⁹Heaton, Curriculum vitae submitted for chair of commerce, University of Melbourne, 1924, *op. cit.* Also galley proof of newspaper article signed H.S.T. on Heaton's departure, reviewing his career. n.d. Heaton Papers

⁶⁰*Advertiser*, 5 May 1919. Editorial.

spelled out the details of the plan by which Germany's economic system was to be weakened, of how her production would be drastically reduced while exorbitant reparations would be demanded of her. The question was, he believed, not whether Germany should be politically crushed, but whether Europe as a whole could survive economically.⁶¹ Correspondence on the lecture in the press accused Heaton of being "distinctly pro-German". One writer to the editor would have respected Heaton more, he said, if he had taught Australian workers that their craze for short hours, high pay and small production did deep injury to their country. Another saw the lecture as a diatribe against the Peace and a "special plea for the aggressors in the most brutal war recorded in history". Heaton would not be wasting such maudlin sentiment on the Germans, this writer was confident, if he had himself contributed "in blood and treasure" to the suppression of their monstrous aggression.⁶² Heaton could only reply that Keynes' views, reached the previous June, were gaining acceptance by many people and he repeated that the demands of the Treaty were impossible. If he were, with Keynes, thought to be "pro-German" then he considered himself in good company.⁶³ There were not, however, too many fellows of this "good company" to be found in Adelaide.

In the eyes of his critics, Heaton had now shown himself in favour of Germany just as a year earlier they believed he had revealed his sympathy with the Bolsheviks. His remarks on Bolshevism haunted his reputation and again illustrated the perils of expounding even a

⁶¹*Register*, 12 March 1920. Report of lecture on "The Economic Consequences of the Peace".

⁶²*Register*, 16 March 1920.

⁶³*Register*, 17 March 1920.

left liberal critique of world issues in a society unfamiliar with the subtleties and nuances of public debate.⁶⁴ In March 1919, when Heaton gave this lecture at Port Adelaide, the papers were carrying daily reports of the latest Bolshevik terror. Horrifying reports of so-called witnesses and tourists in Russia told of plots and outrages, of the nationalisation of women, of the state of beggary to which industry had been reduced. As in the case of the German invasion of Belgium, Heaton took a cautious line on these atrocity reports. He began his lecture rather academically, explaining the theories underlying Bolshevism, from Marx to the French Syndicalists. In a brief history of events, he described the plight of the Russian peasant and the discontent of the Russian wage-earner exploited by both landlords and capitalists, showing how their alliance in revolution had resulted in the transition of power to the middle-class provisional government which was then overthrown by the Bolsheviks. He outlined the function of the soviets, pointing out the limitations on the franchise. Land confiscation and the transfer of industrial control to inexperienced workers were admitted problems, and he acknowledged the intervention of Bolshevik propaganda in other countries. In all, Heaton concluded that the system in Russia was probably working in some sort of way "otherwise it would have been overthrown long ago".⁶⁵

⁶⁴*Advertiser*, 10 August 1925. At Heaton's farewell gathering 8 August 1925 A.G. Roberts referred to the antagonism stirred by the lecture. E.G. Biaggini in his memoir *You Can't Say That!* (Adelaide 1970) refers inaccurately to the lecture:

"Heaton actually dared to give some sort of public lecture on Bolshevism when he was quarantined with others at the time of the Spanish influenza epidemic; and thus to our (the W.E.A.) eternal disgrace, he became a marked man".

What Heaton did when quarantined at the Jubilee Oval with a trainload of people returning from the Eastern states was to organise the entertainment and make the event "a great social success", see *Advertiser*, 6 March 1919. The lecture on Bolshevism was given two weeks later.

⁶⁵*Advertiser*, 21 March 1919.

It took a few weeks for reaction to this lecture to filter into the press and, in the meantime, Heaton had lectured on "The Problems of the Peace". The angry correspondent to the *Advertiser* drew on reports of his lectures from "trustworthy friends" which further fanned the flames of suspicion about Heaton. The lecture was judged an attempt "to palliate the awful outrages committed by the fiends who for some two years have terrorised the Russian people" - in general, it was the kind of approach one might expect of "anti-conscriptionists".⁶⁶ Heaton protested that he did not approve of outrages, but he insisted that there was much contradictory reporting in the cables concerning Russia which should make the public wary of accepting all the statements about atrocities. Many alleged documents relating to the Bolsheviks, Heaton maintained, had proven false - the claims about the nationalisation of women were an example. It was more important, he went on, to try to develop the critical faculties of the public so that they could discriminate more readily between fact and legend. Challenged about the sources of his own opinions, he named the journals and papers which he received from England regularly and which supplemented his reading of the *Advertiser*. He drew much of his information from the *Nation*, which he described as a liberal English weekly consistently critical of Bolshevism as a theory of industry or politics and from the *New Statesman*, which often showed hostility to Russian ideas even among Radical British Labour elements. He also read the American journals, the *New Republic* and the *Nation*, which, he said, often preached that Bolshevism was a menace that could only be overcome by the removal of

⁶⁶*Advertiser*, 21 June 1919.

social evils, like starvation, in Europe. He referred also to an English Church of England weekly, the *Challenge*, and to the *Cambridge Magazine*, again liberal papers which were critical of Bolshevik extremism. The latter periodical was a prominent organ of dissent which had been taken over by the U.D.C. group at Cambridge. Heaton insisted on a distinction between the ideals of revolution and the excesses of revolutionary practice:

We shall not stem back the advance of the Bolshevik ideal by howling about outrages and atrocities. If we regard Bolshevism as a bad social theory, we must fight it as a theory, and not on the ground of the violent conduct of those who first attempt to put it into practice.⁶⁷

Such fine and academic distinctions did not console or impress the masters of industry in Adelaide, faced as they were increasingly after the War with industrial unrest which seemed to them to ripple out from the tidal wave of Bolshevism. At the end of 1922, the retiring President of the Chamber of Manufacturers, Mr J.W. McGregor, spoke out in public attack on Heaton. At the Chamber's annual meeting, two weeks before he addressed himself to Heaton, he took as his theme the unsettled industrial conditions and, in particular, spoke in support of the projected South Australian Industrial Disputes Bill as a "less complicated way of settling industrial disputes" than the arbitration system. Disputes, he said, needed to be settled in a way that would give manufacturers "some sense of security" and he hoped that the new legislation would reduce the power of agitators.⁶⁸ Speaking again at the annual banquet of the Chamber, he reviewed its activities for the

⁶⁷*Advertiser*, 23 June 1919.

⁶⁸*Advertiser*, 16 November 1922.

year and alluded to its university connection in the Diploma of Commerce:

The University, in its teaching of Economics, had, in the opinion of Manufacturers, become, to a large extent, engaged in propaganda work and had been used as a lever by people holding socialist views.⁶⁹

Similar teachings, he warned, had led Russia into her present condition and would eventually place any other country in the same plight.

Heaton attempted some personal discussion with McGregor asking for the chance to reply to his accusations before the Chamber. His meetings with McGregor were inconclusive so that he then appealed to the Council of the university for leave to reply publicly in the press.⁷⁰ A long letter, which appeared on New Year's Day 1923, might have served as his apologia even after he left Adelaide in 1925. He denied that he would ever abuse his university trust or violate the traditions of scholarship by engaging in propaganda - he believed that he dealt with economic problems in a "detached, impartial manner". Indeed, his impartiality seemed to find proof in the fact that in the last six years the representatives of capital and labour had each accused him of being a tool of the other side. Heaton decided that McGregor had based his attack on the fact that those attending his lectures held extreme views and took what they wanted from the lecture to use in their own contexts. This did not make the lecturer partial, Heaton pointed out: all the Marxians, single-taxers, currency cranks, protectionists and freetraders hoped that he would support their beliefs. These were men who came "to lecture, not to learn" but the vast majority of his students were those who wanted to think and learn: "I teach and learn from them who come from all walks of life". He maintained that the

⁶⁹*Advertiser*, 28 November 1922.

⁷⁰Minutes of the University of Adelaide Council, 15 December 1922.

university must be open to the free discussion of ideas and that the teaching of economics was particularly vital to Australians since so many of her economic troubles could be traced to ignorance:

We have left our people to shape their opinions on wealth production and distribution in accordance with their own vested interests or under the guidance of the propagandist and partisan.

