

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE ESTABLISHED AND NEW LEFT GROUPINGS IN THE ANTI- VIETNAM WAR MOVEMENT IN VICTORIA 1967-1972

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of Technology

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DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis is my own work and has not previously been submitted, in part or whole, in respect of any previous academic work.

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Glen Anthony Davis

July 4 1970
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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the relationship between the various left groupings that constituted the opposition to the war in Vietnam in the late 1960s and early 1970s. The focus is on how the newer radical groups of this period interacted with and influenced the established Left and peace movement. The work concentrates on opposition to the war within the Australian State of Victoria, drawing upon interviews with participants as well as written material from primary and secondary sources.

The involvement of conscripted Australian soldiers in the Vietnam War, and the protests that ensued, precipitated growth in and change in the nature of the left in Australia. The battlefields, metaphorically speaking, were not just the rice paddies and jungles of South East Asia, but also the streets and meeting halls of Australia. No longer was the debate restricted to a simple one of opposition to the Government policy of being involved in Vietnam, but was also about how to oppose this involvement and whether or not to actually take sides in the conflict.

Early faith in the ability of the Australian Labor Party (ALP) to win the 1966 Federal election, withdraw troops from Vietnam and take a progressive stance on the issue, was rudely shattered when it suffered a crushing electoral defeat. However, this was a catalyst for younger and newer participants in Left politics to look beyond parliamentary solutions. The following years saw the established Left and their supporters challenged and confronted by a newer, more militant Left. These newcomers, unaffected by the repression and negativity of the Cold War, challenged the passivity and conservatism of their more established fellow activists, as they sought to drive the anti-Vietnam War movement in a leftward direction.

The new radicals did not achieve all their goals. However, their efforts, while often initially unpopular within the anti-Vietnam War movement, influenced the agenda in a number of ways. The anti-Vietnam War movement was impelled to debate, and, at times, accept, more radical positions. Identifying with the 'enemy', mass sit downs, and a focus on US imperialism as the cause of the war, were examples of positions which initially were unacceptable to the established left and peace movement but gradually became more acceptable within the wider anti-Vietnam War movement.

The ability to challenge the existing political hegemony within the established Left and anti-Vietnam War movement provided an example of how through

taking militant action, groups can influence broad political agendas. The radical actions assisted in both moving the movement to the left and influencing public support for opponents of the war.

Features of the period included: a return to the confrontationist direct action approaches unseen in Australia since the 1930's depression; the pivotal role of large scale public demonstrations as a way of mobilising opponents of the war; and the civil disobedience against the conscription scheme for 20 year old men. The impact of this time saw the extra parliamentary forces of the Australian Left endeavour to re-assert their influence in shaping public debate and opinion. While the Left had appeared dormant and irrelevant during the 1950's and early 1960's, the anti-Vietnam War radicals brought a new confidence in directly challenging the system and its prevailing beliefs.

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GLOSSARY

AAESD	Association of Architects, Engineers, Surveyors and Draughtsmen of Australia
ABCE	Australian Building Construction Employees (&BLF)
ACT	Australian Capital Territory
ACTU	Australian Council of Trade Unions
AEU	Amalgamated Engineering Union
AICD	Association for International Cooperation and Disarmament
ALP	Australian Labor Party
AMIEU	Australasian Meat Employees Industrial Union
APWU	Amalgamated Postal Workers Union
AQPC	Australian Quaker Peace Committee
ASLF	Australian Student Labor Federation
ATMOEA	Australian Tramways and Motor Omnibus Employees Association
BLF	Builders Labourers Federation (&ABCE)
BBS	Boilermakers and Blacksmiths Society
BWIU	Building Workers Industrial Union
CDA	Centre for Democratic Action
CDNSA	Committee in Defiance of the National Service Act
CND	Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament
CICD	Congress for International Cooperation and Disarmament
CPA	Communist Party of Australia
CPA	Communist Party of Australia Marxist-Leninist
CPC	Communist Party of China
CPSU	Communist Party of the Soviet Union
DLP	Democratic Labor Party
DRM	Draft Resisters Movement
DRU	Draft Resisters Union
DRVN	Government of the Democratic Republic of North Vietnam
EYL	Eureka Youth League
FFTS	Federated Furnishing Trades Society
FPC	Federal Pacifist Council
FPU	Food Preservers Union
FSPU	Federated Storeman and Packers Union
GPO	General Post Office
LCP	Liberal Country Party
MCC	Melbourne City Council
MUCAC	Melbourne University Campaign Against Conscription
NLF	National Liberation Front of South Vietnam

NSA	National Service Act
NSW	New South Wales
PGEU	Plumbers and Gasfitters Employees Union
PKIU	Printing and Kindred Employees Union
PRG	Provisional Revolutionary Government of South Vietnam
RAM	Radical Action Movement
RevSocs	Revolutionary Socialists
SDA	Students for Democratic Action
SDS	Students for a Democratic Society
SEATO	South East Asian Treaty Organisation
SID	Students In Dissent
SLV	State Library of Victoria
SOS	Save Our Sons
SPA	Socialist Party of Australia
SSA	Socialist Students Alliance
SSDA	Secondary Students for Democratic Action
SUA	Seamans Union of Australia
SYA	Socialist Youth Alliance
TUCAC	Trade Union Campaign Against Conscription
US	United States of America/(American)
UMA	University of Melbourne Archives
VAC	Vietnam Action Campaign
VCC	Vietnam Coordinating Committee
VCND	Victorian Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament
VDC	Vietnam Day Committee
VMC	Vietnam Moratorium Committee
VTHC	Victorian Trades Hall Council
WPC	World Peace Council
WSA	Worker Student Alliance
WWF	Waterside Workers Federation
YCAC	Youth Campaign Against Conscription
YCL	Young Communist League
YLA	Young Labor Association

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In 1965, conscripted Australian soldiers were sent to fight in Vietnam.¹ Although these were not the first Australian troops to be committed to action in Vietnam, they brought to public attention a war that was happening to our north.² It was one that would gradually embroil Australian society in a political struggle over the rights and wrongs of Australian involvement, and the politics of Vietnamese society.

Initial opposition to Australian involvement to the conflict in Vietnam was small, but the ensuing years saw the anti-Vietnam War groups develop into a movement that altered the Australian political landscape, and produced an active and influential growth in the Australian extra parliamentary political Left. Early opposition centered on the issue of Australian troops being used to fight in Vietnam, and especially the re-introduction of conscription for overseas service. Previously Australia's conscription scheme had only applied in its own territories. This time, however, conscripts were being sent to fight an undeclared war in South East Asia.³⁴

During this period the Left groupings within the anti-Vietnam War movement were divided over the direction that the movement should take. The existing Left, which consisted of the Communist Party of Australia (CPA), the Australian Labor Party (ALP) (or at least its more progressive elements), and anti-war groups closely aligned to these two parties, found itself required to

¹ Langley G., *A Decade of Dissent*, Allen and Unwin, p 24.

² *ibid*, p 1 After a parliamentary announcement on 24/5/62, 30 military advisors were sent to South Vietnam

acknowledge and co-operate with a new presence on the Left, consisting of student groupings like Students for Democratic Society (SDS), and Monash Labour Club, with activist anti-conscription groups such as the Draft Resisters Union (DRU). This new force of the Left was amorphous and often hard to categorise. Its alliances could be fluid and its politics ranged from eclectic to dogmatic strains of Marxism-Leninism.

It is the relationship within the left in Victoria and how it shaped the anti-Vietnam War movement in this period that this study will focus on. The period encompassed, 1967-1972, was not chosen arbitrarily. It was the time when the movement reached its zenith between the two important Federal elections marking the commencement and conclusion of this period. The 1966 election saw the peace movement throw its support behind the ALP, the main opposition parliamentary party, only to see their hopes shattered when the incumbent Liberal Country -Party (LCP) coalition government retained power. The period's end is marked by the 1972 ALP Federal election victory that saw the conclusion of 23-years of LCP governments. The final years of the period, 1971-72, saw the end of Australian military involvement in the Vietnam conflict, the withdrawal of the last Australian military personal from Vietnam, and the ending of criminal proceedings against, and incarceration of young men and their supporters who resisted being conscripted to fight in Vietnam. These gains were not merely achieved through the benevolence of the incoming government. They were the result of a long period of struggle by those opposed to Australian involvement in Vietnam, and it is on these opponents of the war that this study focuses.

³⁴Burstall T., *Vietnam The Australian Dilemma*, University of Queensland Press, 1993.

To understand the differences that existed within and helped shape the nature and direction of the anti-Vietnam War movement, we need to examine the politics of those who comprised the movement. As I have already suggested, the movement involved two Left tendencies: one comprised those older, more established groups, who utilised a cautious style of work; the other comprised newer or resurgent groups, the New Left, with more radical tactics and strategies.

To help understand the origins of the term New Left, one needs to return to the height of the Cold War, in the mid 1950's. The New Left as a term had its origins in the splits in the British Communist Party (CPGB) after Khrushchev's speech at the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) in which he launched a vehement attack on the previous leadership of the CPSU under his predecessor Stalin, revealing previously secret information about their alleged crimes and violations. The result of this speech was dramatic, as communist parties across the world began to split, amongst them the CPA. Some of those who left the CPA adopted a position similar to their British comrades who refused to remain loyal to the politics of the Soviet Union whilst not being prepared to return to the influence of the major social democratic party in Australia, the ALP.⁵

Though the New Left can be an arbitrary term, I have followed Mansell, in defining the Australian New Left as a non homogeneous grouping that broke with the Old Left, seeking new practices and styles to fill the void in a context where the Old Left were unable to effectively challenge an oppressive system. Mansell discusses the contradictions and complexities of the term, acknowledging its origins as far back as 1956. However, rather than calling the New Left of the late

⁵ Gordon R., (ed.) *The Australian New Left*, Heinemann, Melbourne, 1970, pp 12-16, O'Lincoln T., *Into the Mainstream*, Stained Wattle Press, Sydney 1985, pp 95-100.

1960's- early 1970's a New-New Left, he just describes them as the New Left. As the Polish Marxist Kolakowski's talks of a 'Left' in relation to the 'Right', this New Left is defined as New in relation to the established Left.⁶ This definition of the New Left represents the so called, 'generation of 68', a movement of late-sixties radicals, some of whom were influenced and guided by the Leninist and Marxist influences that were also pivotal in the established Left.⁷ However these newer radicals interpreted Lenin and Marx differently from their established Left comrades, of whom they tended to be scornful. Whilst there are various other definitions of the Australian New Left, for instance, that of Murphy who defines them as "a different generation, little preoccupied with orthodox communism and critical of existing socialism",⁸ it is Mansell's definition that I believe to be most appropriate for this thesis. It captures the wide mix of different ideologies, tactics and strategies that were adopted by these radicals who, untainted by the stifling conformity of the Cold War, were not willing to play by the political rules of the established order. Confrontation and militancy, which the Old Left seemed to have forgotten, came back on the political agenda. The New Left practice and style sought to reach out and radicalise people to oppose the system that oppressed them, something the existing left could, or would, not do. As someone who was an activist in the politics of the period giving him both an empathy and experience of the various strands of politics that made up the New Left, Mansell has an in-depth understanding of the political relationships at this time. This understanding of the different political ideologies and tactics that were reflected in the actions of these radicals, combined with a refusal to categorise to excess, provides an appropriate analytical framework to complements the conceptual approach of Kolakowski.

⁶ Kolakowski L., 'The concept of the left' in, *Marxism and Beyond*, Paladin Press, London 1971, pp 88-104.

⁷ Mansell K., *The Yeast is Red*, MA, Melbourne University, Parkville, 1994, pp 4-9.

The early 1960s similarly saw the development of a New Left in the United States (US). To an observer at the time it was, "a loose amalgam of civil rights activists, Black Power advocates, ghetto organisers, student rebels, and Vietnam protesters."⁹ Active in campus politics, racial and community struggles, the US New Left was probably best exemplified by the Students for Democratic Society (SDS), an eclectic organisation, not tied to a ideological line but instead motivated by a model of participatory democracy that allowed all to have input into decision making. The influence of SDS, as we will see later, was important in the anti-Vietnam War movement in Australia.

The main established Left groups examined in this study will be organisations such as the CPA and ALP, and other groups who were active and influential in both the broader Australian Left, and the anti-Vietnam War movement. This grouping also included organisations such as the Congress for International Cooperation and Disarmament (CICD). The New Left groups by contrast ranged from student groups like Monash Labor Club and SDS, to organisations focused on specific issues, such as the DRU, which was focused on conscription.

The methodology used by the researcher involved documentary research of primary and secondary sources, and interviews with selected participants. The written material especially primary works helps clarify the ideological differences and the development of the groups. The University of Melbourne Archives, (UMA) and the Bailleu Library contained many important papers and documents of groups such as the CICD, and the Vietnam Moratorium Committee, (VMC), as well as individuals such as Ralph and Dorothy Gibson, both active within the CPA and the anti-Vietnam

⁸ Murphy J., *Harvest of Fear*, Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 1993, p 219.

⁹ Zinn H., quoted in Long P., *The New Left*, Extended Horizons Books, Boston , 1969 p 56.

War movement. The State Library of Victoria, the Radical Collection at Victoria University of Technology and personal collections were other valuable sources of information.

Complementing this were semi-structured interviews with participants and activists who played important public and ideological leadership roles. Chosen were individuals who had played important public and /or ideological roles in this struggle. I aimed for a representative cross section from the various left groups. These were generally conducted on a one on one basis and provided much information that could not be sourced elsewhere. Topics covered ranged from general recollections of the anti-Vietnam War movement and its membership, to specific events where the interviewee had been involved, such as the July 4 demonstrations of this period, to divisions within the Left about how to interpret and express opposition to the war in Vietnam, to meetings and debates within the VMC.

Though the events addressed in this thesis are comparatively recent and many of the main activists are still involved in public life there has not been a large amount of research on this political period of Australian history. Over the last decade a number of scholars such as Armstrong, Mansell and Murphy have begun to research the period more intensively and shed light on the political relationships within the Left.¹⁰ It is hoped this thesis can assist in filling some of the current gaps in our understanding of this period.

This work commences with a review of previous literature on the period, followed by an overview of the main left groups involved in opposition to the war. Their political ideologies, tactics and

¹⁰ Armstrong P., *A History of Save our Sons Movement Victoria 1965-1973*, MA, Monash University, Clayton, 1991, Mansell, 1994, *op cit*, Murphy, *op cit*.

strategies, will be examined in detail. The following chapters will chronologically view events in the years between 1967-1972. These will look at the organisations that comprised the left and how they opposed the war. Their ideologies, tactics and strategies will be touched upon in this chapter. Following this we will examine the growth of the Left opposition to the war in Vietnam, commencing early in 1967, following the Federal LCP governments victory in the election held in late 1966. The early signs of disagreement and debate in the Left around events, including but not limited to aid to the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam (NLF) and the militant demonstrations on July 4 which saw the American Consulate become the target for radical opponents of the war, will be examined in these chapters.

These will be followed with two specific chapters examining relationships within the Left and how they influenced the VMC, and the anti-conscription struggle. The VMC, inspired by events in the US, saw a large mobilisation of people who were prepared to take to the streets to express their opinion against the conduct of the war in Vietnam. The way the VMC was established, the composition of it and the subsequent directions it took, and how those directions were reached, are all covered. The anti - conscription movement, which remained a constant throughout this period although the organisations involved changed and the nature of opposition to conscription underwent a number of changes, is also examined in detail. This struggle was a key part of opposition to Australian military and political involvement in the Vietnam War.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

INTRODUCTION

This chapter examines a number of previously published, academic and other studies on the opposition movement to Australia's military and political involvement in the Vietnam War, focussing particularly on what light they shed on the role of the established and New Left groups in this movement.

It will begin by examining published oral histories of the anti-Vietnam War activity, and participants' recollections and views of events. The ensuing section will discuss academic histories and studies of the subsequent period.

ORAL AND PARTICIPANT HISTORY

Langley's *A Decade of Dissent* is based predominantly on interviews with participants of the period placed in context by brief summaries of events and important dates.

These recollections are not simply those of the Left but also include activists and politicians from the Right, as well as soldiers and police. Thus, the book is able to provide a comprehensive oral history drawn from a cross section of groups involved in the period.

Langley does not seek to analyse the period but allows the voices of participants to convey perceptions of issues and changes in the anti-war movement. The

interviewees' memories concern how the politics of the period expressed itself and influenced them.

Most Left interviewees agreed to varying degrees that this had been a period of enormous social change and great progress had been made. Though the book does not place any specific focus on the New Left /Old Left Relationship. Many of its contributors concur with the view that the New Left helped play a key role in the leftward evolution of the anti-Vietnam War movement.

For example, Dorothy Dalton, a long term peace activist summed up her response to a militant suggestion of sitting down on the ground at the moratorium, and blocking the street, as being; "When we first heard of sitting on the ground, I said to Les 'I can't sit on the ground'. When the day the came I couldn't bear to stand up."¹

A student activist, Michael Hamel-Green, recalled how the position of Jim Cairns changed over time, from one of originally opposing tactics of civil disobedience to swinging around to support it.²

Others tell of how they were won over to and adopted militant positions. Michael Hyde recalls his early attraction to militant politics at Monash University; Val Noone talks of how, despite initial general concern, supporters of the first moratorium were won over to sitting down and blocking the streets; and Betty Blunden, relates how she began to taken adopt a militant public stand in her late 50's, and now found herself confronted with a son facing the prospect of being conscripted to fight in Vietnam.³

¹ Dalton D., quoted in Langley G., *A Decade of Dissent*, Allen and Unwin ,Sydney,1992 p 134.

² Hamel-Green M., quoted in, *ibid*, p 135.

Yet others, such as Bernie Taft from the Communist Party of Australia (CPA), were not as positive in their recollections, but rather critical and begrudging of the young Maoists and their endeavours to influence the movements direction.

They wanted slogans like 'Victory to the NLF'. I personally had no problems with that sentiment, but if their slogans and appeals had have been adopted by the movement, we would not have gained the broad acceptance that we did.⁴

Langley's book assists in gaining a greater understanding of the political views of some anti-Vietnam War activists, and how and why some changed, their views. Though it does not seek to provide a deep analysis of politics and political relationships, the voices of the activists allow an understanding of how and why they became involved in the politics of this period.

Jim Cairns' work, *The Eagle and the Lotus* (1969), focuses primarily on the politics and history of Western intervention within Vietnam during the period 1847-1968. Cairns, a key figure in the Left of the Australian Labor Party (ALP) and a prominent leader of the anti-Vietnam War movement, pays little attention to the growing anti-war movement in this work, beyond general comments on the growth of anti-war sentiment, and the aim of withdrawing Australian troops from Vietnam. The closest he comes to discussing local anti-Vietnam War pressure is an argument for more active participation in the ALP and trade unions to bring pressure to bear and politicise the issues of Vietnam.⁵

Richard Gordon's book, *The Australian New Left*, offered contemporary participant views of the Australian New Left. However, relatively little attention is devoted to the

³ Hyde M., p 42, Noone V., p 135, Blunden A., p 138, quoted in, *ibid*.

⁴ Taft B., quoted in, *ibid*, p 128.

subject of opposition to the Vietnam War and how the New and Old Left relationship was structured in this conflict. Possibly this is because the book was written prior to the moratorium and many later conscription related activities, such as the establishment of the Draft Resisters Union (DRU) and the strengthening of links between the anti-conscription and anti-Vietnam War movements. Only in an early section of the book, where Gordon and Warren Osmond write an 'Overview of the Australian New Left', is any real attention paid to this area.⁶

Gordon and Osmond give a brief synopsis of the growing anti war activities and tend to interpret the Old and New Left relationship as predominantly manifesting itself in the form of an upsurge of student activism and radicalism.⁷ Reference is made to an Association for International Cooperation and Disarmament (AICD) spokesperson commenting in June 1967 on the tendency towards militancy that was developing, particularly among younger activists, but cautioned against being influenced by this development.⁸ They cite seven examples of the growing influence and development of the New Left role in the anti-Vietnam War movement. Two pertain directly to Melbourne: The Monash Labor Club's Aid to the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam (NLF) campaign and the militant July 4 demonstrations. The other five examples include: the anti-war conference conducted in Sydney in January 1967 where the established peace movement was criticised for its electoral tactics in the 1966 Federal election; differences between the more militant youth and student groupings during the Anti Marshall Ky demonstrations at the same time; the establishment of the Draft Resisters Movement (DRM); the establishment of Students

⁵ Cairns J., *The Eagle and the Lotus*, Lansdowne Press, Melbourne, 1969 pp 228-242.

⁶ Gordon R. (ed), *The Australian New Left: critical essays and strategies*, Heinemann, Melbourne, 1970, pp 3-42.

⁷ *ibid*, pp 3-42.

for a Democratic Society (SDS) in Sydney with a new, militant approach to issues and the formation of Students for Democratic Action (SDA), in Brisbane in 1966. Though the authors acknowledge that these actions reflect a radical shift by students and their role within Australian society, there is no detailed analysis of their implications for the overall development of the anti-Vietnam War movement, and the Established and New Left relationship within it.⁹

Michael Hyde's work on the Monash Labor Club, *It Is Right to Rebel*, examines the radicalisation of the club between 1967-1971. It does not focus greatly on off campus issues in which the club played a role, but it does provide one of the fullest accounts of the 'Aid to the NLF' campaign, how it was established and its broader implications for the movement. The work looks at how the radicalisation of the Labor Club and students occurred, examining both how student Labor Clubs were established, as well as the history of student politics at Monash. The book operates from a premise that students are progressive and willing to take a stand on issues, and, as such, are going to experience conflict with 'reactionary' University administrations, serving the needs of capitalism. According to Hyde this conflict was to be exacerbated by the onset of the conflict in Vietnam, coinciding with the Club moving in a leftward direction. From a position in which the right wing of the ALP provided a dominant influence, it moved to a more left wing ALP position by mid 1966, and, with the subsequent defeat of Calwell, re-examined its politics. The experience of this electoral defeat, coinciding with perceived police violence at the Johnson and Ky demonstrations, saw a questioning of its previous political direction, an experience that led to a desire to adopt more revolutionary position and taking radical public stances, such as the Aid to

⁸ *ibid*, p 28.

⁹ *ibid* p28-30.

the NLF campaign.¹⁰ In response to the political attacks the club experienced in this period, it moved well to the left of the ALP, and began adopting revolutionary politics.¹¹ The actions of the Federal Parliamentary ALP, siding with the conservative Federal Government to criminalise the action of raising funds for the NLF, saw a final rupture with the ALP: "Labor Club supporters left the ALP and Social Democrats left the Labor Club".¹²

David Day, an active member of Melbourne University SDS club, subsequently wrote a thesis that was critical of the politics of the club of which he had been an active member.¹³ Day is cynical in his re-appraisal of the period, and is dismissive of SDS as being middle class students, with no links to workers and being devoid of an ideological motivation. He states, "the use of participatory democracy was a way of disavowing adherence to any ideology: any attempt to implement an ideological line would limit SDS's support base".¹⁴ He continues his criticism, alleging that conscription was the lure for many students, but was tarnished by the fact that it could be perceived as lowest common denominator politics.¹⁵ This correlated with a fear of mentioning imperialism, as to do so, might alienate some broader support.

Barry York's, *Student Revolt! Latrobe University 1967-1973* provides an insight into how the New Left politics and political activism were synonymous. To the New Left,

¹⁰ Hyde M., *It is right to rebel*, The Diplomat, Canberra, 1972, pp 1-11, pp 19-50, support for the NLF amongst radical students at Monash could be traced back to the 1965 Australian Student Labor Federation conference, where the first signs of pro-NLF politics could be discerned, pp 8-9

¹¹ *ibid* p21; as well as being attacked in Federal Parliament for their stance on the NLF, they also were attacked by the CPA and other sections of the anti-Vietnam War movement over the carrying of NLF flags at the anti-Ky demonstrations .

¹² *ibid*, p 21.

¹³ Day D., *The History and Politics of Students for a Democratic Society at Melbourne University 1968-1972; A case study of students potential for revolution*. BA Hons. Melbourne University, Parkville, 1980.

¹⁴ *ibid*, p 33-34.

politics was not simply about electing others to determine political agendas, but about being active oneself. "Activism was equated with confrontation, not in the violent sense, but in the sense that opponents would have to respond."¹⁶

The division of the Latrobe New Left into a Maoist influenced Labor Club and an SDS group, saw the emergence of different, radical strands. York perceives the breach as being over the acceptance of orthodox Leninism, which was an integral component of the Maoist approach¹⁷. Like Monash, Latrobe's Labor Club became a Maoist oriented organisation, very hard line, and influential on campus.¹⁸ By 1971 the Maoist presence in the Labor Club was able to convene meetings, determine the club's agenda and function as the club's most cohesive faction. As non-Maoists left the Club, the Maoist controlled club became the best organised, most active and vocal left group, at Latrobe University.¹⁹

Ken Mansell's socio-political history, *The Yeast is Red*, focuses on the establishment and operations of the 'Bakery' in Prahran, a facility which became an off campus headquarters for the Monash Labor Club and its related groupings, such as the Prahran Peoples Movement and the Revolutionary Socialists (RevSocs). Whilst it does not concentrate on issues relating directly to the anti-Vietnam War movement, it does give an insight into the workings of Melbourne's young Maoists and their close comrades, not all of whom were convinced of the application of Maoism to Melbourne.

¹⁵ *ibid*, p 94.

¹⁶ York B., *Student Revolt! Latrobe University 1967-1973*, Nicholas Press, ACT, 1989 p 61.

¹⁷ *ibid*, p 70.

¹⁸ The key pages pertaining to the different lines emerging are 61-63, 68 70, 91-101.

For example, members like Jill Jolliffe, who advocated an uncompromising radical position at the CPA's Left Action Conference at Easter 1969,²⁰ became disillusioned with the increasing Maoist hegemony within the Monash Labor Club, and split away, swinging over to Trotskyism.²¹ Others, like Dave Nadel, formed new groups such as the Independent Communist Caucus, as a reaction to the Maoist control.²² Mansell himself, active within these circles, suggests the expansion of Maoism in this period coincided with the defeat and retreat of the New Left in its most participatory democracy phase, and its replacement by an ideologically guided, old style Communist approach to politics.²³

Bob Scates' *Draftsmen Go Free* offers a participant's history of the anti-conscription struggle. Scates tends to focus on the role of the Victorian Branch of the ALP and, whilst acknowledging the role of the DRU and Draft Resisters Movement (DRM), overstates the role of the ALP. Though the election of a Federal ALP government in December 1972 had enormous implications, it was still a reflection of a much broader alliance of anti conscription forces. The dismantling of the conscription system after 1972 was not a simple outcome of the altruism of the ALP but reflected the successful pressure, applied by the anti-conscription forces, in the years leading up to this time. Whilst Scates is not dismissive of the struggle that took place outside the main political parties, and their influence on the ALP in particular, his focus on the role of the ALP and the role played by ALP activists, appears uncritical. In contrast to the coverage accorded to the ALP, there is a neglect of some of the anti-conscription forces and other left groups active in the struggle. For example, the role of the DRM is

¹⁹ *ibid*, p 101.

²⁰ Mansell K., *The Yeast is Red*, pp 81-82 MA, Melbourne University, Parkville, 1994.

²¹ *ibid*, pp 89-90.

²² *ibid*, p90.

touched on only briefly. It would be of interest to have known more about those who were involved in the DRM, its political leanings, organisational structure and the role it played.

Whilst the book includes some views of individuals who were sceptical of how a Federal ALP government would act, this could have been expanded upon.²⁴ There was little examination of how the other two main left parties the, CPA and Communist Party of Australia Marxist-Leninist (CPAML), and the peak peace body Congress for International Cooperation and Disarmament (CICD), came to develop their positions on conscription. Similarly, whilst Scates traces the development of the Vietnam Moratorium Committee (VMC) as a vehicle for anti-Vietnam War activity, there is very little analysis of how the VMC adopted its anti-conscription position, and the debates that led up to it, compared to coverage of how sections of the ALP viewed the Moratorium.²⁵

Both Michael Hamel-Green and Harry Van Moorst have written recollections of the period in unpublished works. Hamel-Green's, *Power to the People*, recounts an insiders' view of the siege at Melbourne University by DRU and its supporters.²⁶ Van Moorst's *Street Level opposition: The Vietnam Moratorium Campaign* is focused on the Moratorium as the title suggests but also provides background material on related events.

²³ *ibid*, p93.

²⁴ Scates R., *Draftmen Go Free*, Self published, Melbourne, 1989, p72. Fellow draft resister expresses reservation about how the Federal ALP would act if elected to power.

²⁵ *Ibid*; re pp 59,65,71 for views of the ALP in other states re the political motives and gains of the moratorium.

²⁶ Hamel-Green M., *Power to the people*, Unpublished, 1973.

Hamel-Green, as one of the Draft resisters involved in eluding police, and in an occupation and siege at Melbourne University, was able to give a first hand account. The work gives a genesis of events, and emphasises the fact that almost all sections of the anti-Vietnam War movement were involved in supported or participated in events pertaining to the siege. The one exception, he points out, was the Trotskyite influenced Socialist Youth Alliance (SYA). This work, whilst not analysing the relationships within the Left, shows how sections of the Left were able to work collectively around a common issue, whilst still debating differences and lines.

Van Moorst's study, starting from 1966, looks at the development of the anti-Vietnam War movement and how it evolved. He defines the emerging radical forces, as including the New Left, SDS at Melbourne University and what he terms the revolutionary Marxists of the Labor Club at Monash University.²⁷ Contrasted to the radicals was CICD, who he considers as the traditional leadership of the anti-Vietnam War movement during the early opposition to the war. He describes them as a body made up of representatives of the ALP, CPA and trade unions, and considers them as being the major policy formulator of the anti-Vietnam War movement until the late 1960's.²⁸

In Van Moorst's view, the opposition led by the newer forces centered around two major issues: firstly, how the war should be understood and presented to the public; and, secondly how the anti-Vietnam War movement fights its campaign. Debates and differences were around areas such as whether the movement should simply be calling for a stop to the war, and bringing the troops home, or having a more radical position

²⁷ Van Moorst H., *Street Level Opposition*, p 4, Unpublished, 1973.

²⁸ *ibid*, p 5.

of viewing the war as an imperialist war, with Australian and American (US) troops as the enemy, and the NLF receiving the support of the movement.²⁹

Van Moorst goes on to look at the watershed of the July 4 1968 demonstration and the events between then and the Moratoriums. He gives a comprehensive view of the three moratoriums, the debates and differences within the VMC as different alliances were struck and political points were debated.³⁰

ACADEMIC HISTORIES

Academic texts by Watson, *The Split in the Australian Communist Movement 1961-1964*;³¹ and Moorehead, *The Split in the Australian Communist Movement 1966-1973*;³² provide invaluable background material to the period. They examine the splits and changes that occurred in the once monolithic CPA, and the subsequent development of the CPAML, and also the Socialist Party of Australia (SPA). They do not specifically provide a great deal of understanding to the New/Old Left relationship existing within the anti-Vietnam War Movement. However, these works are of assistance in obtaining an understanding of some of the ideological viewpoints possessed, such as why China was preferred to the Soviet Union as a model for socialism and why the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia, was deemed by its local proponents as being in the interests of working people, and the rationale behind adopting these viewpoints.

²⁹ *Ibid*, pp 5-6.

³⁰ *Ibid*, pp 11-34.

³¹ Watson D, *The Split in the Australian Communist Movement 1961-1964*, BA Hons, Latrobe University, Bundoora, 1970.

³² Moorehead G., *The Split in the Australian Communist Movement 1966-1973*, BA Hons, Latrobe University, Bundoora, 1983.

Pauline Armstrong in her thesis, *A History of Save Our Sons Movement of Victoria 1965-1973*, analyses the evolution of this important group. Like many other works covering the time it does not overly concern itself with the New/Old Left relationship, but does provide an insight into the tactics adopted by Save Our Sons (SOS). For example, civil disobedience was accepted as a tactic in 1968; "we feel that the situation is desperate, that civil disobedience is our only course".³³

Burgmann's book, *Power and Protest* looks at the development of social movements, paying some attention to the anti-Vietnam War movement of this period.³⁴ A point she raises is in relation to how talk of radical political claims, shift the political spectrum to a stage where a more moderate approach to the same issue is acceptable. Thus what can be perceived as moderate gains are achieved not by reasonable and moderate approaches but stimulated by more contentious and militant approaches.³⁵ Burgmann talks of how the more radical wing of the anti-Vietnam War movement opposed not just Australian involvement in the war and conscription, but also explicitly urged a victory for the NLF and socialism per se. While this position was never explicitly accepted by the majority of those in the anti-Vietnam War movement, the radicals position made the established anti-Vietnam War movement's opposition to the war look almost respectable.³⁶ This hypothesis will be examined more closely in the present study.

³³ Armstrong P., *A History of Save our Sons Movement, Victoria, 1965-1973*, MA, Monash University, Clayton, p 120. The quote is taken from the SOS Newsletter, No 26, March 1968.

³⁴ Burgman V., *Power and Protest*, Allen and Unwin, Sydney 1993.

³⁵ *ibid*, p262.

³⁶ *ibid*, p190.

The work by Forward and Reece, *Conscription in Australia*, was written at a time when the anti-conscription movement was at a low ebb, struggling to recover from the hopes that they had placed in an ALP victory at the 1966 Federal election.³⁷ It contains a series of articles in which pro and the anti-conscription positions argue about the 'communist' influence on the anti-conscription groups, as well as a synopsis of the various groups that had taken an anti-conscription stance. Chris Guyatt examines the anti-conscription movement of the mid- 1960's, providing a listing of those groups who were active in the struggle against conscription. Contrasting with this, Fred Well's chapter aims to deal with the role of the CPA in the anti- war and anti-conscription movements. This is a conservative overview, and labels the dominant groups at the time, SOS, Vietnam Action Coalition (VAC) and Youth Campaign Against Conscription (YCAC) all as being communist influenced or inspired. In response to this Ralph Summy's chapter gives quite a detailed synopsis of the internal politics of the groups seeking to counter Wells' allegations.³⁸ Not surprisingly it failed to foresee the development of the large fully- fledged movement that arose.

Murphy's work, *Harvest of Fear*, provides a comprehensive treatment of the Vietnam conflict.³⁹ The later chapters of his book give an overview of forces opposing the war in Vietnam and its implications and impact on the domestic political situation in Australia. Though Murphy is not overly sympathetic to the more radical anti-Vietnam War forces, who he describes at times as either being a 'localised clique';⁴⁰ outside the

³⁷ Forward R. & Reece B.(eds.) *Conscription in Australia*, University of Queensland Press, 1968.

³⁸ *ibid.* Ch.8, 'The anti conscription Movement in Australia 1964-1966', Guyatt C., pp 178-190, Ch.9, 'A comment on Mr. Guyatt's Chapter', Wells F., pp 191-199, Ch.10 'A Reply to Fred Wells', .Summy R., pp 200-222.

³⁹ Murphy J., *Harvest of Fear: A History of Australia's Vietnam War*, Allen and Unwin Sydney, 1993.

⁴⁰ *ibid.*, p 220.

Australian polity';⁴¹ and of, 'radical posturing despite lacking a mass base',⁴² this work provides a useful picture of the anti-Vietnam War movement and its wider context.

At times, however, Murphy contradicts himself. He views the period from the Federal election of 1966 to the beginning of the moratorium mobilisation in 1969 as having the features of a pause.⁴³ He then goes on to state that 1968 and 1969 were a time of growth for the New Left, while it was also a time of decline and difficulty for the established groups.⁴⁴ He follows up by discussing how while the New Left and the anti-conscription movement were mobilising, the broader movement was in a lull.⁴⁵ This artificial wall between the new groups and the established groups read as if no relationship exists, and that the newer groups were not part of a broader movement that he erroneously limits to the established groups. Yet at the same time, Murphy argues that while the established peace movement saw itself in a trough, the pulse of the left was quickening, leading to the development of the moratorium. However the Left here is not clearly defined though later on he states that the New Left and its presence contributed to the vitality of the Left.⁴⁶

Whilst his work is detailed and meticulous, it has problems in trying to analyse the dynamics within the New/Old Left relationship, even though he concedes, "the New Left developed in an antagonistic dialogue with the Old Left which it hoped to transform." This of course acknowledges that the New Left and the Old Left were

⁴¹ *ibid*, p 226.