In Australia, issues were determined, in his view, through class experience and he believed that it was the urgent duty of the teacher of economics to broaden the class concept of the economic structure, to weigh opposing views, to examine and criticise new ideas, and to show that there were two sides to every question. "In a country where most political questions are economic in character", he argued finally, "the widest possible teaching of economics is as important as it is delicate, as urgent as it has been neglected."⁷¹

There had already been many other occasions on which Heaton's public remarks alienated the chief patrons of his university work, the business community of Adelaide. He had been in Adelaide only a month when a letter from him appeared in the press reproving the Chamber of Commerce for its misapprehensions about the aims of the W.E.A. It was not correct, he told the Chamber, to look on himself or the W.E.A. as an agency for promoting friendly relations between capital and labour - only employers and employees could do that. But, he suggested jovially, he would be happy to run classes jointly for representatives of the Chamber and the Trades and Labour Council to help them shed their prejudices. The W.E.A., he insisted,

does not exist for any political or economic propagandist purpose, neither to preach harmony between

⁷¹*Advertiser*, 1 January 1923.

capital and labour on the one hand or socialism on the other. It is purely an educational body, non-partisan and non-sectarian ...⁷²

In his capacity as a student and teacher of industrial organisation and practice, Heaton was, moreover, often critical of the attitudes of commercial men and of their business methods. He spoke of the need to improve the quality of Australian goods for export and overseas competition, of the necessity for an increase in "that much-abused term, efficiency" in order to improve much that was "wasteful, out of date and conservative in Australia's equipment and methods".⁷³ He told a meeting of his Diploma of Commerce students that few employers had made any attempt to understand the labour problem and to see why labour should be angry and restless. It was hostile, he informed them, because it had to fight hard for every advantage and was the first to suffer but the last to gain. The role of the commercial man as he saw it required more than mere training in commercial principles. It was a serious one, demanding education and judgement, a wide sympathy and a vigorous imagination. Commercial men, he believed, should see themselves as bearing the responsibilities of trustees of society.⁷⁴ Addressing himself to the more general topic of education he rejected the idea of education as a means of social control intended to produce either a race of quiet, well-disciplined citizens at the beck and call of governments in peace and war, or a body of skilled labour for commercial men to employ. A more human ideal looked upon the child both as a future citizen and a possible worker but it first of all

⁷²*Daily Herald*, 18 April 1917.

⁷³*Advertiser*, 14 March 1919. Report of lecture on "Some Essentials in Commercial Progress".

⁷⁴*Ibid.*

shaped his education to his requirements as an individual.⁷⁵ When he tackled the problem of "Class Consciousness and Social Progress" before the Sunday evening congregation of the Anglican Cathedral, he made it clear that, despite some reservations, he felt that Marx's view of history came near the truth in emphasising the extent to which social unrest in every age had its origin in the clash of hostile economic interests. Class-consciousness was, at root, group selfishness and a degradation of both labour and professionalism. Ought we not to condemn the chairman of a board of directors, he asked, who devoted the whole of his speech at a shareholders' meeting to congratulating the shareholders on the record profits made? Until the "sordid profit motive" was replaced by some "ideal of industry as a public service" there would be no remedy to industrial unrest.⁷⁶

There was at least one occasion on which Heaton, apart from expressing sentiments that might be construed as sympathetic to labour, appeared to some to be actively allied on the side of labour against the employer. In 1920, the newly formed Bank Officers Association of South Australia approached him to accept nomination as vice-president, and to educate and advise them in their efforts to secure better wages and conditions.⁷⁷ Heaton replied that he was wholeheartedly in favour of organisation amongst all members of trades and professions. He would give them a talk on "Organisation amongst Professional Workers" but he was reluctant to accept office in an association that "at an early stage in its career will probably find it

⁷⁵*Advertiser*, 10 June 1919. Report of lecture on "Educational Reform" to annual meeting of the Adelaide Diocesan Social Union.

⁷⁶*Daily Herald*, 1 September 1923.

⁷⁷T.J. Linn, Savings Bank of S.A., to Heaton, 18 June 1920. Heaton Papers.

necessary to embark on a vigorous campaign for an increase in salaries", a matter not proper for an outsider. He would reconsider if they could assure him that his work would be "purely educational".⁷⁸ When the Bank Officers agreed, Heaton was duly confirmed as vice-president at the first general meeting⁷⁹ but within the year his involvement was drawn to the attention of the Council of the university. William Mitchell called a meeting of professors and permanent lecturers to discuss the principles raised by this case. The fear among the Council members, according to Mitchell, was that since the Bank Officers Association was a body committed to having its salaries determined by the Courts, the official participation of a member of the university staff in such an association could implicate the university in "political propaganda". Mitchell feared that the issue could become more general and extend as far as the freedom to teach both within and outside the university:

I am therefore calling a meeting ... in the hope of getting a unanimous resolution on the matter which would, I have no doubt, satisfy the Council and prevent it from even appearing to interfere with our freedom which of course it does not want to do.

Mitchell repeatedly supported Heaton but this was a sensitive and complex issue. As he pointed out, the university now relied heavily on parliamentary support and there were five new parliamentary members on its Council so that it was important that the university should be seen to be "free of politics".⁸⁰ A few weeks later, Heaton offered his

⁷⁸Heaton to Linn, 21 June 1920. Heaton Papers.

⁷⁹Linn to Heaton, 14 July 1920. Heaton Papers.

⁸⁰W. Mitchell, open letter to university staff, 1 April 1921. Heaton Papers.

resignation as vice-president of the Association.⁸¹

As well as alienating J.W. McGregor, the President of the Chamber of Manufacturers, pastoralist, wool merchant and interstate manufacturer, Heaton had made another implacable enemy in W. Herbert Phillipps of the Chamber of Commerce. Heaton named Phillipps as a particular opponent and he was no mean enemy.⁸² In 1925, when Heaton left Australia, W. Herbert Phillipps was seventy-eight years old and, according to Fred Johns in his early *Who's Who* (1914), Phillipps was to be "identified with the commercial and financial life of Adelaide". A brief look at his long, influential and widely ramified career indicates how Heaton would have crossed his path at several points. Phillipps was a founder of the commercial house of Geo. Wills and Co. in 1881. He had been President of the Chamber of Commerce twice and was for thirteen years the President of the Federated Employers' Council. As well as being a member of many boards and charitable societies, he was also Chairman of the Trustees of the State Savings Bank of South Australia, whose employees Heaton appeared to be helping to unionise. He had been, since 1897, the Consul for Belgium and was much decorated by the Belgians for his services to their cause during the War - a cause which Heaton publicly claimed had been exploited for the purposes of propaganda.⁸³ Another body of which Phillipps was Vice-President was the Y.M.C.A., which, according to Heaton, had declined to affiliate with the W.E.A. "largely because Mr W. Herbert Phillipps

⁸¹A. Johnston, Sec. of Bank Officials Association, to Heaton, 21 April 1921.

⁸²*Advertiser*, 1 January 1923. Also Curriculum vitae for chair of commerce, University of Melbourne 1924, *op. cit.*

⁸³Fred Johns, *Australia's Prominent People*, 1914, and *Who's Who in Australia*, 1927-28. (Sydney).

declared the W.E.A. was a dangerous political organisation in league with the Trades Hall, and I was known to be a Bolshevik."⁸⁴ Phillipps had been the Chamber of Commerce's representative on the university's Board of Commercial Studies since its inception in 1902 and he was certainly one of the most vocal voices against Heaton in 1925. It was the outside representatives who were opposed to Heaton's gaining any future chair of commerce. Besides Phillipps, these included the Mayor and President of the Chamber of Commerce, Mr Wallace Bruce, the President of the Chamber of Manufacturers, Mr Perry and the chairman of the Board, Mr S. Russell Booth, of Elder Trustee and Executors Co. and a son-in-law of one of Adelaide's most venerable figures, Sir Edward Stirling. Another member of the Board was Colonel Price-Weir who served, along with Phillipps, as President of the Y.M.C.A. Price-Weir, a soldier of distinguished war record, was also an organiser and founder of the South Australian branch of the Australian Imperial Association. While Naylor and Heaton were supporting internationalist causes in the League, Price-Weir and another member of the university, George C. Henderson, professor of modern history and English language and literature, were appearing together on a platform to inaugurate the Imperial Association whose aims were to foster national unity, "organise patriotism", and strengthen Imperial ties.⁸⁵

Professor George Henderson exemplified much of what Heaton found unsatisfactory in Australian universities. Heaton saw many of the members of the University as "hard-shelled Tories" whose idea of a university

⁸⁴*Advertiser*, 1 January 1923.

⁸⁵*Advertiser*, 21 March and 26 March. See also M. Casson, *G.C. Henderson. A Memoir* (Adelaide 1964).

dated back to the Oxford and Cambridge of the 1880's.⁸⁶ Henderson's history teaching was a case in point: Heaton described it to Grant,

History is badly taught here, since one man has to do both History and Literature. He is an Australian who went to Oxford about twenty years ago, and brought back with him all the Oxford notions of teaching history of that day. Hence the History curriculum is not in the least adapted to the requirements of a University in this young country.⁸⁷

He criticised the lack of teaching about Australia and about the growth of modern nations either in Europe or the Pacific. In 1919, Henderson's course stopped in 1273 and was mainly concerned with St. Francis of Assisi and the First Three Crusades. The only other offering was a course in British imperial development and colonial policy and a course in British constitutional history. By 1923, the situation had improved with the addition of a study of Europe 1789-1914.⁸⁸ In Heaton's view, the hand of nineteenth century Oxford hung heavy over Australian universities; many of the teachers who were trained there were not aware of changes even in Oxford and Cambridge, let alone interested in the "new progressive" standards of the recently founded universities. The practice of sending Rhodes scholars to Oxford and the subsequent employment of them back in Australia led to what Heaton thought was "in-breeding" but he hoped that the Oxbridge influence might gradually be diluted by ideas from places like Leeds, Birmingham and Manchester.⁸⁹ On the other hand, it is probable that Heaton himself appeared to some of the conservative Oxbridge academics as a brash, radical product of those raw, provincial universities which popularised social science subjects that were neither traditional nor trustworthy.

⁸⁶Heaton to J.B. Condliffe, 21 September 1922. John Bell Condliffe Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California at Berkeley.

⁸⁷Heaton to Grant, 26 May 1919. *op. cit.*

⁸⁸See University of Adelaide *Calendars* 1918-23 and University of Adelaide *Examination Papers* 1918-25.

⁸⁹Article by Heaton for Morley (Eng.) Secondary School Magazine, 1919. Reprint in Heaton Papers.

CHAPTER 10. Herbert Heaton: Economics and Politics

When Heaton left Adelaide, the *South Australian Worker* saw his defeat as an attempt to suppress radicalism in the voice of a fearless man who had made the fruits of his research and his opinions known even when he was aware that they would not be popular with the ruling powers. "These opinions", said the official organ of Labour, "have generally been of an advanced radical nature, for the doctor is a thorough democrat, though not a Bolshevik in any sense of that misused word".¹ Not being a Bolshevik prompted as many attacks from the left as Heaton underwent from the right. Darnley Naylor described Heaton's position to the Second Congress of the Universities of the Empire in London in 1921 as being between the 'devil' of the capitalist, who might be a "possible benefactor to the University" but who objected to "dangerous doctrines", and the 'deep blue sea' of the Marxians especially at the Trades Hall.² In the early days of the W.E.A. in South Australia, when unions and organisations of various kinds were affiliating with the W.E.A., the South Australian Socialist Movement had declined on the grounds that such a linkage would not keep intact "one of the most vital principles of their constitution, namely, class consciousness".³ The W.E.A. was frequently under attack for being no more than a glorified debating society which did not reach the true worker in any meaningful way. Mr Baker, of the A.W.U. asked a 1917 Council meeting of the W.E.A.: "The affiliation of the Society of Arts was all right, but what about the A.W.U."⁴ The A.W.U., in fact, remained firmly opposed to Heaton who was, in their view, anti-Labour:

¹*South Australian Worker*, 26 June 1925.

²H. Darnley Naylor, "The Universities and Adult Education", *Proceedings of the Second Congress of the Universities of the Empire* (London 1921), p. 145.

³*Daily Herald*, 15 May 1917.

⁴*Ibid.*

their secretary, Mr. F.W. Lundie, conducted an implacable campaign against him.

In 1917, the debate was with the proponents of the Labour Colleges which were modelled on the Central Labour College set up by the Plebs League in London. The Victorian Labour College was founded by Maurice Blackburn, Frederic Sinclair, Guido Baracchi and W.P. Earsman; in South Australia their spokesman was Mr W. Martin Gormlie, a strong critic of Heaton's conspiracy with the capitalists. At a series of addresses at the College's site, Unity Hall in Bourke Street, the founders defined the aims of their College. It would be under the control of the affiliated unions and would follow the London example of teaching history, economics and literature but it would keep "working-class interests" in view. It was, they stressed, firmly opposed to the university influence on the working-classes and particularly to the W.E.A. whose influence on the worker was "that of a drug which will sap their brains and cause their teeth to fall out". They ridiculed the pretensions of university professors - Meredith Atkinson was their target here - to become the intellectual leaders of the working class. Unlike the Ruskin Labour College at Oxford, the Victorian Labour College was not out to foster the self-development of individuals or to give the workers some general culture; its aim was to fit them "to do better work for the class to which they belonged".⁵ In South Australia, W. Martin Gormlie pursued the same line, attacking Heaton's presentation of social theory as one which planned

⁵*Herald* (Melbourne), 1 March 1918. See for discussion of Baracchi and the Victorian Labour College, D. Walker, *Dream and Disillusion* (Canberra 1976) p. 112.

to nibble all the different schools and phases of thought, to concentrate on none and to thus divert the movement for real working class education from its goal ... the abolition of the capitalist system.⁶

All university schemes, in Gormlie's opinion, were the same: only the trade unions could attempt to educate the worker. Frederic Sinclair agreed that the university had nothing to give the worker because it was as much an adjunct of capitalism as was the liberal party in politics. Sinclair's journal *Fellowship* took the occasion of the Victorian grant of £1000 to the W.E.A. in March 1918 for a vituperative analysis of the conspiracy announcing, "the Government is satisfied as to the orthodoxy of the teaching it now subsidises". Money spent on such education softened the aspirations and minds of the workers, drew their most intelligent children away from their origins up into the middle classes, and so ensured a "docile and contented proletariat". How could the W.E.A. be on the side of the worker, the article asked, when it advocated conscription and Imperialism - the clear reference again being to Meredith Atkinson - and when its Director in Adelaide, Mr Heaton, was "feted by the Chamber of Commerce"? It was all, said *Fellowship*, part of a "gigantic conspiracy of benevolence".⁷ For his part, Heaton found his exchanges with Sinclair stimulating and, having obtained a copy of the syllabus of the Victorian Labour College, was amused to discover that, as far as he could see, the course proposed by Guido Barrachi on economics was stolen verbatim from the table of contents of Gide's *History of Economic Doctrines*. He told Portus,

⁶W.M. Gormlie to press, 22 May 1917. Newspaper cutting, Heaton Papers.

⁷F. Sinclair to press, October 1917. Newspaper cutting, Heaton Papers. Also, article by "Ivan the Fool" in *Fellowship*, Vol. 4, no. 8, March 1918.

Scarcely a word is altered or added, but Baracchi obviously knew so little about economics that he had to steal his syllabus from the work of a purveyor of capitalistic dope.⁸

In 1919, when more radical influences ran strong in the Labour movement, the South Australian Labour Party withdrew from its affiliation with the W.E.A. because it and Heaton were deemed "tools of Waymouth and Pirie Streets", and the Port Pirie Trades and Labor Council also refused its support because Heaton was not "class-conscious".⁹ One dedicated combatant in the struggle, "Marxian", wrote persistently to the papers attacking Heaton for his part in the plot to dope the workers and accusing him of being a "true son of capitalist tuition".¹⁰ At the same time, the Y.M.C.A. was refusing to hazard association with the dangerously "radical" W.E.A. This coincidence of events drew from Heaton a wry parody on his situation, entitled "The Sorrows of a Non-Partisan" and published under the pseudonym "Kismet".¹¹ Thus, in the years he spent in Adelaide, Heaton had ascribed to him most of the views along the political and social spectrum. He was a capitalist and a Bolshevik, a free-trader and a protectionist, a Quaker, a Roman Catholic, a Free Mason and a Sinn Feiner. He was even said to have declared "that Confucius was a greater person than Christ".¹²

Heaton's views were not, as the *South Australian Worker* had pronounced, of an "advanced radical nature" in the sense that he, more than any of his fellow W.E.A. intellectuals, advocated the revolutionary reconstruction

⁸Heaton to G.V. Portus, 18 December 1917 and *Syllabus and Constitution of Victorian Labour College* (Melbourne c. 1917), Heaton Papers.

⁹*Advertiser*, 1 January 1923.

¹⁰"Marxian" to Press, c. 1917. Newspaper cutting, Heaton Papers.

¹¹H. Heaton ("Kismet"), "The Sorrows of a Non-Partisan", *Australian Highway*, Vol. 9, November 1919.