⁴² *ibid*, p 255.

⁴³ *ibid*, p 197.

⁴⁴ *ibid*, p 226.

⁴⁵ *ibid*, p 229.

⁴⁶ *ibid*, p 230.

engaged in a dialectical relationship, characterised by a battle over ideas and praxis.⁴⁷ Despite a comprehensive overview of the emergence and influence of the New Left in his chapter 'The Left Revived', Murphy adopts an ideological framework sympathetic to the views of the CPA and its perceptions of events.⁴⁸ In his analysis of the newer, more radical left groupings such as Monash Labour Club, he uncritically echoes a line put forward by the CPA at the time, dismissing their radical opposition as 'ultra left'.⁴⁹ The term first appears in describing the Maoists at Latrobe and Monash Universities, as well as the Sydney Trotskyites. After looking at the developments of Maoism in Australia, and the criticisms of SDS about the 'ultra left' lacking democracy and being confrontationist, he traces the enmity with the Maoists and the traditional Left back to the CPA-CPAML split, with its focus in Melbourne. He views enmity in the anti-Vietnam War movement as being an echo of history, leading to the 'ultra left' presence not being able to form an effective alliance, because their dogmatic, confrontationist approach was outside the reality of Australian polity.⁵⁰ This viewpoint is continued throughout the chapters of the book focusing on opposition to the war.

Murphy acknowledges differences within the New Left groups, looking at how SDS viewed the Maoists and their old style communist approach, to Marxism, which did not complement the more open style of the SDS groups, thus emphasising that the New Left were not a homogeneous body. Again however he uses the term 'ultra left', to describe the Maoists.⁵¹

⁴⁷ *ibid*, p 219.

⁴⁸ *ibid*, pp 219-237.

⁴⁹ *ibid*, pp 219-226; this point is also noted by Mansell K., *op cit*, 1994, also commenting that Murphy failed to interview any members of the New Left, *op cit* p 8. Kuhn A., in his article, 'The Australian Left, Nationalism, and the Vietnam War', *Labour history* No. 72 also comments that Murphys' underlying political argument is a defence of the CPA's position, he emphasises pp 245, 254-258.

Murphy considers the Moratorium a victory for those he defines as the 'moderates' or the 'moderate Left'. Those who were opposed to them are defined as the ultra Left and/or the militant Left.⁵² The book provides an overview of the forces opposing the war in Vietnam and the implications and impacts on the domestic political situation in Australia. However, a weakness in Murphy's line of argument is the failure to consider the question of how and why the Victorian Moratorium movement was to move in a leftward direction throughout its existence and did not disintegrate as occurred in other states. He talks of how the centrality of the organised peace groups allowed the leadership to "mute the more radical demands of the ultra Left."⁵³

Murphy asserts that the centrality of these groups gave the Moratorium an organisational framework rather than an ideological or strategic framework.⁵⁴ Does this mean that these groups operated simply as a controlling bureaucracy and that only the young radicals had any ideological guidance? One would presume the statement is not that simplistic and that these groups had both organisational and ideological positions. He also incorrectly describes VMC vice-chairman Harry Van Moorst as being a representative of the DRU, not SDS, which he was.

Murphy also uses the term 'conservative' to describe some sections of the established peace groups when discussing the national consultation following the first moratorium.⁵⁵ Yet Murphy fails to adequately explain the eventual acceptance of a strong anti conscriptionist position and open support for the NLF. These were positions that the established Left felt reluctant to initially endorse, yet were strongly

⁵⁰ *ibid*, pp, 223-226.

⁵¹ *ibid*, p 224.

⁵² *ibid* refer to Chapter 13 'The moratorium' and how Murphy describes the different groupings involved re militant left, p 241, and ultra left, pp 224-227, p 257.

⁵³ *ibid* p 251.

⁵⁴ *ibid* p 251.

advocated by the newer radical groups. The greatest credence he appears to give to the radicals is by talking about how the established peace figures would meet prior to meetings and offer some concessions to the 'ultra Left', similar to the begrudging way Saunders views the concessions offered to the radicals.⁵⁶ The CPA is however, high on list of praise as being the organisation which held the VMC structure together.⁵⁷

Other general works covering aspects of Australia's involvement in Vietnam including Doyle and Grey, Edwards, King and Pemberton.

The work of Edwards, *A Nation at War*, is a conservative overview of the period. Whilst his work provides an attempt to review the period, Edwards fails to provide any new information or a detailed analysis of the relationship between the existing groupings. He tends to describe the newer groupings interchangeably as militants and radicals, without ever clearly providing how these terms are used to describe groupings in the anti-Vietnam War movement. An obvious example of this is in relation to the events of July 4 1968, when he talks of the 'militants' actions and then mentions Michael Hyde as one of the Monash student 'radicals' involved.⁵⁸ Another example of how he uses terms in a somewhat arbitrary manner is seen in his coverage of the lead up to the moratorium, when he talks of diverse groupings of Old and New Left; professionals and the working class; and moderates and militants. These terms

⁵⁵ *ibid*, p 264, Re Saunders use of terms 'Conservative' and 'Radical', refer to review of Saunders later in this chapter.

⁵⁶ *ibid*, p 255.

⁵⁷ *ibid*, pp 255-259.

⁵⁸ Edwards P., *A Nation at War; Australian Politics, Society and Diplomacy during the Vietnam War 1965-1976*, Allen and Unwin, St Leonards, 1997, p 224.

used in this manner can erroneously give the reader the idea that these were defined and structured groupings, coming together to build the Moratorium.⁵⁹

Despite the conservative nature of his work, Edwards, unlike Murphy, acknowledges that the newer radical groupings were able to influence the direction of the movement. He acknowledges how the moratoriums were pushed leftward after the first one,⁶⁰ and in a general sense states the radical influence and direction in the following way, "[they adopted] tactics that many of the moderate 'peaceaucrats' would have rejected outright a year or two earlier". This acceptance of the New Left influence is consistent with the argument developed in this thesis about how the New Left influence helped shift the movement leftward.⁶¹

Vietnam War, Myth and Memory, edited by Doyle and Grey, contain chapters by several authors pertaining to this period.⁶² The most pertinent in relation to this thesis is Curthoys' examination of the anti-Vietnam War movements in both Australia and the United States, and outlines their development and the differences and similarities between the two movements. Curthoys who had been active since the inception of the war, predominantly in Sydney, though she spent a short period of time at Monash in 1967, initially talks of the Old Left and the Peace movement as seeming to be quite separate entities. She does not assume a 'Chinese Wall' existing between them but shows that the links between the Left and the Peace movement were real and relevant, as individuals and organisations prominent in the Left were also active in the

⁵⁹ *ibid*, p 230.

⁶⁰ *ibid*, p 282.

⁶¹ *ibid*, p 230.

⁶² Doyle J. & Grey J., (ed), *Vietnam, War, Myth and Memory*, Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 1992 Ch 4 Grey J., 'Vietnam as history in Australia', Ch 5 Pierce P., 'Never glad Good Morning Again', Ch 6, Curthoys A., 'The anti-War movements'.

directions that the peace movement took.⁶³ She also looks at the Old and New Left, and appears to view the CPA as being a significant player, without over simplifying its role. However she comes across as unclear when she talks about the rise of a non-communist Left starting with those who had broken away post 1956, but also seeming to include the New Left, Trotskyites and Maoists. Her usage of the term, non-communist Left, is disconcerting and inaccurate, as the Maoists and possibly the Trotskyites certainly saw themselves as communists. Both groups considered themselves to be the true revolutionary inheritors of communist traditions and politics, unlike the CPA, who they considered had long lost its claim to be an organisation of communists. It would be far more accurate and descriptive to talk of a non-CPA Left, rather than a non-communist Left.⁶⁴ It is important to note that she is examining the movement Australia wide, rather than simply viewing one state, so her perspective is generalist, not specific.

Pemberton's work, *Vietnam Remembered*, also includes a chapter by Curthoys, 'Mobilising Dissent' which provides a chronological overview of opposition to the war. Again she uses the term Non-Communist (far) Left to describe those to the Left of the CPA, without ever explaining why she considers them non-communists. There is a chapter by Jordens on 'Conscription and Dissent' which looks at the earlier developments covering both opposition to the war, and also early anti conscription activities. There is also a chapter by Cochrane 'At War at Home', which discusses the impact of the conflict on Australian society, discussing generational issues, cultural changes and the growth of protests. However none of the above chapters provide any

⁶³ *Ibid*, Curthoys A., in Doyle, J. & Grey J, (ed), pp 90-91.

⁶⁴ *ibid* pp 101-103.

new or different information about the New/Old Left relationship within the anti-Vietnam War movement.

King in his edited book *Australia's Vietnam*, "explores Australia's role in the second Indo-china war, the role of the war in Australian politics and the responses of Australian institutions and people to the stresses and challenges of 'Vietnam'."⁶⁵ King works in a framework, critical of Australian involvement in Vietnam, as well as its ongoing implications for Australia in the South East Asian region. His work includes coverage of the role of the Federal ALP, and how, when and why it determined its policy on Vietnam, as well as chapters on the role of media coverage and public opinion polls.

Michael Hamel-Green's chapter on the *'The Resisters: a history of the anti-conscription movement 1964-1972'* complements and expands the analysis contained in his Masters Thesis on the same subject. The chapter looks at the development of the anti-conscription movement, its actions, structures and influences on Australian society.⁶⁶ Hamel-Green views the success of the anti-conscriptionists as related to being a part of a broader movement able to secure troop withdrawal from Vietnam. There is also the success of how ordinary citizens could challenge the state and unjust legislation, and by using radical tactics, could achieve change. However the work does not delve deeply into the New and Old Left relationship. Whilst he mentions the roles played by New Left influenced groups such as SDS, Melbourne University Pacifist Society and Monash Labor Club, as well as those influenced by the Old Left

⁶⁵ King P., (ed) *Australia's Vietnam*, Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 1983 p 9.

⁶⁶ *ibid*, pp 100-128.

such as CICD and the Amalgamated Engineering Union (AEU), these are not analysed or judged in relation to each other.⁶⁷

In terms of academic treatises Saunders's work, *The Vietnam Moratorium Movement 1969-1973* provides a narrative account of this movement and its development.⁶⁸ In his work he differentiates the established peace and anti-war movements, though conceding they often seemed the same.⁶⁹ The thesis, while closely researched fails to focus explicitly on the New/Old Left within the movement. Saunders also tends to view the moratorium as a triumph for the moderates in the movement, whom he considers as prevailing over those defined as radicals. He sees the differences as stemming from the moderates versus the radicals, a theme that flows throughout his work.

His use of these terms is never properly elaborated, with the term moderates being used in relation to the older existing groups and the radicals being any new group not fitting into the umbrella of the existing groups, e.g student groupings. The term conservative also appears in relation to the existing groups. To return to moderate it is used in a number of ways. Early on he speaks of a 'moderate Left' in the ALP, counterpoised to the centre and the right, but does not mention if there is a radical ALP Left, to the left of the 'moderate Left'.⁷⁰ The Term 'Radical', first appears on p19 in relation to radical student groupings and the first time moderates and radicals are mentioned in relation to Victoria is on p32 when discussing the Caprice Restaurant meeting. His use of the descriptive labels 'conservative' and 'moderate' relate to those

⁶⁷ *ibid*, p 113.

⁶⁸ Saunders M. *The Vietnam Moratorium Movement*, PHD, Flinders University, Adelaide 1975, p 5 in which he describes his work as a story, not a vehicle for grand theories

⁶⁹ *ibid* p 10.

members and groups of the established Left and those associated with them. These groupings are the ones that I will describe as part of the Old (established) Left. The term conservative is used in the context of the 2nd national consultation conducted after the first moratorium, where Saunders speaks of three groups; 'Conservatives' who are a small group of the old guard of the peace movement who want the second moratorium to follow the first; 'Moderates' similar to the conservatives, but wanted a few more advanced aims, and were the largest group; and the 'Radicals' who were mainly students, and were concerned at the power of the moderates.⁷¹

Saunders' position on the influences on the moratorium is different to the findings of this thesis. He acknowledges as a theme that there was a continual struggle between moderate and radical factions driving the moratorium.⁷² There is the early claim concerning the success of the first moratorium, that the VMC had adopted the aims and methods of the ALP and CPA contrary to the demands of the radicals, yet the students and young radicals still claimed the day as a victory.⁷³

He does not view the moratorium as being pushed to the left by the radicals, but sees it as being under control of the moderates. He acknowledges that the control of the moderates was at its strongest in the lead up to the first moratorium, and then as the radicals grew in influence, public support waned. True, numerical support waned, but do we judge numbers as the sole key to success? Saunders makes a statement in his conclusion claiming;

⁷⁰ *ibid* p13.

⁷¹ *ibid*, p 144.

⁷² *ibid*, p 367.

⁷³ *ibid*, p 138.

Even when the aims and other policies of the movement were moved in a more radical direction the fact that the moderates were in a position to control the movement was reassuring to the wary or those not fully committed.⁷⁴

For all of his meticulous research, Saunders appears unwilling to acknowledge in a positive light the influence of the newer more radical groupings. Despite acknowledging that they were able to influence the VMC direction, this tends to read as a negative, as a way of limiting public support. Even where the radicals were able to influence VMC direction, it can be interpreted as a way of providing grudging concessions.⁷⁵

Other writers, such as Basset and Gerster, view the moratorium as being a triumph over the radicals, reducing the moratorium to an almost depoliticised status. In their 1991 work *Seizures of Youth*, they survey the changes in Australia in the 1960's drawing information from both electronic and print sources.⁷⁶ However they did not seem compelled to interview participants of this period. This was a weakness in their methodological approach, as they give an impression that a reliance on books, films and newspapers provides a sufficient framework around which their analysis can be framed.

Yet not all of their analysis of mainstream coverage, is consistent with the conservative line that prevails in the book. They criticise *The Age* newspapers' coverage of the July 4 1969 demonstration, alleging that the article shows a strong anti protest and pro police bias.⁷⁷ Generally however the criticism is focussed at anti-war protestors, not proponents of the war.

⁷⁴ *ibid*, p 364.

⁷⁵ *ibid*, pp 363-366.

⁷⁶ Basset J. & Gerster R., *Seizures of Youth*, Hyland Press, Melbourne, 1991.

⁷⁷ *ibid*, p 72.

Their political analysis of the period is dismissive of the Left, in particular the student movement which attracts criticism. There is a criticism that, whilst the student movement was strident in its anti- Americanism, it was reliant on American models such as SDS for much of its inspiration.⁷⁸ They emphasise the fact that the majority of University students were not active in the Left and many actually supported the status quo. However, to argue that some Left writers viewed a large number of students as active radicals, is setting up a straw man argument, with no real benefit in terms of understanding of issues.⁷⁹

The moratoriums are removed from being places where debate and dialogue occur over political directions. The success of the Moratorium is seen as the depoliticisation of the anti-Vietnam War movement, an end to what they deem as the "old violent anti-war movement".⁸⁰ The arbitrary use of terms like Old has no relationship to the way New and Old have been used in this research and the emotive use of the word violent casts aspersions solely on protesters, with no real analysis of how and why violence occasionally flared at anti-Vietnam War demonstrations. They reduce the moratorium to being a, "P.R triumph for the Anti-War movement".⁸¹ They go on to accord it the status of a fashion statement claiming: "marching against the war had become a popular fashion and therefore, like all fashions, has a limited life: no wonder the moratorium movement died an ignominious death in the two years following."⁸²

⁷⁸ *ibid*, p 68.

⁷⁹ *ibid* pp 46-51.

⁸⁰ *ibid*, p 77.

⁸¹ *ibid*, p 77.

⁸² *ibid*, p77.

At no stage of their work is there any serious attempt to analyse the politics of the groups on the left, let alone the differences amongst them. Instead a very subjective and limited critique is offered, which provides an overview of events, but does not assist in providing new insights into the dynamics between the established and New Left groups in the anti-War movement.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The works discussed above have provided a substantial body of scholarship that enables us to begin to understand and analyse the relationship between the New and Old Left groupings in the anti-Vietnam War movement. Whilst much of the literature surveyed can be used to clarify an understanding of this time, there are some viewpoints and interpretations that are not supported in the present study. A number of authors cited in this review will have their findings challenged in this study. For example the viewpoints of Saunders and Murphy, both of whom are critical of the newer, radical groupings, will be further examined in this thesis.

The question of whether the appearance of the newer groups helped direct the anti war movement further to the left is pivotal to this work. In areas such as the Moratorium being the peak anti-Vietnam war body, the ability to successfully link the anti-conscription and anti-Vietnam War struggles together, the fact that the movement was willing to accept open statements of support for the NLF and explicitly name US imperialism as the enemy, provide some examples of how much influence the new radicals exerted. Was it due to the presence and determination of the New Left that the

above developments occurred? Were the more radical rhetoric and tactics in the Anti-War movement, a result of the New Left? These are some of the questions the thesis seeks to examine and answer.

The study will commence with an overview of the groups who were involved in opposing the Vietnam War during the period under review, 1967-1972. Some of these groups had long histories, others were new arrivals on the political landscape, and there were others that lasted only as long as the war itself. By examining these groups and gaining a better understanding and analysis of their ideological basis and their political strategies and tactics, we can begin to understand how the relationship between the newer groups and established groups helped shape the direction of this important political movement.

CHAPTER 3

OVERVIEW OF ESTABLISHED AND EMERGING POLITICAL GROUPS ACTIVE IN THE ANTI-VIETNAM WAR MOVEMENT 1964 - 1972

INTRODUCTION

Within the anti-Vietnam War movement during 1964–1968 there were several established groupings that began the process of organising opposition to the Vietnam War. Some had come through the Cold War period when those who opposed Australian Government foreign policy ran the risk of being labeled and perceived as apologists and agents of the socialist states such as China or the Soviet Union. Their tactics and strategies on the domestic front reflected their cautious approach. Peace congresses, peaceful marches and processions were the approaches used to pursue their aims. The prevailing viewpoint was that sit-ins and militant demonstrations were actions that risked alienating public opinion and played into the hands of the State. Some of these groups, such as the Communist Party of Australia (CPA), remained active right throughout the period under study; others, like the Melbourne University Labor Club, divided, with part of their membership joining new radical groups, such as Students for a Democratic Society (SDS).

The established groups were to find their leadership of the movement challenged, and at times undermined, by a new generation of radical activists. These new arrivals on the scene had generally not been through the repressive atmosphere so omnipresent

during the height of the Cold War. A number of newer groups, such as Save our Sons (SOS) and the Youth Campaign against Conscription (YCAC) had appeared in 1965; however it was after 1967, and especially in the period 1968-1972, that these newer groups were to be influential in the direction of the movement. Although anti-communism remained a potent weapon for establishment leaders and opinion makers the world had changed. Not just in Australia but in many other parts of the globe this hegemony was being challenged. New groups reflective of the militancy of the period were emerging. Some were existing groups who underwent enormous changes; others became aligned to existing organisations.

In this chapter i initially examine the established Peace and Left groups at the start of the period and then examine new groups that emerged during the period, in order to enable an exploration of the relationship between new and established groups within the anti-Vietnam War movement.

ESTABLISHED GROUPINGS

At the commencement of Australian military involvement in Vietnam, the major peace grouping in Melbourne was the Congress for International Cooperation and Disarmament (CICD). It had emerged out of a similarly named congress conducted in Melbourne in November 1959, which had drawn over 1,000 delegates from a broad range of affiliations including scientists, church leaders and trade unionists. Amongst this diverse grouping there was a strong CPA presence.¹ Though the CPA retained a major influence over the peace movement in the early 1960s it did not enjoy the

hegemony that it had previously maintained over the peace movement. However there remained a lingering perception amongst some peace activists that CICD was CPA directed and showed a pro-Soviet bias in both its analysis and practice. The CICD supported policies that endorsed universal disarmament, peaceful coexistence between the socialist and capitalist states, and a Nuclear Free Zone in the Southern Hemisphere. It also expressed opposition to French nuclear tests in the Region, and opposed Australia's membership of the South East Asia Treaty Organisation (SEATO). CICD had also taken public stands against United States of America's (US) policy, in Cuba, Algeria and the Congo.²

The CPA involvement in CICD at the height of the Cold War was not the its first involvement in the peace movement in this period. Following the establishment of a World Peace Council (WPC) in Paris in 1949 a similar organisation was set up in Australia. In April 1950 the local Peace Congress involved up to 10,000 participants in its conference and associated activities in Melbourne. Another notable example of the peace work of this period was the CPA's youth wing, the Eureka Youth League (EYL). In 1952 the EYL organised a Youth Carnival for Peace and Friendship, which drew crowds as large as 30,000.³ In the conservative context of the time, peace movement activists were cautious in the methods of work followed. For example there was an emphasis on collecting petitions, holding conferences, screening anti-war films and other non-militant forms of action. They hoped to avoid alienating potential recruits and supporters by offending the establishment and the conservative

¹ Murphy J., *A Harvest of Fear: A History of Australia's Vietnam War*, Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 1993, pp 121-123; Pauline Mitchell, interview, 17/12/98.

² Roger Holdsworth, interview, 6/5/99; David Hudson, interview, 1/6/99; Saunders M. & Summy R., *The Australian Peace Movement: A short History*, Peace Research Centre, Australian National University, 1986, pp 32-35. The aim of a Nuclear Free Zone in the Southern Hemisphere was also

mainstream media. There was always a CPA presence within the peace movement at the time, and the movement was always open to the risk of being perceived as little more than a pro-Soviet front. The peace movement often saw disarmament as the primary responsibility of the West, not the Soviet Union and its allies. The Peace Council was considered by many to be a CPA front and this led to the 1959 establishment of CICD, which had a broader focus and appeal with less overt CPA presence.⁴ The structure of CICD welcomed non-CPA members, including ALP members, many of who could not participate in the Peace Council after it was proscribed by the ALP as a Communist controlled body.⁵

The CPA, whilst its influence had fallen since its peak during the latter part of World War Two, maintained an influential presence in the peace movement as well as in the trade union movement and various other progressive causes.⁶ Its previously monolithic unity had been shaken by the impact of, firstly the denunciation of Stalin by Khrushchev at the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU), with its subsequent splits in the international communist movement and the formation of an early New Left. Then followed the Sino-Soviet split, whose ramifications were felt in Communist Parties all over the world including in Australia. After a period of uncertainty as the party grappled whether to align themselves with

supported by the ALP. McMullin, R., *The Light on the Hill, The Australian Labour Party 1891-1991*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1991 p 293.

³ O' Lincoln T., *Into the Mainstream*, Stained Wattle Press, Sydney, 1985, p 90.

⁴ Summy R., in his article, 'Reply to Fred Wells', speaks about an obvious pro-Soviet bias in the period after the peace council, Forward R. & Reece B.(eds.), *Conscription in Australia*, University of Queensland Press, Santa Lucia, 1968, p 209.

⁵ O' Lincoln T., *op cit*, pp 90 -92; Saunders M. & Summy R., *op cit*, pp 32 -33.

⁶ At the peak of its popularity during the latter stages of World War 2 the CPA had around 23,000 members, though for a variety of reasons it had fallen to 5,300 in 1965. Davidson A., *The Communist party of Australia a Short History*, Hoover Institution Press, Stanford, California, 1969 p 93 and p 171. In Victoria in 1965 there were 1,375 members *Tribune*, 28/7/65 quoted in Davidson, *ibid*, p 174. In terms of its presence and influence in the peace movement during this period the CPA were the main political grouping involved in both organising and giving political direction to anti war/ anti nuclear activities. Sindy J., *Comrades come Rally*, Nelson Australia, West Melbourne, 1978 pp 177-178

Peking or Moscow, the CPA finally remained aligned to Moscow. In early 1964, there were acrimonious expulsions and resignations of those who believed that the Moscow brand of socialism was revisionist and that the Communist Party of China (CPC) were the true inheritors of Marxism - Leninism.⁷ As a result of the split the Peking aligned Communist Party of Australia Marxist–Leninist (CPAML) was formed. The split and its implications were to be felt throughout the next decade as both parties sought to influence opposition to the Vietnam War and cultivate support amongst those who opposed the conflict.

The CPA was in a process of trying to reconcile its pro-Soviet elements with a desire to be more attuned to the needs of contemporary Australian society and viewed the Euro Communist models of the Western European Communist Parties with interest. They no longer saw themselves as the vanguard party; rather they looked at being in a power-sharing situation, that is a party within a ‘Coalition of the Left.’⁸ This ‘Coalition of the Left’ became party policy at the 1967 Congress. In many ways it can be viewed as a return to the ‘Popular Front’ approach of the 1930s of building links with progressive non-communist forces. However, it went a step further to deny the leading role of the working class and the Party in the struggle for a new society. The CPA was moving to the centre and seeking closer links with the ALP and any other grouping it could align with to achieve some legitimacy for its aims. Coinciding with this, there was a reduced emphasis on socialism as a solution to the problems confronting Australian society.

⁷ Sendy J., *ibid*, pp 128-137,, O'Lincoln T., *op cit*, pp 104-106, Watson D., *The Split in the Australian Communist Movement 1961-1964*, BA Hons, Latrobe University, Bundoora, 1970

⁸ Mansell K., *The Marxism and Strategic concepts of the CPA 1965 – 1972*; BA Hons, Latrobe University, Bundoora, 1980, Milner A., *The Road To ST. Kilda Pier*, Stained Wattle Press, Westgate, 1984, pp 35–36; Sendy J., *op cit*, pp 163-167; Aarons, BE, *What's Left*, Penguin Books, Ringwood, 1993, p 198.

Despite the CPA's political difficulties from the beginning it had seen the conflict in Vietnam as of high importance. In its paper *Tribune*, it notes:

We stand today at one of the main crossroads of human history. We are in the middle of the most decisive test of strength between the war forces and peace forces of the world since the ending of the Second World War.⁹

The CPA strove to raise the issue of the war in their publications as well as participating in the organisation of anti-war activities.

The CPAML was initially limited in its presence, and was influenced by the Liu Shao-Chi policy of assuming a low profile as a way of avoiding perceived heavy state repression¹⁰. However the bulk of party membership and influence was in Victoria, and they were able to tap into the upsurge in radicalism which marked the late 1960s and early 1970s. They also retained influence in a number of unions such as the Australian Tramways Motor Omnibus Employees Association (ATMOEA), the Waterside Workers Federation (WWF) and the Australian Building Construction Employees and builders Labourers Federation (ABCE & BLF).¹¹ As such, the CPAML was not visibly present in the early anti-Vietnam War activities beyond commentary in their publications. However by being the only political group to condone and encourage the more militant forms of political action, the CPAML was able to present a credible alternative to other Left groups who were more restrained

⁹ *Tribune*, 19/5/66.

¹⁰ Liu Shao – chi was a colleague of Mao Tse Tung. Liu was to be exposed as a ‘capitalist roader’ during the period of the Greater Proletarian Cultural Revolution, after previously being regarded as a good Communist. The low policy was one applicable to situations of white terror where to be openly known as a communist carried severe risks. The CPAML adapted this to Australian conditions always seeing fascism just around the corner and hence the need to operate in a secretive, clandestine fashion to avoid detection and the associated punitive risks.

¹¹ Davidson A., *op cit*, p 155, claims the party had 200 members in 1964. It is hard to estimate its actual numerical size due to its secrecy.

and appeared more focused on the election of ALP governments as the solution. The apparent successes of socialist China and the great kudos paid to young people and students during the Greater Proletarian Cultural Revolution all added credibility to the CPAML. As York notes: "Australian Maoism bridged the gap between the New Left style and Leninism in some important respects. Peking was in, the Soviet Union and the West were out."¹² The CPAML's ability to tap into the newly found radicalism allowed them to find a niche in Australian politics.¹³

As well as the split which led to the establishment of the CPAML there was a further split in the CPA ranks in 1971 which led to the establishment of the pro-Soviet Socialist Party of Australia (SPA). The CPA, as it moved further away from alignment with the Soviet Union as the correct model of a revolutionary society, began to question and criticise current Soviet actions, not least of all the invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968. It gradually found itself unable to reconcile its pro Soviet elements with the remainder of its membership. Eventually the split occurred, as those pro-Soviet elements left to form the SPA. The SPA whilst being prominent in Sydney, was never a major player in Melbourne during this period.¹⁴

The journal *Arena* was established in 1963 by current and former members of the CPA and was a non-party Marxist theoretical journal encouraging debates and arguments to flourish. Its editorial board remained open to both CPA and non-party

¹² York B., 'The Politics of Marxism – Leninism', *Arena*, No 66, p 29.

¹³ An excellent synopsis of the politics of the CPAML in this period is, Herouvims J., 'Politics of the Revolving Door' in *Melbourne Journal of Politics*, Vol 15, 1983–84.

¹⁴ A good analysis of this split, and the events leading up to it and the implications are covered in Moorehead G., *The Split in the Australian Communist movement 1966-1973*, BA Hons, Latrobe University, Bundoora, 1983.

individuals, though the party did not finance it or control it organisationally.¹⁵ *Arena* was published throughout the relevant period, providing a forum for different viewpoints to be expressed and allowing for vigorous debate of a non-sectarian nature.

Within the established political parties a degree of support was obtained from the Victorian branch of the ALP, the main parliamentary opposition in the state. Since its split in 1955 the ALP remained in parliamentary opposition. However, partly due to the exodus of a core of its extreme right wing members, who formed the Democratic Labor Party (DLP), the Victorian Branch of the ALP remained a progressive social democratic party, mirrored by their progressive young counterparts in the Young Labor Association (YLA).¹⁶

Though the Victorian branch of the ALP had a progressive position on the conflict in Vietnam, their Federal counterparts had an ambivalent position, which fluctuated throughout the period. Within the Federal parliamentary body, this was expressed in a number of ways. For example, the Federal ALP initially endorsed intensified American efforts in Vietnam, despite some parliamentarians, such as Jim Cairns, being strongly opposed to Australian involvement in Vietnam. In his role as Federal Party leader, Arthur Calwell assured Australian troops in May 1965 that the ALP supported them logistically, although there was disagreement within the party over Australian troop involvement. It would be fair to say that, generally, the Federal

¹⁵ Davidson A., *op cit*, p 166; Sedy J., *op cit*, pp 161-162.

¹⁶ Refer Kevin Healy, interview, 20 /12/98, and Bob Scates, interview, 3/3/99. In terms of primary documents, miscellaneous papers, documents and records contained in the ALP archives at the Latrobe Collection of the are of importance. The above listed material stored in boxes, cover much of this research period For more details of the DLP split and its implications refer to Murray R., *The Split Australian Labour in the Fifties.*, Cheshire Publishing, Melbourne, 1970

ALP's position relating to the conflict in Vietnam and how Australia was involved, appeared more poll driven than principled, particularly so after the 1966 Federal election debacle.

Amongst the organised labor movement there were major divisions. The 'Rebel Unions', as they were known, were a group of trade unions that had refused to pay their affiliation fees to the Right wing controlled Victorian Trades Hall Council (VTHC). Amongst the political influences at play amongst these unions were the ALP, CPA and CPAML. The 'Rebel Unions' were active in opposing the war, including anti-conscription work and trying to mobilise union members for the Vietnam Moratorium Committee (VMC) and Moratorium activities. Many of these unions carried stories in their journals and newspapers on topical issues pertaining to the war and the struggle against it.¹⁷

NEWER GROUPINGS

One of the earliest manifestations of differences within the anti war movement was the establishment of the Victorian Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (VCND), in 1960.¹⁸ It was established to provide a more liberal, less pro-Soviet, alternative to CICD. VCND's founders held the viewpoint that the CICD was very much an apologist for the Soviet position and that VCND's position was a more genuine attempt to eliminate a nuclear conflict. An example of how they differed from more

¹⁷ The most comprehensive writing on the split is Plowman D., 'Unions in Conflict: The Victorian Trades Hall Split 1967-1973', *Labour History* No 36, May 1979, pp 47-69.

¹⁸ Murphy J., *op cit*, p 125.

pro-Soviet Peace groups can be seen from a statement made prior to the October 1964 Peace Congress in Sydney.

We do not think that Disarmament can be effectively advanced from a merely pro-communist, or a merely anti communist political position. These convictions have brought us into disagreement from time to time with the ANZ congress for International Co-operation and Disarmament, which is sponsoring the Sydney meeting.¹⁹

It could be seen as an early New Left/Old Left relationship, reflecting the earlier split which had occurred in the international communist movement and its supporters as a result of Krushchev's 'secret' speech at the 20th congress of the CPSU in 1956. VCND was inspired by the activist-based approach of the British model of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND). This influence also included aspects of a civil disobedience approach, and the British CND style marches being held on Easter weekends. Inspired by the British Aldermaston march, Melbourne marchers would meet in various suburbs and converge into a mass march and rally in the inner city.²⁰ This approach was more activist oriented than the previous one of relying predominantly on petitioning and public meetings. With the advent of Australia's direct military involvement into Vietnam, VCND changed its focus and evolved into the Vietnam Day Committee (VDC).²¹

The VDC was established as a result of requests from the International Vietnam Day Committee that had originally been set up in the United States in August 1965. They contacted support groups in Melbourne seeking support for actions on October 15-16

¹⁹ Reprinted from *Sanity* 3 No 9 October 1964, by Summy R., in Forward R. & Reece B.(eds.), *op cit*, pp 208-209.

²⁰ Saunders M.& Summy R., *op cit*, p35, speak about civil disobedience, without specifying any specific examples.

²¹ Murphy J., *op cit*, pp 125-128; Roger Holdsworth, interview, 6/5/99; David Hudson, interview, 1/6/99.

as part of "Days of International Protest for a Return to a negotiated Solution to the Vietnam War".²² One of the Committee members recalls:

The Vietnam Day Committee was in response to the American one. They wrote to us, and asked for a similar action. Someone, I think it was David Pope, called a meeting of a number of unions, a number of groups talked about setting up another group called the Vietnam Day Committee.²³

The VDC was established on September 17 1965 following a public meeting at Assembly Hall. Its establishment came a month after the founding of the Sydney based anti-Vietnam War, anti-conscription coordinating committee, the Vietnam Action Campaign (VAC), and four months after the announcement of the commitment of Australian combat troops to South Vietnam.²⁴ On October 15-16, as part of their solidarity with the international protests, they organised a 24- hour vigil outside the Commonwealth Parliamentary offices and a rally at Melbourne University.²⁵ They were also one of the sponsors of an open- air concert conducted at the Myer Music bowl in November 1965 that drew 8,000 to 10,000 people. As well as musical performers a panel of speakers was present including the Rev. David Pope and Jim Cairns.²⁶ The VDC eventually changed its name in late 1967, developing into the Vietnam Coordinating Committee (VCC).²⁷

Detailed discussion of the various anti-conscription groups is undertaken in Chapter 7, but it is worth noting that these were important elements in the emerging constellation of new groups.

²² Saunders M. & Summy R., *op cit*, pp 35-36; Summy R., in Forward R. & Reece B.(eds.), *op cit*, pp 204-205.

²³ Roger Holdsworth, interview, 6/5/99.

²⁴ Murphy J., *op cit*, pp 144 -145.

²⁵ Summy R., in Forward R. & Reece B. (eds.) , *op cit*, p 205.

²⁶ Murphy J., *op cit* pp 140–142. Other groups present were VCND, CICD, ALP, SOS YCAC and three groups from Melbourne University, the Folk Music Club, Melbourne University CND and also Democratic Socialist Club.

²⁷ Roger Holdsworth, interview, 6/5/99.