¹²*Advertiser*, 1 January 1923.

of society along Marxist-Leninist lines. He was more "proletarian" in sympathies than Atkinson, more of a political economist than Copland and more of a democrat than Mayo. Like Portus, he assented to the broad Marxist analysis of history and capitalism but preferred social justice to economic inevitability as the dynamic of future social reconstruction. Socialism, he wrote,

will have to cease saying 'Socialism is the next economic order' and say once more 'Socialism is the embodiment of a higher ethical code, and the realisation of an ideal of economic justice. It must come, not because it has got to come, but because it ought to come. Exploitation must go because it is robbery; private appropriation must go because it injures the social well-being; extremes of wealth and poverty must vanish because they are morally unhealthy for rich and poor alike. Socialism must be the victory of mind over matter, of ideals over economics, of justice over selfishness ...'¹³

As he saw it, his role as an educator and critic was to assist his students in understanding the present order and to scrutinise the possible alternatives, without adopting any one as the panacea:

The best way to understand contemporary society is to see how that society evolved, study the forces behind it, and trace the growth of rival social theories.¹⁴

This was the organising principle of his lecture course in economic history. In 1918, Heaton issued thirty-seven lecture summaries in pamphlet form. These were re-published in 1921 as no. 5 in the W.E.A. Series under the title of *Modern Economic History with special reference to Australia*. After his year abroad in 1924, he revised this edition giving more space to his growing interest in the study of new lands - Australia, America and Canada - and less to the "isms" and social

¹³H. Heaton, *Economics, Historical, Descriptive and Theoretical*, (W.E.A. Adelaide c. 1918) Lecture no. 28, p. 8.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, Foreword to Lecture no. 1.

theories which so preoccupied his teaching in the immediate post-war years.

The forces which Heaton identified in his history as shaping contemporary society were predominantly economic. The way in which the growth of trade and industry had changed the life of pre-industrial man was vividly described. His students learned of the changes in conditions and social structure wrought by industrialisation and of the increasingly monopolistic evolution of capitalism. He traced the emergence of the twin ameliorist forces of state regulation and trade unionism which had developed in response to laissez-faire economy. But consideration was also given to the influence of theory as a factor in economic and social systems. Theories of individualism, liberalism, Utopian and Marxist socialism, syndicalism and guild socialism, of Co-operation and Co-partnership, were expounded and critically examined. In the light of all this, he came to Australia's economic development: lectures were devoted to the development of trade unionism and industrial legislation, to the fiscal problem of the tariff and to arbitration and wages policy.

Heaton shared the evolutionist view of social development which generally prevailed at the time but, within the movement of human history towards progress, he discerned the same dialectic which concerned all the W.E.A. intellectuals - that between liberty and authority, individualism and interventionism, or, as Mayo put it, between democracy and freedom. His own period, he believed, was one marked by the intervention of authority in the expansion of the sphere of the state but he also thought he saw the beginnings of a reaction against the excesses and failures of state action. The problem he posed his students was how far the state could remain laissez-faire and how far

the citizen could manage by voluntary, corporate effort. As he developed his history of this question, he drew attention to the similarity of the economic arrangements of pre-industrial regimes - the area of his own research in England - to the comprehensive regulation of economic life in the modern state. Pre-industrial regulation of trade and industry was largely dismantled in the nineteenth century but in reaction against the new freedom, workers had been provoked into protective associations and, then, into reliance upon politics and the state for reform. Now, in 1918, they stood upon the brink of a new history in the wake of the War which had changed the terms of the struggle once again. In his analysis, labour was groping for new policies: it was seeking a voice in the management of industry as it had earlier looked for a voice in the government of the country.

Conceding that the state had played an important part in mitigating social evils, Heaton nonetheless wanted to demythologise the "social laboratory". The collectivist state had, in his view, been correctly perceived by those critics who doubted its radicalism, who pointed to its palliative measures and who saw it as a prop of bourgeois capitalism. It had done little to alter the distribution of wealth or to solve the labour problem. Following the general criticism of G.D.H. Cole and other guild socialists, Heaton agreed that democratic gains in the political area had only been played off against unchanging economic realities. The idea he wished to introduce to his students was that any break-through into a new social order must involve some alteration of the industrial state. He laid out, therefore, the various contemporary strategies for achieving this end but his critique of each suggested flaws in them all - either in the problems of transition or in the

machinery of the economic and social arrangements they proposed. His ideal principle was the self-government that the devolutionary theorists proposed in both the control of governments and the control of industry but he had deep reservations about the organisation of guild socialism and about the difficulty of preserving a proper balance in society between the interests of the producer and those of the consumer. Self-government, initiative, voluntarism, however, depended in the end on "the standard of intelligence and character in a democracy".¹⁵ This was the question to which all the W.E.A. discussion returned.

Five years later, in a series of articles for the *Printing Trades Journal*, Heaton reviewed the very limited success of self-government schemes in industry, from the Whitley Councils in Britain to the Bolshevik policies in Russia. The gloomy record, he concluded, was the result of the worker's lack of education for the task: he was not prepared for the expert work of industrial management, finance and production planning. If labour were to be economically free then it would have to acquire economic sophistication, to be trained in new skills and to be given a broad education in the questions of production and exchange.¹⁶

Turning to Australia, he believed that the question of the location of the control of industry had been tardily put here because of the acceptance of the legislative route to reform in the arbitration system. The emphasis had remained, therefore, on matters such as wages and conditions of work rather than on the more fundamental problem of

¹⁵*Ibid.*, Lectures 1-37, *passim*. See also H. Heaton, *Modern Economic History with Special Reference to Australia* (W.E.A. series no. 5 Adelaide 1925).

¹⁶H. Heaton ("Adam Smith, jun."), "Experiments in Government Control" *Printing Trades Journal*, 12 June 1923.

the status of the worker in industry. As his pre-War lectures for the W.E.A. in England showed, he had seen constructive potential in the compulsory arbitration schemes operating in Australia and New Zealand.¹⁷ On his arrival in Tasmania he was still positive about the Australian experiment; he told the press,

On every hand great interest is being shown at Home in the practical outcome of the system here, and even leading Conservative papers are giving a good deal of attention to Australian conditions.¹⁸

But as he continued to study wages policy and industrial relations, as he saw them before him in Australia, his enthusiasm began to wane. He expressed doubts about the efficacy of the arbitration system in maintaining industrial peace - it seemed to him that the system accepted the class struggle as a given and proceeded to harden its lines. The court had thus become only a new arena for class warfare. Heaton's personal admiration for Henry Bournes Higgins matched that of his W.E.A. colleagues and he appreciated his work as "a fine first landmark in the history of wages regulation", but he indicated many problems that the court faced in doing its job: the methods of determining the standard of living and the question of industry's capacity to pay were but two of the issues drawing public fire after the War.¹⁹ The court, in his view, had justified its existence but the problem of industry would prove intractable until new frameworks were established which would recognise the status of the worker in some form of industrial democracy.²⁰

¹⁷H. Heaton, lectures to Cheltenham Christian Social Union (c. 1913). Newspaper Cuttings Book, Heaton Papers.

¹⁸*Hobart Daily Post*, interview with Heaton, 16 July 1914.

¹⁹H. Heaton, "The Basic Wage Principle in Australian Wages Regulation", *Economic Journal*, Vol. 31, 1921, pp. 309-319.

²⁰H. Heaton, *Welfare Work*, Bulletin no. 16, Advisory Council of Science Industry (Melbourne 1919), preface.

Heaton's critique of the arbitration system went beyond the problems specific to the court to the whole character of the Australian social order as he perceived it. The court was evidence of the hegemony of politics which he saw in Australian life and which he believed cauterised initiative and the exploration of alternatives. There was, he found, an "obsession with politics" in Australia which led to many things being left to the state:²¹ he wrote in mid-1915,

Political activity seems to have swallowed up the whole of our energies as a people. The State must improve industrial conditions; the State must raise wages; the State must manage economic affairs generally ... we wait for political change ... we wait, hoping that some day the political machine will be so perfect that it will be able to produce a perfect economic society. Poor fools that we are, to believe in the omnipotence of the State. The nation which leaves everything in the hands of its government is a nation which deserves to stagnate and decay. For twenty-five years the people of Australia have been looking for economic salvation through the State. Are we satisfied with the achievements of those long years? Have the results been at all commensurate with the energy expended? I think not ...²²

His personal, and perhaps nostalgic, preference in all the schemes of self-help and self-government which he analysed was for the encouragement of Co-operation. Of all those who laboured for the W.E.A. in Australia, he was closest to Mansbridge's original alliance between the Co-operative movement and adult education because of his own Yorkshire experience. While he recognised the feebleness of the cause in Australia where impulses to self-help had been, in his opinion, translated into reliance upon political action, he was, nevertheless, prepared to argue its virtues. He offered his services to organise a voluntary consumer society in Hobart urging it as a private expression of community, as

²¹Heaton to MacGibbon, 3 May 1923. Heaton Papers.