Save Our Sons (SOS) was formed in 1965, following the establishment of the Sydney based group of the same name. It holds a special role in the range of groups active in this period. Its beginnings in Melbourne can be traced to a group of mothers sitting around at a house in one of Melbourne's bayside suburbs and discussing the implications of the National Service Act (NSA), and what potential danger it posed to their sons. From this a public meeting was conducted at Assembly Hall on August 18, the official launch of SOS.²⁸ A notable feature of SOS was that it was not seen as politically aligned with any particular party or ideology, though there was a discernible ALP presence. In the words of a founding member, "We were careful not to align ourselves with any political party".²⁹ Despite this, strong links were established with the Victorian Branch of the ALP, links that saw some of the key SOS members take out ALP membership. SOS was also initially reluctant to take a public stance on Vietnam and focused solely on the issue of conscription for overseas service.³⁰ SOS was the first group to publicly challenge the legitimacy of conscripting young Australian males for overseas service and were key players in early demonstrations outside Richmond Barracks where they confronted young conscripts and their families and sought to convince them of the implications of conscription for overseas service. It was the only anti-conscription body that was active throughout the whole period of organised opposition to the conscription scheme, 1965-1972.

The Youth Campaign against Conscription (YCAC) was established in 1965 and its primary focus was to seek the election of a Federal ALP Government in the 1966

²⁸ Jean McLean, interview, 21/12/98; Murphy J., *op cit*, p142; Summy R., in Forward R. & Reece B (eds.), *op cit*, pp 142-143.

²⁹ Jean McLean, interview, 21/12/98.

³⁰ Murphy J., *op cit*, p 142.

election.³¹ It was involved in organising early demonstrations and public actions against conscription and the war such as the picketing of the Department of Labour and National Service on March 10 1965.³² It seems however that some of these early demonstrations and acts of civil disobedience, such as burning draft cards, led to disapproval from some of the established anti-war groups.³³ It was anticipated that the ALP, with strong public opposition to conscription to Vietnam, would, once elected, bring an end to conscription.³⁴ Once the election result went the other way, YCAC's future as an organisation was limited and it disappeared, being replaced by more radical groups, whose focus went beyond parliamentarism and elections.

The Draft Resisters Movement (DRM) was a short lived body set up in the summer of 1967-1968 and aimed at resisting conscription as a scheme. With a membership drawn both from students and former YCAC activists it sought to go beyond simply protesting and opposing the war on the grounds of being a conscientious objector. Using direct action, civil disobedience type approaches, DRM cooperated with SOS and many of the student groupings to revitalise the anti-conscription struggle.³⁵

The Committee in Defiance of the National Service Act (CDNSA) was established in Sydney in 1969, by two academics from Sydney University, Professors Charles Birch and Charles Martin. Not long after a branch was established in Victoria, which

³¹ Jordens AM., 'Conscription and Dissent: The genesis of the Anti-War protest', in Pemberton G.(ed.), *Vietnam Remembered*, p75, states that YCAC was launched in Sydney on 29/11/1964 at a public meeting chaired by ALP parliamentarians, Cairns and Uren.

³² Armstrong P., *A History of Save our Sons Movement of Victoria, 1965-1973*, MA, Monash University, Clayton, p 9.

³³ Guyatt C., 'The Anti-conscription movement', 1964-1966, in Forward R.& Reece B., *op cit*, p180.

³⁴ Summy R., in *ibid*, pp 241 -245.

³⁵ Hamel-Green M., 'The Resisters: a history of the anti-conscription movement 1964-1972', in King P.(ed.), *Australia's Vietnam*, Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 1983, pp 112-113; Scates R., *'Draftsmen Go Free': A history of the Anti conscription movement in Australia*, Self Published, Melbourne, 1990, p 39.

provided a forum/structure for the established Left to play a public role in the anti-conscription struggle. The CDNSA while initially securing much publicity, failed in its attempts at self prosecution for breaching crimes act provisions against inciting young men not to register for national service and was supplanted by the VMC.

The Draft Resisters Union (DRU) was one of the most militant of the anti-conscription groups and it was established in 1970 and remained an active body until the end of conscription for overseas service. Following on from the DRM it sought to have the National Service Act repealed and challenged the role of Australia in supporting the aims of US imperialism. With direct action tactics, including demonstrations, occupations and the establishment of an organised draft resisters underground, the DRU was an important actor in the early 1970s mobilising opposition to both conscription and the war. On the university campuses a number of left oriented political groupings existed. At Melbourne University, the Melbourne University Labor Club still remained the major progressive grouping on campus. Other progressive student groupings included the Melbourne University Campaign against Conscription (MUCAC) and Melbourne University Pacifist Society. There was also the Vietnam Study Group which brought together many of the activists as they sought to gain a better understanding of what was really happening in Vietnam and how they could challenge these events. However by 1968 there were concerns that student politics at Melbourne University was not activist enough and something new was required. In the words of Michael Hamel-Green, president of the Melbourne University Labor Club in 1968:

The Labor Club was more keen on theoretical work, and,.....it was not enthusiastic about practical organisations or demonstrations. Those involved in the Pacifist Society and Draft Resisters Movement which were formed in 1968 felt very strongly about not only theoretical debate and political education on socialist approaches but also the need for action with the Vietnam War raging and the need to do something about it, and that led a number of us to feel we needed something distinctly new and New Left to bring these elements together.³⁶

The organisation of SDS was to be the vehicle at Melbourne University which saw these different elements on campus brought together to form one of the pivotal groupings from the period.³⁷ The origins of SDS go back to the US in the early 1960's and its influence/presence first appeared in Australia at Sydney University in 1966, as a way of breaking away from the traditional student Left groups³⁸. A gathering of approximately 100 students from a variety of existing clubs such as the Melbourne University Labour Club, the MUCAC and the Melbourne University Pacifist Society met on the August 24 1968 to establish the Melbourne University branch of SDS³⁹. The politics of SDS were a radical democratic, libertarian approach, with an emphasis on involving people in decisions that affected their lives. In the words of an SDS statement;

SDS is being formed here in an effort to provide a common group for those who are concerned, whether generally or specifically with our present society. We aim to assist with highlighting what we conceive to be existing wrongs, and to offer alternatives based on general ideals. We do not present a blueprint for a brave new world, but will question the old one. We do have certain basic tenets, and we will seek to achieve change based on these.⁴⁰

³⁶ Michael Hamel -Green, interview, 10/4/99.

³⁷ *Shop*, the Melbourne University Labor Club newsletter mentions the need for more professionalism amongst the student political bodies and the need to work together and build closer links, especially citing the relationship with the Pacifist club, *Shop*, 24/6/68.

³⁸ Cahill R., *Notes on the New Left in Australia*, Australian Marxist Research Foundation, 1969, p 12.

³⁹ Day D., *The History and Politics of Students for a Democratic Society at Melbourne University 1968-1972: A Case Study of Students Potential for Revolution*, BA Hons, Melbourne University, Parkville, 1980.

This form of participatory democracy was in contrast to the formal democratic processes within Australian society. SDS sought to make democracy a concept where people could be involved in decision making and take a degree of destiny over their own lives. The group established the Centre for Democratic Action (CDA) based in a terrace house at 57 Palmerston St Carlton not far from Melbourne University. Many of the SDS members later became involved with the Radical Action Movement (RAM) which was formed in 1970, providing an organisation for both ex SDS members who had finished their studies and also non students whom were drawn to the politics that SDS had embodied.

Monash Labor Club could not boast the long history or tradition of its counterpart at Melbourne University. Indeed Monash University did not have the long history and tradition of Melbourne University. It was located on a campus isolated from mainstream political activity, being situated out in Melbourne's outer South- Eastern Suburbs. The club had been established with the assistance of the Melbourne University ALP Club and was initially aligned with the Fabian Society and the more conservative elements remaining inside the Victorian Branch of the ALP. The club's constitution barred members of parties other than the ALP. This was designed to deter both Communists to the left and pro-DLP elements of the right, a clause that was finally deleted in early 1968.⁴¹

Monash Labor Club was to earn a reputation as the most militant and 'hard-line' of the student groupings. Despite its conservative origins and the fact there was a New Left Club on campus it successfully attracted key activists and militants. For Michael Hyde

⁴⁰ Students for a Democratic Society undated leaflet, Van Moorst collection.

⁴¹ Hyde M., *It is Right to Rebel*, The Diplomat, Canberra, 1972, p 6.

who initially joined the New Left Club and found it was not activist oriented, the Monash Labor Club was appealing because, "They were vibrant, they wanted to change the world the same as I did".⁴² Monash Labor Club rapidly became a key player in the newer groups.

Like SDS with its off campus headquarters at CDA, Monash students set up an off campus headquarters at the 'Bakery' in Greville St. Prahran.⁴³ A number of different groupings based around the Monash Labor Club and the Bakery were formed and existed briefly during this time. The Young Communist League (YCL) was one based on a hard line explicitly Marxist-Leninist faction within the club and operating as a secretive cell.⁴⁴ Groups such as the Prahran Peoples Movement and the Revolutionary Socialists (RevSocs) were also closely linked to the Monash Labor Club and were part of the Bakery scene.

The RevSocs group was organised to look at establishing a new revolutionary organisation/ Party and ran a series of discussion groups and produced pamphlets and leaflets before folding later in 1969. It involved members of Monash Labor Club and other independent Marxists who were not attracted to any of the existing parties. Its role was more educational than activist.⁴⁵

As was mentioned earlier Latrobe was the newest of Melbourne's three universities, and the Latrobe Labor Club was influenced by the actions of the Monash Labor Club.

⁴² Michael Hyde, Coburg, interview, 11/2/99.

⁴³ For a comprehensive history of political events at the 'Bakery' and this period per se refer to Mansell K., *The Yeast is Red*, MA, Melbourne University, Parkville, 1994.

⁴⁴ *ibid*, pp 52-57.

⁴⁵ *ibid*, pp 27-31, Pamphlets and their 'Newsletter' *Half Baked* can be perused in the McLaren Collection of Australian Political Pamphlets, Box 32 at the Baillieu Library Melbourne University.

Speakers from the Monash Labor Club had been out to Latrobe in 1967 addressing students on the Vietnam War.⁴⁶ Latrobe Labor Club had a strong Maoist influence amongst its leadership and remained an active, militant group well into the 1970's. It had been initially known as the Latrobe Democratic Socialist Club, but inspired by the stance Monash had taken in supporting the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam (NLF), changed their name and took on a position of support for the NLF.⁴⁷

Latrobe University also had a SDS club, which was established in 1969. It had strong links with the Melbourne University SDS and was prominent in the anti-conscription struggles of the time. A key member of SDS was Ian McDonald who was also an active draft resister during this period.⁴⁸

For many of the Maoist former students, and also workers, the establishment of the Worker Student Alliance (WSA) in early 1970 provided an ongoing vehicle for their politics. It remained very closely associated with the CPAML, though it was more open in its operations. It had a number of suburban branches established and these met regularly. WSA and its journal *Struggle* ran a consistently hard-line position, often very critical of other sections of the Left, both newer or the more established groupings.

On a broader scale there were attempts made to unite different radical student groupings on a national basis, including the Socialist Students Alliance (SSA). The

⁴⁶ York B., *Student Revolt ,Latrobe University 1967-1973*, Nicholas Press, Campbell, ACT, 1989, pp 62-63.

⁴⁷ *ibid*, pp 62-63, 101; *Red Moat No 8 June '24 1968*, also Pola *Perspectives of the Australian Radical Left Student movement*, Phd, Latrobe University, Bundoora, 1988, gives a very good overview of the student left at Latrobe University during this period.

SSA was an organisation designed to replace the old Australian Student Labor Federation (ASLF). It was driven predominantly by the Brisbane based Students for Democratic Action (SDA), but never had a key role within Victoria, and nationally it co existed for a period of time alongside the ASLF, before departing the political landscape.⁴⁹ Its first conference conducted at the University of New South Wales during February 17 – 21 1969 saw a split with Monash Labor Club aligning itself with SDA Brisbane and Adelaide, against Sydney SDS and the Trotskyite influenced Resistance.⁵⁰

One of the late arrivals on the Melbourne political scene was the Socialist Workers League, and its youth wing, Resistance, later to be known as the Socialist Youth Alliance (SYA). They first appeared in Melbourne in 1970.⁵¹ The SYA grouping based on an American organisation with the same name first manifested itself in Sydney and gradually spread down to Melbourne⁵². Their first copy of the paper *Direct Action* stated, " *Direct Action* is not a paper for the whole left. It is a paper for a particular segment of the left." ⁵³ The group was not a major influence on the struggles or debates of the period, though they were active in arguing their line in various forums including the VMC and the anti-conscription movement.

⁴⁸ *ibid*, in particular pp's 61,63,71,78 Ian McDonald later became as an ALP member in the New South Wales Parliament.

⁴⁹ Cahill R., *op cit*, p13.

⁵⁰ Mansell K., 1994, *op cit*, p80.

⁵¹ There is some conjecture about this as Dave Kerin has recollections of speaking to Dave Holmes a member of Socialist Youth alliance selling *Direct Action* circa 1967, though not clear on these dates. However *Direct Action* did not appear until 1970, throwing some doubt on these dates. Dave Kerin, interview, 18/4/99.

⁵² Milner A., *op cit*, p 32; Jamie Doughney interview, 25/3/99; John Ebel, interview,, 29/4/99; and Dave Kerin, interview, 18/4/99.

⁵³ *Direct Action*, No.1, September 1970.

There was also a proliferation of high school student groups such as Students in Dissent (SID) and Secondary Students for Democratic Action (SSDA). They were to play an active role at different times during this period and were in close contact with the University based student groupings. SID was aligned with Monash Labor Club and for a time they were based at the Bakery, a similar relationship existed between SSDA and SDS, being based at CDA.⁵⁴

There were other groups involved in the struggle against the Vietnam War. These represented diverse interests such as returned servicemen and also religious bodies. However, these groups will not be examined since the focus of this thesis is on the New and Established Left groups and their relationship within the anti-Vietnam War movement.

CONCLUSION

This chapter was concerned with identifying the groups and organisations that were key players in the anti-Vietnam War movement. All had explicit political stances, stances that influenced their positions on tactics and strategies integral to the movement. Some were political parties with a comprehensive approach to all issues impacting on society, of which opposition to the war and Australia's involvement was but one. Others were focused on issues pertaining to war and peace, such as CICD and SOS. Some organisations had a flexibility in their positions, such as SDS which did not feel constrained with a 'correct' ideological line position, while others maintained

⁵⁴ Mansell K., 1994, *op cit* pp 56–59 and 152–153; leaflets and newsletters produced by SID and other radical secondary student groups are able to be viewed in Box 28 Secondary Students at Melbourne University's McLaren Collection of political pamphlets held in the Baillieu Library.

a 'correct' ideological line throughout, such as the Maoist oriented groups. In total these groups comprised a growing and active opposition to our involvement in Vietnam.

Some of these groups became both more active and influential in their opposition, whilst others remained active, despite having their influence challenged and at times diminished. But as an amorphous structure they made up a radical movement that shocked Australian society out of the conservatism and timidity, that was characteristic of the preceding Cold War period.

The next chapter will focus on the re-establishment of the anti-Vietnam War movement following the large electoral victory of the Liberal Country Party (LCP) Coalition, in the 1966 Federal election. The ALP had taken a strong stand on not sending conscripts to Vietnam and they were ambivalent at best about Australia's involvement in the conflict. On this basis most opponents of the war had hoped for an ALP victory, and many like YCAC strove hard in practice for this result.

Out of this disastrous culmination to 1966, many individuals and some groups began to question the viability of such an approach and began to seek more radical and challenging approaches, bypassing the traditional ways of the established peace movement. The year 1967 saw the beginnings of radical changes as to how opponents of the war pursued their agendas, as they sought to push the movement into a more confrontationist approach, breaking the straight jacket of Cold War conformity.

Different political ideologies, tactics and strategies converged to provide a movement that sought not just to oppose Australia's involvement in the conflict in Vietnam but also to challenge the government of the day and the social and economic system under which we live. Along the way the different groupings engaged in debate and dialogue, and through this dialectical process, produced an anti war movement larger and more radical than had been seen previously in Australia. The issues of conscription and the war in Vietnam were brought together in a way that highlighted that they were closely inter-linked, not separate issues. The relationship between the existing groupings and the emerging newer groupings will be the focus of ensuing chapters on aspects of the anti-Vietnam War movement, during the period 1967-1972.

CHAPTER 4

RETHINKING THE ANTI-VIETNAM WAR STRUGGLE

1967 - 1968

INTRODUCTION

With the defeat of the Australian Labor Party (ALP) at the 1966 Federal election there was a sense of futility about dependence on parliamentary solutions to end the war. Individuals who worked for a parliamentary solution were dismayed. Kevin Healy's recollection reflected the mood of many, "Calwell got slaughtered at the election. I was scrutineering at a country booth and we were devastated as the results came in and I remember sitting down and thinking 'Christ!' and feeling very depressed indeed by the result".¹ As well as individual feelings of despair, groups that had put their faith in an ALP electoral victory were demoralised. Youth Campaign Against Conscription (YCAC), which based its strategy on scoring an ALP electoral victory, totally disintegrated. However, opposition to the war in Vietnam and Australia's role in the conflict did not fade away but began manifesting itself in new and different forms.

Throughout 1967 new, more radical, anti-Vietnam War forces grew in both confidence and influence. Notwithstanding the despondency of those who had put their faith in a parliamentary solution to the problem, others were prepared to adopt more radical positions. However, to begin with they were not in a position to

¹Kevin Healy, interview, 20/12/98.

challenge the established anti-war movement for either leadership of the movement or to have a major influence on its direction.

The radicals began to challenge the prevailing peace movement orthodoxies by taking a public stance in support of the National Liberation Front of Vietnam of South Vietnam (NLF) and the Government of North Vietnam (DRVN). Their actions were construed as treasonous by conservative forces, including the Federal Government. To a peace movement shrouded in respectability and trying to recover from the Cold War, and the subsequent anti-communist attacks on the movement, such actions went well beyond earlier stances. These events started to shape the parameters of debate and move them to the left, as the movement's thinking on the war was challenged.²

The events of July 4 1967 showed that the relationship between those who traditionally led and those who followed was being further challenged. Peace movement organisers found themselves engaging with more than 100 radicals who wanted to move beyond traditional passive activities and make a confrontationist assault on the United States (US) consulate in Melbourne. For these radicals, this was a symbol of the enemy, the US, the imperialist force behind the bloodshed and subjugation of Vietnam.

The anti-conscription struggle faltered, damaged by the emphasis that YCAC had placed on a Federal ALP victory. However Save our Sons (SOS) and the Federal Pacifist Council (FPC) continued to provide a focus for anti-conscription actions and a basis for a new regrouping of anti-conscription forces.

² Refer to Interviews with Michael Hyde, interview, 11/2/1999 and Dave Nadel interview, 11/12/98.

MARSHALL KY DEMONSTRATION

The arrival in Australia of South Vietnamese leader, Prime Minister, Air Vice Marshall Nguyen Cao Ky, in January 1967 saw a series of demonstrations opposing his visit. However there was not the same high turnout of protesters as had been present at the Johnson demonstrations in 1966 and the police response was more restrained.³

A broad coalition of opponents to the Ky visit established an anti-Ky action Committee. This group consisted initially of the younger, newer groupings such as Melbourne and Monash University Labor Clubs, YCAC and Victorian Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (VCND). Support for planned activities was sought from existing groups such as the Victorian branch of the ALP.⁴

In Melbourne, Ky was airlifted by helicopter into parliament house to avoid demonstrators, whilst in Sydney there were signs of open differences in tactics between march organisers and more militant sections of the movement. A section of the demonstration diverged to the Prime Minister's residence at Kiribilli House where it was stopped at the police barricades and marchers debated whether or not to confront the police. Eventually at the behest of the march organisers, the march

³ The United States President, Lyndon Baine Johnson had toured Australia in 1966 and had been 'greeted' with angry demonstrations, including in Melbourne.

⁴ A letter, dated 5/1/67 from I.Morgan, Convenor of the Anti Ky Action Committee was sent to W. Hartley, Victorian ALP State Secretary, seeking the support of the ALP to organise opposition to the visit of Ky. A list of those in attendance at the groups first meeting, conducted on 29/12/66 comprises Monash anti-Conscription Society, Monash and Melbourne University Labour Clubs. ALP CEM folder 1/3 held in ALP manuscript collection at the SLV. Also refer to Michael Hyde, interview, 11/2/99.

dispersed.⁵ However the fact that there was opposition to the visit showed that there was still some fight in the movement.⁶

Amongst members of the Monash Labor Club there was a series of discussions during the summer of 1966/67 about what action could be taken on the war by progressive minded students and similarly minded people in light of the election result. Members of the club played a key role in organising the Ky demonstration and from here the club began rebuilding itself.⁷ They threw themselves into a number of campaigns involving students in campus activities as well as off campus social issues, such as being involved in the unsuccessful campaign to halt the hanging of Ronald Ryan. After Ryan's execution they were prominent in opposing the granting of an honorary degree to the state premier Henry Bolte, who had supported the state sanctioned execution of Ryan.⁸ However, it was with the controversial Aid to the NLF campaign, that they started to have a major impact on the direction of the movement.

OPEN SUPPORT FOR THE NLF

At the Marshall Ky demonstration the established peace movement had sought a ban on carrying NLF flags, a ban that was basically accepted.⁹ Not long after the demonstration the Monash Labor Club's journal *Print*, announced a position of

⁵ Murphy J., *Harvest of Fear: A History of Australia's Vietnam War*, Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 1993, p 211.

⁶ Murphy J., states the ALP, CPA, and Monash Labour Club are all confirmed as being present at the demonstration with ALP Federal leader Arthur Calwell being amongst the speakers, *ibid*, pp 210-211, Hyde M., *It is Right to Rebel*, The Diplomat, Canberra, 1972, p 10.

⁷ Hyde M., *ibid*, p10 claims that Monash Labour Club was the majority body involved in organising the demonstration. Dave Nadel, interview, 11/12/98.

⁸ *ibid*, pp 13-18, York B., *Student Revolt, Latrobe University 1967-1973*, Nicholas Press, Campbell, ACT, 1989, p 21.

solidarity with the NLF.¹⁰ On July 21 the Monash Labor Club established a 'Committee to Collect Medical and Unspecified Aid for the NLF.' They were to take the first open position in Melbourne in support of the NLF. "We supported the NLF because we wanted to make people aware there were Vietnamese in the South who opposed the American presence and not all of them were communists".¹¹ The issue of Aid to the NLF had its origins in debates in the Australian Student Labour Federation (ASLF) which had originally voted for a position of conditional support for the NLF in May 1965. Despite major differences within the ASLF the vote opened the door for student groups to follow the lead.¹² Already the Sydney University ALP and Labor Clubs had raised money for medical aid with very little publicity outside Sydney.¹³ Not all members of Monash Labor Club agreed with this position, and thus there were debates about its merits, but after a series of meetings the position was supported after a vote of members.¹⁴ A small number of members who were unhappy with the result left to establish an ALP club.¹⁵

The campaign to raise money for the NLF regardless of how the money was to be spent caused outrage across many sections of the community.¹⁶ Monash University authorities sought to circumvent the fund raising and outlawed all activities associated with it.¹⁷ Even though it did not appear that the majority of students endorsed the Aid to the NLF campaign, most were prepared to support the right of the club to act in this

⁹ Hyde M., *ibid*, p21, claims the 'Right Wing' leadership of the movement including the CPA banned the carrying of flags. Some Members of the Monash Labor Club actually supported the ban as it was felt the flags would alienate the masses.

¹⁰ *Print*, 30/3/67.

¹¹ Hyde M., quoted in Langley G., *op cit*, p 89.

¹² Dave Nadel, interview, 11/12/98, Hyde M., *op cit*, p 8

¹³ *ibid*, p 22, *Tribune*, 2/8/67, mentions four Universities, Canberra, Melbourne, Monash and Sydney all sending forms of aid to the NLF.

¹⁴ Bob Muntz, interview, 14/12/98 and Dave Nadel, interview, 11/12/98.

¹⁵ *Print*, 10/8/67.

way and also oppose any harsh crackdown by the University administration. A meeting of over 2,000 students condemned Vice-Chancellor Matheson's actions in seeking to restrict the activities of the club.¹⁸ As well as the expected condemnation from the right there was also criticism within the movement. From the viewpoint of the Monash radicals, their position served to broaden debate. Opponents of the war now had to question whether they were opposing all parties to the war or whether they were willing to take sides.

The Federal Parliamentary Labor Party, including Jim Cairns, opposed the action of the Monash Labor Club.¹⁹ Federal Parliament in response, passed the Defence Forces Protection Act, which effectively banned the collections of aid, except via the Red Cross, which had no intention of either supporting or passing on supplies to the NLF. The bill was passed on September 9 1967, with the only parliamentary opposition being the Independent Senator Hannaford. The main parliamentary parties, Liberal, Country Party (LCP), ALP and Democratic Labor Party (DLP) all supported the legislation. For breaches of the Act offenders faced a potential jail term of two years.

This action by the ALP helped force the Monash Labor Club further to the left as club members who felt some remaining attachment to the ALP as an organ of potentially radical social change sought a more militant alternative.²⁰ Dave Nadel, who had been active at Monash and in ALP politics, was one who turned further to the left after this event. He moved from being a supporter of Jim Cairns and radical social democracy,

¹⁶ The mainstream print media of the time is reflective of this backlash. eg ' Monash Labor Club and the Viet Cong' *Australian*, 19/8/67.

¹⁷ Hyde M., *op cit*, pp24-30, interview with Dave Nadel, Ascot Vale 11/12/98, *Australian*, 19/8/67.

¹⁸ *Age*, 19/9/67, *Australian*, 19/9/67.

to a more radical, Marxist view of events. "The Federal Government passed a bill called the Defence forces Protection Act and the Labor Party supported it because they had no alternative, and that's when I resigned from the Labor Party".²¹ Nadel's break from the ALP saw him become a key figure in the more radical Labor Club. Melbourne University Labor Club also voted to provide aid to the NLF. However it was quite specific that it would only provide medical aid. Despite opposition from sections of the student union they met and voted to raise funds for medical aid. In the words of the Club's President, Doug Kirsner, "We supported medical aid to the NLF, simply because politically, tactically, it was not a good idea to go [too] far as it would alienate people. It was really a symbolic gesture".²² As a symbolic gesture this put them alongside their colleagues at Monash at the forefront of the radical wing of the anti-Vietnam War movement. However, unlike Monash, Melbourne made it explicit that the money would not be used for weapons.

The Melbourne University Labor Club has never even considered the sending of weapons, funds or any other material except medical supplies to the National Liberation Front. We do not want our name added to the list of those responsible for these deaths and will have no part in the killing of Australian soldiers fighting in Vietnam, often against their will.²³

The position of Melbourne University Labor Club was not necessarily well received by their Monash counterparts. According to some Melbourne University Labor Club sources there were recriminations from Monash Labor Club who felt that the Melbourne University Labor Club had been too soft and should have taken a harder line. "The difference between Melbourne and Monash should have been between

¹⁹ Though Cairns was bound by Caucus solidarity to vote this way or risk expulsion from the party, in the parliamentary debate he remarked on the issue of sales of Australian primary products to North Vietnam or China. Refer *Australian*, 19/8/67.

²⁰ Hyde M., *op cit*, pp 35-37.

²¹ Dave Nadel, interview, 11/12/98.

²² Doug Kirsner, interview, 4/2/99.

friends but they thought we were revisionists."²⁴ Another Melbourne activist recalls, "I think they saw us as wimps during the NLF Aid debate, we wanted to send medical aid, while they wanted to send Kalishnikovs".²⁵ Even at this early stage the Monash radicals were intent on proving themselves as the most hard line of the student groupings with their stance on the war.

JULY 4 1967

The importance of the July 4 1967 demonstration is not so much in what occurred on the day, as the events that preceded it. There was a direct challenge issued to the established peace movement, by the young radicals whose pro-NLF stance had helped further debate and shift the movement to the left. The peaceful, anti-war approach, which had been so typical since the start of the Cold War, was facing a growing challenge.

The annual July 4 demonstrations at the US consulate can be traced back to 1965 when the VCND, which became the Vietnam Coordinating Committee (VCC), organised a 24-hour vigil outside the US consulate. At its meeting on May 31 1965 a motion was passed stating:

A vigil is to be held outside the US information service in Commercial Road lasting 24 hours. Committee members will undertake to be present at certain times :it is desirable to have at least one committee member on at all times if possible.²⁶

²³ Press Release Melbourne University Labour Club 20/8/67, also printed in the Newsletter *Shop* 20/8/67 Doug Kirsner Personal collection. ¹

²⁴ Doug Kirsner, interview, 4/2/99.

²⁵ Hutchison G., quoted in Langley, G, *op cit*, p 98.

²⁶ VCND minute book held in possession of Roger Holdsworth. Unfortunately the book does not indicate either mover or seconder of the motion.

The 24-hour vigil was conducted again on July 4 1966 and this occasion drew a crowd of around 80 placard-bearing demonstrators and passed peacefully enough.²⁷

The activities of July 4 1967 were organised by the Vietnam Day Committee (VDC), yet the presence of the traditional leadership of the ALP, Communist Party of Australia (CPA), and the Congress for International Cooperation and Disarmament (CICD) was still strong.²⁸

The lead up to the demonstration included a three day festival including street theatre with actors playing the role of US presidents, past and present, including Thomas Jefferson and the current president Lyndon Baine Johnson (LBJ), followed by a 24 hour vigil attracting 150 -200 people. On the evening of July 4 around 1,000 people attended a demonstration addressed by a panel of speakers drawn predominantly from the ALP, including Dr Jim Cairns MHR and Senator J. Keefe.²⁹ A statement presented to the consulate officials by Humphrey McQueen called on the US government to cease bombing and withdraw their troops.³⁰ There were four demands put by the demonstrators:

A complete withdrawal of American troops
A cessation of bombing
For the American Government to disengage from any alliances involving dictatorships
For the American Government to dismantle military installations which threatened the independence of other nations.³¹

²⁷ *The Age*, 5/7/66; *The Guardian*, 14/7/66.

²⁸ Michael Hyde, interview, 11/2/99.

²⁹ *Farrago*, 7/7/67.

³⁰ Humphrey McQueen had come down from Brisbane in August 1966 and was involved in both the VDC and YCAC. McQueen was at times close to the Monash Labour Club and was also involved in the establishment of the 'Rev Socs' as he sought a revolutionary vehicle outside of the existing Left parties and groups, Mansell K., *The Yeast is Red*, MA, Melbourne University, Parkville, 1994, p29.

After this the protesters marched off down St Kilda Rd to congregate at Assembly Hall. The CPA paper *Tribune* viewed this peaceful rally as the most effective protest yet against the war.³²

However, within the anti-Vietnam War movement, there were expressions of discontent from a number of demonstrators, in particular members of the Monash Labor Club. They had spent many hours preparing for the evening as well as mailing out fliers and advertising the demonstration. They had elaborate plans to sit down at the consulate entrance and burn a US flag.³³ However they were 'dissuaded' by CICD organisers from burning U.S flags. These organisers felt that this action would alienate public sympathy for the cause and lose the support of the ALP. There were threats to abandon the demonstration of the flag burning went ahead.³⁴ Monash Labor Club, having already established itself with the controversial Aid to the NLF campaign, and with clearly stated differences between themselves and other Left organisations, were endeavouring to play a vanguard role in setting the lead for radical actions. As one Club member recalled, "The realisation that traditional protests achieve bugger all was a powerful force in the mind of the NLF Aiders".³⁵ The period of traditional protests was now being challenged by more radical confrontationist approaches.

³¹ *Farrago*, *op cit*.

³² *Tribune*, 12/7/67.

³³ McQueen H., 'A Single Spark', *Arena* No.16, p52; Dave Nadel, interview, 11/12/98; *Tribune*, 12/7/67.

³⁴ Edwards P., *A Nation at War: Australian Politics, Society and Diplomacy during the Vietnam War 1965-1976*, Allen and Unwin, St Leonards NSW, 1997, p 170, Basset J. & Gerster R., *Seizures of Youth*, Hyland Press, Melbourne, 1991, p 227, Langer A., *Revolutionaries and the Moratorium*, Paper delivered at Sydney Anti-war Conference, February 1971, CICD collection, UMA.

³⁵ McQueen H., *op cit*, p52.

Albert Langer was scathingly critical of the established peace movement as he recalls their attitude towards the mooted flag burning of July 4 1967:

It seems incredible today that there were once passionate arguments about whether we should have demonstrations at all (it was said that public meetings and petitions would show we were responsible). It seems decades since a motion was carried at a fairly large meeting of anti war supporters to ban the carrying of NLF flags at the demonstration against KY, (with this motion being supported by some on the left "in order not to embarrass the ALP"). One laughs to think that on July 4 we stayed up all night for a 'vigil' outside the American consulate chatting with cops and HOLDING CANDLES and that Sam Goldbloom and CICD were then so much in control that he successfully prevented the left from burning a US flag (our own) by threatening to have us publicly denounced by the rest of the anti-war movement, physically prevented by volunteers, denied bail on arrest and generally run out of the movement! (The flag was saved up and burnt the following year in more auspicious circumstances!).³⁶

The 1967 July 4 demonstration was to be the last non-militant July 4 demonstration for the duration of the Vietnam War. The views expressed by Langer reflected a section of a newly emerging radical wing of the anti-Vietnam War movement, who were not restrained by a Cold War conservatism that had gripped the established, Australian anti-war movement. No longer was this day going to be conducted along the conventional approach of the established peace movement. The following years saw volatile, militant July 4 demonstrations, that marked a changing approach to how many people sought to express their opposition to events in Vietnam and the forces they considered responsible.

These views were to become more widely held within the movement as debate occurred about tactics and strategies for the direction the anti-Vietnam War movement was to take and how it would get there. The position of, simply, seeking an end to the conflict in Vietnam, and asking for Australia to disengage, were being challenged by more radical analysis of the war as a reflection of broader political factors, such as monopoly capitalism and the role of US imperialism. For the radical groups in the

³⁶ Langer A., op cit.

peace movement, who regarded acknowledging US imperialism as the enemy, and who supported the NLF and the forces of North Vietnam implicitly meant opposition to Australian military and political involvement in Vietnam. For many in the peace movement this was a step into the unknown, and fraught with danger. However it was one that would loom high on the agenda in 1968.

1967 IN HINDSIGHT

In Victoria the influence of the newer radical groups had begun to be felt in 1967. Those who had hoped for an ALP Federal electoral victory in 1966 as being the way forward in the struggle against the War in Vietnam entered 1967 with feelings of disillusionment and unsure of where the struggle would go. But 1967 also contained some of the seeds that would blossom into a larger and more radical opposition in 1968, though it is unlikely whether many could go have foreseen the dramatic events that were to come.

The Aid to the NLF campaign had started to shift the boundaries of both debate and practical support to the left. No longer was it simply a question of wishing to stop the war and its attendant horrors, but people were now openly siding with the NLF. Public identification with the 'enemy' in this undeclared war could be perceived as treason, but it also gave radicals a tangible goal to struggle around. It was not a question of wishing simply for a peaceful resolution to the conflict: it was now about supporting one side over the other.

Though the efforts to make the July 4 demonstration a radical display of anti-imperialism had been thwarted, the signs were there that the opposition to the war was entering a new phase, one that would leave an indelible mark on the Australian political landscape. July 4 demonstrations from this point on became an activity where the more radical opponents of the war in Vietnam could express their anger and disgust at those whom they saw as perpetrators of the conflict. Anti-imperialism was now to gain a radical, expressive edge.

As well as a revitalised anti-Vietnam War movement, the forces opposed to conscripting young men for overseas service were able to resurrect themselves, and start to rebuild. SOS, in particular, remained strong. Despite the demise of YCAC after the 1966 Federal election, anti-conscription activists were able to build a new and reinvigorated anti-conscription campaign in the following year.

As 1967 drew to a close a revitalised movement emerged. It flared into life in 1968, with a new momentum and radicalism that challenged a movement that had become complacent in its ways of operating. No longer would peaceful marches, petitions and pleas to the Government suffice: confrontation as much as negotiation would become part of the agenda.