²²Hobart *Daily Post*, Heaton to editor, 10 May 1915.

against the state-initiated and maintained bodies he had come to expect in Australia.²³ In Adelaide, he found an active Adelaide Co-operative Society which had been set up in 1868 - he soon sought the university's approval for his nomination to its Committee of Management.²⁴ He regarded the story of the Adelaide Co-operative Society and that of its sister, the Port Adelaide Society, as being "little less thrilling than the achievement of the Lancashire weavers".²⁵ The appeal of Co-operation was two-fold: there was the claim of self-interest and there was the hope of a "Co-operative Commonwealth" which would prove a superior form of social organisation. When the consumer became his own capitalist in the Co-operative movement he had the benefit of his profit while, at the same time, "laying the foundations of the next social system" to which society would pass as it developed through the stage of capitalism. Not least in his appraisal of Co-operation was its contribution to education, although little had been done in this area in Australia.²⁶

In 1920, Heaton was active in the formation of the South Australian Co-operative Union and in the organisation of the First and Second Australian Congress of Consumers' Co-operative Societies in 1921 and 1922. He was judged the most striking and impressive figure at the Second Congress because of his address on Co-operative education, marked by its "ripeness of knowledge, fluency of speech and keenness

²³*Ibid.*

²⁴Minutes of the Board of Commercial Studies, University of Adelaide, 27 August 1919.

²⁵H. Heaton, "Co-operation of Consumers", *Printing Trades Journal*, 13 February 1923, p. 25 (under pseudonym Adam Smith, jun.).

²⁶H. Heaton, "The Co-operative Commonwealth", *Printing Trades Journal*, 16 January 1923, pp. 4-5 (under pseudonym Adam Smith, jun.).

Also H. Heaton, "Co-operation in Australia", *Year Book of the Commonwealth of Australia*, no. 17, 1924, pp. 581-586.

of Co-operative enthusiasm".²⁷ He was not, he said, one of those fanatical Co-operators who found the solution of all social problems in the movement, and he had no illusions about its limitations, but he argued that it could, within its limits, contribute substantially to social progress.²⁸ To this end he was an energetic propagandist for the cause. Apart from the training in efficiency and in practical democracy that the running of Co-operative ventures gave the workers, the most profound value was in the "spirit of Co-operation" because it gave a new coherence to the community and because it offered an alternative to the class divisions in society. Co-operation was to Heaton an expression of the life and health of society - the "middle way" which could avoid both the dominance of the collectivist state and the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat.

Heaton's "radicalism" was misunderstood by his opponents in Adelaide. His challenge to the Australian social order consisted of a critique of capitalism but not of a commitment to overthrow it. He was outspoken in his condemnation of the hegemony of politics in Australia which he saw expressed in two ways: one, the degree of state centralisation and government intervention and, two, the way in which every social and economic issue became a political one. The Australian obsession with politics, as he termed it, was further compounded in his view by the failure of the major political parties. Both appeared to him to be "dominated by wire-pulling and opportunism" and both subservient to vested interests. The Labour Party, to which

²⁷*Co-operative News*, 1 November 1922. Report of Heaton address to the Congress on "Co-operative Education".

²⁸H. Heaton, "Co-operation in Australia", *op. cit.*, p. 586.

his social philosophy ought normally to have inclined him, did not look to intellectuals and ideas. It was flawed by the lack of underlying principles and by the absence of any coherent international policy.²⁹

He outlined his own priorities thus,

... the alternative seems to be a brand new Political Party, new in its personell (sic.), and preaching the gospel of decency in public life, hard work, better education, a real foreign policy, and fairer distribution of wealth.³⁰

He summed up his own political philosophy as laissez-faire plus voluntarism,³¹ an alternative to the reliance of citizens on the collective state:

We do need a good healthy dose of Laissez-Faire, not Laissez-Faire plus rank individualism, but one tempered by the influence of the many sectional organisations with which the country abounds today. We want trade unions and employer federations to work out their problems themselves, we want far more co-operation, both amongst city dwellers, and amongst the farmers; we want a large measure of devolution by which much which is done by the state today would be passed over to reformed local authorities.³²

The broad principles of the social order that Heaton envisaged were also those of Bland, Portus and Atkinson - the recognition of the pluralist nature of society, the plea for the co-operation of competing groups in the social whole, the renewal of local life through the self-reliant effort of the informed citizen, the extension of democratic measures to industry, and the need for the renovation of politics. It is doubtful, however, whether Heaton's rejection in Adelaide had much to do with any local understanding of these ideals. It had much more

²⁹Heaton to Grant, 26 May 1919. Heaton Papers.

³⁰*Ibid.*

³¹Heaton to E. Mayo, 14 February 1919. Mayo MS, Baker Library, Harvard University.

³²Heaton to Grant, 26 May 1919, *op. cit.*

to do with the problem of teaching and discussing issues which provoked controversy in a small provincial city by appearing to threaten established interests. In a smaller community than Melbourne or Sydney, the style, personality and message of a well-known speaker from the university commanded much more attention. The politicisation of Australian culture had been remarked by Lord Bryce when he observed that opinion in Australia appeared to run parallel with class lines:

... certain elements needed to form breadth and to give variety, or to form a mediating influence between sharply opposing interests, have been wanting. The opinion of the richer sort as well as that of the masses runs in a groove with far too little of a sympathetic exchange of views.³³

Through his role as an educator forming opinion, Heaton aspired to be a "mediating influence" but, in the Adelaide of the post-War years, such an intellectual function was neither recognised nor permitted.

* * * * *

The announcement in June 1925 of Heaton's resignation and appointment in Canada aroused wide response in the press, in the university, in Labour circles and in the general community. His own comment was predictable: because of the political climate his position at the University had developed into a professional dead-end,

It is impossible to make any progress in the study of economics until sectional interests and partisanship are eliminated.³⁴

In Adelaide he had made many friends but also many powerful enemies whose criticisms of him, he felt, were never explicit enough for him to confront openly. Moderate Labour representatives, like the Printing Trades

³³James Bryce, *Modern Democracies*, Vol. 11 (London 1921), pp. 272-273.

³⁴*News*, 15 August 1925.

Employees Union, concluded that class-interests had prevailed. One Labour M.P. on the University Council, Mr L.P. Hunkin, protested that Heaton had been "persecuted with peculiar malignancy for purely political reasons". He claimed that the Government was prepared to endow a chair to retain Heaton's services but that there was strong opposition in the university which would insist on lengthy appointment procedures when Heaton himself must make a quick decision about his future.³⁵ In the South Australian Parliament, Mr F.W. Birrell, President of the South Australian Labour Party, feared that Heaton was leaving Adelaide for reasons which were not at all creditable to the University Council; if it had acted because it believed that Heaton's views were "advanced", then its action was to be deplored:

His ability, like that of many another good man in South Australia has not been recognised, and he has gone to another country as so many have gone to other states.³⁶

The loss was irreparable, Birrell considered, because Heaton, more than any other, had given to people of all classes a better knowledge of economics, social problems and international affairs. The *South Australian Worker* was convinced that if Heaton had *not* given the public the benefit of his knowledge on these matters, he would have held the chair long since. It then called for a Royal Commission into the allegation that the university was controlled by outside financial interests.³⁷

The *Register* and the *Advertiser* did not comment on the politics

³⁵*News*, 20 August 1925.

³⁶F.W. Birrell, *South Australian Parliamentary Debates*, 6 August 1925, p. 335.

³⁷*South Australian Worker*, 26 June 1925.

of Heaton's departure but both acknowledged his achievement in raising the status of economics in the university to the point where it was now one of the most important subjects. He had built up one of the largest schools of economics in the British Empire, having now over 200 students.³⁸ One journalist was inspired to develop an analogy between Heaton's case and the Scopes trial which was proceeding in Dayton, Tennessee, in July 1925, and was widely reported in the Australian press. He was prepared to call Heaton one of the foremost living economists whose work was much better appreciated overseas. In Adelaide his teaching had not been tolerated because he had eschewed a "class-view" and so alienated the commercial and financial world, despite "his patent mastership of his subject", his "boundless devotion to his task and students" and his outstanding abilities. "It is hard to see on what grounds" concluded the writer, "Adelaide can afford to laugh at Tennessee".³⁹ Within the university, Darnley Naylor, Chairman of the Joint Committee for the W.E.A. Tutorial Classes, believed that the Council would learn to regret its action,⁴⁰ and Vice-Chancellor William Mitchell said publicly that if Heaton showed any sign of wanting to return they would not fill his job for a year.⁴¹ Students and editors of papers for which he had written joined his colleagues in the W.E.A. in lamenting his going. Among his W.E.A. friends, Portus wrote that Heaton was in his opinion the best man in the country in his subject,⁴² a judgement which L.F. Giblin

³⁸*Register*, 17 June 1925 and *Advertiser*, 17 June 1925.

³⁹Galley proof of article, signed H.S.T., entitled "Adelaide and Tennessee. A Comparison provoked by Dr Heaton's Departure". A note in the margin says "Got held over and was never published in full". Heaton Papers.