A NEW YEAR, 1968

1968 saw an upsurge in radicalism around the world. The year began with the January North Vietnamese/NLF Tet offensive, in which previously safe American installations in Vietnam were attacked and the whole American military presence in Vietnam

threatened. The same year also saw race riots in parts of the United States as Black Americans protested against the endemic racism confronting them. There was the mass action of students and workers in Paris in May 1968 that saw the De Gaulle Government almost toppled and enormous upheavals in French society. There was the 'Prague Spring' democratic movement in Czechoslovakia. In Socialist China the Greater Proletarian Cultural Revolution continued. In Melbourne there was a new vigour and militancy in the anti-Vietnam War movement. This was perhaps best exemplified by the July 4 demonstration of that year.

The air of despair, which was apparent after the result of the 1966 Federal election rapidly began to evaporate. The emergence of a newer more radical anti-Vietnam War grouping of opponents of the war created major pressures for changed approaches within the established anti-Vietnam War movement. The leftward pressure created by the Aid to the NLF campaign was to gather momentum and influence. The streets became the forum where change would occur.

As the fear of making overt challenges to authority, faded away, a new confidence arose. The established anti-war movement was to find itself not just under attack from the forces of the right but from the left as well. The events of July 4 1968 were to dramatically highlight the changes that the movement was experiencing.

JULY 4 1968

In the lead up to the July 4 1968 demonstration there appear to have been efforts made to ensure the demonstration would proceed smoothly and to discourage open expressions of militancy that might undermine the influence and direction of the official peace movement. Monash Labor Club members recall that pressure was placed on them before the demonstration to comply with the wishes of the organisers or face 'severe repercussions. These included threats of physical violence and withdrawal of the support by the official peace movement.³⁷

On a cold winter evening the demonstration started peacefully before erupting into clashes, arrests, claims and counter-claims. Demonstrators and police clashed in a manner unseen since the peak of the 1930's depression. The events of the night challenged the existing anti-war orthodoxy and saw a new struggle for ascendancy over the anti-Vietnam War movements' political direction.

Two days previously violence had erupted at an anti-war demonstration in Sydney organised by Sydney University Student's for a Democratic Society (SDS). At a meeting of Federal Cabinet at the Commonwealth Bank Building in Sydney's Martin Place a hundred demonstrators were arrested and a number of demonstrators injured. *Tribune* highlighted this clash stating:

The authorities themselves created an atmosphere of violence, intimidation and brutality 2 days before July 4 for which a peace movement protest had been scheduled in Melbourne.³⁸

These events were a harbinger of things to come.

³⁷ Michael Hyde, interview, 11/2/99 and Bob Muntz, interview, 14/12/98.

Another possible sign that this July 4 demonstration would be different and more radical than previous years was an episode that occurred earlier in the day at the Southern Cross Hotel, where the Federal opposition leader was addressed a meeting of the Australia America Association. In the audience was Dave Rubin, a waterside worker, and member of the CPA and well-known anti-war activist. He had arrived uninvited to the function and was unimpressed at what Whitlam had to say.³⁹ "As far as I was concerned the ALP was supporting the intervention in Vietnam. Whitlam was talking at the Southern Cross and I got in and he was talking about the role of the Americans and I objected, then all the bouncers came along and I was eventually ejected."⁴⁰ Rubin then made his way to the US consulate where he became a key player in the nights' events, was arrested, and subsequently faced a trial on a number of serious charges.

As in the previous year a petition was presented to a consulate official. The two Melbourne University students delivering the petition, Ian McIvor and Harry Van Moorst, were promised a response in the mail. As a backdrop, demonstrators formed lines, chanted, waved NLF flags and were addressed by radical speakers using megaphones.⁴¹ Yet expectations of a response to the petition became the last thing on people's minds as demonstrators and police clashed angrily.⁴²

³⁸ *Tribune*, 3/7/68 Though one must be clear authorities in Sydney and Melbourne were not one and the same. This does not discount the possibility of discussion of what tactics would be used to intimidate the demonstrators.

³⁹ *The Sun*, 5/7/68, also refer to Mendes P., *The New Left, The Jews and The Vietnam War 1965-1972* Lazarre Press, North Caulfield, 1993, p135

⁴⁰ Dave Rubin, interview, 27/12/99.

⁴¹ Hyde M., quoted in Langley G., *op cit*, p 97.

⁴² Mansell K., 1994, alludes to a police get tough approach as directed by the Government, *op cit*, p 49.

The catalyst for the conflict was the burning of a US flag and the efforts of the police to seek out and apprehend those responsible. From here the march resembled a pitched battle, as demonstrators went beyond symbolic actions and directly attacked the consulate, pelting rocks through the windows and unleashing smoke bombs. All of this occurred to the chants of, 'LBJ how many babies did you kill today' and '1,2,3,4,the NLF will win the war'.⁴³

March organisers found events beyond their control, exhorting demonstrators to leave in an orderly fashion and follow the pre arranged march route. One of the rally organisers, Max Teichman, sought negotiations with police and even went as far as appealing to the demonstrators from a police vehicle as he sought to regain control. Yet Teichman's pleas fell on unsympathetic ears. There was a growing anger as St. Kilda and its surrounds became filled with charging police horses and stone throwing militants who were determined to maintain a presence outside the consulate. For more than an hour the demonstrators clashed with police. Some concerned demonstrators approached the Reverend David Pope, the Secretary of the VCC, who acknowledged he could not regain control of events.⁴⁴ The police showed little reluctance to restrain themselves as they charged after demonstrators, inspired by the rallying cry of 'give it back to them'.⁴⁵ Eventually there were 45 arrests, 14 of whom were charged with rioting. The Victorian Premier Henry Bolte declared that charges would be laid under the Riot Act.

Reactions to events that evening showed growing differences within the movement.

One demonstrator recalled, "You had a crowd that was sharply divided. At least one

⁴³ Hyde M., quoted in Langley, G, *op cit*, p 97.

⁴⁴ Fricke M., quoted in Langley, G., *op cit*, p 98.

half was very angry with the other half who wished to wreck their peaceful demonstration by rocking [throwing rocks] the consulate".⁴⁶ For stalwarts of the established peace movement such as Dorothy and Les Dalton, the events of the evening came as a shock to them and many of their colleagues. "It sent shock waves through many of the older people, that type of demonstration was somewhat different".⁴⁷ The earlier schism that had been opened up by the Aid to the NLF Campaign now widened even further. Left response ranged from unequivocal support to outright condemnation.

The editorial in the Communist Party of Australia Marxist-Leninist (CPAML) paper *Vanguard* made it clear that the violence was initiated by the State, emphasising the links between the incidents in Sydney and Melbourne. The perceived police tactics in Sydney were in their opinion counterproductive, making opponents of the war more determined in their opposition. They were also critical of members of the established peace movement, attacking them as revisionists.

The Revisionists who were there were panic-stricken. One of their leaders rushed into a police cart that was equipped with amplifiers and loud speakers. He pleaded over the police microphone with the demonstrators to cease their resistance to police violence and join in the peaceful march to the city. Some of the demonstrators called back: "We are not taking our instructions from the police or those who work with them." The Revisionists were isolated. Their little group was pathetic. They stood aside from the real struggle and co-operated with the police with the police. This was the reality of the situation. What a lesson this was. The role of the revisionists was fully exposed. When the chips are down they rush to the side of U.S imperialism and their job-so plain to see in action-is to steer the peoples protest movement away from US imperialism.⁴⁸

⁴⁵ *Lots wife*, 10/7/68.

⁴⁶ Bob Muntz, interview, 14/12/98.

⁴⁷ Les and Dorothy Dalton, interview, 16/4/99.

⁴⁸ *Vanguard*, 11/7/68.

Much of the simplistic and dogmatic criticism could be interpreted as a point-scoring episode related to the CPA/CPAML split. However the fact that *Vanguard*, as the mouthpiece of the CPAML made these criticisms and was supportive of a militant demonstration, was seen as a way to recruit new young activists. As one young CPAML member said: "July 4 crystallised differences in the movement, for example the role of the marshals to keep the crowd under control. We expected the backlash from Sam Goldbloom, but we just ignored it as they lost the plot at that point".⁴⁹ This growing confidence amongst the radicals would give them more impetus for future challenges.

The CPA writings were also critical of the police but were more circumspect in their response. The first copy of *Tribune* after the event focused on the high level of police violence without any undue criticism of the tactics employed by the demonstrators. The front-page headline of "Police Celebrate July 4 " focused on the police approach. Regardless of the violence the paper was supportive of the positive impact of the rally.⁵⁰ For Bernie Taft the night was a divisive one and its implications for the movement were negative. "I thought it was a mistake to throw stones as it allowed the police to move us on".⁵¹ Taft's concerns can be seen as reflective of a leadership that was not just being challenged but placed in an unaccustomed situation. The imposed docility that had been apparent throughout the Cold War was now disappearing as a new group of activists saw confrontation as a way of getting results.

⁴⁹ Kerrie Miller, interview, 2/2/99.

⁵⁰ *Tribune* 10/7/68.

⁵¹ Bernie Taft, interview, 18/2/99.

Within the ALP a number of views were presented. The party paper *Fact* printed a statement by the state executive supporting the demonstrators against those politicians critical of them.⁵² It is not clear if this included Dr. Cairns who was clearly uneasy about the student militancy and the violence on the day. He addressed members of Monash Labour Club and suggested student protests were useless, urging students to utilise politics to achieve social change, for example, by joining an existing parliamentary political party. According to Cairns at the time, "Nothing can be gained by boycotting politics in the belief, protests, demonstrations and civil disobedience can do the job and politics can't".⁵³

Fact printed a letter from the VCC Secretary, the Rev. David Pope, who considered that the demonstration had shown new levels of dynamism and militancy and was clear that the V.C.C. congratulated the demonstrators. He went on to state, "the history of the Vietnam Peace movement has been a history of police violence against protestors."⁵⁴ Some members of the Young Labor Association (YLA) at the time such as Kevin Healy expressed a similar view. "The ALP, especially those involved in it (the demonstration) condemned the coppers very strongly."⁵⁵ Yet there were other A.L.P. members who were publicly quite critical of the events of the night.

One, A. Quinlan of Oakleigh in a letter printed in *Fact* claimed that the actions of the night alienated many people and rendered previous anti-Vietnam War demonstrations ineffectual.⁵⁶

⁵² *Fact*, 12/7/68.

⁵³ *The Age*, 6/7/68 Cairns also addressed students at Melbourne University around this time with similar views. Michael Hamel-Green, interview, 10/4/99.

⁵⁴ *Fact*, 16/8/68.

⁵⁵ Kevin Healy, interview, 20/12/98.

⁵⁶ *Fact*, 30/8/68.

Amongst student publications there were mixed views of the night. There were "recriminations in the student publications [about] the tactical merits of staging such a violent demonstration".⁵⁷ Leading student New Left figures such as Richard Gordon and Warren Osmond were critical of the direction the demonstration took and turned their venom on the militants. Gordon exonerated the police arguing that, "The cops apart from the cavalry charge were marvelously restrained".⁵⁸ He accused Monash Labor Club as the major instigator of the violence, alleging that student activists were armed with marbles, smoke bombs and razor blades. He deemed their militant tactics counterproductive and suggested that their prime aims were to elevate themselves to a leadership role whilst pouring scorn on others in the left, deriding them as left liberals and revisionists. Gordon goes on to say, "it is important to realise that the tactics of those who organised violence have more to do with sheer political bravado than serious political activity".⁵⁹

Osmond also claimed the occurrences on July 4 caused confusion and splits within the peace movement, drawing comparisons with the peaceful and passive Abschol rally, which he found a more viable way of putting across a position. In his conclusion he speaks vaguely of concepts where informed groups of students and similar minded people change themselves radically as a springboard to radical social change. Like Gordon he considered the actions of the militants counter productive, and argued that this situation should never arise again, as it hardened opposition to both students and the anti-Vietnam War movement. He also offered tacit support to the police response, praising their action.⁶⁰

⁵⁷Bob Muntz, interview, 14/12/98.

⁵⁸ *Farrago* 12/7/68.

⁵⁹ *ibid.*

⁶⁰ *The Age*, 6/7/68.

At Melbourne University there were similar concerns at how the evening had unraveled and its impact on the direction of the movement. For members of the Melbourne University Pacifist Society, such as Fran Newell, the actions were counter-productive, as the violence and damage to property was likely to alienate many people. In a situation where the aim was to win over the largest possible public support, this was not seen as an appropriate approach.⁶¹ However, the society was not a homogeneous body. Some members were involved in dousing the U.S flag with blood, and then symbolically trying to clean it.⁶² Whilst this behaviour was certainly challenging, it did not constitute a physical threat to any person or to property. For other members, like Harry Van Moorst, there were somewhat mixed views of the evening.

This is not to say that I am blaming the police for the violence on Thursday night, but neither I am laying the blame on the students. Rather I think the blame lies in the attitudes and actions caused by the lack of experience and understanding of the behaviour of a large demonstration.⁶³

He went on to suggest, "The line must be flexible to a certain extent because if it is not then the police will be playing into the hands of any demonstrators wishing to cause a riot."⁶⁴ This was followed up by a letter sent to both State and Federal politicians in which Van Moorst stressed the need for police to communicate with demonstration organisers and to cease the use of police horses being used as an offensive weapon against demonstrators.⁶⁵ This more complex position of being

⁶¹ Fran Newell, interview, 15/4/99.

⁶² Van Moorst H., *Street Level Opposition :the Vietnam Moratorium Campaign*, unpublished, Werribee, 1973.

⁶³ *Inscape*, Undated July- August 1968 Ralph and Dorothy Gibson Collection UMA.

⁶⁴ *Inscape*, *ibid*.

⁶⁵ *The Age*, 10/7/68.

critical of the police role as well as being concerned at the tactics of some demonstrators also influenced the Melbourne University Labor Club's position.

The Melbourne University Labor Club was sharply divided over the demonstration. There had been debates about whether the club should play the role of a socialist education strategist or be actively involved in radical actions. Initially the club was divided into two camps over whether or not to support the demonstration, with members such as Stuart McIntyre and Kelvin Rowley opposing the demonstration, arguing that radical, confrontationist demonstrations achieve nothing. Counterpoised to this viewpoint were people such as Michael Hamel-Green and Arnold Zable, who whilst not being in agreement with the violence towards both people and property, were prepared to accept militant demonstrations but not actions which hindered the development of the movement. The club had an ambivalent attitude to support for the nights actions.⁶⁶

As the ramifications of the night circulated, debate and division ensued within the club. Club President, Michael Hamel-Green, was dissatisfied with the events of the night, critical of other young radicals. One of those targeted was Michael Hyde who he criticised for alleging that leaders of the anti-Vietnam War movement were showing their true colours by co-operating with the police seeking to restrain the demonstrators. "For Michael Hyde co-operation with the police and negotiations with them amount almost to treason for the anti war movement."⁶⁷ The Club then followed this up with a narrowly adopted motion (34/27) condemning Government policy in

⁶⁶ Harry Van Moorst, interview, 19/3/99.

⁶⁷ *Shop*, Vol 3, No 13, 16/7/68.

Vietnam and seeking to discourage political violence except as defence from an unjustified attack.⁶⁸

For the established peace movement, their hegemony was threatened and they required a reflection on where they saw the movement heading. CICD, whilst being publicly restrained in its criticism, was determined to ensure future demonstrations with which it was involved did not finish up as violent clashes with the police.⁶⁹

Ramifications from the night continued to be felt for the rest of the year and well into 1969, with the trial of Albert Langer on riot charges appearing to cause further divisions between Monash Labour Club and sections of the established Left. Langer was to be tried with Dave Rubin who faced 14 offences including malicious wounding of a police officer and riotous assembly.⁷⁰ Rubin had allegedly arrived at the demonstration in possession of scalpel blades, with the object of cutting down the US flag and in the process of performing this deed he allegedly injured a policeman with a blade.⁷¹

Both appeared in Prahran Court on July 30 and were committed to trial that December. The serious charges that had been laid had strong implications for both men and the anti-Vietnam War movement. Langer had been charged with rioting, inciting a riot and obstructing a police officer. Langer sought a political trial to highlight the issues involved as he felt this would allow him to represent himself and ask political questions a lawyer would feel restrained to ask. This approach posed

⁶⁸ *ibid.*

⁶⁹ CICD Executive Committee Minutes, 24/7/68 CICD collection UMA.

⁷⁰ *The Age*, 4/12/68.

problems for Rubin who faced possible deportation if he was sentenced to two or more years imprisonment.

The stakes were different, Albert's was just a trial. My trial, if I was found guilty [would mean I would be]I'm deported because I had been refused naturalisation since I had been here and if I got two years, according to the law I would be automatically expelled from Australia. I also had a family, Albert was single, the stakes were different.⁷²

Despite apparent pressure from a number of trade unions and key figures in the anti-Vietnam War movement, Langer decided to represent himself. The first trial in December 1968 was aborted after the Judge discovered a policeman had been in conversation with the jury. This resulted in a retrial in 1969.⁷³ None the less the fact Langer went down this path led some to claim that his approach caused acrimony in the movement, with sections of the WWF critical that Langers' approach divided anti-Vietnam War forces.⁷⁴

Following on from the Aid to the NLF campaign, the July 4 events further established the salience of a newer and more militant presence in the movement. For the established peace movement this was further proof that the student groupings could not be trusted and that their actions would undermine the established organisations. Amongst the students and the newer groupings there were differences as some sections clearly felt uncomfortable between the militancy of the Monash Labor Club and those who supported their tactics and strategies, whilst feeling isolated and constrained by the existing anti-war groups and the political agendas they served. The

⁷¹ Mendes P., *op cit*, p 135.

⁷² Dave Rubin, interview, 27/12/99.

⁷³ Mendes P., *op cit*, p 66.

⁷⁴ Dave Nadel, interview, 11/12/99.

movement in opposition to the war in Vietnam was moving in a leftward direction whether it had wanted to or not.

DOW CHEMICALS

A rally outside the Melbourne Office of Dow Chemicals in October also saw dramatic clashes between police and demonstrators. Dow was a major player in the production of chemical weapons, in particular napalm for use in Vietnam. Napalm is a flammable jelly made of aviation gasoline and a chemical compound, designed to stick to the victims' skin causing horrific burns. Dow was responsible for the production of 338,000 tons of napalm to be used in Vietnam.⁷⁵ As a result their Melbourne Office was targeted during three days of action commencing on October 25. A march down St. Kilda Rd to Dow's Office was followed by a rally. Before the action meetings were conducted between representatives of the VCC and the Assistant Commissioner for traffic with the Victoria police, M. Braybrook. An agreement was reached that would allow use of loudspeakers and a PA system. The police also guaranteed the marchers would be able to march down the service lane in St. Kilda Rd, placards, banners and flags would be burnt to symbolise the effect of napalm on Vietnamese civilians. The protestors would provide fire extinguishers and douse the flames accordingly.⁷⁶

When the march commenced in pouring rain, the agreement with the Victoria Police proved null and void. Banners and placards were torn off marchers and ripped up, the marchers were physically harassed and obstructed as they marched down the service lane, the PA system was cut off a number of times. Finally when the symbolic petrol

⁷⁵ Langley G., *op cit*, p 80.

doused dummy had been lit, members of the Fire Brigade turned their hoses on both the blazing dummy and all those who stood near by. Arrests were made and the 1,000 marchers in attendance might well have felt that Assistant Commissioner Braybrook's alleged 'agreement' was little more than a tactic to disarm them. The words of Braybrook's superior, Police Commissioner Arnold, promising tough policies against demonstrators, were more reflective of how the police viewed the demonstrators.⁷⁷ One of those present Michael Leunig, felt that the police tactics were intentional and led to a response from demonstrators. " The police started the whole thing, and it was clearly an experiment to see what tactics to use on the protesters".⁷⁸ It seemed that the police were determined to be as brutal and heavy handed as possible.

Not long after the events of that night Albert Langer, writing in *Vietnam Protest News* commented that a definite division had arisen between what he deemed the moderates and the militants.⁷⁹ The former were the established organisations, the latter were the newly arrived groupings such as Monash Labor Club. Langer emphasised that the differences were of a political nature, but also acknowledged that there were generational differences, amongst the movement, claiming that the majority of young activists were drawn to the more militant positions.⁸⁰

⁷⁶ *Tribune*, 6/11/68.

⁷⁷ *Tribune*, 30/10/68.

⁷⁸ Leunig M., quoted in Langley, *op cit*, p 79.

⁷⁹ *Vietnam Protest News*, was the newsletter of the Vietnam Coordinating Committee.

⁸⁰ *Vietnam Protest News*, No 19 December 1968, pp 4 -7.

CONCLUSION

The events of 1968 saw significant developments in the opposition to the Vietnam War. The newer radical groupings were not just opposing the established movement, but were actually taking the initiative and seeking to move the movement further to the left in an effort to challenge both the pro-war forces and the system which benefited from the war.

These groupings were not homogeneous. Some were very clear on both their political agendas as well as in their practice, whilst others were more eclectic. Though they could often be critical of each other, they were able to unite in practice in militant actions that had not been attempted since the 1930's depression. No longer was it simply a question of peaceful marches and petitioning; the use of civil disobedience and attacks upon property were now in vogue amongst the new radicals.

Differences emerged between the Monash Labor Club and Melbourne University Labor Club over the nature of the Aid to the NLF campaign. These differences also appeared in tactics over demonstrations. Monash appeared more confrontationist, more willing to respond to state violence with self- defence, as well as being willing to physically attack buildings that represented the 'enemy.' Melbourne University students, and their respective organisations, were inclined to use non-violent approaches including civil disobedience in their tactics. Fran Newell expresses these differences in the following terms.

There was a three way schism between the CICD approach... the Maoist , Monash Labour Club, type approach, and quite seperately as far as I'm concerned, the civil disobedience type

groups. The beauty of civil disobedience is that you can support people at all different levels, it does not limit your approach.⁸¹

The established groups were caught off guard by these actions and were now going to have to decide what their relationship with these groups would be. Did they work in a co-operative manner, did they try to win over these new forces or did they seek to exclude them totally? All of these were questions that would need to be answered in the near future. The war in Vietnam continued unabated, and how opponents of the war responded would be of pivotal importance.

The next chapter will look at the period covering the years 1969-1970. During these years the movement found itself gaining in terms of both support and influence. The newer more radical groupings found themselves also growing in terms of support and influence. How the relationship developed and the direction that the movement took are examined in the next chapter.

⁸¹ Fran Newell, interview, 15/4/99.

CHAPTER 5

CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE AND THE NEW MILITANCY

1969-1970

INTRODUCTION

Throughout 1969 and 1970 opposition to the war in Vietnam grew stronger and more strident. During the same period, the movement saw continuing clashes between the established Left and their newer counterparts, over tactics and strategies.

With the events of 1968 still fresh in people's minds the following two years saw the newer groupings continue their efforts to move opposition to the war and conscription further to the left. The established groups could not ignore their presence or influence, and despite attempts to exclude them, were forced to work together, with the new groups.

The start of 1969 saw the continuation of the 'Don't Register' campaign initiated by Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) and the Draft Resisters Movement (DRM) as part of the anti-conscription struggle. This had commenced late in 1968 coinciding with the Federal Governments' registration period for young men to comply with the National Service Act (NSA). (For more details refer to chapter 7 on conscription) As a result of this they found themselves involved in a campaign to challenge a previously

dormant Melbourne City Council (MCC) by law, By-Law 418, that was revived to limit anti-Vietnam War and anti-conscription activists from publicly stating their case on the streets of Melbourne. During the same campaign there were also selective arrests under the Crimes Act carrying the prospect of twelve months jail for inciting young men not to register, combined with more numerous arrests under the provisions of the By-Law. A groundswell of support rapidly developed into a struggle where civil disobedience was used successfully against the legislation designed to stifle free speech.

The October 25 1969 Federal election saw the Australian Labor Party (ALP), led by Gough Whitlam, regain much of the ground lost in 1966. Pressured by the growing influence of the anti-Vietnam War movement, Whitlam campaigned on the theme that there would be no Australian troops left in Vietnam after June 1970, and that conscription would be ended if the ALP was elected.¹ Other Federal ALP parliamentarians were even more explicit in their stance with former leader, Arthur Calwell, calling for all Australian troops to be home by Christmas 1969.² Although the ALP failed to gain the 9% swing required to win the election it gained a swing of nearly 7%.

The 1969 July 4 demonstration involved participants expressing a range of viewpoints from the demand that all American troops leave Vietnam, to positions that were more explicitly against pitched in opposition to US imperialism. These continued to highlight differences within the movement. The fallout from the 1968 July 4 demonstration continued with the trials of Monash radical, Albert Langer, and

¹ Langley G., *A Decade of Dissent*, Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 1992, p 125.

² *Age*, 18/10/69.

waterside worker, Dave Rubin. Both trials were handled differently and political differences manifested themselves. The July 4 1969 action was conducted in a manner very similar to the previous year, involving militant attacks on property and violent clashes with the police, further alienating the more moderate members of the movement. Congress for International Cooperation and Disarmament (CICD) had approached the day with concerns, fearful of a repeat of the previous year. As it turned out, CICD was yet again unable to control or direct the events of that day.

The 1970 July 4 demonstration saw further divisions in the movement as debates and arguments occurred over when and how to hold the now annual demonstration. Splits occurred not just between the new and established groups, but also within the ranks of the newer groups.

In contrast to the militancy and radicalism of the July 4 demonstrations, the CICD March of the Dead, conducted in late 1969, involved a peaceful march, though provocative in that placards bearing the names of troops killed in Vietnam were displayed. This drew as much negative publicity as demonstrations organised by their newer, more radical counterparts.

Around the same time the disclosure of the My Lai massacre added further to the anti war cause. Though it had taken place in 1968 it was covered up and only in late 1969 did the world learn of the massacre of innocent Vietnamese civilians at the hands of American troops.

BY-LAW 418

From late 1968 individuals and members of a number of groups opposed to conscription for overseas service and opposed to the war had been handing out leaflets in front of the Melbourne General Post Office, an action that was to lead to an increased conflict with the state.³ As well as being in breach of the Crimes Act, for which twelve months' jail was the maximum term for incitement, they also breached one of the MCC's by-laws. The MCC decided to initiate prosecutions using By-Law 418. This law had been on the statute books for almost a century and was designed to stop the distribution of leaflets not authorised by the council. However it had lain dormant and was now being revived to prosecute anti-Vietnam War and anti-conscription demonstrators. It appears to have first surfaced on July 17 1968 when two members of Save Our Sons (SOS), Jean McLean and Jo MacLaine Cross, were charged as they handed out leaflets urging non-compliance with the National Service Act. This was during a joint SOS and DRM protest outside Victoria Barracks, aimed at blocking a new intake of arriving recruits.⁴

Subsequently proceedings were begun against McLean, who was represented by Peter Redlich QC. Redlich argued that McLean had a right of freedom of expression and opinion under Article 19 of the United Nation's Convention on Human Rights. The

³ Some of the groups involved were DRM, SDS and SOS.

⁴ *SOS Movement of Victoria Newsletter*, No. 31 Aug. 1968.

case was eventually dismissed on a technicality⁵; but gave a warning of things to come in terms of how the Council would act.⁶

By-Law 418 was designed to restrict and hinder the rights of people to hand out leaflets. For some participants the arrests of people handing out anti-Vietnam War and anti-conscription material helped draw links between the political persecution in Vietnam as well as in Australia. The launch of the SDS and DRM Don't Register campaign on December 28 1968 was designed to coincide with the January – February Conscription Registration period. The MCC's use of By-Law 418 provided the spur for a campaign of civil disobedience around civil rights issues. Such was the level of support generated that following the initial spate of arrests, over 500 people gathered on the steps of the Melbourne Post Office on the first Saturday in 1969 to engage in civil disobedience by handing out 'Don't Register' pamphlets.⁷

SDS played a pivotal role in the campaign. As well as being actively involved in a campaign of civil disobedience, it sought negotiations with the MCC, to which the MCC was not willing to respond. It had requested that the MCC receive delegations and be prepared to answer questions from concerned citizens, as well as calling for a MCC vote on the by law at a meeting at which any resident of Melbourne was able to attend and speak on the issue.⁸

⁵ *SOS Movement of Victoria Newsletter*, No.32 Sep.1968.

⁶ *ibid*, Armstrong P., *A History of Save our Sons Movement of Victoria, 1965-1973*, MA, Monash University, Clayton, 1991 p 96.

⁷ Hamel-Green M., 'The Resisters: a history of the anti-conscription movement 1964-1972', in King P.(ed), *Australia's Vietnam*, Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 1983, p 114.

⁸ Open Letter from SDS to City of Melbourne 18/2/69; Ralph and Dorothy Gibson collection UMA.

A combination of police arrests using the provisions of the Crimes Act and the use of MCC Parking officers to enforce the by-law saw over 100 arrests by early March 1969.⁹ Yet there appears to have been a selective approach followed as to who was arrested. Some students, especially those, who were prominent activists, were charged under the more serious provisions of the Crimes Act. Other protesters, such as some trade union officials, had their names taken and were warned but not arrested. There was less discrimination in the use of the by law, with a large number of students, anti-conscriptionists, SOS members and members of Parliament, including Dr. Jim Cairns, arrested. As a way of monitoring these actions, a prominent union official, Laurie Carmichael, brought along his tape recorder to tape police and council statements to protesters whom they were either arresting or warning. He also made it clear that there would be ongoing trade union support for students in anti-Vietnam War and anti-conscription activities.¹⁰ Of those arrested under the by-law many chose to go to jail to expose the unjust law and put further pressure on the council to repeal it. On weekends people rallied outside Melbourne GPO and would hand out leaflets in defiance of the by-law.¹¹

Further demonstrations and arrests continued throughout March. Students from Melbourne University, Monash University and Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology organised a demonstration of over 1,000 students and workers on March 25, with active assistance from the 'Rebel Unions'.¹² SDS members and their supporters sought to have a delegation meet with the Acting Town Clerk, M. Herd, on

⁹ Hamel-Green M., in King P,(ed), *op cit*, p 114.

¹⁰ *Age*, 17/2/69.

¹¹ *Herald*, 6/3/69.

¹² *Age*, 26/3/69.

March 31; however, this failed to influence the MCC to repeal the by-law.¹³ SDS then, with the support of the 'Rebel Unions', sought to threaten the mayor's commercial interests.

The Chairperson of the MCC General Purposes Committee, which had the authority to repeal the bill, was Sir Maurice Nathan. He had initially made it clear he was not concerned with who or how many would be arrested and he would not repeal the by-law. Nathan was one of the conservative Civic Group councilors who represented the interests of local big business, and was a director of Courage Brewery. The 'Rebel Unions' took steps to put pressure on the MCC. This included banning transportation of Courage Beer and urging their members to support a SDS proposal to boycott consumer items that could be linked to members of the Civic Group, particularly Nathan and his Courage Beer. The unions distributed leaflets headed "Boycott Courage Beer- the Health Food of a Nathan."¹⁴ SDS similarly urged: "We are calling for a boycott of Courage Brewery and all other economic interests that Civic Group represents".¹⁵ Courage Brewery allegedly began to suffer losses, and some activists believed this additional pressure led to the English owners of Courage contacting Nathan to seek a resolution to the problem.¹⁶ On April 9, at a MCC General Purposes Committee meeting, the councilors repealed the bill.

Within the campaign to repeal By-Law 418 there were differences between sections of the newer Left groups. The differences were not so much over tactics as the

¹³ SDS Press Release, 30/3/69.

¹⁴ Michael Hamel- Green, interview, 10/4/99; Plowmasn D., 'Unions in Conflict: The Victorian Trades Hall Split 1967-1973', *Labour History* No 36. On p 59 of this article he refers to a letter from the 'Convenor' of the 'Rebel Unions' Ken Carr which discusses their accomplishments, one of which was their role in the By law 418 campaign.

¹⁵ SDS Press Release, 2/4/69.

ideology behind the struggle. SDS played a key role, assisted by the 'Rebel Unions' and SOS, and to a lesser degree, the Monash Labor Club and their supporters.

However the Monash Labor Club position was quite different to that of the other groups. A leaflet put out at a demonstration by the Monash Labor Club and their comrades at the Latrobe University Labor Club, stated, "We are not pacifists, we are not marching to salve our consciences and we are not terribly concerned about City council by laws. There were criticisms that, despite SDS seeking a peaceful demonstration, arrests still occurred and allegations of a meeting of students at Melbourne University voting the action was not militant enough".¹⁷ For the Monash Labor Club and those who supported their position the issue was to oppose repression, as they cited examples of the crisis facing capitalism. Their message was that defeat of the imperialists in Vietnam would lead to a further crisis in the system and that, axiomatically, dissent at home would be repressed. Thus it was imperative that revolutionaries be vigilant and fight the trend towards repression.

The role of Jim Cairns also saw differences of opinion. In a biography of Cairns his biographer Paul Ormonde argues that, "The outcome of the protest show[s] the importance of having a leading public figure such as Cairns in the vanguard. Without his leadership, the issue would never have attracted much public attention. His willingness to go to jail, if necessary, ensured that the case received nationwide publicity".¹⁸ Cairns played a key role as both spokesperson and activist. Along with twelve other protesters, Cairns was arrested on April 3 1969, for breaching the by –

¹⁶ McLean J., quoted in Langley G., *op cit*, p 114.

¹⁷ *Liberation*, 25/3/69 A flier put out by Latrobe and Monash University Labour Clubs and authorised by Michael Hyde. Refer also to *Lot's Wife*, 3/4/69. The alleged meeting that voted the action was not militant enough is a mystery. Participants have no recollection of this meeting ever occurring, casting doubt on these allegations. If a meeting of this nature did occur it would have seemed to be a very small clandestine meeting, not one involving a large amount of students.

law and was released without bail. He was told he would be charged by summons but that never eventuated. The twelve others arrested were charged with failing to provide their names when requested. They were all released on bail of \$2.00.¹⁹

The Revolutionary Socialists (RevSocs), however, criticised his role and his victory comments. To them Cairns had come into the struggle grandstanding and had taken it over. Cairns sought to portray the victory as a result of the conciliatory approach played by the councillors and insisted they should be lauded as reasonable men. He also insisted that it showed the effectiveness of the democratic system. In contrast to this position, the RevSoc's position was that it should be seen as a victory of principle and that access and control of the streets and free communication could be won by struggling against unjust laws.²⁰

The struggle to overturn this by-law saw an increasing confidence within the anti-Vietnam War forces. Though the issue was essentially a domestic one, it was in relation to curtailing anti-Vietnam War and anti-conscription activities that the by-law was utilised. In the ensuing struggle it was the younger radicals who played the front line role, initiating a campaign of civil disobedience, and eventually, with the support of the more established Left forces, achieved a repeal of this by-law. This helped set the tone for a more confident and radical year where anti-Vietnam War activists began to turn their movement to the Left and build a bigger, more radical movement.²¹

¹⁸ Ormonde P., *A Foolish Passionate Man. A Biography of Jim Cairns*, Penguin Books Australia, p 107.

¹⁹ *ibid*, pp 107-108, *Age*, 4/4/69; *Sun*, 4/4/69.

²⁰ *Half Baked*, 19/4/69.

LEFT ACTION CONFERENCE

The 1969 Left Action was organised by the Communist Party of Australia (CPA), as they sought to regain ground, in a period when the anti-Vietnam War movement was moving further to the Left. It had been first discussed at the Party's National Committee meeting held in November 1968, where the party looked at how it could make up lost ground and it was felt a conference, inviting members of the newer groups would be the most appropriate forum.²² Though the CPA appears the major driving force behind the conference there were also a number of non aligned activists sponsoring the conference. It was held in Sydney between April 4th and 7th 1969 and sought to bring together different Left groups.²³ In all 791 people were in attendance, including 187 from Victoria.²⁴ It was meant to help build the coalition of the Left that had been sought by the CPA, yet when invitations were sent out, a number of groups were excluded, amongst them the Monash Labor Club. Undaunted, members of the club attended, with the intention of engaging in ideological debate with political opponents. The end result was further distancing and differences within the Left, with some newer groups, predominantly Sydney and Brisbane based, finding themselves aligned with the CPA. Though CPA officials and members and other unaligned socialists sought to build links with those in attendance the position of Monash Labor Club and its supporters allowed no such alliances.²⁵ They had no desire to come

²¹ Echoes of this issue appear to have resurfaced in 2001 with demonstrators being threatened with breaching council by-laws, by council employees and police, whilst leafleting outside the Nike Store in Swanston St Melbourne. Refer the *Age*, May, and June 2001.

²² Robertson M., 'Conference for Left Action-Report to National Committee', *Discussion*, No2 July 1969, p39, quoted in O'Lincoln T., *Into The Mainstream: the Decline of Australian Communism*, Stained Wattle Press, Sydney, 1985, p 143.

²³ For example refer to Kirsner D. & Playford J., in 'Left Action Defended' in *Arena* No 19 1969.

²⁴ Mansell K., *The Yeast Is Red*, MA, Melbourne University, Parkville, 1994, p 82, in Freney D., *A Map of days*, William Henneman, Port Melbourne, 1991 he claims an attendance of 850, p 238.

²⁵ *Tribune*, 9/4/69.

under the influence of the CPA or build links with them. For them the conference was perceived as being part of a CPA strategy to gain broader control and influence²⁶.

As well as the radicals from Monash other more established groups were concerned that the conference was predominantly designed to promote the CPA's agenda and assist it in establishing a degree of control as well as recruiting new members. Marxist academics associated with the journal *Arena* expressed similar views and a series of sharp exchanges featured in *Arena* after the conference.²⁷

Ken Mansell suggests that, as splits occurred and organisations began to search for new allies, Monash Labour Club found itself splitting from other radical student groupings and drifting more and more towards the Communist Party of Australia Marxist-Leninist (CPAML).²⁸ The Monash radicals were being drawn into the orbit of this most radical and dogmatic of the existing parties.

In an article in *Lot's Wife*, after the conference, Albert Langer responded to criticisms that they had been too negative and wished to boycott the conference.²⁹ Langer denied that Monash had gone en bloc to stifle the conference and claimed. "I don't go along with the sophisticated analysis and humanitarian concern of New Leftists like Dan O' Neill, because I still believe in the necessity for a violent revolution to overthrow

²⁶ 'Left Action Conference, Monash Labour Club at the Conference', *Lots Wife*, 24/4/69. Though the CPA had not invited Monash Club to the conference and the fact that Monash Labor Club had departed the conference, even further divorced from the CPA and those that were supportive of the CPA it is interesting to note that at the conference the CPA first took a public stance in support of the NLF, a position taken by Monash and not publicly supported by the CPA almost two years previously. O' Lincoln, *op cit*, p 143.

²⁷ Some of the articles dedicated to this debate within *Arena* include: 'Shadows in the Long Reaches of the Bureaucracy', White D., *Arena*, No 18 1969; 'Left Action Defended', Kirsner D. & Playford J., *Arena* No 19 1969; and 'Reply', White D., *Arena* No 19 1969.

²⁸ Mansell K., 1994, *op cit*, p 82; *Vanguard*, 10/4/69.

²⁹ *Lots Wife*, *op cit*.

imperialism and establish socialism through class struggle".³⁰ The same edition of the student paper saw other Labor Club members, Jill Jolliffe and Keith Jepson, take a similar stance. They argued against the lack of Marxism displayed by some of those in attendance and the fact that no resolutions or motions could be spoken for or against or moved until the final day of the conference. Jolliffe and Jepson also attacked the CPA, accusing them of organising and manipulating the conference to its own ends, as shown by their initial desire to bypass the Maoist influenced groupings and focus on inviting individuals and groups they could 'work with', and possibly recruit into their ranks.³¹

The conference marked another watershed within the developing Left forces as the hard-line stance of the Monash radicals further distanced themselves, ideologically from their left colleagues. Though the conference attracted large attendance, and some New Leftists were recruited to the CPA, it showed that the CPA, even though it was selective in who it wished to build a coalition with, was required to engage in ideological debate; and did not always prove successful in convincing their opponents of the merits of the CPA's politics

LANGER AND RUBIN TRIALS

The ramifications from the July 4 1968 demonstration continued with the eventual trials of Albert Langer and Dave Rubin. As discussed in the previous chapter, on July 30 1968 they appeared at Prahran Court, Langer facing riot charges, Rubin wounding charges. They were committed to stand trial before a judge and jury in December

³⁰ *ibid.*

1968.³² However, this trial was annulled when it was discovered that a policeman had spoken to one of the jurors. On June 2 1969 the trial finally commenced with Langer and Rubin taking very different approaches.

Langer and his supporters intended to use the trial as a political event. Demonstrations had been organised, drawing attention to the trial and its political nature.³³ This position had been opposed by Rubin and his supporters and caused further acrimony within the anti-Vietnam War movement. Langer's decision to conduct his own defence at the trial saw him cross examine witnesses and attempt to impress the political nature of the trial on the presiding judge. Early in proceedings Langer sought to make his position crystal clear claiming, "This is not a legal trial but a political stunt and I refuse to plea".³⁴ In response Judge Forrest ordered a plea of not guilty be entered. Langer then proceeded to cross-examine the police and then upped the ante, seeking to subpoena the Victorian Chief Secretary, Sir Arthur Rylah. "If you convict me of riot you will be playing a new role because it will be the first time a jury has been used by a government".³⁵ Langer's rationale was that Rylah had made public comments after the demonstration calling for riot charges to be laid, and that this trial was taking place as a result of Rylah's statement. Eventually the jury, unable to reach agreements on riot charges, was dismissed, and a further trial was required.

At the third trial Langer was eventually found guilty of obstructing the police, with the more serious riot charges being dropped, but the jury made a plea for leniency in

³¹ *Lot's Wife*, 8/5/69.

³² Mansell K., 1994, *op cit*, p 49.

³³ *ibid*, p 81.

³⁴ *Tribune*, 11/6/69; *Lots Wife*, 26/6/69.

³⁵ *Tribune*, 25/6/69.

sentencing. After the handing down of the verdict Langer made a 70 minute political speech. The final judgement saw Langer fined \$150.³⁶

Early on in the process Rubin had requested a separate trial, as Langer had sought to make their trial an explicitly political one. Rubins request was granted, and both men were to appear seperately. Dave Nadel's recollection of the rationale behind this as being, "Albert wanted a political trial to ask questions that a lawyer could not ask and that is what happened. Albert raised the stakes so high he got a hung jury and got off. The fact he went ahead despite trade union pressure did not win warm and affectionate support from the trade unions".³⁷ There had developed a degree of antipathy between officials of the Waterside Workers Federation (WWF) towards Langer's desire for a political trial and also student involvement in a number of violent demonstrations. Some officials of the WWF felt that the radical students were trying to usurp the role of the trade unions as being a militant voice for working people.³⁸ Yet Rubin himself has quite a different recollection of events. As had been noted, the stakes were higher for him; the risk of deportation and having to leave his Australian born family meant he was less adventurous in the approach to the trial.³⁹ When Rubin's trial commenced he saw a stream of notable character witnesses

³⁶ *Herald*, 30/8/69.

³⁷ Dave Nadel, interview, 11/12/99.

³⁸ *Tribune*, 11/6/69; Mansell K., 1994, *op cit*, p37.

³⁹ It is interesting to note that Rubin was defended by Jack Lazarus a CPAML member. Despite the obvious antipathy between the CPA and the CPAML, this was not an absolute. Lazarus in defending Rubin was more cautious in his handling of the case than fellow Maoist Langer had been, and had advised Rubin the cases be conducted seperately, for the reasons already covered. In the words of Rubin, "Lazarus and I were personal friends, and we didn't have to talk about disagreements we had. When it comes to personal freedom I wasn't the main enemy, the main enemy was the state so Lazarus had no compunction in coming to defend me and I had no compunction in coming to him." Dave Rubin, interview, 27/12/99.

including Jim Cairns, Bill Hartley and Clive Holding all appear.⁴⁰ Rubin eventually received a fine of \$200 and a suspended sentence.⁴¹

JULY 4 1969

As a consequence of the previous year's July 4 demonstration concerns were expressed by sections of the established anti-Vietnam War movement, about the forthcoming July 4 demonstration. Though the Congress for International Cooperation and Disarmament (CICD) continued to work alongside the Vietnam Coordinating Committee (VCC) there were reservations about how to approach the demonstration. At CICD's executive meeting on April 30 it was moved;

We request from organisers of July 4 demonstration a clear outline of the programme, including details of action likely to arise following a forced change of plan. It was agreed that we urge our members to follow precisely those activities announced beforehand and not take part in unannounced activities. Also agreed that we urge the organisers of the demonstration to state precisely arrangements for the demonstration in the form of a widely distributed leaflet or some other similar publicity.⁴²

Their sense of trepidation for the night can be further seen from the following statement made at the executive meeting conducted on June the 4 and 6.

Following information that a prominent member of the Monash Labor Club had announced a plan at a recent Sydney Conference that the Monash Labor Club in its pre publicity announce its intention to support the concept of a pacifist demonstration on July 4 but at a later stage to transform it into a militant (violent) demonstration it was proposed that a newsletter indicate this information and that we ask VCC to announce its knowledge of this plan and to inform the participants not to be involved in it.⁴³

⁴⁰ *Age*, 12/8/69.

⁴¹ *Age*, 14/8/69; *Tribune*, 20/8/69; 27/8/69.

⁴² CICD Executive Minutes, 30/4/69, UMA.

⁴³ CICD Executive Minutes, 4 and 6/6/69, UMA. The identity of the Monash Labor Club person is not noted and the use of brackets () around the word violent are the way it was originally typed up.

The following week's executive meeting followed up this theme with a motion calling for Sam Goldbloom to support the stated VCC plan for the day and not to react to internal or external provocation.⁴⁴

For the VCC, the organising body, there were hopes of a crowd of up to 50,000 attending a demonstration. To ensure the event ran smoothly marshals' meetings were organised, with the aim of making sure that demonstrators did not play into the hands of the authorities by acting in a provocative manner. If groups or individuals sought to operate in a provocative manner, the rest of the demonstrators were required to follow the lead of the marshals.⁴⁵

The State Branch of the ALP was far less hesitant about what might occur on the evening. In their regular column in the *Sun* they confidently stated;

"Whatever happens blame will not lie with the demonstrators but may be firmly sheeted to far away Washington. The violence of Vietnam set's a precedent by the establishment of the United States and its followers in Australia." They went on to affirm, "The Australian Labour Party is the only party to vigorously oppose Australia's participation in the war in Vietnam and the foreign policy basis of that participation. The Australian Labour Party is the only political organisation in Australia to show any understanding of the phenomena of power and dissent".⁴⁶

As a preliminary to the demonstration, members of SOS held a vigil outside the consulate from 8.00 PM. the previous evening until 3.00 PM. on the day.⁴⁷ At the demonstration in Treasury Gardens a panel of speakers including former Federal Opposition Leader Arthur Calwell, Rod Quinn, WWF Official (and CPAML member)

⁴⁴ CICD Executive Minutes, 11/6/69 UMA.

⁴⁵ *Tribune*, 25/6/69.

⁴⁶ *Sun*, 2/7/69.

⁴⁷ Armstrong P., *op cit*, p 122.

Ted Bull, and Monash University Lecturer, Alan Roberts.⁴⁸ The crowd then marched down to the US Consulate. On a wet and cold Friday evening over 3,000 people attended the demonstration and again there were shades of 1968. Expecting violence, over 300 police were in attendance, and in the clashes that eventuated,⁴⁹ demonstrators and police fought pitched battles, and there were 44 arrests.⁵⁰ Monash Labor Club again appeared to be at the forefront of the militancy. In the words of one of those present,

I remember waiting for the Monash University bus, carrying Albert Langer and company. It was a violent demonstration. The police knew we meant business and were determined to break it up. A stack of marbles were thrown under the horses hooves and people were serious about burning the embassy down. One of the revolutionary students even booked a hotel room on the second floor of the Chevron Hotel, opposite the embassy. He communicated with people by walkie- talkie to try and direct the demonstration. It was a heavy demonstration but a good one in that it achieved headlines all over the world. People began to realise, particularly in the US, that Australians were not taking all this crap about, 'Waltzing Matilda with you.'⁵¹

Once again the control of the night's demonstration had been very much taken over by the radicals.

The CPAML were suitably impressed with the level of radicalism displayed, commenting in their paper *Vanguard*, on the 'Magnificent July 4 Demonstrations'. It talked about the growing tide of revolution and rebellion and the propensity of the ruling class to respond with violence. It considered this as teaching the Australian people an important lesson regarding class based politics, and attacked the role of the established peace groupings and their supporters. The latter were considered to be active participants in the implementation of state violence, as their tactical approach

⁴⁸ *Tribune*, 9/7/69.

⁴⁹ *ibid*, they allege the march was militant and orderly until set upon by police.

⁵⁰ *ibid*, give the crowd figures as 4,000. *Sun*, 5/7/69; *Age*, 5/7/69; *Lots Wife*, 10/7/69 .

⁵¹ Armstrong K., quoted in Langley G., *op cit*, p 116.

was designed to 'disarm' the struggles of the Australian people. "The revisionists, labour party leaders, pacifists, who cry 'peace', 'non resistance', etc, are really encouraging police violence', the article stated.⁵² For *Vanguard* the rest of the established Left constituted the enemy and needed to be opposed vigilantly.

Yet the revisionists so savagely lambasted in *Vanguard* were also critical of the police. Ralph Gibson writing in the CPA's *Tribune* considered the march to have been conducted in a spirited and orderly fashion until attacked by the police.⁵³ His CPA colleague, Max Ogden apportioned blame to both the police and to radicals, who were not named individually or organisationally. He alleges the police took the initiative, without any provocation. This was balanced with the statement, "The July 4 demonstration should be a good lesson to those few people who see such action as being simply an opportunity to provoke the police". Ogden then went on to raise the issue of tactics, such as sit-downs, forms of actions that will inconvenience people, and hopefully make them think about the political issues and raise their consciousness.⁵⁴

July 4 was now appearing as a 'cause de celebre' for the radicals especially those aligned with Monash Labor Club and the CPAML. Monash Labor Club and CPAML links were strengthening. For the established Left, the July 4 demonstrations were something they could no longer control and were seen to be in the hands of the radicals, who sought to turn the streets into an anti imperialist battleground.

⁵² *Vanguard*, 10/7/69.

⁵³ *Tribune*, 16/7/69.

⁵⁴ *Ibid*; Ogden is talking about tactics of civil disobedience without actually raising the term.

MARCH OF THE DEAD

In contrast to the militancy and subsequent violence of the July 4 demonstration, CICD were working toward a March of the Dead to be conducted in Melbourne on Saturday November 15.⁵⁵ They drew on an idea from the US where 46,000 protestors held a procession which ended with each of them depositing a coffin at the Capitol bearing either the name of a Vietnamese village destroyed or a US soldier killed in action. The CICD march would have marchers walking in single file bearing a placard with the name of an Australian servicemen killed in Vietnam. Whilst inherently peaceful in its nature it saw CICD take a more confrontationist approach. Though there were not the clashes with the state that seemed to have become a feature of demonstrations featuring their newer counterparts, the public display of the names of dead soldiers drew a hostile response from relatives of servicemen, conservative citizens and the media. Like their younger, New Left, counterparts they were trying more radical and provocative approaches to get the message across. Similar marches were planned in both Brisbane and Sydney.⁵⁶

Despite the fact that the march was to be conducted in an orderly and legal manner, there was a public backlash that it was in bad taste and death threats were made against some of the organisers. As a result of complaints by relatives of servicemen a total of 12 names were removed.⁵⁷ Such was the concern with this backlash that urgent last minute talks were conducted between Goldbloom and Cairns. Cairns had become distressed about the calls that he had received and the negative hostility whipped up in

⁵⁵ This march was also known within CICD as 'Mobilisation Day'. Refer to CICD executive minutes, 22/10 and 29/10/69 UMA.

⁵⁶ Saunders M., *The Vietnam Moratorium Movement in Australia 1969-1973*, PHD, Flinders University, Adelaide, 1975, p 21.

⁵⁷ *Age*, 14/11/69; Ormonde P., *op cit*, pp 114 - 115.

the media and felt the names should be deleted and black armbands worn instead. Finally Goldbloom convinced Cairns that to back down now would under mine both Cairn's role and the success of the march⁵⁸. A total of 325 demonstrators bearing names of those killed marched accompanied by over 1,000 others.⁵⁹ In reference to the struggle of anti-conscriptionists when the march eventually reached the City Square, Cairns and a number of other marchers oversaw the symbolic burning of the call up papers of three conscientious objectors.⁶⁰ Unlike the July 4 demonstrations this march was conducted in a peaceful, non-violent manner in line with the traditional peace approach. However, it was able to provoke a far more controversial response than other CICD peace marches, something that Saunders downplays. Whilst he states, "these demonstrations were dignified, even impressive affairs, their peacefulness meant they aroused only minimal publicity".⁶¹ This fails to acknowledge the reality that there was a degree of public affront and concerns about using the names of dead soldiers, actions far more radical than CICD had previously followed. Within CICD the rally and its buildup were viewed in a positive light. The Secretary's report for the 1969–1970 period noted, "When the plan was announced an enormous debate ensued and Dr. Cairns, who led the march, appeared on numerous radio and television programs to engage on debate on the issues".⁶² Whilst it was not as militant as the July 4 demonstrations it can be seen as a more radical-leftward move by CICD.

⁵⁸ *ibid*, p 115, this discussion was raised in an interview conducted between Goldbloom and Ormonde.

⁵⁹ Saunders M., 1975, *op cit*, p 21, *Age*, 17/11/69; *Australian*, 17/11/69.

⁶⁰ Ormonde P., *op cit*, p 115.

⁶¹ Saunders M., 1975, *op cit*, p 21.

⁶² Secretaries Report, CICD AGM, November 4 1970 UMA.

JULY 4 1970

Though the Moratoriums dominated most of 1970, differences within the anti-Vietnam War movement continued to manifest themselves in other forums. As has been discussed the two previous July 4 demonstrations with their high level of violence and militancy had caused differences within the movement. Again this was manifest in 1970 though the differences took on a different shape this time. July 4 was to fall on a Saturday and to substitute the Maoists wanted to hold the demonstration on the evening of Friday July 3.⁶³

At the July 4 Committee meeting on June 5 a narrow majority voted 91 to 87 that the demonstration be conducted on July 3, starting with a march from the Treasury Gardens to the US Consulate. The march on the Friday would mobilise more people coming from their workplace, rather than coming from their homes on a Saturday morning. The meeting also elected a 32-member executive that was given the task of promoting the demonstration. However, the result of the vote caused consternation amongst sections of the movement and a further meeting was held on June 18 as there was a push to alter the date and destination. In a leaflet circulated by the State Executive of the July 4 committee criticisms were made of the Monash students planning the meeting in advance and stacking it. The role of Ted Bull as chairperson was criticised, Bull being a CPAML member and favourable to the militant position.

For the CPA and others who were not Maoists there were allegations that he only allowed certain speakers, limited what debate there was, and chaired the meeting in a very parochial manner. There was the intimation that the agenda for the Friday demonstration was to seek a violent confrontation with the police as a way of revolutionising young people.⁶⁴

The subsequent meeting on June 18 saw the move to hold the march on the Saturday. The position put was that the demonstration commence outside the US Consulate at 10.00 am on July 4 and subsequently march down St. Kilda Rd and Swanston St to a destination to be chosen by those in attendance at the meeting.⁶⁵ The vote in favour of this was 243 – 168. At the same time the 32-member executive voted 22 – 10 to perform the task of promoting and supporting both demonstrations. The July 3 demonstration was to commence at 4.00 PM with a rally at Treasury Gardens and a march to the US consulate. The July 4 demonstration would assemble outside the US Consulate at 10.00 AM and would march to the American airlines, Pan Am, Melbourne office.

Not surprisingly the CPA played an active role in seeking to change the date and direction of the demonstration.⁶⁶ In the words of a Party organiser George Zangalis, "There has been a split on the left over this but it is not so much a political split as a split over what the nature of the demonstration should be".⁶⁷ The party mobilised large

⁶³ York B., *Student Revolt, Latrobe University 1967-1973*, Nicholas Press, Campbell, ACT, 1989, pp 92–93 characterises this as being a result of a leadership struggle between the CPA and CPAML. In light of most other information this seems a fairly accurate appraisal of events.

⁶⁴ This information is taken from a flier dated 30/6/70 put out by the State Executive of the July 4 Committee. It is held in the Ralph and Dorothy Gibson collection at the UMA.

⁶⁵ *Tribune*, 24/6/70.

⁶⁶ York B., 'The Australian Anti-Vietnam War Movement 1965–1973', *Melbourne Journal of Politics*, Vol 15, 1983-1984, p 35.

⁶⁷ *Sunday Observer*, 5/7/70.

numbers of members to ensure that they would have a strong presence at the June 18 meeting. Their concerns with the violence of previous demonstrations and the influence of the radicals, was quite obvious by this time. They viewed the push for the Friday night as being "motivated by a conscious seeking of confrontation with the police outside an empty consulate building".⁶⁸ CICD also supported the Saturday demonstration since it was fearful of the scenes of the previous two years and was possibly feeling threatened about its role in the movement. CICD was critical of how the first meeting was run and was supportive of the June 18 meeting and its direction.⁶⁹

Of interest is the role of SDS whose members and supporters expressed a number of diverse viewpoints in their *Catch 22* newsletters. Ted Poulton, Harry Van Moorst and Alan Walker all produced copies of the SDS flier *Catch 22* showing a diversity of views to the schism over July 3 versus July 4. Van Moorst outlines the rationale behind changing the demonstration from the Friday evening back to the Saturday. He outlines the case of those who wished to change the rally from Friday to the Saturday. Those who were arguing for the Friday rally are accused of wanting 'nothing more meaningful than a confrontation with the police outside an empty building;' adding that it will isolate the most militant section of the anti-Vietnam War movement; it would fail to mobilise workers; and due to the small attendance it would not provide an opportunity to raise issues of anti-imperialism to a wide number of people. In the end it would play into the hands of the police, who would outnumber the demonstrators and result simply in a clash that would not benefit the movement.⁷⁰

⁶⁸ *Tribune*, 17/6/70.

⁶⁹ *CICD Newsletter*, undated. Circa, June-July 1970.

Poulton is critical of the sectarianism with blame apportioned on one hand to the CPA who are accused of taking over the movement to cover their own impotency and the CICD. The Monash Labour Club is also criticised for their role in the schism. To Poulton the actions of organising two separate demonstrations can only split the movement and lead to Left Wing sectarianism.⁷¹

Alan Walker in *Catch 22* criticised the organisers and the intent behind the July 3 demonstration. In what was meant to be an anti-imperialist demonstration, he noted the lack of mention of the role of Australian imperialism and was critical of what appeared to be a symbolic action of marching to the US Consulate. He commented pointedly, “ the Friday demonstration,... does not set out to challenge the acceptance of imperialism which pervades Australian society. It focuses on the US diplomatic presence in Melbourne (the Consulate) , something which is remote from the everyday life of the community”.⁷² To Walker the demonstration by its symbolic nature will detract from building a revolutionary anti-imperialist movement. However he failed to elaborate why he considers that the Saturday demonstration could provide a better direction in that movement.

The viewpoints of those opposed to changing the date of the demonstration are covered in a copy of the Monash Labor Club journal, *Print*, released just after the June 18 meeting. They accused the CPA of stacking it, of bringing in members that were not involved in the movement and whose sole role was to be pawns of the party. The difference was not about organisational issues but about the politics behind the demonstrations. They considered that the CPA thought Saturday would bring a lower

⁷⁰ *Catch 22*, 16/6/70.

⁷¹ *Catch 22*, 3/7/70.

turnout of people and that the rigid adherence to a format for where the march would go was to play into the hands of the police, as it would allow them to control the destiny of the march. They were dismissive of the July 4 demonstration considering its impact would be minimal in terms of a radical anti-imperialist action.⁷³

The August edition of the Worker Student Alliance (WSA) journal *Struggle* adopts a similar line accusing the meeting of being stacked by the CPA and ALP with some support from the Centre for Democratic Action (CDA) and the Socialist Youth Alliance (SYA). They, however, qualify their position by alleging that the CPA was exposed as wreckers and that the bulk of militant youth had attended the Friday march, despite the best efforts of the CPA.⁷⁴

The official July 4 Committee's statements display the divisions within the organisation. A broadsheet authorised by Michael Hyde advertises and promotes both events, giving them equal prominence. Yet another broadsheet brought out by the Committee and authorised by a Victor Castle, promotes only the Saturday rally.⁷⁵ However an unauthorised flier attacks Hyde's decision to release the broadsheet claiming that it was released without any consultation with the committee and followed this with a press release, again without any discussion or consultation. The leaflet also claims an organisation called the 'Alliance Against Imperialism' made up of remnants of the VCC, were supportive of the push for the July 3 action, whilst also seeking to organise a boycott of the moratorium.⁷⁶ A leaflet put out by Chris Gaffney

⁷² *Catch 22*, undated.

⁷³ *Print*, 19/6/70.

⁷⁴ *Struggle*, August 1970.

⁷⁵ Both broadsheets are held in the Ralph and Dorothy Gibson collection at UMA.

⁷⁶ *July 4 Confront The People*, no authorisation, 6/70. This leaflet is held in the Ralph and Dorothy Gibson collection at the UMA.

on behalf of the July 4 Committee sought support for both demonstrations. But he closed the leaflet with a warning about the way meetings are treated, stating, "The issue is not whether Friday or Saturday will provide the most effective demonstration, but whether open general meetings are to control the movement".⁷⁷ However Gaffney leaves the issue here, failing to elaborate on this point.

The July 3 demonstration was conducted in the same vein as the two previous July 4 demonstrations, with clashes between police and demonstrators. Fears of violence were heightened when, on the night before the rally, petrol bombs were hurled through the windows of the Lonsdale St. office of US computer manufacturer, IBM, causing extensive damage.⁷⁸ After the march had left from Treasury Garden to head into the city square, marshals urged the marchers to disperse peacefully. However the bulk of the marchers headed down to the intersection of Flinders and Swanston St and sat down in an attempt to block the traffic. The police then waded into them seeking to remove the demonstrators, on the pretext of clearing a path for commuters. Whilst the level of violence was not as high as previous years and the number of arrests was lower, with only 8 arrested, some of the concerns that opponents had about the July 3 march seemed to come to fruition.⁷⁹

On the Saturday 1,000 people marched down the St Kilda Rd on their way to rally outside Pan Am, in accordance with the plans for the day. Despite the desire for the Saturday to be free of the conflict of the last two July 4 demonstrations, problem arose, as the police rode their horses into the ranks of demonstrators marching down St. Kilda Rd. A number of arrests were made amidst scuffles, and further clashes

⁷⁷ This leaflet is also held in the Ralph and Dorothy Gibson Collection at UMA.

⁷⁸ *Age*, 3/7/70.

occurred at the Treasury Gardens where once again arrests were made. Demonstrators responded by blocking paddy wagons and letting off firecrackers. Subsequently horses were ridden into the ranks of demonstrators.⁸⁰

The platform saw a range of speakers from the groups supporting the demonstration, but also included Jim Bacon speaking on behalf of Monash Labor Club. Despite their active work in organising and supporting the Friday action, they were still granted a speaker on the official platform. However, his speech was attacked in *Tribune*. Bernie Taft in his summing up of the demonstration lambasted the Bakery group and Bacon as a speaker, for their primitive and simplistic views of capitalism and how to overthrow it.⁸¹

Unlike the two previous years July 4 demonstrations there had not been the high level of violence, involving both people and property. However the splits within the movement remained, as the various Left forces that comprised the anti-Vietnam War movement continued to debate and argue as to what the appropriate strategies and tactics were, and what were the correct political positions on the war in Vietnam.

CONCLUSION

The relationship between the established Left and its newer colleagues remained one that was always tense, occasionally erupting into conflict. The different ways in which the Langer and Rubin trials were approached is but one example. Within the ranks of

⁷⁹ *Age*, 4/7/70; *Sun*, 4/7/70.

⁸⁰ *Sun*, 6/7/70; *CICD Newsletter*, August 1970.

⁸¹ The Bakery was a building in Prahran, occupied by Monash Labor Club members and ex members. It was the headquarters for many of the Maoist oriented groupings that existed at this time.

the newer groups differences over tactics remained a source of contention, with the Maoist oriented groupings in particular advocating a consistently hard, uncompromising line. Even within the newer groupings there were discernable differences, noticeable during the By-law 418 campaign, coming to a peak with the separate July 4 demonstrations conducted in 1970. Though they were all committed to a direct action approach to confront the issues, there were differences influencing their approaches. For those influenced by Maoism an explicit position of anti-US Imperialism and militant, confrontationist tactics was essential. For those who were aligned with Melbourne University SDS the use of non-violent civil disobedience and a less dogmatic line, more eclectic approach to politics was prominent.

The increased level of militancy and direct action remained present throughout this period and the fact that anti-imperialism became more prominent amongst the movement can be seen as indicative that the radical pressure of the newer groupings was making inroads. The acceptance of civil disobedience approaches by the more established left, who had been initially lukewarm about such tactics, reflects a movement to the left, pushed along by the newer organisations. Support offered by the 'Rebel Unions', and other sections of the established Left during the By-law 418 campaign provides a good example of this. The more extremist confrontationist tactics, of which the Maoists were often accused, did not win the same respect and acceptance from the established Left. However, the Maoist presence and militancy could not be denied. They continued to command support from many younger people drawn into the movement as well as establishing important trade union links.

For the established peace movement, especially CICD, their leadership that had been unchallenged since the Cold War period, was now not just threatened but also effectively bypassed at times. Their ability to adjust to changes within the anti-Vietnam War movement was now dependent on accepting the legitimacy of the newer activists and at times accepting their leadership. CICD, however, also began searching for a vehicle which it could control and thus regain their hegemony over the movement. This vehicle was one similar to the American Vietnam Moratorium Committee (VMC).

In the ensuing chapter the Australian VMC, and its functioning in Victoria will be examined. Undoubtedly the issue which drew the movement more closely together under its umbrella in 1970 and in the following years was to be the moratorium. The VMC structure provided a focus for the anti-Vietnam War movement, and allowed arguments and debates without the movement splintering and falling apart. The established Left would still seek to remain in control whilst their newer counterparts would wage a struggle against their hegemony. This resilient structure will be the subject of the next chapter.

CHAPTER 6

“NO MORE WAR”, THE VIETNAM MORATORIUM :

MOBILISING FOR MASS CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE

INTRODUCTION

The establishment of the Moratorium in many ways representing the culmination of mass civil action was a new development in the anti-Vietnam War movement.

Commentators such as York, Murphy, Gerster and Basset see the Moratorium as a moderate counter to the more militant sections of the anti-Vietnam War movement.

York argues that the moratorium was the tactical and strategic focal point of the moderates, who were willing to allow the radicals to retain July 4 as their demonstration.¹ Saunders claims that the Moratorium was a distinct movement, separate from the previous anti-Vietnam War struggle, since it was a mass movement, organised and able in a short period of time to mobilise the public in a way that the anti-Vietnam War movement had failed to do in the previous five year period. This division, implying a "Chinese Wall" between moderates and radical elements, needs to be assessed to ascertain if the moratorium can be clearly marked as a separate entity.² Saunders sees it as being at its most successful when the established groups controlled its direction, and then, when their influence waned, losing effectiveness.³

By contrast, some moratorium participants believed that the established Left sought to

¹ Bassett J. & Gerster R., *Seizures of Youth*, Hyland Press, Melbourne, 1991, pp 77-78; Murphy J., *Harvest of Fear; A History of Australia's Vietnam War*, Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 1993, pp 241- 249-258; York B., The Australian Anti Vietnam War Movement, *Melbourne Journal of Politics*, Vol 15 1983-84, p 35.

² Saunders M., *The Vietnam Moratorium Movement in Australia*, PHD, Flinders University, Adelaide, 1975, p 2.

³ *ibid* pp 363-366.

gain control of the movement but were not successful. They feel that the newer groups were able to push the agenda constantly leftward.⁴ Whether or not this was the case this requires further examination.

The origin of the Moratorium can be traced to the United States of America (US). The impact of the Tet offensive ended US hopes of achieving an easy political and military victory. By June 1969 President Nixon had commenced the process of US troop withdrawals.⁵ This however coincided with increasing use of aerial attacks and the desire to 'Vietnamize' the war as Vietnamese troops replaced US troops. During this period moderate US opponents of the war formed the Vietnam Moratorium Committee, bringing together a diverse range of groups and individuals opposed to the US's ongoing involvement in Vietnam and concerned that more radical actions would alienate support.⁶ The leadership of this body was of a predominantly liberal bent, aligned with more progressive elements of the Democratic Party but able to reach out and involve a large number of Americans in their actions. The first successful moratorium was held on October 15 1969, and was of unprecedented size, estimated as between 500,000 and 1,000,000 participants.⁷ About 250,000 marched in New York City, another 100,000 in Washington and smaller rallies were conducted in numerous locations across the country.⁸ Though 100, 000 protesters had attended an anti war rally in Washington on October 21, 1967, these demonstrations were the largest yet seen. The term 'Moratorium' was chosen as a substitute for 'strike', because

⁴Karl Armstrong, interview, 1/2/99 Vera Boston, interview, 12/3/99 John Ebel, interview, 29/4/99 Michael Hyde, interview, 11/2/99 Dave Kerin, interview, 18/4/99 Bob Muntz, interview, 14/12/98, John Sinnot, interview, 11/3/99, Harry Van Moorst, interview, 19/3/99.

⁵Edwards P., *A Nation at War: Australian Politics, Society and Diplomacy during the Vietnam War 1965-1976*, Allen and Unwin, St Leonards, NSW, 1997, p245, Moss GD., *Vietnam, An American Ordeal*, Eaglewood Cliffs, Prentice Hall, New Jersey, 1990, p 305, Saunders M., 1975, *op cit*, p 359.

⁶Curthoys A., 'The Anti-War Movement', in Doyle J. & Grey J., *Vietnam War, myth and memories*, Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 1992, p 88.

⁷ Edwards P., *op cit*, p 245 Moss GD., *op cit*, pp 305-306.

of its less negative connotations.⁹ A strike was seen as too radical a term for many, so 'Moratorium', alluding to a simple halt in 'business as usual', was used.¹⁰

This was followed by a further demonstration in Washington conducted between November 13 and 15, which drew crowds estimated between 400,000 and 800,000.¹¹ These events coincided with the public disclosures of the My Lai massacre, which contributed to a further weakening of the pro war position. Despite the fact that the massacre had occurred in 1968, shortly after the Tet offensive, the details had only become public in early 1969. The widespread revulsion which followed strengthened the hand of the anti war forces.¹²

In Australia, in late 1969, the anti-Vietnam War groups had no centralised umbrella body to coordinate activities. Within Victoria, the unofficial withdrawal of Congress for International Cooperation and Disarmament (CICD) and the lack of support from some similar minded organisations had reduced the ability of the Vietnam Coordinating Committee (VCC) to mobilise large numbers. In this void the moves to establish a new coordinating body commenced.¹³ However, this was not an inclusive process. From its inception there were selective aspects to the establishment and building of the moratorium campaign.

⁸ Edwards P., *ibid*, p245, Saunders M., 1975, *op cit*, p24.

⁹ *ibid*, p2, Saunders quoting from the *Random House Dictionary of English language* NY 1970, p 930, defines Moratorium as 'the temporary cessation of activity'.

¹⁰ Curthoys A., in Doyle J. & Grey J., *op cit*, pp 88-89.

¹¹ Curthoys A., in Doyle. & Grey., *ibid*, pp88-89 Edwards P., *op cit*, p245, Murphy J., *op cit*, p 242; Saunders M., 1975, *op cit*, p 25;

¹² Edwards P., *ibid*, p 246, Murphy J., *ibid*, p 229.

¹³ Van Moorst H., *Street level Opposition: The Vietnam Moratorium Campaign*, unpublished, Werribee, 1993, p 11.