⁴⁰H. Darnley Naylor to Heaton, 19 July 1925. Heaton Papers.

⁴¹*Advertiser*, 10 August 1925. Report of Heaton Farewell.

⁴²G.V. Portus to Heaton, 18 June 1925. Portus wrote

"you are in my opinion the best man in this country in your subjects. The ridiculousness of passing you over for Gunn and Copland now becomes apparent ... I have always had the comfortable feeling that you knew and understood and made allowances for me and that I could always rely upon you. Though our intimacy has been much less than I have wished, I have somehow or other developed a real affection for your sturdy, old forthright, Yorkshire, mixed-up self." Heaton Papers.

supported in his letter:

I still feel rotten about your going and haven't the heart to offer congratulations on your appointment. It's perfectly damnable to think that a University in Australia can still be run on these paleolithic principles. I tried to enquire about the position in Adelaide last year but the answer was always rather vague. That certain people would not agree to advertising your job at professorial status while you were there - but who was the active force of the certain people and exactly what was the motive I did not get clear. I can't see how any impartial judge could doubt that you were the strongest man in the Economics line in Australia or New Zealand and the getting of you for Adelaide should have been a scoop - of course you might have preferred to move on anyway. That would have been sad. But it's the not at least offering the professorial job which makes your going now so particularly bloody.⁴³

It is true that Heaton had tried to move on, almost since he had arrived in Adelaide. Since 1919, he had made efforts to return to England from which he felt greatly remote. Perhaps he had in mind Sir William Ashley's words recalling that he had served many years outside England in North America before his return to Birmingham. Heaton had applied for the chair of economics at Wellington in 1919, when it had appeared for the first time that the Degree course at Adelaide would now be deferred.⁴⁴ In 1921, he sought a post in Aberdeen and here Ashley spoke warmly of his great vigour and his substantial contribution in his book just published - "Mr Heaton is one of the few men who know how to combine minute investigation of original material with a philosophical outlook"⁴⁵ - and he had also corresponded with Lillian Knowles about the possibilities of employment in England.⁴⁶

⁴³L.F. Giblin to Heaton, 8 August 1925. Heaton Papers.

⁴⁴A reference from J.F. Fowler for Heaton for the Wellington post is attached to Heaton's application for Melbourne chair, 1924, *op. cit.*

⁴⁵Copy of reference from Sir William Ashley in application for Melbourne chair, 1924. Also a letter from R.H. Tawney to Heaton, 10 October 1921 refers to Heaton being in for the Aberdeen chair for which Tawney had sent in a "laudatory letter". Heaton Papers.

⁴⁶L. Knowles to Heaton, 9 August 1922. Heaton Papers.

In 1922, it appeared as if there would be a general shift around Australian universities which might give him the opportunity to move when Brisbane was setting up a chair in history and economics, Sydney had forced the retirement of R.F. Irvine (who urged Heaton to apply as his successor) and Melbourne was calling for a replacement for Meredith Atkinson's post. Nothing came of these moves and he briefly considered a readership in Commerce at the University of London in the same year;⁴⁷ then, while abroad in 1924, he corresponded with Oxford on the prospects of a Readership there.⁴⁸

Heaton believed that his reputation for radicalism blocked his chances for the appointments in Brisbane and Melbourne. The W.E.A. wanted him to succeed Meredith Atkinson as Director of Tutorial Classes in Melbourne and, in a field of forty applicants, Heaton was placed on a short list of three along with D.B. Copland and J.A. Gunn. Mansbridge, Tawney and Zimmern were then asked to interview Gunn, while information was sought on Copland's uncertain health. The Committee decided that it must find out more about Heaton, since reports "both favourable and critical" had reached some members of the Committee. The University Council also had a standing instruction to inquire from any candidates whether they had rendered war service, and if not, for a statement of their reasons. Unfortunately, the further information on Heaton from Adelaide and his statement about war service are not to be found in the file with his application but it is hard to imagine that either would have advanced his cause.⁴⁹ With incredulity, Heaton noted the outcome -

⁴⁷Heaton, Personal Diary, 31 December 1922 entry takes stock of these events during the year. Heaton Papers.

⁴⁸Heaton to Oxford, 1924. Letter written from Queen's University in reply to letter from Oxford about Mynors Fellowship and Readership. Heaton Papers.

⁴⁹University of Melbourne Registry Files 1922/433.

"They chose Gunn".⁵⁰ Indeed, that appointment was one of Melbourne's most disastrous; it spelled an end to any effective interest in sociology (which Gunn professed) and a decline in the activities of the W.E.A. in Victoria. When Heaton's departure was announced three years later, Copland wrote to him reflecting on the "appalling state of affairs in the Tutorial Classes Department" at Melbourne since Gunn arrived. He reported how one of his students had facetiously remarked that the import of Gunn and the export of Heaton upset Copland's principles of international trade.⁵¹

As the occupant of the first chair of commerce at the University of Melbourne, Copland felt a certain personal anguish over Heaton's going since Heaton had also been an applicant for the same position in 1924. Copland himself had written to Heaton, then at the L.S.E., about the chair and urged him to apply. He would himself be a candidate but he declared,

I must say that you should be appointed before me and I will let that be known if any opportunity should occur. I have no wish to exploit your so-called unpopularity in high financial circles.⁵²

Copland suspected that the "hand of high finance would weigh heavily upon this appointment" and that none of them might be favoured. Heaton did submit a lengthy application for the chair, from London, and this time he prefaced it with a letter which anticipated the inevitable further inquiries in Adelaide. "I am well aware that by some Adelaide businessmen and wage-earners I am regarded with grave suspicion", he stated, but he wanted it to be known that none of his critics were ever students of

⁵⁰Note added to his copy of Application for 1922 position. Heaton papers.

⁵¹D.B. Copland to Heaton, 18 June 1925. Heaton Papers.

⁵²Copland to Heaton, 14 March 1924. Heaton Papers.

either his lectures or his work. He volunteered the names of four men who had been most active in expressing their dissent - two businessmen, W. Herbert Phillipps and J.W. MacGregor, and two left-wing critics, Mr F.W. Lundie of the A.W.U., and Mr W.M. Gormlie, well-known socialist. He then countered with four other names of ex-students and trade union officials who would speak well of him, and who did have first-hand experience of his teaching.⁵³

Despite the fact that his experience and his writings were substantial by 1924, Heaton was not successful in this application. William Ashley made it clear that Heaton was the preferred candidate of the English committee which was asked to advise and which also included William Beveridge and a Melbourne professor. Since Melbourne did not take its advice, Ashley commented tersely, "I am not sure I shall be very anxious to take the trouble to sit on a similar committee in future."⁵⁴ Copland wrote, after the event, reporting that the business men on the committee wanted a "business" appointment - even a man who knew no economics - and that Heaton might have been rejected because he was too much of a historian. Even so, Copland did not believe that Heaton had been treated fairly, either then or in 1922. Although pleased at his own success, Copland could not but feel that Heaton had been objected to "on account of opinions".⁵⁵ His final comment, in 1925, again attested to Heaton's standing in the eyes of his fellow economists:

⁵³Application for the chair of commerce, University of Melbourne 1924. *op. cit.*

⁵⁴W. Ashley to Heaton, 27 January 1925. Heaton Papers.
W.H. Beveridge to Heaton, 3 November 1924, state "I heard the other day that contrary to our strong recommendations here the Melbourne job has not come to you ..." Heaton Papers.

⁵⁵Copland to Heaton, 12 September 1924. Heaton Papers.

So it has happened. Your letter gave us some hope that you might win in Adelaide but the opposition was apparently too formidable. I have no doubt that you will find bigger problems and more opportunities in America and in the long run the move will be beneficial ... It makes one feel insignificant compared with the fine stand you have taken on many things and the appreciation with which you are held in circles that count but have little claim to control the cash.⁵⁶

A central problem for Heaton - and for the early professionalisation of economics in Australian universities - had been the tension between the outside requirements of commerce and the prevailing ideas about economics. The business men who endowed or supported or were involved with the teaching of commercial students in universities wanted practical training in methods and principles and were wary of the theoretical dangers of economics. When the University of Adelaide's Board of Commercial Studies was developing its Diploma in 1907, R.F. Irvine had advised them about the importance of economics to such a course, pointing to the conflict:

With us Economics is the basis; it furnishes the body of principles which give unity to the whole study of Commerce and Industry. With you, technique is the basis: and although there may be some advantage in this, the treatment of technique in a series of more or less unrelated topics, seems to me to be contrary to the true conception of University studies. It lacks coherence, and, while it may turn out good clerks and accountants, it fails to produce broad-minded citizens.⁵⁷

In his letter to the Chairman of the Board of Commercial Studies before the crucial meeting of May 29, 1925, Heaton had argued for the same liberal dimensions in a university education,

⁵⁶Copland to Heaton, 18 June 1925. Heaton Papers.