BACKGROUND TO THE MORATORIUM

Following the success of the moratoriums in the US, a meeting was convened in Canberra in mid October 1969, to plan similar action in Australia. The meeting consisted of the Secretary of CICD, John Lloyd, the Vice President of CICD, Norman Rothfield, and Bevan Ramsden, who was not a member of any formal organisation.¹⁴

Following this, a meeting of the CICD executive was held in Melbourne on October 22 to determine whether they were willing to endorse such a proposal. It was eventually endorsed despite reservations expressed by some executive members, including long time peace activists, the Rev. Alf Dickie and Rev. Fred Hartley.¹⁵

Following this John Lloyd, acting on behalf of CICD, sent letters out to contacts notifying them of a national consultation to be held on November 25. This joint CICD/AICD, Association International Cooperation and Disarmament (AICD) convened conference was conducted in Canberra, bringing together 36 anti-Vietnam War activists from Victoria, Queensland, New South Wales, South Australia and the Australian Capital Territory to plan the Moratorium.¹⁶ Whilst it was portrayed as a broad consultation of the peace movement it was noticeable that with the exception of SOS, none of the newer groups were invited, nor were students of any political persuasion.¹⁷ The Victorians in attendance included four CICD aligned people, Sam Goldbloom, Rev. John Lloyd, Bill O'Brien, Norman Rothchild, two representatives of SOS, Jean McLean and Jo MacLaine-Cross, and one objector to National Service, Laurie Carmichael Junior, whose father was a leading figure in both the Communist

¹⁴ Edwards P., *op cit*, p 248; Saunders M., 1975, *op cit*, p 25 states that John Lloyd told him the idea for both the meeting and the moratorium was Bevan Ramsden's. Interview with John Lloyd, 28/6/01.

¹⁵ Saunders M., 1975, *ibid*, p 25.

¹⁶ *ibid*, p 25, p 360.

Party of Australia (CPA) and the Amalgamated Engineering Union (AEU).¹⁸ Amongst those in attendance during the opening session were eleven Australian Labor Party (ALP) senators, despite the Federal ALP's ambivalence towards the anti-Vietnam War movement. Petitions to obtain signatures of support endorsing the proposed moratorium's position of a non-violent campaign to urge the withdrawal of Australian troops were circulated amongst the Federal ALP caucus, by Alf Dickie and John Lloyd. All members except the leader Gough Whitlam and his Deputy, Lance Barnard, signed.¹⁹

As a result of this meeting the broad direction and aims of the Vietnam Moratorium Committee (VMC) were established. All capital cities and some provincial towns established their own VMC groups.²⁰ The initial aims of the VMC were:

To hold a national Moratorium activity early in 1970: that its shape and content be determined by each participating state, and that a decision be made immediately thereafter to determine whether future similar activity be conducted .²¹

Furthermore it was decided that the VMC was to seek:

- (1) The withdrawal of Australian and all other foreign troops from Vietnam
- (2) The repeal of the National Service Act

As a way to ensure the peaceful, non violent nature there was an additional proviso stating;

We further request, in agreement with the aims of this campaign that all actions be of a peaceful, non- violent nature.²²

The gathering saw the establishment of a flexible national structure, not one that would control and direct the separate state structures. The states would establish their own committees and John Lloyd was appointed the provisional convenor in Victoria.²³

¹⁷ Poulton E., the Vietnam Moratorium: A critical evaluation, *Farrago* 15/5/1970 p 12.

¹⁸ Saunders M., 1975, *op cit*, p 31.

¹⁹ Interview with John Lloyd, 28/6/01

²⁰ Saunders M., 1975, *op cit*, p 360.

²¹ VMC minutes, National Consultation 25/11/69, as cited in Saunders, 1975, *ibid*, p 26.

A planning meeting was held on December 9 at the Caprice Restaurant in Collins Street, chaired by Dr Jim Cairns. The invitations did not include the newer, more militant groups and this appeared to be an attempt to exclude them.²⁴ To Harry Van Moorst, the implication of these early planning meetings was clear, "CICD organised their position in Canberra and the Caprice to control the moratorium by excluding the student groups".²⁵ However members of a number of the newer radical groupings including Monash Labor Club and Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) were in attendance, amongst many other people belonging to a variety of established groups, or attending as individuals. In all 105 people met to discuss the direction of the moratorium movement.²⁶ Five resolutions were adopted, including one that read.

That this meeting accepts the offer of CICD to

(a) Financially underwrite the campaign.

(b) Carry out the administrative work associated with the campaign²⁷

It is further agreed that all funds raised by the Vietnam Moratorium campaign be used in the conduct of the campaign as decided by the executive and the Committee, and for the reimbursement of the CICD for its administrative responsibility and to meet its financial guarantee of the campaign.²⁸

This suggested an attempt by CICD to control both the processes, and potentially, the direction of the VMC. An Interim Committee of sixteen members was established and they met on December 16 to commence the planning process. The Committee was one in which CICD and its supporters had a majority.²⁹

The composition of the committee saw Sam Goldbloom and Rev. Alf Dickie elected from CICD. Amongst the CICD supporters on the committee were: Roger Wilson and

²² VMC minutes, National Consultation 25/11/69, as cited in Saunders, 1975, *ibid*, p 26

²³ *ibid*, p 26; interview with John Lloyd, 28/6/01.

²⁴ Poulton E., *op cit*.

²⁵ Harry Van Moorst, Werribee, interview, 19/3/99.

²⁶ Attendance List, Caprice Restaurant, 9/12/69 UMA.

²⁷ Minutes, Caprice Restaurant, 9/12/69, UMA.

²⁸ Minutes, Caprice Restaurant, 9/12/69, UMA.

²⁹ Saunders M., 1975, *op cit*, p 32.

Bert Naylor from the Seamans Union of Australia (SUA), Laurie Carmichael Senior from the AEU (Carmichael and Wilson were both CPA members), the Rev. Stanley Moore from the Unitarian Church;³⁰ Jean McLean of Save Our Sons (SOS), Jim Cairns from the ALP, John Ryan from Catholic Worker, and James Newell from the Society of Friends. Radicals included Michael Maher and Harry Van Moorst from SDS, Ted Poulton from Centre for Democratic Action (CDA), Dave Hudson from the VCC, Peter Butcher from the Monash Labor Club, and Tony Dalton a draft resister.³¹

This early effort by CICD to establish a pivotal role for itself in the campaign can be perceived as part of a strategy which ostensibly sought to limit the more radical organisations and to place the moratorium under the control of the established peace movement.³² John Lloyd suggested that the executive of the VMC should consist of the seven-member CICD executive and an equal number of affiliates and that CICD finance the Moratorium. CICD's offer of assistance was accepted, though the VMC agreed to pay its own way and reimburse CICD. However, the VMC would elect its own executive, with CICD representation on it.³³ The established Left groups could call upon the support of organisations such as SOS, and could, with a majority on the executive, overrule their opponents.

Within the ranks of the established groups there were differences about how to handle the radicals. Sam Goldbloom appeared to favour an approach of total exclusion,

³⁰ The Rev. Moore was a US born minister and draft counsellor with the Unitarian Church who disappeared from the political scene mysteriously, casting doubts about his real political agenda (Scates R., *Draftsmen go Free; A History of the Anti-Conscription Movement in Australia*, Self published, Melbourne, 1990, pp 61–62).

³¹ Saunders M., 1975, *op cit*, p 32, Van Moorst only accepted his nomination after changes were made to the structure and direction of the VMC. Harry Van Moorst, interview, 19/3/99.

³² *ibid*, p 32; Van Moorst H., *op cit*, p 12.

³³ Murphy J., *op cit*, p 244; CICD Committee minutes 3/12/69; CICD AGM 11/4/70 UMA; Harry Van Moorst, interview, 19/3/99.

feeling that the growth of the newer radical groupings had undermined CICD's role. "He was reasonably upset that he was no longer out in the front, there was that kind of militancy being brought in by the students, whereas CICD had always been the kind of peace movement that appealed to leaders".³⁴ Yet, amongst his colleagues, there was a view that to totally exclude the more radical groupings would play into their hands and create further problems. Bernie Taft expressed his concern for this approach, "I was a bit disturbed by the way some of the older people were handling the young Maoists, they were handling them in a silly way, in a narrow sectarian way, treating them as children".³⁵

Despite the view that a CPA/CICD alliance controlled the VMC, efforts by more radical groups forced some concessions, such as holding open public meetings and including the word 'immediate' in the two moratorium demands. These early victories of radicals signalled the beginning of a shift in the direction of the Moratorium.³⁶ The proposal to hold open meetings was to allow greater input from all sections and permit subsequent debate that would strengthen and enhance the operations of the VMC. It would also take it out of the narrow, direct control of CICD and their allies, giving the movement a greater sense of independence. Those opposed to the use of including the word 'immediate' felt it would alienate people by being too radical. The mover of this motion, Harry Van Moorst, and others supporting the inclusion of the word 'immediate' were able to convince the majority.³⁷ Their position was that the Australian and US governments were already withdrawing troops from Vietnam and even conservative voters could accept this current position. However, by

³⁴ Dorothy and Les Dalton, interview, 16/4/99.

³⁵ Bernie Taft, interview, 18/2/99.

³⁶ These were the changes Van Moorst sought before he was willing to commit himself to the interim executive.

putting the term 'immediate' in the aims, it would accelerate the process and add integrity to the VMC position, instead of being simply a 'lowest common denominator', and would bring pressure to expedite the withdrawal. The temporary executive meeting on December 16 accepted demands from radicals for the new organisation to have its own PO box, an independent treasurer, a VMC letterhead, and a secretariat of five to handle correspondence, prepare meetings and convene open, advertised public meetings.³⁸ This was pursued by radical groupings since it allowed the VMC some independence from CICD.³⁹

The presence and influence of radical groupings within the moratorium further loosened the extensive grip that the CICD and CPA had over the movement. With the radicals having made their presence felt on the streets in militant actions since 1968 the established left was now forced to negotiate, and was unable to exclude the radicals from involvement in the VMC.

POLITICAL DIRECTION OF THE MORATORIUM

The initial public meeting on February 1 1970 set the scene for further contentious meetings as all sides sought to assert their line and positions. The radicals were, however, prepared for the meeting and had formulated positions that would be aimed at moving the moratorium leftward. At a series of meetings SDS, Monash Labor Club, and Worker Student Alliance (WSA) pressed for a more explicitly anti-imperialist position, and pro-National Liberation Front of South Vietnam (NLF) stance, and also

³⁷ Minutes of Meeting, 9/12/69, CICD Collection UMA, Van Moorst H., *op cit*, p 12.

³⁸ Cairns, Carmichael, Lloyd, Poulton and Ryan ; Saunders M., 1975, *op cit*, p 32.

a demand for a march to be held on a Friday that would occupy the city streets and would include participants sitting down and bringing the city to a halt.⁴⁰

With more than 400 people in attendance, the debates were heated, with the contending groups endeavouring to establish control over the VMC's direction.⁴¹ Early in the meeting Sam Goldbloom proposed Jim Cairns as the chairman and after bitter debate Goldbloom and his supporters were able to succeed with this proposal.⁴² Yet on the meeting room floor, the debate initiated by the radicals (including Monash Labor Club, SDS, and Worker Student Alliance (WSA) regarding tactics and strategies occupied a great deal of the meetings time and resources. Radical motions calling for the occupation of city streets, removal of the non violence clause and a clear cut position of support for the NLF were successfully carried despite the opposition of the established peace groups.⁴³

The proposal to have a token occupation of the city streets for a period of three hours that would include a variety of activities such as street theatre, speeches and a sit-down, did not appeal to CICD and their allies. Their preference was for a rally, and then a march with as little disruption or confrontation as possible.⁴⁴ The passing of the occupation motion was a problem for the established peace groups as it could be perceived as a provocative action designed to seek a clash with the State.⁴⁵ The successful move to delete the non-violence clause also sparked alarm in more

³⁹ Harry Van Moorst, interview, 19/3/99

⁴⁰ Saunders M., 1975, *op cit*, p 32; Harry Van Moorst, interview, 19/3/99.

⁴¹ *ibid*, p 33.

⁴² *ibid*, p 33, Murphy J., *op cit*, p 245; VMC Record Sponsors Minutes, 1/2/70.

⁴³ Saunders M., 1975, *ibid*, p 33; Murphy J., *ibid*, p 245; VMC Record Sponsors Meeting, 1/2/70.

⁴⁴ Ormonde P., *A Foolish Passionate Man. A Biography of Jim Cairns*, Penguin Books, Australia 1981, p 123.

⁴⁵ This motion was moved by WSA member Ms. J Cassidy, Saunders M., 1975, *op cit*, p 33; VMC Record Sponsors Meeting 1/2/70.

conservative elements as debate raged over this topic. Passionate speeches by John Ryan, the editor of the *Catholic Worker* and James Newell from the Society of Friends failed to sway the required numbers.⁴⁶ As a result of the adoption of the motion to change the position of non-violence, letters sent out to the press making it quite clear the VMC did not endorse violence. It was made clear that if violence occurred it would not be at the behest of the VMC and its supporters but due to forces opposed to or seeking to limit the effectiveness of the VMC and its actions.⁴⁷

Amongst the demands was a motion that called for all decisions of sponsor (public) meetings to be implemented by the executive, a motion that produced clashes and differences.⁴⁸ A motion moved by Laurie Carmichael required that all affiliates have the right to send one delegate to the executive, which in turn had the right to elect office bearers.⁴⁹

At the first executive meeting on February 16 the radicals expressed concern that the executive would overturn motions passed at the public meeting, such as the occupation of city streets, yet were assured by Sam Goldbloom this would not be the case.⁵⁰ However a coalition comprising of the ALP, CICD and CPA sought to delay the planning for the Friday night occupation of the city. Laurie Carmichael, the Assistant Federal Secretary of the AEU, proposed a motion that explicitly focussed on the events of the Saturday and Sunday, calling for the establishment of sub-committees to organise those two days. He omitted any reference to the proposed

⁴⁶ *Sun* 2/2/70.

⁴⁷ CICD Executive Minutes, 3/2/70, UMA.

⁴⁸ Sponsors Meetings set politics and dates for action. The Delegates Meetings would work out the details. As an example, at the 3rd moratorium the public meeting decided to support draft resistance, with the delegates meeting providing the practical solution of the draft resisters speaking from a truck. Interview with Harry Van Moorst, 19/3/99.

Friday night occupation.⁵¹ A counter motion moved by the Monash Labor Club's Peter Butcher was defeated, calling into question the power of the executive to effectively rescind motions passed at public meetings.⁵²

The issue of the sit down and occupation of the city streets remained a constant source of conflict at meetings. For example at an executive meeting conducted on April 13 Jim Cairns used his authority as Chairperson to request a motion limiting the sit down/occupation to a maximum of 15 minutes. Following heated argument a motion of dissent in the chair was moved, but failed to garner sufficient support. Whilst Sam Goldbloom occupied the chair in Cairns' absence, speakers emphasised that Cairns' action had run counter to the motion at the first sponsors' meeting regarding executive implementation of decisions from Sponsors meetings. Cairns' motion was eventually adopted despite bitter debate and disagreement.⁵³

A good deal of the debate and the differences within the groups comprising the VMC occurred at both the delegates and planning meetings as the established groups tried to both hold sway and accommodate the newer more radical groupings, particularly the Maoist influenced groups. Other groupings such as SDS and the Socialist Youth alliance (SYA) found themselves entering into temporary alliances at different times with each end of the spectrum. The initial friction surrounding the establishment of the Moratorium continued throughout the planning meetings with the established groupings constantly being besieged by their newer more radical counterparts.

⁴⁹ Murphy J., *op cit*, p 244.

⁵⁰ Saunders M., 1975, *op cit*, p 35; VMC Executive Minutes, 16/2/70.

⁵¹ Saunders M., 1975, *ibid*, p 35, VMC Executive Minutes, *ibid*.

⁵² *ibid*, p35.

Within the established Left there was a desire to retain control of both the organisation and the direction of the VMC and they marshalled their resources accordingly. After losing control of the July 4 demonstrations they were reluctant to lose control of the VMC. With sponsors/public meetings being held on Sunday afternoons, different groupings sought to have a maximum number of members and supporters in attendance. The CPA, with a high number of industrial workers who worked throughout the week, were required to rally their members to give up a Sunday and attend to vote in a disciplined bloc. Dave Davies recalls, "meetings at Richmond were a pain in the neck for many CPA members".⁵⁴ In many ways the acrimony of the Sino- Soviet split was continued, with the CPA fighting against not just the new, militant student radicals, but against their old comrades from the Communist Party of Australia-Marxist Leninist (CPAML). For Bernie Taft the Richmond Town Hall meetings were an occasion for the Maoists to dominate, but the CPA had the numbers to block them.⁵⁵ However matters were not as simple as this, as a large non aligned group comprising SDS and the Trotskyites could vote with the Maoists as a fluid bloc against the ALP, CICD, and CPA grouping.

The success of the sit down at the first moratorium helped shape its future direction, with sit-downs becoming a common tactic as a method of mass civil disobedience. For people such as Dorothy Dalton it was a radical new approach, but one she eventually accepted. "The sit-down in Bourke St was a shock to the system to people like me and there were many others like me who could not sit down in the streets in the city, yet when it actually happened, you couldn't bear to stand up!".⁵⁶ Yet it had

⁵³ Poulton E., *op cit*, VMC Executive Minutes, 13/4/70.

⁵⁴ Dave Davies, interview, 10/12/98.

⁵⁵ Bernie Taft, interview, 18/2/99.

⁵⁶ Dorothy Dalton and Les Dalton, interview, 16/4/99.

initially aroused much division and caused bitter debate before it was accepted as a tactic.

Despite the reluctant acceptance of these more radical tactics by the established Left, there were examples of friction within the newer groupings. Some WSA members felt the sit-down was not as militant as it could have been and did not last as long as it should have. There was also criticism that Cairns, Carmichael and Goldbloom had cooperated with the police to clear the demonstrators away quickly. However they also claimed that the march had been a success for opponents of capitalism (both conscious and non-conscious) and that more radical actions were required to maintain the momentum of the anti-Vietnam War movement.⁵⁷ A SDS bulletin released after the march was critical of unnamed Monash comrades who were believed to have viewed the peaceful march as a sell out and not sufficiently militant. The Monash Labor Club representatives also saw it as involving a betrayal by the established Left and peace organisations and their leadership, aided and abetted by SDS and their off campus colleagues at CDA.⁵⁸ This SDS bulletin provided further evidence that the newer Left groups were not monolithic in their unity, and had almost as many differences with each other regarding strategies and tactics as they did with the established left and peace groups.

SECOND NATIONAL CONSULTATION AND FOLLOW UP

Following on from the first Moratorium a second National Consultation was conducted in Melbourne on May 26-27. As with the earlier meetings to establish the

⁵⁷ *L'Enarge* 15/5/70, *Red Moat* Vol.111, No 18 May 1970.

Moratorium, the nature of the consultation and involvement was structured in such a manner that the bulk of the 80 attendees were drawn from the established organisations, and more radical organisations were excluded. Criticisms were raised at the executive that the format was restrictive and designed to exclude those more radical groupings.⁵⁹

At the executive meeting the night before the consultation, Peter Butcher of Monash Labour Club moved the following motion. "That this meeting express its disapproval re arrangements for National Consultation and that in future such consultations be arranged to facilitate greater attendance and participation and that any decision at the consultation should be of an advisory capacity only".⁶⁰ An amendment from Mark Taft of the CPA which read, "While we regret the timing of the National Consultation, we should pursue the policy of NSW and invite one delegate from each organisation affiliated to the VMC to participate in this consultative meeting".⁶¹ This amendment was accepted and passed. As it turned out the radical groupings did attend and sought to argue their positions, being critical of the lack of support for the NLF, the need for a clear expose of the role of US imperialism and a strong position opposing conscription.⁶² A total of 82 delegates attended, with Victoria provided the majority with 32 delegates.

⁵⁸ *Catch* 22 12/5/70 .

⁵⁹ Murphy adds another perspective talking about how the moderate left such as the CPA dominated opposed by the radicals and a group he defines as conservatives, the more cautious of old peace activists, but does not elaborate beyond this point, *op cit*, p 264.

⁶⁰ VMC Executive (Delegates) Meeting, 25/5/70.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² Saunders M., 1975, *op cit* pp 144–146; Van Moorst H., *op cit* pp 17–19; Murphy J., *op cit*, p264.

Despite concerted opposition the VMC continued to move to the left, even if it was not at the speed sought by the radicals. After vigorous debate the VMC's aims were amended to read:

Immediate, total and unconditional withdrawal of Australian and American and other foreign troops from Indo China, and the immediate and total and unconditional withdrawal of all forms of support for the present Saigon Government.
Immediate abolition of conscription in any form.⁶³

Saunders claims that these represent a moderate not radical shift to the left. Murphy adopts a similar viewpoint that it shows the moderates were still in control and able to regulate a slight shift to the left.⁶⁴ However this appears to understate the opposition to these amendments. The fact that the groups that CICD and their allies had tried to exclude from the process were now able to put pressure on and win support for their positions, resulting in the established groups having to compromise, can hardly be considered a slight shift. Whilst the established Left remained in charge of the organisation through its numerical superiority, it was being forced to deal with and adopt concepts that only six months earlier they sought to avoid.

Another Moratorium was proposed within the next four months, and emboldened by the success of the sit down in Melbourne a resolution was passed recommending that other state VMCs carefully consider occupation of city streets. The resolution read:

Further mass action be organised on a nationally agreed date within the next four months.
That the action be based on the concept of a Moratorium on business as usual to bring the life of the nation to a standstill in transport, factories, offices and educational institutions and that action be conducted in the same spirit as events on May 8.
That it be suggested to state VMCs that they carefully consider occupation of city streets for a considerable period.⁶⁵

What had been a radical position, hard fought to accomplish for the initial moratorium, was now becoming the accepted tactic.

⁶³ Saunders M., 1975, *ibid*, p 145.

⁶⁴ *ibid*, p 145; Murphy J., *op cit*, pp 264-265.

As a way of ensuring the VMC did not move too far left, the following agenda item was proposed:

That the national Coordinating Committee be requested to canvas the proposal with all state committees that a nation wide referendum be conducted by the Moratorium campaign at the time of the senate election in November, with questions based upon the objectives of the Moratorium.⁶⁵

There was also a resolution moved by John Lloyd recommending that;

To all supporters that they realise the achievements of the aims of the VMC depend upon decisions by the government and that they therefore should work to remove the present government of Australia and replace it with one which is consistent with the aims of the VMC.⁶⁷

Both Murphy and Saunders gloss over these two resolutions. Murphy fails to mention either and Saunders touches solely on the second one. The second resolution was passed but not without strong opposition from radicals, concerned it would create the same false hopes as the anti-Vietnam War movement experienced back in 1966.⁶⁸

The Maoist oriented journal *Struggle* provides an insight into how the differences in these meetings were perceived and the frustration felt by the more radical groups.⁶⁹ In what is essentially a polemic, they criticise the Moratorium as being run by a CPA - ALP reformist ticket with an executive open to anyone who would pay \$10. They proceed to allege a watering down of any anti-imperialist politics and described the Moratorium as being used as an election platform for the ALP. At a Richmond Town

⁶⁵ Decisions for notification from the 2nd National Consultation, cited in Saunders M., 1975, *ibid*, p145.

⁶⁶ Agenda item 10, VMC 2nd National Consultation, 26-27/5/70.

⁶⁷ Saunders M., 1975, *op cit*, p 146, On p 90 of the footnotes Saunders claims there were no recordings taken of the consultation, yet handwritten notes previously existed in the CICD office in Melbourne. Unfortunately I have had no luck finding this material. Van Moorst H., *op cit*, pp 17-18.

⁶⁸ Van Moorst H., *ibid*, p 18.

⁶⁹ *Struggle* 5/8/70 pp 9-11 The article is essentially a polemic with a number of errors. The \$10 re being on the executive is wrong, \$10 was the affiliation fee paid by affiliated groups.

Hall Meeting;⁷⁰ they allege that the Left of the ALP, represented by Gordon Bryant and Jim Cairns exposed their true colours. The article states.

Only a week before, Moratorium sponsor Gordon Bryant had shown clearly on which side he had stood by suggesting that the Australian Government should join with the CIA in sending support to the Lon Nol regime in Cambodia. Although the stand is, of course, quite consistent with the ALP's policy of support for the American alliance, Bryant's statement did much to clarify the real position of the labour 'lefts' like Bryant.⁷¹

The article attacks Jim Cairns for failing to condemn Bryant, and then discusses a motion debated at the meeting.⁷² The motion sought the removal of the present government. The WSA counter position to this, of opposing the limiting of struggle solely to the parliamentary arena, was to seek a mass anti-imperialist struggle. The article proceeds to discuss a compromise motion calling for the removal of the government in the course of mass struggle. Jim Cairns is the target of the article's anger, being accused of pedagogic attacks on WSA speakers, who he allegedly lambasted as students.⁷³ The meeting finished abruptly, having dealt with only two thirds of agenda items, allegedly at the behest of the CPA. The article went on to describe what happened as.

When WSA delegates proposed that the mass meeting be reconvened a week later to deal with the rest of the agenda, the right opposed the motion. Throwing democracy out the window, they said all matters not dealt with that afternoon should be dealt with by the blatantly stacked '\$10 a pop executive'(sic). They just refused to let the general meeting have any more say.⁷⁴

⁷⁰ There is no date given for this, it states the meeting had been conducted just over two weeks previously, making it circa mid July.

⁷¹ *Struggle*, 5/8/70 p 9.

⁷² The article talks about how the movers of the motion were reluctant to openly seek the election of an ALP government, though that was considered the direction and intent of the motion.

⁷³ Apparently the article writer considers being described by Cairns as a student, is a way of denying that persons working class position and is a put down.

⁷⁴ *op cit*, p 11 Cairns received quite stringent criticism in the Maoist publications for his police background. *Australian Communist* No40 .

This article and the viewpoint it expressed was characteristic of many of the Maoists' attitudes towards Cairns and the Left of the ALP at that time.

THE SECOND MORATORIUM

In the lead up to the second Moratorium there was a successful marriage of the draft resistance/anti-conscription position with the anti-Vietnam War position of the VMC. This, however, did not occur without opposition within the VMC, as some representatives expressed concern that linking of the two would detract from the Moratorium's central focus. For example, John Ryan from *Catholic Worker* was concerned at the VMC authorising and supporting actions that offered public support to incite young men not to register, action which was illegal under the terms of the Crimes Act, whilst others were ambivalent about the issue of conscription.⁷⁵ Eventually the anti-conscription activists wore down this opposition and by the middle of 1970, the VMC was willing to endorse the Draft Resisters Union (DRU)/SDS 'wreck the draft' campaign. At the time of the September Moratorium the VMC was able to take a public stance that supported and encouraged young men to refuse to comply with conscription.⁷⁶

An example of this was the VMC leaflet, 'Why Another Moratorium', with a section related to conscription, including the statement:

Young men subject to conscription should refuse to comply with the National Service Act and other citizens not subject to conscription should support them by all means within their power.⁷⁷

⁷⁵ Harry Van Moorst, interview, 19/3/99.

⁷⁶ Van Moorst H., *op cit*, pp 19–21, Harry Van Moorst, interview, 19/3/99.

⁷⁷ VMC leaflet "Why Another Moratorium?" held in Ralph and Dorothy Gibson collection at UMA.

The VMC also produced a leaflet 'Stop Conscription Now', which included statements by a number of non-compliers including Armstrong, Heldzingen and Langford.⁷⁸

The VMC was also now taking a public stance in support of the NLF distributing leaflets with the headlines urging, "Support the NLF, support their independence struggle, support the Vietnam Moratorium; Support the Vietnamese struggle for independence, Democracy and Peace". The leaflet went on to state, "Their struggle is led by the National Front for Liberation of South Vietnam", and proceeded to explain exactly who the NLF were, what they wanted and their peace proposals for a settlement of conflict.⁷⁹

Further conflict beset the second Moratorium with differences as to whether or not the March would challenge the refusal of the State Government to allow any obstruction of city traffic.⁸⁰ There was also conflict with the Melbourne City Council (MCC) who refused to allow marchers in the vicinity of the Princess Gate Plaza, as they felt the structure would not be sturdy enough to carry the weight of the marchers. They also requested that the police stop people using this area. Within the executive there were concerns as to how far the law could be flouted and what the police response would be.⁸¹ As a response to the threats of the State Government, who warned against

⁷⁸ VMC leaflet 'Stop Conscription Now' held in Ralph and Dorothy Gibson collection at the UMA.

⁷⁹ VMC leaflet for September 18 moratorium held, 'support the NLF, support their independence struggle, support the Vietnam Moratorium' in the Ralph and Dorothy Gibson collection at the UMA.

⁸⁰ *Age*, 17/9/70, 18/9/70; *Herald*, 18/9/70.

⁸¹ To further the air of tension, on September 16, a demonstration by Labor Club and SDS students at Latrobe University, to raise the issues of police brutality and to support the Moratorium, was brutally attacked by police. *Age*, 17/9/70, *Sun*, 17/9/70, *Rabellais*, 14/10/70, York B., *Student Movement, Revolt Latrobe University, 1967-1973*, Nicholas Press, Campbell, ACT, 1989, pp 93-100.

occupying the streets lest undefined action be taken,⁸² meetings were held between VMC leaders and the chief marshals at which it was decided that if the police blocked the march the sit down would occur at this point.⁸³ However, for reasons never fully explained this decision was not made public prior to the march.⁸⁴ Defying established Moratorium policy Jim Cairns and Sam Goldbloom organised a meeting with the Police Officer in Charge, Superintendent Gerard Hickey. Cairns and Goldbloom stressed police interference in the direction and functioning of the march could lead to difficulties, which the organisers could not control.⁸⁵

The September 18 march itself passed peacefully, with the march leading into Bourke St. where a half-hour sit-down went peacefully. Finally the police blocked the intersection of William and Lonsdale Streets, where police directed the marchers to disperse. There was a time of confusion as to whether to go through the police barricades or not. This meant quick decision-making from the leaders and marshals, mindful of the executive position that if the police barriers were a serious, rather than a token effort to block the march, the march should then peacefully proceed to Melbourne University rather than risk confrontation with the police. In line with the position of the VMC executive Cairns took the bulk of the marchers up in the direction of Melbourne University except for some radicals led by members of Latrobe and Monash Labor Clubs who sought to take over the running of the march, and confront the police. A group of around 5,000 managed to force their way past a token police line but when confronted by a larger well resourced group of police found they had nowhere to go and were quickly isolated. After a short sit down

⁸² *Age*, 17/9/70, *Herald*, 17/9/70.

⁸³ *Tribune* 23/9/70, Saunders M., 1975, *op cit*, p173.

⁸⁴ *ibid*, pp 172-173.

⁸⁵ Ormonde P., *op cit*, p 133.

they dispersed with many returning back to the bulk of the marchers proceeding to Melbourne University.⁸⁶ Other groups who wished to break away from the march were convinced by Cairns not to split ranks and to proceed to Melbourne University in an orderly fashion.⁸⁷ Amongst the radicals there was a feeling they had been sold out. There were concerns that though Cairns had acted in line with the executive decision he had been too hasty.⁸⁸ Once again a large clash had been averted and established Left could show they were still able to wield power over the movement.

Following the end of the march efforts were made to ensure the structure was such that this sort of confusion did not occur again. The marshalling for demonstrations was reviewed, with their role being to protect marchers and enhance and facilitate communication. Marshals would now be better selected and one of the VMC Vice-Chairpersons would undertake the role of Chief Marshall.⁸⁹

NATIONAL ANTI WAR CONFERENCE

Following the pattern of the 2nd National consultation in May 1970, a national anti-war conference was conducted in Sydney between February 17 and 21, 1971. Many of the participants in the Victorian VMC were in attendance, with all state VMC's represented. The conference participants represented the established groups, the ALP, individual activists, covering the whole political range of the anti-Vietnam War

⁸⁶ Van Moorst H., *op cit*, p 25.

⁸⁷ *Age*, 19/9/70, 21/9/70; *Sun*, 19/9/70; Saunders M., 1975, *op cit*, p174.

⁸⁸ Van Moorst H., *op cit*, p 25.

⁸⁹ *ibid.*, pp 25-26.

movement, though the radicals were again under-represented.⁹⁰ Overseas speakers were also in attendance including Michael Uhl an officer who had served with the US army in Vietnam, Peter Wiley a US anti-war researcher, and Professor Phillippe Devillers a French expert on South East Asian politics.⁹¹ The conference sought to examine three major themes, which were.

- (1) The international situation and international developments.
- (2) The political context of, and ideological positions in, the Australian anti war movement.
- (3) The strategies and tactics of the Australian anti war- movement.⁹²

In all 81 papers were delivered to the conference covering the three themes listed above and the speakers covered the whole breadth of the anti-Vietnam War movement. As Vice Chairman of CICD Sam Goldbloom was a key figure in the established peace movement. In his paper he spoke about how militant actions that do not impose upon others and do not deter the participation of others must be supported. He emphasised that one could not compare a peace movement to a political party and that no one particular line should dominate the direction of the movement. It was important that the most advanced sections of the movement should not be divided from the bulk of the movement. He identified four main tactics: confrontation, defiance, protest and resistance, though he was not overly clear on their actual meaning. He summed up the desired direction of the movement by stating, "It is not a revolutionary movement per se".⁹³ Goldbloom's paper eloquently elucidated the shifting politics of the established Left within the anti-Vietnam War movement. As someone who had sought to exclude and minimise the influence of the newer radical groupings, during the previous years, Goldbloom was now tacitly acknowledging that

⁹⁰ Saunders M., 1975, *op cit*, pp 250-252; York, B, cited in, Anti-War Conference, *Rabelais*, 5/3/71.

⁹¹ Flier advertising the conference held in the Ralph and Dorothy Gibson collection at UMA.

⁹² Saunders M., 1975, *op cit*, p 250.

⁹³ *The Role of the Peace Movement*, Paper delivered by Sam Goldbloom to National Anti War conference, Sydney, 17-21/2 1971.

their militancy was pushing the movement leftward. This paper demonstrated how he, as a spokesperson for the established Left, sought to accommodate the radicals.

Similar views were expressed by speakers from the CPA and CICD concerned that having an explicitly anti-imperialist position, ie; the imposition of a requirement to adopt anti-imperialist position in order to become involved in the movement, was the perceived criteria for being involved, would restrict people from joining and becoming involved. They felt it was better to get people involved and then win them over to an anti-imperialist position.⁹⁴

Yet other speakers challenged this view and took more militant positions. Very much in contrast was the view put forward by the Maoist influenced groupings including Latrobe and Monash Labor Clubs and WSA. They sought to have the VMC take an explicitly anti-imperialist approach and lead the movement, not follow it. They wished to see the Moratorium go beyond pursuing a pro-ALP, pro-parliamentary line and be overt in its opposition to the role of imperialism as the driving force behind the conflict in Vietnam, as well as supporting the NLF. In conjunction with like minded comrades from Adelaide and Sydney they called upon the VMC to, "recognise that the aggressor in Indo China was US imperialism and that the force representing the people of South Vietnam is the Provisional Revolutionary Government (PRG) of South Vietnam."⁹⁵ Their sentiments were expressed by a number of speakers including Ted Bull, who put the 'correct' revolutionary position: "A war may be just or unjust. We support just wars. The Vietnamese people and the Indo Chinese people as a whole are fighting for freedom from imperialist exploitation and oppression. They are

⁹⁴ For example, see *Perspectives of the Anti-War movement: A Communist View*, Paper delivered by Laurie Aarons to National Anti-War conference, Sydney, 17–21/2/1971.

fighting an entirely just war of national liberation on their own land".⁹⁶ The position was a clear and militant anti-imperialist position though not one that would necessarily win over the bulk of the delegates present, appearing as a simplistic urging of anti-imperialism without explicitly explaining it, and coming across at times as mere sloganeering.

The linkage between conscription and the war also found a receptive platform and audience. Michael Hamel-Green in his paper drew out the links between the role of conscription and imperialism. He examined the role of the US government in its effort to crush dissent in countries where they had important economic interests and how the Australian Governments use of conscription proved to be a tool in this agenda. This was especially highlighted in his analysis of events in Vietnam that influenced and shaped the nature of the war.⁹⁷

Away from the delivery of political papers highlighting and emphasising the different political directions in the movement there was debate and arguments over the future of the VMC and its aims. A series of slogans moved by Melbourne based Maoists called for the replacement of the existing aims with the following: Oppose US and Australian aggression in Vietnam and Indo China, Smash Conscription and Oppose the US-Australian alliance and US domination of Australia! They also sought to have the VMC adopt an explicitly pro-NLF and PRG position alongside a position of

⁹⁵ York B., 1989, *op cit*, p 36.

⁹⁶ *War, Peace and Imperialism*, Paper delivered by Ted Bull to National Anti-War conference, Sydney, 17-21/2/1971.

⁹⁷ *The Dumb Waiter: Conscriptions' Role in Imperialist Wars*, Paper delivered by Michael Hamel-Green to National Anti-War conference, Sydney, 17- 21/2/1971.

explicit opposition to the US- Australian alliance.⁹⁸ A second more detailed set of aims was proposed by the Sydney based Trotskyite, Bob Gould, and his Sydney Anti-Imperialist Caucus. These very much complemented those moved by the Maoists having a pro- NLF/ PRG position and being anti-US imperialist, though not seeking an end to the US–Australian alliance. A more moderate series of proposals were put up by the AICD, in conjunction with the CPA, as were a series of proposals from the SYA.

When the vote was put the proposals of the Maoists and Gould's group, were defeated. Attempts to seek amendments to the AICD/ CPA proposals failed to garner sufficient support and after another vote the SYA proposal was defeated. Then with slight amendments this proposal was accepted by the conference as being the aims of the VMC:

1. We demand the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of the total us and allied military presence from Indo China, and the cessation of US aggression and internal subversion against the people of Indo – China.

2. We demand the immediate unconditional and unilateral withdrawal of Australian military forces from indo China irrespective of US policy.

3. We demand the immediate abolition of conscription in any form, recognising it as a direct instrument of Australia's involvement in US military intervention in Indo – China.

4. We demand that the United States, Australian, and other allied Governments withdraw all military , material and political support for those regimes or forces sustained by the United States in Indo – China.

5. We demand That Australia end its present policies of military involvement in countries of Asia and South West Pacific and refuse all future involvement in US or other aggression or interference in the internal affairs of any country.

6. We demand that the US and its allies recognise the Indo – Chinese peoples right to national independence, unity and self- determination.⁹⁹

By conferences end the aims and tactics of the VMC had been moved to the left.

Saunders portrays this as a victory for the moderates, as firstly, he considers the

⁹⁸ Saunders M., 1975, *op cit*, pp 252 – 253. The motion was moved by Albert Langer and the seconder was Latrobe Labor Club member Barry York.

⁹⁹ *ibid.*, p 254 The Motion was moved by McLeod on behalf of AICD and Robertson on behalf of the CPA.

moderates were being more daring and confident a move to the left would not alienate support and subsequently the radicals were required to moderate their aims. As an example of this shift he discusses how many moderates position of opposing US imperialism was not too dissimilar to the radicals, though the moderates were concerned that openly supporting this position could cost support. But one can also interpret this to read that those that Saunders' defines as moderates were being moved to the left to accommodate newer more radical positions, thus acknowledging the newer groups were playing an important role in shaping the agenda and political direction of the VMC. However these actions can be interpreted, it is worth noting that Saunders does acknowledge a move to the left, though his appraisal of how and why is not commensurate with my interpretation.¹⁰⁰

THIRD MORATORIUM

In the build up to the third and final Moratorium the public meetings saw the radical effort gain more acceptance and their influence on the direction of the VMC movement become more obvious. This coincided with a change in the VMC structure that saw the existing secretariat replaced with a 23-member executive. This was elected at the sponsors meeting on the 29th of March.¹⁰¹ The office bearers included Cairns as Chairperson, McLean, Taft and Van Moorst as Vice-Chairpersons and Lloyd as Secretary. The established Left still held the key positions within this structure, but were still required to negotiate and debate their way through public meetings, where the radical groupings could still hold influence. This revamped structure, of what was formerly called the executive, the new delegates committee,

¹⁰⁰ *ibid*, pp 256 - 257.

allowed for more representation from the trade unions, and had two delegates from all VMC affiliates.¹⁰²

The influence of the Maoists was noticeable in this time. At a public meeting on April 4 they were able to win sufficient support to have their slogans included into the VMC's statement of strategy, to complement the VMC adopting the aims recommended at the February anti war conference. They also were able to convince the VMC, for the first time, to adopt an explicit written position on US domination of Australia and the need to oppose the Australian–American alliance.¹⁰³

Over a period of almost two months positions were argued and debated as to how the Third Moratorium would be organised. SDS sought a greater role for the local groups to organise (referred to elsewhere in this chapter), yet a compromise was reached with the Moratorium following the format of other states with three separate actions being conducted. There would be local activities on April 30, actions to win the support of the Churches and their congregations would be held on May 30, and the mass action in the city would be conducted on June 30.¹⁰⁴

The format of the June 30 demonstration brought forward debate on how it would be conducted. To avoid the confusion that had occurred during the previous Moratorium a structure of radial marches was put forward with the main rally outside the town hall in Swanston St and two other rallying points, which were at Melbourne University and the waterfront. Van Moorst moved an amendment that a third rallying point

¹⁰¹ Harry Van Moorst, interview, 19/3/99.

¹⁰² Saunders M., 1975, *op cit*, p 266; Harry van Moorst, interview,, 19/3/99.

¹⁰³ *ibid*, p 266; Vic. VMC resolutions, 4/4/71, Dalton Collection, in Riley and Ephemera Collection SLV.

would be at Parliament, and that, those rallying there, would then march down to join the main body at the Town Hall. After a rally there they would march up to Parliament and hear further speakers.¹⁰⁵ This did not resolve the issue. Despite the established groups accepting a compromise position of a number of rallying points, the radicals were not placated. Finally at the public meeting on June 7 a compromise was reached after acrimonious debate. Led by Albert Langer the radicals wanted to alter the focus of the demonstration. They argued that instead of marching on to parliament the rally should head to that symbol of US imperialism, the US consulate. As well as the support from the traditional Maoist oriented groupings such as WSA, Monash and Latrobe Labor clubs, there was support from Melbourne University SDS, members of the DRU, members of the Maoist influenced Diamond Valley Moratorium group and suprisingly the Trotskyite SYA. All were to varying degrees willing to support a position contrary to the original plans.¹⁰⁶

Eventually a compromise was reached, in which three separate marches would converge on the city-square and then march to Parliament House. The Maoists and those supportive of changes argued their position well enough to win sufficient concessions for changing the march format.¹⁰⁷ The march would also see the public appearances of four draft resisters who would appear in defiance of the state and challenge the power of the authorities to apprehend and silence them. If arrested these men faced up to eighteen months' jail. The more conservative elements of the VMC were concerned at this action. For them there were tactical considerations, more so than ideological questions. To go from not just openly advocating flouting of the law,

¹⁰⁴ *ibid.*, p 267; *Age*, 5/4/71.

¹⁰⁵ VMC minutes, General Committee Meeting, 31/5/71, Ralph and Dorothy Gibson Collection UMA.

¹⁰⁶ Saunders M., 1975, *op cit*, p268.

to actual public breeches of the law, could lead not only to damaging publicity, but a determined police effort to apprehend the wanted men and those publicly supporting them.¹⁰⁸

The third and final Moratorium on June 30 1971 once again saw the anti-Vietnam War movement mobilise large numbers of people, highlighted by the controversial appearance of four draft resisters (refer further to chapter 7). As with the two previous moratoriums demonstrators occupied the hub of Melbourne as they marched in from four different directions, taking over city streets and footpaths and occupying the city square. A crowd with a higher percentage of students and young people in attendance totaled almost 60,000 people.¹⁰⁹ The draft resisters addressed the crowd at the city square and then proceeded with the march up to parliament house, and then under the watchful gaze of fellow demonstrators were escorted back to the relative safety of Melbourne University, tailed by police vans the whole way. This last part of the rally experienced some problems. As the marchers gathered outside parliament house they were addressed by speakers including the well-known American paediatrician Dr Spock. Spock was to be the guest of honour at a dinner function straight after the conclusion of the march and after he had finished addressing the crowd John Lloyd called for the marchers to disperse. This jeopardised the position of the draft resisters whose security was guaranteed by the presence of the large crowd. After some hasty work a large enough percentage of the crowd remained together to provide the escort.

¹⁰⁷ *ibid*, p 268 VMC Minutes, General Committee Meeting, 7/6/71, Ralph and Dorothy Gibson Collection UMA.

¹⁰⁸ VMC Minutes, General Committee Meeting, 10/5/71, Ralph and Dorothy Gibson Collection UMA.

¹⁰⁹ Harry Van Moorst, interview, 19/3/99. Other estimates vary with Jim Cairns claiming 100,000 in the *Age*, 1/7/71, whilst at the lower end of the scale News Weekly estimated the crowd at being 15,000, refer to Saunders M., 1975, *op cit*, p 269.

The appearance of the draft resisters helped strengthen the links between opposition to the war in Vietnam and the issue of conscription for overseas service.

SUBURBAN REGIONAL BRANCHES

As a means of decentralising the Moratorium movement, suburban and regional branches were established. These were often based on existing branches of either the ALP or CICD.¹¹⁰ By April 1970 there were a total of fifty suburban groups established.¹¹¹ The idea of decentralising the Moratorium appears to have been generally supported, though there were some early concerns from within the ALP that these structures could threaten their local branches, though this position did not last long once ALP activists realised they could establish moratorium branches around their existing structures. Within the Maoist oriented groups there was also concerns about the role of local groups, particularly the belief that they could dilute the movements radicalism.¹¹²

Proponents of the move argued that it allowed more people to be involved on a level, where they felt comfortable and could network more efficiently. Rallies in local shopping centres on Saturday mornings would bring the importance and influence of the war back into the suburbs. Proponents of the local groups felt "By its very nature suburban activity and locally based activity tends to be broader by its political nature than centralised work. You need the dynamic between the centralised and decentralised. I don't think the Moratorium would have happened as a mass

¹¹⁰ CICD had local networks in place since 1960. Refer Button J., 1989, *Vietnam and the Rise of Middle Class Protest Australia 1966 – 1972*. BA Hons. Melbourne University, Parkville, p25.

¹¹¹ Murphy J., *op cit*, p257.

mobilisation of 100,000 people if you hadn't had the decentralised activities".¹¹³ A similar view was expressed that,

The groups were very effective in getting people who were coming around, who may in fact have believed the propaganda at the start but were starting to see that the war was wrong. The suburban groups got these people involved and gave them something to do where they felt they were achieving something to the ultimate end.¹¹⁴

Local groups also took novel approaches to political questions, using new methods to publicise the struggle. The Carlton Moratorium group distributed leaflets in Italian and Greek to shoppers and stall-holders at Victoria Market. At a time when very little material on the Left was being translated into languages other than English, this helped spread the message to a wider audience.¹¹⁵

One of the better known and more vigorous groups was located in Moorabbin, which was closely aligned to CICD and containing active stalwarts of the peace movement such as Dorothy and Les Dalton. "We put an ad in the local paper, *The Standard*, and our local group was established in our living room. Along came these people we never knew and that showed there was a level of concern in the community. We changed public opinion on the issue and that was sparked by the Moratorium".¹¹⁶ They subsequently established a strong network throughout their area and with an established core of 20 people were active in distribution of leaflets, organising speakers and highlighting the issue to their local community.¹¹⁷

¹¹² *ibid*, p257, Van Moorst H., *op cit*, p22.

¹¹³ Andrew Hewett, interview, 3/6/99.

¹¹⁴ Kevin Healy, interview, 20/12/98.

¹¹⁵ *Moratorium News*, June 1970.

¹¹⁶ Dorothy and Les Dalton, interview, 16/4/99.

Of the newer groups SDS (and their post student replacement Radical Action Movement RAM) supported the concept of the decentralised suburban groupings. They argued it would be harder for the state to crack down on these, they would provide VMC with more and broader contacts and offered more varied and versatile approaches to mobilise around.¹¹⁸ They believed that local groups could produce a more aware movement and one that would provide the nuclei for a strong network for social change, once the issues of Vietnam and conscription for overseas service had been resolved. This position was argued from late 1970 onwards. They suggested that despite the rhetoric to the contrary, the VMC executive were lacking in their support for suburban branches and had a preference for centralisation and direct control. There was also an implicit criticism of the Maoist groupings, alleging that they preferred large, confrontational demonstrations and violent conflict with the forces of the state.¹¹⁹

The position opposing decentralisation was that it would break down the mass strength of the movement and also that the suburban groupings were very much controlled by the established organisations. For the Maoist influenced groupings the political question of a large militant Moratorium movement, challenging US imperialism and demanding victory for the NLF, was the primary issue. They saw small suburban groupings as a diversion from large mass demonstrations designed to radicalise the masses and raise both political questions and political consciousness.

¹¹⁷ Dorothy and Les Dalton, interview, 16/4/90, also John Ellis, interview, 13/5/99.

¹¹⁸ Undated SDS leaflet, (circa 1971) *Moratorium from Protest to Resistance*, Riley and Ephemera collection SLV; Saunders M., 1975, *op cit*, pp 266 - 267.

¹¹⁹ *Troll*, May 1971.

This was also a view shared to a degree by the SYA, who were supportive of large demonstrations as a way of radicalising people.¹²⁰

The zenith of the local groups was undoubtedly during April 1971 when decentralised activities were held as a way of publicising and preparing for the June 30 Moratorium. April was the month when local groups would begin the lead up to the start of the third Moratorium, commencing April 30 with suburban demonstrations. Sunday May 30 would see activities by the churches and their members. Thus, instead of local events having a life of their own and being used as a springboard to build ongoing local rallies, they were preliminary activities tailored for the lead up to the June 30 moratorium. After this event their role tended to decline corresponding with the decline in the number of participants at VMC sponsored demonstrations and events. Some groups such as the Moorabbin local group remained strong vibrant based community organisations taking on board various struggles and causes, others disappeared and other individuals who were active in their suburban VMC grouping drifted back to focusing on activities involving their local ALP or CICD branches.

THE ROLE OF THE TRADE UNIONS

As discussed earlier in this thesis the trade union movement in Victoria was divided, throughout the period. The support provided to the Moratorium movement was predominantly from the 'Rebel Unions'.¹²¹ The Victorian Trades Hall Council (VTHC)

¹²⁰ Harry Van Moorst, interview, 19/3/99.

¹²¹ *Age*, 18/4/70. The Left of the Victorian ALP had strong links with the 'Rebel Unions', with State ALP president George Crawford being an office bearer with the Victorian Branch of the Plumbers and Gasfitters Employees Union (PGEU), his predecessor Bill Brown being an office bearer with the Victorian Branch of the Federated Furnishing Trades Society (FFTS). This was the same Union, which

was antagonistic to the VMC approach, and quite a number of its affiliated unions were hostile to the aims, alleging the VMC was a vehicle used by communists to establish a dominance in South east Asia.¹²² The VTHC was not alone in being opposed to the VMC with the trade union movement Australia wide being divided over whether or not to support the VMC. The Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) was to vote 9 –8 in favour of supporting the first Moratorium at a time when its six affiliated bodies were equally divided three all, in their position on the Moratorium.¹²³

An example of the antipathy felt in Victoria by the official trade union movement toward the VMC is probably best exemplified by the actions of VTHC Secretary Ken Stone telling Dr Jim Cairns to keep out of VTHC business, when Cairns spoke of Union support for the VMC.¹²⁴

Separate to the 'Rebel Unions', there were five unions affiliated to the VTHC who took a public stance in support of the Moratorium. The Amalgamated Postal Workers Union (APWU), the Building Workers Industrial Union (BWIU), the Food Preservers Union (FPU) and the Federated Storeman and Packers Union (FSPU) were all sponsors to an ad placed in the *Sun* on April 28 calling on their members to stop work to attend the rally.¹²⁵ The APWU and the Association of Architects, Engineers, Surveyors and Draughtsmen (AAESD) of Australia were also affiliates to the VMC.¹²⁶

the Secretary of the 'Rebel Unions', Ken Carr was drawn from. The Victorian ALP State Executive was at this stage under the control of the Left, including the ALP affiliated Rebel Unions. Parkin A. & Warhurst S., (ed), *Machine Politics in the Australian Labour Party*, Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 1993

¹²² Saunders M., Trade Union Opposition to Vietnam and conscription 1965–1973, *Labour History*, No 43, November 1982, p 74.

¹²³ *Age*, 3/3/70.

¹²⁴ *Herald*, 13/4/70; *Age*, 14/4/70 .

¹²⁵ *Sun*, 28/4/70.

¹²⁶ Saunders M., 1975, *op cit* ,Table 11.

The bulk of 'Rebel Union' support appeared to come from the maritime, building and manufacturing unions. There was also support offered by the public transport unions, in particular the ATMOEA. This Union under the guidance of CPAML stalwart Clarrie O'Shea had members march behind the union banner, and the branch executive moved militant motions calling for class struggle to end the conflict in Vietnam by forcing out all foreign troops and supporting the Vietnamese peoples right to self determination. Members at Preston Depot also moved a motion naming and condemning US imperialism as the driving force behind the conflict in Vietnam.¹²⁷ Amongst the manufacturing unions the AEU was particularly prominent with their status and role enhanced by the activities of Laurie Carmichael. Such was their level of involvement that they affiliated their state council and 15 of their suburban branches to the VMC.¹²⁸

A full time union organiser dedicated to the Moratorium was elected to provide a link between these unions and the VMC.¹²⁹ However there were times when the support was qualified and criticism was provided of the VMC's tactics. Ken Carr had problems with the concept of the sit-down stating, "I don't agree personally with sitting down in the street. I don't think it achieves anything".¹³⁰ Nonetheless a few days later Carr had changed his position and was able to ensure the VMC of their support for the sit-down.¹³¹

¹²⁷ Refer *Tramway Record*, May and July 1970.

¹²⁸ Saunders M., 1982, *op cit*, p74. It also allowed the AEU greater voting rights.

¹²⁹ Button J., *op cit*, p 23.

¹³⁰ *Age*, 20/4/70.

¹³¹ *Age*, 28/4/70.

The May 8 Moratorium saw the SUA stop work for 24 hours in support of the day and members of the Waterside Workers Federation (WWF) stop for 3 to 4 hours.¹³² There were also stoppages in the manufacturing and construction industries.¹³³ At the second National consultation there was the urging of the establishment of joint action committees to further publicise activities, and involve rank and file unionists.¹³⁴

The second Moratorium again saw an active level of trade union support. Again the most active support was from the SUA whose members stopped work for the day.¹³⁵ Members of the WWF stopped for the afternoon. In the meat industry the Australasian Meat Employees Industry Union (AMIEU) announced that 15 major workplaces had stopped in support of the Moratorium. There were also some stoppages in the manufacturing industry, but there was a concern that a number of workplaces that had been involved in recent stoppages were not willing to stop. As well there were also concerns that some Left union officials were not pushing the issue hard enough for fear of alienating support for the ALP.¹³⁶

An area where the unions had a positive role was in pressuring the print media for better coverage of the Moratorium and other anti-Vietnam War actions. Jim Fraser recalls a large demonstration outside the Herald and Weekly Times Building, and a deputation of unionists led by Jim Cairns met with the editor. The editor was informed that as most of the print paper came from Tasmania the members of the

¹³² Saunders M., 1982, *op cit*, p 73.

¹³³ *Tribune*, 26/5/70 It was estimated that 40% of AEU members favoured stopping, but in practice the results were patchy. It is hard to obtain clear figures for what level of workers stopped work on the day

¹³⁴ Agenda item 12, VMC 2nd National Consultation, 26-27/5/70.

¹³⁵ *Tribune*, 8/7/70 Between the 1st and 2nd moratoriums SUA members manning tug boats stopped work for 24 hours to coincide with the July 4 demonstration.

¹³⁶ *Tribune*, 23/9/70, 30/9/70.

SUA would ban it if the coverage did not improve. Fraser claims there was a marked improvement from that point.¹³⁷

The anti-war conference in Sydney in February 1971 had resolved to seek more working class involvement.¹³⁸ At the conference a motion proposed by Laurie Carmichael suggested: "That the whole anti-war movement make the main direction of its activities towards achieving a forthright effort at all levels of the working class and the labor movement for mass consciousness and actions for aims. The main slogan directed to the workers and the labor movement for their participation in anti-Vietnam War action was 'Stop work to stop the war', with all necessary varieties of action enlisted to lead to the goal of a mass political strike. The movement to establish the close connection between the Moratorium aims and the daily issues of immediate concern to working people."¹³⁹ This coincided with a push from SDS to have the local and regional groups make contacts with local factories and workshops as part of the way of involving more workers and strengthening the local activities.¹⁴⁰ This theme of stopping work to stop the war, with its aim of more worker involvement continued on at the third and last big moratorium of June 30 1971

MORATORIUM DECLINE 1971/1972

During 1971-1972 the presence and influence of the VMC declined. Contributing to the decline were; the withdrawal of Australian troops from the conflict; the US government desire to 'Vietnamise' the war: and the fact that a Federal election was

¹³⁷ Quoted in Langley G., *op cit*, p 129.

¹³⁸ York B., 1983-84, *op cit*, p 36.

¹³⁹ Saunders M., 1975, *op cit*, pp 256-257.

looming. The focus also began to expand beyond those related to the conflict. Young radical anti-Vietnam War activists were to spend time with other issues, such as the big anti-Springbok demonstrations of July 1971, the continuing anti-conscription fight, and smaller anti-Vietnam War demonstrations.

During 1971-72 the VMC remained the peak anti-Vietnam War body in Victoria. Though other state branches folded or became irrelevant, in Victoria the VMC continued on.¹⁴¹ It remained the only body able to organise and rally large numbers of people for anti-Vietnam War activities. Though the June 30 Moratorium was the last of its kind the VMC continued to agitate for issues pertaining to the war and to conscription. There were unsuccessful efforts by members of the CPA and CICD to wind up the VMC; but rather than hand control over to the newer groups they remained involved, albeit in a reduced manner.¹⁴² Whilst the large attendances of the three Moratoriums were never reached again, there were further large militant anti-Vietnam War demonstrations organised right up until 1974.

The VMC continued to remain active working alongside the DRU and SOS in the struggle to end conscription for overseas service. Activities including a blockade of the Department of Labour and National Service on December 3 1971 as well as active participation and support in the Summer Offensive, during the summer of 1971-72. Throughout 1972 further demonstrations were held, the biggest being on April 21 where between 10,000 and 12,000 demonstrators marched on the US Consulate, where they burnt effigies of US politicians, and the US flag. US corporations also

¹⁴⁰ Van Moorst H., *op cit*, pp 26-27.

¹⁴¹ Murphy J., *op cit*, p 268; Saunders M., 1975, *op cit*, p 317.

¹⁴² Van Moorst H., *op cit*, pp 31-32.

found their offices attacked and property damaged by protesters though these actions were not sanctioned or supported by the VMC.

Early in May there were a series of violent clashes as a response to the decision of Nixon to increase his aerial onslaught in response to a new North Vietnamese offensive. Around the country at demonstrations in May violence flared as the US Consulate and offices of a number of US corporations were attacked. On May 10, in Melbourne, a crowd of 2,000 people gathered in the City Square and marched through the city streets, stoning the offices of Pan Am on their way. On May 12 demonstrators marched to the US Consulate and were blocked by a group of some 60 police. They then proceeded to march back into the city heading for the Pan Am building, which had been boarded up in expectation of trouble. In scenes reminiscent of the July 4 demonstrations, demonstrators and police clashed.¹⁴³ This drew an angry backlash from Cairns critical of those whom he felt had betrayed the peace movement, by acting in a violent and destructive manner.¹⁴⁴ To counter the negative publicity a demonstration was conducted on May 19. Cairns made requests to the State ALP Branch and the supportive unions to ensure the day went smoothly and violence did not flare up.¹⁴⁵ The day went smoothly enough as the 8,000 demonstrators marched through the streets of Melbourne and conducted a sit-down at the intersection of Bourke and Swanston Streets. Saunders saw this as being the end of the large- scale

¹⁴³ *Age* 13/5/72 In response to the clashes with police on May 12, Harry Van Moorst issues a civil summons against the police officer in charge Superintendent Hickey. He charged Hickey with, "behaving in a riotous manner in Collins St on May 12", and also with, "having by violence, threats and intimidation, hindered and interfered with the free exercise and performance of the political rights of other persons contrary to Section 28 of the Commonwealth Crimes Act." Not suprisingly Hickey was found to be not guilty however he did not wish to pursue costs.

¹⁴⁴ Saunders M., 1975, *op cit*, pp 329 –337. In terms of Cairns positions Saunders quotes from reports in Adelaide paper the *Advertiser* and the *Sydney Morning Herald* that alleged Cairns was about to resign from the VMC, s statement Cairns disputes in a letter to Saunders. refer to Saunders footnotes p 191.

¹⁴⁵ *Age*, 18/5/72.

street activities, claiming that the moderates felt that they could no longer control the radicals and also Cairns was intimating that there would be fewer marches in the future. For Cairns there was a view that other tactics would be required as well.¹⁴⁶ Though it was not explicitly stated, the desire to support the election of a new federal government loomed large.

Saunders appears to contradict himself as he initially talks of the established forces, reasserting their influence by ensuring that the day went smoothly and then talks about how dispirited they were at their inability to control the newer radical groupings. Though they might have felt dispirited and despondent at these actions, they were still not able to either totally dismantle or gain control over the VMC structure.

For the rest of the year the public presence of the anti-Vietnam War movement was very low key. Surprisingly, in some ways, in the light of the 1966 Federal election fiasco, there was an emphasis on electing the ALP to the seats of parliamentary power. Yet within the VMC radical politics continued to be pursued. For example there was the re-emergence of the demand for medical aid to the NLF as well as demands to remove all US bases from Australian soil.¹⁴⁷ Demonstrations still occurred, though intermittently and not on a large scale.

The final VMC public meeting was conducted on December 7 1972, shortly after the Federal election. There was satisfaction that the change of Federal Government would mean an end to Australian military involvement in Vietnam and an end to the

¹⁴⁶ Saunders M., 1975, *op cit*, p 337.

dilemmas facing those eligible for or avoiding conscription; but the reality was that the conflict in Vietnam was not yet resolved. The meeting sought to have a delegation from Vietnam be invited to Australia, called for a campaign to end the presence of US bases in Australia, and passed a series of demands on the new government.¹⁴⁸

The election of the Whitlam and the withdrawal of the last Australian troops saw the VMC's influence and relevance decline substantially. The bombing of dykes in North Vietnam in late December was greeted by a VMC demonstration on New Year's Eve.¹⁴⁹

IMPACT OF THE VMC ON THE ANTI-VIETNAM WAR MOVEMENT IN VICTORIA

The VMC changed not just the nature of opposition to the war, but how the left could mobilise large numbers of people. A coalition representing the full extent of the Left, often prone to severe ideological debate and disagreement, nonetheless brought thousands of people onto the streets to express their viewpoints, which were contrary to both the government and political orthodoxy of the day. A shift had occurred and the VMC had been a key to this process. This success was reflected in the words of a participant.

[There was] A lot of tension which ultimately proved constructive between those who wanted a radical militant demonstration, the student types, and those who wanted to make it respectable, so as not to alienate the suburban mums and dads they saw as being essential to make up the numbers. It proved successful because these tensions were ultimately well

¹⁴⁷ VMC minutes, General Committee Meeting, 25/9/72, and 9/10/72, Ralph and Dorothy Gibson Collection, UMA.

¹⁴⁸ Van Moorst H., *op cit*, p 33.

¹⁴⁹ *ibid*, p 47.

managed and I think, Jim Cairns, not only Jim Cairns of course, played quite a role in the movement as chairperson.¹⁵⁰

The first Moratorium was the largest demonstration in the history of Victoria, up to that point, and surpassed all expectations of its organisers. Even though the attendances at the next two moratoriums were smaller, they still saw large turnouts of people who sought either an end to the war or the defeat of the South Vietnamese regime and its international backers.

In hindsight participants viewed the VMC as successful. To Harry Van Moorst, "the Moratorium represented the culmination of the shift from Old Left to New Left politics".¹⁵¹ Bernie Taft, in acknowledging its great success, claims the reason was, "without the cooperation between the CPA and Jim Cairns the moratorium would not have happened. The Maoists were tiny. I don't think the Maoist influence pushed the movement to the left".¹⁵² Yet he also states;

We were able to keep the Maoists in check without confronting them or driving them out and we managed to do that, we found a way of militant attitude which reflected the feeling of young people, without going to the extremes of the Maoists.¹⁵³

This is different to the view expressed by other participants, for example, Kerrie Miller and Harry Van Moorst, that the newer Left groups, not just those influenced by Maoism, moved the VMC in a leftward direction.¹⁵⁴

In examining the political relationship within the anti war movement throughout this period, not solely the moratorium, it is fair to say the emergence of the newer, radical

¹⁵⁰ Bob Muntz, interview, 14/12/98.

¹⁵¹ Harry Van Moorst, interview, 19/3/99.

¹⁵² Bernie Taft, interview, 18/2/99.

¹⁵³ Bernie Taft, interview, 18/2/99.

¹⁵⁴ Kerrie Miller, interview, 2/2/99 and Harry Van Moorst, interview, 19/3/99.

groups, led to a move to the left. Certainly the move to the left was not far enough to always satisfy the radicals, yet the movement took on radical stances that the peace movement would not have even contemplated in the middle of the 1960's.

The ability of the VMC to mobilise large numbers of people to occupy city streets, to have large scale sit-downs, allow draft resisters to address their rallies, and also to take open positions condemning US imperialism, were just some of the areas where the pressure of the radicals succeeded in taking the VMC to the left. Whether the VMC took these positions to outflank the more extreme positions of some of the radicals is not the point. Rather the VMC, even with the numerical strength of the established peace movement, found itself moving in a direction that had hitherto not been thought either desirable or possible.

Even if writers such as Murphy or Saunders consider this represents a 'victory' for the moderates, it is at best a compromised victory. An organisation which had been established to retain control of the anti-Vietnam War movement in the hands of the established peace movement became a forum for intense ideological debate over tactics and strategies, and a vehicle which managed to mobilise and radicalise large numbers of people.

The VMC provided a united front that worked cooperatively despite major, ideological, strategic and tactical differences. The VMC in Victoria was to be the most successful of any state, and the size of the crowds at the three major Moratoriums indicated the ability to win people over to take action on this pressing issue. Though Saunders is correct in stating that the increased influence of the radicals

coincided with the decline of numerical support for the VMC, this can more accurately be seen as a result of changing circumstances. The desires of many people to focus on the election of the Federal ALP in 1972, together with the lessening of an Australian military presence in the conflict, all contributed to a decrease in the size and support of the moratorium and its activities. It is misleading to suggest that the influence of the radicals was the reason that public support dwindled. The situation is more complex than that, with all of the above listed factors contributing to the declining active support on the streets of Melbourne.

Despite the reality being that the established Left had control of the VMC it was constantly required to compromise, having to move to the Left simply to respond to the radicals. If they had not adopted this approach there was a risk of a split in the VMC and the possibility that the radicals would aim to win support on the basis that they had been excluded and driven out of the VMC.

The other contentious statement of Saunders is that the VMC should be seen as a separate entity to the anti-Vietnam War movement. To my mind this remains an unusual way to perceive these developments.¹⁵⁵ Surely a VMC comprising all the groups active in the anti-Vietnam War movement, raising and taking stances on a multiplicity of war related issues such as conscription and the role of US imperialism, should not be viewed as separate or detached from the anti-Vietnam War movement.

In the light of the events of the period one can see a pattern in the relationship between the established groupings and the newer groupings, within the anti-Vietnam

¹⁵⁵ Saunders, M, 1975, *op cit*, p 2.

War movement. The VMC, whilst always being numerically controlled by the established groups, never had a homogeneous political flavour. The newer more radical groups were always seeking to move the boundaries further to the left, and a fluidity of alliances existed within the VMC, allowing groupings like SDS to align themselves at times with Monash Labor Club, at other times with the more established groups.¹⁵⁶ The end result was a mass movement that mobilised on the streets of Melbourne more people than the Left had ever managed to mobilise before, and to capture public attention on the Vietnam War.

¹⁵⁶ This theme can be seen in sections of the chapter with SDS and the Monash Labor Club, being together in the early phase of the VMC, determined to provide a radical counter, to the established groups who wished to limit or negate their presence. Yet SDS, unlike the Monash Labor Club, could also align with the more established groups in setting up suburban branches.

CHAPTER 7

"WE WON'T GO":

THE ANTI-CONSCRIPTION MOVEMENT 1967-1972

INTRODUCTION

The issue of young Australian men being conscripted to fight abroad dates back to the early part of the twentieth century, with the two bitterly contested anti-conscription campaigns conducted during World War One, in 1916 and 1917. These two referendums rejected the Governments' efforts to conscript young Australian males aged between 21 and 34 to fight on the battlefields of Western Europe.¹ The outcome of these referendums reflected an early Australian antipathy to the concept of compulsory military service, which can be traced back to the pre World War One campaigns opposing compulsory youth conscription under the Commonwealth Defence Bill.²

With the introduction of the National Services Act (NSA) into Federal Parliament on November 10 1964, the issue of young Australian males being conscripted for overseas service returned to the political agenda. The scheme allowed for a selective up of 20 year old males for a period of 2 years. The selectivity was determined by a

¹ Hamel-Green M, 'The Resisters: a history of the anti-conscription movement in Australia 1964-1972', in King P.(ed), *Australia's Vietnam*, Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 1983, p100. Jauncey LC., *The Story of conscription in Australia*, Macmillan, South Melbourne, 1968, pp 156-335, Forward R. & Reece B., *Conscription in Australia*, University of Queensland Press, Santa Lucia, 1968, pp 32-44.

ballot of birth dates, which determined who would be eligible for conscription.³ Initial opposition was exemplified best by Youth Campaign Against Conscription (YCAC) and Save Our Sons (SOS). The Victorian branch of YCAC was formed at a meeting of 40 people at the Young Labour Association (YLA) on August 22 1965.⁴ Not long after anti-conscription committees were established at Melbourne and Monash Universities. Protests and discussions were organised, and acts of civil disobedience included a rally of 70 people outside the house of Prime Minister Holt at which three conscripts publicly burnt their draft cards.⁵ YCAC concentrated its energy on seeking the election of an Australian Labour Party (ALP) government in the 1966 Federal elections; however, once that failed to eventuate, YCAC dissolved, its fortunes having been intertwined with the strategy of electing an ALP government. As one draft resister stated, "YCAC was a very general campaign, but to the best of my memory they did not advocate a course of defiance".⁶ His comments are mirrored by a colleague who recalls YCAC as, "a bit of a Labor party front that was only active, [I think] to the 1966 election and collapsed not long after that".⁷ YCAC's strong ALP links, with the majority of its membership, and its Victorian leadership being either ALP supporters or members;⁸ did not appear to prepare it well for what to do after the 1966 Federal election disaster. That result saw the LCP government returned with 50 % of the vote and 82 of the 124 seats in the House of Representatives; the ALP received only 39% of the vote and 41 seats in their worst showing since the 1906

² Jauncey LC., *ibid*, pp 53–62; His book covers extensively the issue of the early compulsory military training program and the Referendums of 1916 - 1917.

³ Hamel-Green M., in King P.(ed), *op cit*, p101.

⁴ *ibid*, p207.

⁵ *Tribune* 30/3/66.

⁶ Tony Dalton, interview, 11/3/99.

⁷ Bob Muntz, interview, 14/12/98.

⁸ Guyatt G., 'The Anti-Conscription Movement', 1964 –1966 in Forward R. & Reece B.(eds.), *op cit*, p 178; Summy R., 'A Reply to Fred Wells', *ibid*, p213.