⁵⁷Minutes of the Board of Commercial Studies, University of Adelaide, 28 August 1907.

I regard our Commerce school as the giving of a liberal education with a commercial basis. This means that a teacher must help his students in the accumulation of facts and get them into the habit of trying to be well-informed, on the one hand. On the other hand, he must train them to examine rival theories and reach their own conclusions. The teacher's business is to state as impartially as he can rival theories and points of view when the subject is a controversial one, leaving the students to reach their own conclusions by the exercise of their own thinking machinery.⁵⁸

In the discussion which followed Heaton's resignation, the problem persisted. Mr Wallace Bruce, then Mayor and president of the Chamber of Commerce, addressed the Commerce Students Association, a few weeks later. He agreed that the establishment of a chair in any subject meant public recognition that the subject was of sufficient educational and social importance to warrant special study. He found that this was true in the matter of commerce but, in the Chamber's view, it was the teaching of economics which presented the risks. Bruce defined economics as the "study of the material welfare of the people" and declared that he would be sorry if its teaching "resulted in clouding the University in a murky haze of party politics".⁵⁹ The *News* printed a strongly dissenting editorial on Mr Bruce's opinions and was provoked to ask, "what is there in this community that makes the teaching of Economics more difficult and hazardous than in any other?" If economics were as Mr Bruce defined it, then there was no more important subject for Australia. It was ridiculous, continued the *News*, to teach commerce without its economic foundation and it was this very fear that had caused Adelaide to lag behind the rest of the country, and the Empire,

⁵⁸Heaton to the Chairman of the Board of Commercial Studies, 28 May 1925. Heaton Papers.

⁵⁹*News*, editorial, 15 July 1925.

in the founding of a chair, and to lose Mr Heaton.⁶⁰ William Mitchell was also much opposed to the idea that "the man in practice" was better able to teach than the man acquainted with theory - this, he denounced at an organised Farewell for Heaton as "an ignorant notion".⁶¹ Mitchell pursued the campaign for the chair after Heaton left; Phillipps and Bruce and the Chamber were finally persuaded, acquiescing in Mitchell's insistence that it was an economist and not "a practical man" that was needed.⁶² The Chair was finally established and filled in 1930 by an Adelaide economist, L.G. Melville.

Not only was Heaton's position as the educator of future business leaders one that was particularly vulnerable and susceptible to outside pressures; there was also the "philosophical outlook", as William Ashley called it, which characterised his writing and teaching. Heaton as an economic historian was more of a political than a theoretical economist; he was openly concerned with the human and social implications of economic policy and with the various social theories that informed them. He described his own strengths and weaknesses in his letter to Oxford concerning the Mynors Fellowship and Readership there:

Again, if the person appointed has to be a specialist in money and banking, I am useless. My ten years teaching in new universities has compelled me to be an academic general practitioner, covering the whole range of economics. But recently, I have been able to narrow down my field to modern economic history, industrial organisation and practice, and industrial relations. I am not good at pure theory or on currency problems but I have a good working knowledge of the structure and operation of industry, of its recent developments and of what can broadly be called the labour problem.⁶³

⁶⁰*Ibid.*

⁶¹*Advertiser*, 10 August 1925.

⁶²W. Mitchell to Heaton, 23 August 1925. Heaton Papers.

⁶³Heaton to Oxford, 1924. *op. cit.*

Heaton's field of research, the "labour problem", was almost by definition a controversial one in Australia, but it was his public activities as educator, publicist and critic which stirred most of the suspicion that clouded his work. F.A. Bland urged him on in this role, putting his finger both on what Heaton most valued and on what most provoked hostility:

You ought to be writing but don't do too much of the erudite 'researching' of Copland's dreams. Let it be more of the Wallas, Russell, Tawney endeavours with a modern *bite*. I wish I had your pen to chide and guide politicians in the way they should go.⁶⁴

In Australia, there was, it seemed, much more future in being a Copland than a Tawney or a Russell.

As Heaton sailed from Australia in August 1925, an interesting exchange of letters took place. T. Griffith Taylor had written to Heaton asking for a copy of his article in the *Quarterly Journal of Economics*. Taylor was then professor of geography in the University of Sydney and was suffering much vilification for the shadows his research was casting on the notion of Australia Unlimited, in particular, for his doubts that the tropical spaces of Australia would ever hold small farms or that the population would ever exceed twenty million. Labelled a "pessimist" himself, Taylor inquired whether Heaton had ever been in hot water for saying unpatriotic things "about the land which is 25 times the size of England and 1,489, 652½ times as big as Gibraltar". Taylor's letter reached Heaton as he arrived in Canada and drew an outspoken response:

My chief offence has been that I trod on the stupid golden corns of Adelaide's elderly plutocrats, and the sequel would make a good appendix to an Australian edition of Upton Sinclair's *Goose-step*.⁶⁵

⁶⁴F.A. Bland to Heaton, 5 August 1925. Heaton Papers.

⁶⁵Heaton to T. Griffith Taylor, 14 September 1925. Griffith Taylor Papers, MS 1003/9/823 N.L.A.

Heaton acknowledged the great benefit he had derived from Taylor's work on the Australian environment and wondered if Taylor had ever considered coming to North America, where, unlike in his native land, his work was regarded as exciting and pioneering. Heaton had in fact mentioned Taylor's name at the University of Toronto which was planning the establishment of a department of geography.⁶⁶ Taylor responded warmly to the idea and remarked,

our paths have been somewhat alike, as regards public non-appreciation! However, my colleagues stand by my views and the "many-headed" will learn to agree with us - after we are dead.⁶⁷

Three years later, Griffith Taylor left Sydney to take up a chair at the University of Chicago where he pursued a long and fruitful career.⁶⁸

In 1920 Heaton had urged Alfred Zimmern to visit the W.E.A. in Australia, in the following terms:

All the States are very keen on getting an occasional visitor to come out here, for you have no conception of the sense of isolation, and therefore of ever-threatening insularity, which broods over this distant continent.⁶⁹

Leaving Australia in 1925, he may have felt that he had rejoined the world. In July 1926, he was elected to the Inaugural Council of the Economic History Society in England which, with William Ashley as its first president, was composed of most of the leading scholars in the field.⁷⁰

⁶⁵Heaton to T. Griffith Taylor, 14 September 1925. Griffith Taylor Papers, MS 1003/9/823 N.L.A.

⁶⁶*Ibid.*

⁶⁷Griffith Taylor to Heaton, 26 October 1925. Griffith Taylor Papers.

⁶⁸See T. Griffith Taylor, *Journeyman Taylor The Education of a Scientist* (London 1958).

⁶⁹Heaton to Zimmern, 13 June 1920. Zimmern Letters MS 3731 N.L.A.

⁷⁰See T.C. Barker, "The Beginnings of the Economic History Society", *Economic History Review*, Vol. XXX, no. 1, 1977, p. 14.

W.G.K. Duncan and R.A. Leonard in their history of the University of Adelaide note that, after his move to the University of Minnesota, Heaton "built a reputation as one of the most eminent economic historians in the English-speaking world." W.G.K. Duncan and R.A. Leonard, *The University of Adelaide 1874-1974* (Adelaide 1973) p. 71.

CONCLUSION

When the first issue of the *Economic Record* appeared in 1925, Herbert Heaton greeted the event as a moment of passage in the intellectual life of Australia. It meant to him the beginning of the systematic study and teaching of economic science in Australia and as such seemed a fitting occasion to review the problems and progress of that discipline in the country which he had recently left. The economist had now become persona grata in the land where "every political problem was an economic one" and where the distrust of theory and the fear of criticism of the existing social order had hitherto inhibited his legitimation. Heaton attributed this advance to the fact that economic expertise was needed to guide Australia's social experiments but also to the impetus which the W.E.A. had given to economics and related fields. The W.E.A., he maintained, had recruited to its ranks many of those under whom economic studies would come to maturity; the writing and teaching of this group, necessitated by the demands of worker education in a young democracy, had added strength from "without the walls of the universities".¹ Almost twenty years later, Heaton reiterated these claims with regard to the development of Australian historical studies. In another retrospective article, "The Progress of Historical Studies in Australia", published in the *Journal of Modern History* in 1943, he pointed again to the stimulus to the study of Australia provided by the worker education movement after 1914. This article, occasioned by the appearance of five new books from Melbourne University Press, was itself a landmark because it was one

¹H. Heaton, "Progress and Problems of Australian Economics", *American Economic Review*, Vol. 16, 1926, pp. 235-248.

of the first historiographical exercises in the field of Australian history. The books which he welcomed treated the sorts of issues which he had recommended for research two decades earlier: R.M. Crawford's *Ourselves and the Pacific* and Lewis Lett's *The Papuan Achievement* were addressed to Australia's relations to Asia and the Pacific; Paul Hasluck examined internal policy in *Black Australians: a Survey of Native Policy in Western Australia 1829-1897* and Brian Fitzpatrick had produced a formidable economic history of Australia - which had been Heaton's own ambition - in *The British Empire in Australia 1834-1939*. Looking back, he praised the work of the early professors, Scott, Wood and Henderson for their promotion of Australian history and for their drive to assemble archival materials, but he also recalled the W.E.A. publications which had preceded the establishment of a university press and were the result of the engagement of social scientists in adult education.²

To a certain extent this thesis has been an elaboration of Heaton's perspectives in its assessment of the contribution of the W.E.A. circle to the academic and intellectual development of modern Australia. It began, however, as an inquiry into what Australians themselves thought of the social order they had created by the end of the Deakinite years, noting that most of the accounts of the social laboratory to that point had come from the pens of foreign visitors. What became clear from contemporary writing was the anxiety of those who took thought about the same question. There was a pressing awareness of the need to evaluate Australia's achievements which was

²H. Heaton, "The Progress of Historical Studies in Australia", *Journal of Modern History*, Vol. XV, 1943, pp. 304-310.

sharpened by participation in a war which threatened the old social order everywhere and made crucial the reconstruction of a new one. Not only was there common complaint that there was no body of analytical work on Australia but it was a recurring criticism that Australia lagged behind the rest of the world in providing the education which trained the type of mind able to undertake social analysis and social planning. At the time, the key to social problems appeared to many to lie in the new social sciences which, by 1914, had barely a foothold in Australian universities. The W.E.A. intellectuals attempted to match their perception of these gaps with their own efforts to fill them. Within the universities, they promoted the development of those social sciences which would train new experts and, outside the universities, they arranged forums from which to raise the level of public understanding of current issues. They undertook the W.E.A. Series which was explicitly designed as "economic, political and social studies" and consciously labelled "written in Australia".

At the end of the twenties the seeds of the social sciences had been sown but the maturation expressed in the creation of separate departments and in the national co-ordination of research was still many years away. The American Social Sciences Research Council had been founded in 1923 but a committee to consider the formation of an equivalent body in Australian was not convened until 1942. The chairman of the provisional committee, K.S. Cunningham, surveyed the situation at the end of the Second World War in terms not so different from those of R.F. Irvine and Francis Anderson in 1914:

It is commonly agreed that the social sciences are relatively undeveloped in Australia ... This is one particularly strong argument for the vigorous development of the social disciplines in this country. Although there are elements of universality in all forms of social study, and although

questions of methodology are the same wherever they occur, the concrete problems dealt with by the social sciences take on forms which are peculiar to the country concerned. Until Australia devotes due attention to training workers in this field, many of her urgent social problems will remain undealt with, or will be dealt with unscientifically.³

Cunningham was, however, able to acknowledge the *relative* development of the social sciences which has been one of the main concerns of this study, and to find among the members of his committee such old W.E.A. colleagues as D.B. Copland, F.A. Bland, F.R. Mauldon, H. Alcock and R.C. Mills.

With the exception of Elton Mayo's thought and Bland's designs for the structures of Australian government, there was little that was original and much that was derivative in the social theory which informed the W.E.A. critique of Australia. It is argued, however, that what was important was the systematic and pioneering attempt to apply to Australia some of the hypotheses and techniques developed elsewhere during a high period of social theory in the western world. What emerged - and what has not hitherto been noted - was a critique of the Australian social order that was at odds with all the myths in questioning the triumph of the collectivist state. The conventional wisdom held that here in the South Seas was a land where social progress had been achieved through the political alliance of the working class with a group of liberals whose progressive philosophy relied on the state as the agency of social reform. The rejection of this concept of social reconstruction by the W.E.A. group in the early years of their

³K.S. Cunningham, *Social Science Research in Australia* (Melbourne 1945) p. 7. Cunningham had also been a W.E.A. tutor in Victoria in the mid-twenties.

careers was a mark of the influence of the cluster of ideas which was then loosely called sociology. In this social theory, emphasis was placed upon devolution - in government, in industry and in community life. The state was to be regarded as an association *primus inter pares* so that political allegiance was seen as only one of the many loyalties commanding the energy of the citizen. The ideal of the active citizen participating in democracy by operating in his natural and voluntary groups ran counter to the dominance of politics and the state as they observed it in Australia. The participation of the citizen was always predicated on the cultivation of his intelligence - the business of all education. Thus the W.E.A. intellectuals did not engage with politics except to point out the vulnerability of democracy to its excessive influence. It must be concluded, however, that this social theory was always a marginal set of ideas in Australia. It did little to change the realities of Australian *étatisme* or to solve the class hostilities it sought to weld into the corporate whole. Indeed, the discipline of sociology which purveyed this concept of the social community itself evaporated and was not revived in Australian universities until the nineteen sixties. The W.E.A. Series also disappeared from later bibliographies but, I would argue, the problems and questions it addressed have persisted. It was in the discourse of these books, and of the circle which produced them, that many of the terms in which the subsequent discussion of Australia has been cast found their first formulation. The social analysis of the W.E.A. passed into a general deposit from which such seminal writers as W.K. Hancock drew and passed on influential ideas.

Hancock's *Australia*, published in 1930, has attained classic status in Australian historical studies. Regarded as a brilliant

starting point in the evaluation of Australia, it has set the terms of many of the debates in later historical writing. Its eloquent and epigrammatic style makes *Australia* still an exciting book but it has also been deceptive in giving the force of apparent new insight to much that had been said before. Hancock's ability to synthesise the issues of three previous decades should be recognised as much as his originality. By 1930, as this thesis has demonstrated, Hancock was able to write out of a tradition of social comment and could offer not tentative suggestions but virtual definitions of Australia's social order and political economy. This is particularly true of one of the books major concerns - the nature and role of the state. Hancock declared with conviction what the W.E.A. intellectuals had laboured to formulate:

Thus Australian democracy has come to look upon the State as a vast public utility, whose duty it is to provide the greatest happiness for the greatest number.⁴

He defined as a key element in the prevailing ideology of Australian democracy "the appeal to government as the instrument of self-realisation", a phrase which echoed the commentary of Meredith Atkinson.⁵ He identified the same tensions and problems to which Atkinson, Mayo, Heaton, Bland, Irvine and Eggleston had previously called attention - for example,

Social democracy therefore aims both at efficiency and at popular control. Can the two be reconciled?⁶

At the heart of this social democracy, Hancock found the same dilemma

⁴W.K. Hancock, *Australia* (Brisbane 1961), p. 55.

⁵*Ibid.*, p. 57. Cf. M. Atkinson, *The New Social Order*, pp. 273-274.

⁶Hancock, *op. cit.*, p. 106 and ff. In this chapter on State Socialism, Hancock acknowledges the work of Eggleston and Bland. He also quotes G.V. Portus on the history of the Labour movement, see pp. 170-171.

with which the W.E.A. group had struggled, that between the demands of the ethical and the economic. He explained it lucidly as a conflict between an ideal notion of social justice - as expressed in such concepts as a "fair and reasonable wage" or a "fair" protective tariff - and the economic necessities pronounced by an impartial economic science.⁷ Finally, one of Hancock's most memorable judgements was his assertion of the hegemony of politics in Australia. In almost every department of life, with the exception of their pursuit of pleasure, Hancock believed that the activities of the Australian people "lose their clear outline in the universal smudge of politics".⁸ This was surely the end-product of an era of social analysis to which the W.E.A. contribution was central.

Thus, the legacy of the W.E.A. intellectuals extended beyond the immediate endeavour to educate the worker. To the origins of the social sciences in Australia, and to the study of Australia itself; this group provided a unique shape and stimulus. As a collaborative intellectual venture, the W.E.A. Series has had no comparable sequel. It is important, therefore, to restore these books in their sociological and intellectual context to historical view and to make visible again this common chapter in the lives of those who made them possible. There was more than rhetorical truth in Heaton's closing remarks in the Third Annual Report of the Workers' Educational Association of Australia for 1922:

Above all we have found that in our midst is an active minority of people to whom our ideals and methods have appealed, and we can claim to have done our bit - maybe a big bit - in shaping the mind and broadening the outlook of this young nation.⁹

⁷*Ibid.*, pp. 66-67.

⁸*Ibid.*, p. 235.

⁹H. Heaton and S.D. Thompson, "Third Annual Report of the Workers' Educational Association of Australia, 1922", *Australian Highway*, October 1, 1923 p. 152.

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