Federal election.⁹ Though YCAC remained as an active, though smaller, entity in 1967, it had effectively disappeared by 1968

PRELIMINARY ACTIONS

Thus for a brief period in 1967 the only organisations publicly prominent in opposing conscription for overseas service were SOS, the Federal Pacifist Council of Australia, (FPC) and the Australian Quaker Peace Committee (AQPC).

In this void SOS was able to offer an ongoing opposition to the war. SOS, with its adult female membership, fitted uneasily into being categorised as either part of the established left or the newer more radical groupings. Whilst not being party aligned, SOS managed to portray a respectable image, even though at certain times it found itself taking confrontationist positions and pushing the bounds of civil disobedience.¹⁰

Over the period of opposition to the war the organisation saw its political stance develop from one which was not politically aligned, to a period where it saw it self fairly closely aligned to the ALP and retaining strong ALP links. It adopted an early position (1968) supporting the use of civil disobedience.¹¹ An SOS publication argued that, " We feel the situation is so desperate, that civil disobedience is our only course".¹²

⁹ Saunders M. & Summy R., *The Australian Peace Movement: A short history*, Peace Research Centre, Australian National University, Canberra, 1986 p 61.

¹⁰ Though some key members were either ALP members or became ALP members such as Jean McLean and Joanne MacLaine-Cross.

¹¹ Armstrong P., *A History of Save Our Sons Movement of Victoria, 1965-1973*, MA, Monash University, Clayton, 1991, pp 179-181.

¹² *ibid*, p140, *SOS Newsletter* No 26, March 1968.

Its structure was one devoid of traditional hierarchical positions, in which women were coopted or invited on to the committee. Jean McLean, one of the better known and more visible faces of SOS, was to be its secretary from 1966, one of the few official positions within this loose structure.¹³

The FPC was a body established in the early part of World War 2. Its origins can be traced back to June 1942 when the small diverse pacifist groups in Australia sought a centralised structure to coordinate their activities.¹⁴ They were the Australian section of the War Resisters International, a body formed in 1921 and established in line with a strong pacifist stand. Throughout the early period of the Vietnam War the FPC were prominent in circulating and publicising anti war issues through a monthly publication, *Peacemaker*, as well as actively supporting actions organised against the war and conscription. The FPC's membership and support base was made up predominantly of older people, many of who were motivated by religious factors.¹⁵

The AQPC were not strictly political in the sense that it appeared to have explicit political goals. Rather it was a religious grouping whose history of pacifism can be traced back to 1660. Their membership consisted of those who had been admitted to the Society of Friends, and the AQPC, coordinated activities in all states of Australia, bar New South Wales. Their stance on why conscription should be opposed is summed up eloquently in a leaflet they issued entitled, *Conscription, why it is wrong!*:

¹³ Armstrong P., *ibid*, p17, pp 186-187.

¹⁴ Saunders M. & Summy R., *op cit*, p 31.

¹⁵ Guyatt C., in Forward R., and Reece B.(eds.), *op cit*, pp 184-185.

Because it is essentially an enforced training of young men to kill their fellow man. It trains them in habits of Violence and inculcates wrong values. It is a negation of those religious principles to which we claim adherence as a Christian nation.¹⁶

Despite the lack of concerted organisational opposition in 1967, a number of individuals were prominent in publicly refusing to register for conscription for overseas service. January –February 1967 saw the registration period for males turning twenty in that year. For those who failed to comply there was the prospect of two years jail as punishment. In Victoria, Errol Heldzingen and in New South Wales Chris Campbell and Mike Matteson took public stances on refusing to be drafted and made both the authorities and public aware of their stance.¹⁷ These three followed in the footsteps of the Sydney school teacher Bill White who had defied a notice on July 18 1966 which directed that he report for duty at an army induction centre. White, a conscientious objector, was incarcerated, but eventually convinced the courts of his status as a conscientious objector. His refusal to cooperate drew strong publicity and support, highlighting the injustices of the scheme and stood in contrast to YCAC's approach, which had focussed primarily on electoral campaigns aimed at changing the federal Government.¹⁸ The actions of these young men inspired others who now decided to take a stronger stand. "The point at which I became a draft resister rather than someone simply opposed to the Vietnam War was late in 1967. Inspired by the actions of individuals such as Errol Heldzingen, Mike Matteson and Bill White I started resisting and said I would refuse any further cooperation with the state".¹⁹ Heldzingen, who later found himself in the armed forces was a prominent figure in this time. Heldzingen, who had been involved with the Communist Party of Australia's (CPA) youth wing, the Eureka Youth League (EYL), found himself attending the anti-

¹⁶ *Conscription, why it is wrong!* undated leaflet quoted in *ibid*, pp 182-183.

¹⁷ Hamel-Green M., in King P.(ed), *op cit*, p 111.

¹⁸ *ibid*, p 100.

war demonstrations and developing a political line supporting the National Liberation Front of Vietnam (NLF). When he was called up he refused and became an early non-complier.²⁰

It was during this period that the differences in the opposition to conscription from overseas service started to crystalise. For more radical activist orientated newer groupings there was a confrontationist approach. For the established bodies of the Left there was initially a reliance on conscientious objection and the use of tactics that the peace movement had perfected over the last decade: peaceful rallies, petitions, and appeals to conscience. How these converged and were related to and influenced each other will be the central focus of this chapter. First the established Left groups approach to conscription will be examined followed by their newer more radical counterparts.

CONSCRIPTION AND THE ESTABLISHED LEFT

The practice of the established Left in supporting conscientious objectors was already well established by 1967. As far back as 1964, not long after Menzies' announcement of conscription for overseas service, the CPA was already taking a public stance. In a leaflet entitled *Conscription What For* they argued against conscription for overseas service and on this basis urged a vote against the Menzies Government in the Senate

¹⁹ Michael Hamel-Green, interview, 10/4/99. Mike Matteson was an anarchist and draft resister active in Sydney during this time.

²⁰ Errol Heldzingen, interview, 20/12/98.

elections of December 5 1964.²¹ Not long after Mavis Robertson wrote in the *Communist Review* an article called the 'Conscription Lottery', claiming that many different groups including the trade unions, pacifists, the EYL and churches were working to oppose conscription for overseas service.²² She went on to state, "Actions against the war in Vietnam and for a solution to the Malaysia -Indonesia crisis should include action against conscription for overseas service."²³ An article by Eric Fry in *Australian Left Review* from late 1966 is an early reflection of the CPA's position on the issue. He discusses compulsory military service on Australian soil as not being a good thing or a bad thing but to be judged on its circumstances, purposes and effects. He draws the comparison between the current (1966) opposition to conscription and the big struggles of 1916/17, emphasising in both cases that conscription serves imperialism. To Fry the key to the contemporary conscription debate was that conscription served the interest of US imperialism at the expense of Australia's national development. For good measure he sought to draw on the legacy of earlier anti conscription campaigns and claimed, "A strong and deep seated Australian tradition opposes it".²⁴ Unions influenced by the CPA also took active stances in this period.

The Amalgamated Engineering Union (AEU) which was to maintain a strong position on the issue of conscription came out in early 1966 supporting the actions of YCAC and YCAC members who burnt their draft cards as a protest action. They made a donation of \$100 to YCAC and organised actions to take place outside courthouses

²¹ *Conscription What for?* CPA leaflet circa 11/64, held in Ralph and Dorothy Gibson collection UMA.

²² Robertson M., 'The Conscription Lottery', *Communist Review*, April 1965, pp 73-75.

²³ *ibid*, p 75.

²⁴ Fry E., *Conscription Then and Now*, *Australian Left Review*, Oct-Nov 1966 No 3

where draft card burners were being prosecuted.²⁵ One example of these actions was the decision to conduct an extraordinary meeting of the Union's Melbourne District Committee outside of Carlton Court House, where a young anti-conscription activist, Andy Blunden, was facing charges of burning his draft card. Though Blunden was not a member of the AEU, this action was symbolic of their early support for this struggle.²⁶

The Victorian Branch of the ALP took a strong stance in the period 1965 - 1966, coinciding with the emergence of YCAC. Motions opposing conscription for overseas service and drawing the links with the war in South East Asia were passed at ALP state conferences as early as June 1965.²⁷ Their colleagues in the YLA had also made their anti-conscription stance clear as far back as 1964, with a motion stating;

That the Federal executive be advised that it is the opinion of this body that the Australian Labor Party should continue to oppose compulsory military call up or compulsory national service training.²⁸

Just as staunch in their opposition was the Victorian ALP's Womens Central Organising Committee whose resolutions on the issue were endorsed and passed at the Victorian ALP's central Executive Meeting conducted on July 16 1965. They resolved that;

(1) This conference of labor Women strongly protests against the sending of regular troops and the proposed sending of conscripted youth to fight in Vietnam.

²⁵ *Age*, 7/4/66.

²⁶ *Tribune*, 20/4/66.

²⁷ Scates R., *Draftsmen Go Free: A History of the Anti-Conscription Movement in Australian*, pp 16–17, Papers ALP State Conference, ALP manuscript Collection SLV.

²⁸ Motion passed at YLA Quarterly conference 1964 and submitted and endorsed at Victorian ALP state Central Executive Meeting 16/10/64, ALP CEM folder 1/3 held in ALP manuscript collection at the SLV.

(2) Conference calls on the Womens Central Organising Committee to organise a public protest campaign against the present system of conscription and also ask every woman present to assist in the campaign.²⁹

The ALP as a national organisation had a public position opposing conscription for overseas service, as articulated through the 1966 Federal election campaign, and going back as far as its split during the First World War. Its position changed after the 1966 election and the subsequent replacement of Calwell as leader by the more conservative Gough Whitlam. This saw the advent of a more cautious position, constantly influenced by the opinion polls. However the focus here will be predominantly on the Victorian Branch. There was from this point a fairly consistent anti conscription position maintained within the Branch. Within the Victorian branch anti-conscriptionists held different viewpoints ranging from those who supported conscientious objection regarding a particular war, to those who were prepared to be seen with draft resisters publicly burning draft cards.³⁰ One of the more publicised examples of the Victorian Branch being opposed to conscription was its active role in seeking the release of John Zarb from Pentridge.³¹

The case of John Zarb became a 'cause de celebre' for the established Left. Zarb had sought conscientious objection status but had been rejected on November 2 1967. He subsequently refused his call up notice on December 4 that year and a second call up notice on July 4 1968. A further call up on October 3 was disregarded and Zarb found himself in court on October 14 1968, and ended up sentenced to 18 months in

²⁹ Motion passed at ALP Womens Central organising Committee meeting, and submitted and endorsed at the State Central Executive meeting conducted on 2/7/65. At the Central executive meeting the mover and seconder were Messrs Hartley and Johnson. ALP CeM folder 1/4, held in ALP Manuscript collection at the SLV.

³⁰ *Downdraft*, p45.

³¹ Press release issued by Bill Hartley, Victorian ALP branch, on 11/8/69. The press release also includes a statement from Federal Secretary, Joe Chamberlain. John Zarb had been a young postman jailed for refusing to obey his call up notice. Zarb ended up serving 10 months before his release. ALP manuscript collection SLV.

Pentridge. Zarb was to enjoy a large groundswell of support.³² The established left took on board his case and was involved in a lengthy legal struggle to keep him out of jail. The state branch of the ALP, Congress for International Cooperation and Disarmament (CICD), trade unions led by the AEU;³³ and Zarb's own union the Australian Postal and Telegraphists Union (APTU), along with other members of the established peace movement, all became involved.³⁴ An appeal to the Federal High Court failed and ongoing solidarity acts were organised to keep Zarb's plight public, drawing attention to the broader anti conscription struggle. As young radicals moved from protest to resistance, these actions by sections of the established peace movement saw them start to build closer links with the newer radical groupings. Subsequently as the young radicals moved from protest to resistance, sections of the established peace movement also began to take a stronger stance.³⁵

In November 1968 a Campaign for Conscience on Conscription was established. The driving forces behind this body were CICD and the traditional Left organisations such as the ALP, CPA and the 'Rebel Unions'. Their aim was to support the right to be able to hold a conscientious objection to a particular war, in this case the Vietnam War. A conference on this theme was conducted on November 25 1968, with a panel of speakers drawn from within the established left. Speakers included the CICD aligned Monash University Politics lecturer Max Teichman, the Reverend Arthur Preston from the Uniting Church, ALP State president Bill Brown, ALP Senator Gordon Bryant and

³² Zarb himself was not aligned or involved in the anti-conscription movement either before or after his gaoling, avoiding being involved in politics. Zarb was also different than many other draft resisters as he was not student or a white-collar worker, but explicitly working class, as a postman. He thus was able to be comfortably supported by the trade unions and the other groupings that had been part of the established Left.

³³ There was a trade union based 'Committee for Conscience on Conscription' based at the AEU offices.

³⁴ As well as the established peace groups, the DRM and other radical groupings supported the 'Free Zarb' struggle.

Kevin Healy from YLA. The conference resolved to use the traditional methods of the peace movement with a mass petition to change the National Service Act, public meetings, workshops and protests. The group became quite active in organising and supporting demonstrations for jailed objectors such as John Zarb and Brian Ross.³⁶

Nationally the anti conscription movement received a new focus with the establishment of the Committee in Defiance of the National Service Act (CDNSA), which in early July 1969 issued a statement of defiance pledging to support and aid draft resisters. This had been initiated by two New South Wales Academics Professors, Charles Birch and Charles Martin who addressed an Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) lawn meeting at Sydney University, making public statements encouraging young men not to register for National Service. To ensure these academics were not isolated, approaches for support and assistance were made to Association for International Cooperation and Disarmament (AICD), CICA's counterpart in NSW. These approaches were met favourably and led to the establishment of the CDNSA, which provided a forum where the established Left could play a key public role in the anti-conscription debate. The CDNSA had an air of respectability, similar to many of the peace campaigns of the Cold War. A cross section of respectable members of society were willing to sign the Statement; academics, artists, ALP Politicians, barristers, company directors, farmers, journalists, medical doctors, religious leaders and trade union officials, all of whom were prepared to put their signatures to the statement of defiance. These actions breached the Crimes Act, in particularly contravening:

Part 1a, Section 7a: If any person-

³⁵ Hamel-Green M., in King P.(ed), *op cit*, p 113, Scates *op cit*, pp 32 - 38.

- (a) Incites to, urges, aids or encourages: or
- (b) prints or publishes any writing which incites to, urges, aids or encourages, the commission of offences against any law of the commonwealth or of a territory or the carrying on of any operations for or by the commission of such offences, he shall be guilty of an offence.

Penalty: Two hundred dollars or imprisonment for twelve months, or both³⁷

Despite widespread outrage by the Federal Government there was a groundswell of support for this action. The *Australian* printed a half page advertisement on June 24, which was signed by 327 people drawn from within NSW and the Australian Capital Territory (ACT).³⁸ A further full-page advertisement was placed in the *Australian* on July 3. This time there were 900 signatures drawn from all parts of Australia.³⁹ It represented a campaign in which the laws of the land were openly challenged and flouted, albeit in a respectable manner. Despite the risk of incurring severe legal penalties, there was support for those participating in this approach. In some ways these actions were similar to the tactics of the established Left in previous struggles, such as the Communist Party Dissolution Bill of 1951 and the peace campaigns of the 1950's, where respectable citizens would align with radicals and take a public stance on controversial issues. However, this action involved civil disobedience and carried potentially quite serious penalties. As with aspects of the Zarb case the established Left was now openly challenging (and flouting) the laws of the land.

On July 3 a press conference was conducted at the Sydney Town Hall where 72 prominent citizens including literary figures, ALP politicians, housewives and lawyers, publicly signed a statement which urged young men to refuse to register for National Service. Some of the signatories included the writer Patrick White, Federal ALP parliamentarian Tom Uren and State ALP Parliamentarian George Petersen. This

³⁶ *Tribune*, 4/12/68.

³⁷ Scates R., *op cit*, p43.

like the earlier public pronouncements and the advertisements in the *Australian* breached the Crimes Act, and those participating in these activities could be fined or jailed accordingly.⁴⁰ On July 25 in an effort to increase pressure on the Federal Government CND SA presented the Attorney general, Mr Neville Bowen with names and addresses of over 2,000 signatories to the Statement of Defiance. Bowen was urged to prosecute those people, or recognise the right of individuals to conscientious objection, by amending the NSA accordingly.⁴¹ This would have entailed the abolition of conscription for overseas service, making provision for young men with a genuine conscientious objection to a particular war and including provision for alternatives to military service.⁴²

In just four months there were over 8,000 signatories to the Statement of Defiance, and the Federal Government made public statements making it clear that they were not willing, or unable, to take punitive action. After being initially Sydney based, branches of the CDNSA were established in other states including Victoria. John Lloyd took the running for the committee in Melbourne with CICD very much mirroring the role of AICD in NSW.

In Victoria the medium of the print media was again viewed as a way of getting a message across. In the ALP newspaper *Fact*, a petition was placed urging readers to sign and obtain further signatures, which were to be returned to CICD. In the box

³⁸ *Australian*, 24/6/69.

³⁹ *Australian*, 3/7/69.

⁴⁰ Saunders M., *The Vietnam moratorium movement in Australia 1969-1973*, PHD, Flinders University, Adelaide, 1975, p 16.

⁴¹ *ibid*, p 16.

⁴² *ibid*, footnotes, p 9.

adjoining the petition there were the following challenging words, in breach of the Crimes Act:

Those young men whose principles will not permit them to register under the present National Service Act and who refuse to be coerced into any war which they believe to be immoral and unjust, have my whole hearted support, encouragement and aid. If I were required to register under present conditions I would refuse. Therefore while young men may serve 2 years gaol because they have the courage to defy conscription and oppose the Vietnam War I stand with them.⁴³

A 'Don't Register' leaflet was released on December 7 1969 and urged supporters of this tactic to sign the back of the leaflet and return it to CICD with money which would be used to cover advertising costs. Again this action breached provisions of the Crime Act and those involved were risking incarceration or fines.

A large advertisement appeared in the *Age* on March 21 1970. Many of those who signed their names on the back of the Don't Register leaflets had their names printed for all to see. A cross section of the Victorian community was represented including actors such as Terry Norris, politicians such as Moss Cass, and religious figure such as Dorothy Gillian of the Uniting Church. Heading the leaflet was a list of trade unions that sponsored the leaflet. These included the Australian meat Industry Employees Union (AMIEU), Australian Tramways and Motor Omnibus Employees Association (ATMOEA), the Boiler Makers and Blacksmiths Society (BBS), Federated Furnishing Trades Society (FFTS) and members of the Seamans Union of Australia (SUA) aboard a number of different vessels.⁴⁴

With the emphasis on the new Vietnam Moratorium Committee (VMC) strategy, combined with the reluctance of the Government to prosecute, the CDNSA faded away, though it was never officially dissolved. It marked a new stand in the anti-

⁴³ *Fact*, 22/8/69.

Vietnam War movement, in which it was not just the radicals, but also the established groups who were prepared to actually defy the government. For Saunders, the CDNSA episode had great significance for the peace movement. "It marked the period during which the movement shifted from a position where it merely protested against the government to one where it actively defied it or resisted it."⁴⁵ Civil disobedience and defiance of the law was no longer simply the domain of the radicals, as a wider citizen opposition was to appear in the VMC.

CICD, despite being often quite conservative on other issues regarding opposition to the war, continued to play an active role in supporting draft resisters and young potential conscripts. Members of CICD were active during the 'Don't Register' campaigns playing the role of draft counsellors, performing the duties of counselling potential conscripts who were not aware of their rights or the implications conscription held for them.⁴⁶

The CICD Secretary's Annual Report of 1971 describes their use of Draft Counselling as:

Extensive Draft Counselling is carried out by CICD staff especially during registration periods. It is our practice to point out all the alternatives that confront a young man before he registers (both legal and illegal), indicating that the most politically effective way of defeating National Service lies in the course of draft resistance. Young men are always encouraged to make their own choice according to their own sense of priorities. Considerable time is spent outlining the details of conscientious objection, which is a legal provision for exemption within the National Service Act.⁴⁷

⁴⁴ *Age*, 21/3/70.

⁴⁵ Saunders M., 1975, *op cit*, p 18.

⁴⁶ *CICD Newsletter*, August 1970, Pauline Mitchell, interview, 17/12/98.

⁴⁷ CICD Annual Report of the Secretary, September 1971, p 4, held in the CICD collection UMA.

This approach allowed groups like CICD to actively support Draft resisters, without openly encouraging radical law breaking actions. The fact that counsellors provided both legal and illegal options allowed CICD to be seen to be 'even handed' in their support for young men who were unwilling or unsure about fighting in Vietnam.

The rebel unions also challenged the laws. At a meeting of over 200 workplace delegates, organised by the Trade Union Anti-Conscription Committee (TUCAC);⁴⁸ they issued the famous 'mutiny' call of December 15 1969 in which they called upon young men to refuse to fight.

We call upon young men already conscripted to refuse to accept orders against their conscience and to those already in Vietnam to lay down their arms in mutiny against the heinous barbarism perpetrated in our name against the aged, innocent, women and children.⁴⁹

Yet despite these actions arousing outrage from the media, the political right and the established trade union movement, the Federal Government was unwilling to prosecute. Like the actions of the CDNSA, the 'mutiny' call succeeded in drawing further attention to both the issue of conscription and the inability and unwillingness of the Federal Government to prosecute.

Buoyed by the mood at the time, the ALP Victorian branch conference in June 1970 saw over 400 party members vote unanimously for a motion supporting and encouraging all young males who refused to fight in Vietnam. In part the motion read, "Conference expresses its warm approval and support and encourages all young Australians to resist being conscripted to fight in the dirty war in Vietnam."⁵⁰ The conference also took a strong stand against the provisions and use of the Crimes Act. It

⁴⁸ This group derived their support predominantly from the rebel unions and appears as a continuation of "The Committee for Conscience on Conscription".

sought the removal of all troops from Vietnam; the repeal of the NSA; the release of all of incarcerated as a result of the breaches of the NSA and the dropping of all charges against those who had defied the NSA. Around 300 of those present signed a petition endorsing the motion.⁵¹

Not surprisingly the Federal Government was outraged by this action. Federal Cabinet met and contemplated using the provisions of the Crimes Act to prosecute the Victorian ALP.⁵² In retrospect the actions of the Federal Government appeared little more than a combination of wishful thinking and conservative rhetoric. Yet there was never any action taken possibly because of the rise in the community opposition to conscription.

This community opinion is reflected in the opinion polls on conscription. In November 1967 70% of those interviewed were in support of ongoing conscription, yet by April 1970 that figure had dropped to 55%. In contrast the percentage opposing conscription had grown from 25% to 34% in this same period. Against this movement any attempt by the Federal Government to prosecute could only mean further polarising of the issue and further conflict which they seemed to avoid.⁵³

SOS had long been one of the most consistent organisations in opposition to conscription for overseas service. Whilst they were hardly a radical grouping they were prepared to use civil disobedience as a tactic. On February 8 1971, five of their

⁴⁹ *Sun* 1/12/69, *Australian* 1/12/69, Scates R, *op cit*, p50, Hamel-Green M., in King P.(ed), *op cit*, pp 116-117.

⁵⁰ *Age*, 15/6/70.

⁵¹ *Age*, 15/6/70, Hamel-Green M., in King P.(ed), *op cit*, p 125.

⁵² *Age*, 16/6/70.

members were arrested on the 10th floor of the Princess Gate building owned by the Victorian Employers Federation as they handed out anti-conscription, anti-Vietnam War leaflets.⁵⁴ The 10th floor housed the offices of the Department of Labour and National Service. The five women were charged under the State Governments' recent amendments to the Summary Offences Act, and they were released to appear in court on April 9, Holy Thursday.

Their hearing was the last one conducted on the day before Good Friday and they were all sentenced to 14 days imprisonment at Fairlea Women's prison, without being given the option of a fine.⁵⁵ This sparked public outcry in support of the 'Fairlea Five' as they came to be known. A 24-hour vigil was organised in the City Square and demonstrations were organised at the entrance to Fairlea. Industrial action by maritime workers was taken in support of the women and public anger at their incarceration led to further shows' of support for their release. A demonstration organised early on the morning of April 11, Easter Sunday, drew a crowd of 400 people, eager to express solidarity with the 'Fairlea Five' and to oppose the unjust laws that had seen them incarcerated.⁵⁶

Whilst the Victorian Branch of the party was prepared to take a progressive stance, federally the ALP was reluctant to be seen to be supporting actions which were clearly illegal and could be used against them with a subsequent electoral backlash.

⁵³ Gallup poll figures quoted in *Downdraft* Vol 2 p 60, Goot M., and Tiffen R., 'Public Opinion and the Polls', in King P.(ed), *op cit*, p142, discuss a fall in support as measured by the polls from August 1969 at 63% down to 53% in June 1971, this corresponding with a drop in support for the war.

⁵⁴ All 5 were members of the ALP, with 4 of them being members of the ALP women's organisation, Jean McLean being its vice President. Chris Cathie was the wife of Ian Cathie who had previously been a state ALP parliamentarian and later on finished up holding ministerial portfolios in the Cain Govt.

⁵⁵ *Age*, 10/4/71; *Herald*, 10/4/71; Scates R., *op cit*, pp 78-80, *Minefields and Miniskirts*, McHugh S., Doubleday Publishing, Moorebank, Sydney 1993, pp 223-225

⁵⁶ *Age*, 12/4/71.

Eventually the Federal ALP found itself taking a more active stance on this issue. At the 1971 Conference in Hobart the following resolution was passed:

- (A) A Labor Government will repeal the present National Service Act and annul its penal consequences
- (B) A Labor Government will grant full repatriation and rehabilitation benefits to all National Service men and sympathetically investigate the possibility of those who have suffered penal consequences of the National Service Act.
- (C) Conference notes with approval the following decision of the Federal Executive taken on 17th June 1971. ' That the Federal Executive declares its support for Victorian ALP members Barry Johnson, and Tony Dalton, due to face court proceedings on Friday 18th of June, for breaches of the National Service Act which could result in two year terms of imprisonment. This executive again emphasises the ALP's opposition to the principles of the National Service Act and declares its support for all those young men who have refused to be conscripted for the undeclared war in Vietnam. This executive asks all members of the party in Victoria to protest in their own way in favour of Barry Johnson and Tony Dalton and others who are refusing to comply with the provisions of the Act.
- (D) Conference calls upon the Federal Government for the immediate release of Geoff Mullen and Charles Martin who are in prison as a result of the penal consequence of the Act.⁵⁷

Possibly the reason this was taken was to reflect a decline in support for conscription to fight overseas. Polls taken in the periods August and October 1969, April and October 1970, and June 1971, saw support slip from 63% of those polled down to 53%.⁵⁸ Whitlam and his supporters in the Federal ALP, in line with their conservative stance on issues relating to Vietnam, could have perceived the beginning of a change in public opinion.

The Federal ALP continued to show support for a policy on conscription that would be different to the current Government and by July 1972 Gough Whitlam was able to state the following:

Within 24 hours of assuming office, said the opposition Leader, the ALP would release all young men being held in prison for breaches of the National Service Act. All charges laid against

⁵⁷ Australian Labour Party, *Platform, Constitution and Rules*, pp 41-42 as approved by the 29th Commonwealth Conference, Launceston 1971.

⁵⁸ Goot M., and Tiffen R., in King P.(ed), *op cit*, p 142.

people for breaches of the Act, actual and alleged, would be withdrawn. Conscription would be stopped immediately. National servicemen in the army would be given the choice of ending their service at once or continuing as volunteers. An ALP government would provide 'rehabilitation assistance' for those who had suffered 'in the name of conscience' under the act. A bill to repeal the National Service Act would be introduced into the House of Representatives as soon as Parliament met. If the Senate refused to pass the bill, all operations of the National Service Act would be suspended by administrative action.⁵⁹

Yet the support for Barry Johnson, who had been pre selected for the Federal seat of Hotham caused soul searching in the upper echelons of the ALP federally, and possibly amongst its membership. Despite public pronouncements that a Whitlam led Federal Government would end conscription, and the fact that Johnson, a draft resister who had gone underground, was the nominated ALP candidate for a Federal seat, the party was in a quandary. There were claims that ALP candidates knowing the whereabouts of Johnson should inform on him as there were concerns having an endorsed candidate who was on the run from the authorities would cost the ALP votes.⁶⁰ The principles of the case appeared to be expendable to the power brokers in the party. Not long after this Whitlam issued a public call for Johnson to turn himself over to the authorities and seek to have his trial adjourned until after the election.⁶¹ Johnson quickly made a public statement attacking Whitlam for his lack of support. He drew attention to the sharp differences between the support received from the Victorian branch, and the actions of Whitlam.⁶²

Johnson was very much part of the Newer Left with his involvement with the Draft Resisters Union (DRU) and the tactics that he pursued. Yet by virtue of his status as an endorsed ALP federal candidate, he could be perceived as very much part of the established Left. Despite the ALP Federal electoral victory Johnston was unsuccessful

⁵⁹ Saunders M., 1975, *op cit*, p 345.

⁶⁰ *Age*, 16/6/72.

⁶¹ *Age*, 3/7/72; *Australian*, 6/7/72; Saunders M., 1975, *op cit*, pp 341-342 .

⁶² *Age*, 4/7/72.

in his endeavours to be elected as the member for Hotham. Hotham was a traditional Liberal seat held by the minister for Customs in the Federal Government, Don Chipp. In the 1969 Federal election, Chipp had received a primary vote of 23,776, 48.23% of votes cast, winning the seat. Despite the hopes of his supporters, Johnson did not fare very well only obtaining a swing of 1.1% compared to the Labor swing in the five adjoining seats of 7.7%. Chipp with 25,242 votes received 48.07% of votes cast, Johnson with 21,796 votes, scored 41.50% of votes cast.⁶³

RADICAL NEW APPROACHES

The Draft Resisters Movement (DRM) was formed in early January 1968, after a meeting of 20-30 young people who had been active in student groupings and YCAC, as well as some who were directly facing the dilemma of conscription.⁶⁴ Inspired by using the concept of civil disobedience, and wishing to have an activist approach to opposing conscription and the war, the establishment of DRM marked a step forward in the campaign as it sought not just to protest about and oppose conscription, but actually disrupt the functioning of the NSA.⁶⁵ For many of those involved with DRM the position of being simply a conscientious objector on pacifist grounds was not enough as the mood was now turning towards one of non compliance. DRM 's 'statement of existence' confirms this, stating:

⁶³For these figures refer to, Hughes CA., *Voting for the Australian House of Representatives, 1965-1984*, Department of Government, University of Queensland, 1995 p43 and p79, Mackerras M., *Australian General Elections* Angus and Robertson, Sydney, 1972,p108, Mackerras M., *The Swing: variability and uniformity*, in *Labor to Power*, Mayer H.(ed), Angus and Robertson, publishers, Melbourne, 1973, p 239.

⁶⁴ Des Files, interview, 3/4/01 As there is a paucity of available written material on this short lived grouping, I am very much indebted to Des Files for much of the information in this thesis re the DRM.

⁶⁵ Scates R., *op cit*, p39.

The DRM has not been formed to oppose conscription, it has been formed to wreck it. We are opposed to the war in Vietnam and we intend to resist the conscription of Australian Youth for this war by *all* available means. We will hold demonstrations of various kinds with the aim of making conscription as ineffective as possible; we will supply information on how to fail medical tests and other methods of resisting the draft and we will encourage people not to register. By these means we will help those 20 year olds who do not wish to be conscripted for any reason.⁶⁶

Despite the short life of DRM it helped advance the direction of the anti- conscription movement. Its work and enthusiasm was taken on board by some of the more militant student groups such as SDS, Melbourne University Pacifist Society, Monash Labor Club and Worker Student Alliance (WSA). From the perspective of a founding member, DRM was not intended to be an organisation that had long-term plans, rather it would provide a radical impetus to other groupings. Des Files described DRM as, "soon as we got it up and running, others took it on board, as we were a sort of catalyst." ⁶⁷

The DRM proved far more militant than its predecessors in YCAC, going beyond simply seeking a change of parliamentary government, but aiming to smash conscription. One of its earliest actions in early February 1968 saw four members of the DRM chain themselves to the gates at Swan St Richmond barracks to deter conscripts arriving at the intake. In this action they received assistance from 50 supporters of SOS and SDS. ⁶⁸ February 1968 also saw the by- election for the Federal seat of Higgins and the campaign launches of both the prime Minister John Gorton and the Opposition Leader Gough Whitlam were attended by DRM members and supporters. This was the first time Whitlam had been publicly confronted by anti-Vietnam War demonstrators. The 50 demonstrators sat silently, holding placards

⁶⁶ *Peacemaker*, February-March 1968 SLV.

⁶⁷ Des Files, interview, 3/4/01.

⁶⁸ Scates R., *op cit*, p39; Hamel-Green M., in King P.(ed), *op cit*, pp 112-113.

requesting a stronger stance from the ALP.⁶⁹ DRM were also involved in the tactic of 'fill in a false', where false conscription forms were completed, designed to frustrate and confuse the conscription process.⁷⁰ As a way to ensure that the links between the anti-conscription movement and the anti-Vietnam War movement were strengthened, the DRM affiliated to the Vietnam Coordinating Committee (VCC).⁷¹

Anti- conscription activists were to take their message to Canberra in May 1968. The occasion was the Australian Student Labor Federation (ASLF) conference. On May 19 what was billed as a 'Freedom Ride' saw over four hundred students, not just from Melbourne, but throughout Australia, descend on the Prime Ministers' Canberra residence, 'the Lodge', to oppose their opposition to Conscription and its punitive methods of dealing non-compliers. Yet there were some differences within the demonstrators, as they sought to get their message across. The previous night the demonstrators had met and the Melbourne University students, the primary organisers of the action, had argued for a position of non-violent action and guidelines which would adhere to this approach, which led to strong debates. When the demonstration occurred the next day Monash students and those influenced by them chose to sit in on the main arterial road and defy the attempts by the law to stop them. Those from Melbourne University sat down peacefully on the Prime Minister's driveway and were promptly arrested.⁷²

Barry York believes a further division between the Monash and Melbourne Universities, political views occurred that day. He claims, "That as an exercise in civil

⁶⁹ *Sun*, 15/2/68

⁷⁰ Des Files, interview, 3/4/01.

⁷¹ *DRM News*, 2/9/68.

disobedience, it had been completely coopted by the State."⁷³ He goes on to quote a Mr Boyne – Andersen, who claims he now felt violence was necessary and the concept of non- violence was no longer credible.⁷⁴ However York does not investigate this position any further and leaves the question in limbo. In contrast Michael Hamel-Green emphasised that far from their actions being coopted by the state, Melbourne students felt the force of the law. The arrested were locked, refused bail and tried in Canberra and subsequently fined for their actions. Many of those who refused to pay their fines were eventually locked up in Melbourne.⁷⁵ The differences that existed amongst the newer anti conscription groups are covered later in this chapter and possibly the roots of these differences are to be found in the events in Canberra on May 19 1968.

May 1968 saw further amendments to the NSA increasing pressure on those young men who refused to be conscripted. Most penalties in the Act were doubled, for 20 year old males who refused to register there were fines ranging between \$40 and \$200, with the extra penalty of being ‘deemed to have registered for national service’. In practice this meant that the high chance of not having a marble drawn disappeared, a particularly punitive approach. Any eligible male who failed to attend his medical examination faced a mandatory sentence of seven days imprisonment in a civil prison.⁷⁶ The only improvements offered in this legislative package was that national

⁷² There were 69 arrests on the day of whom 30 were from Melbourne, *Age*, 19/5/68, *Australian*, 19/5/68.

⁷³ York B., *Student Revolt, Latrobe University 1967-1973*, Nicholas Press, Campbell, ACT 1989, pp 66-67.

⁷⁴ *ibid*, pp 66-67.

⁷⁵ Michael Hamel-Green, interview, 10/4/99.

⁷⁶ Scates R., *op cit*, p 31.

service defaulters and resisters would be incarcerated in a civilian not military jail and a reduction in the penalty for non compliance from two years to 18 months.⁷⁷

As the year drew to a close DRM and SDS launched a joint 'Don't Register', campaign at their joint conference conducted on January 28 and 29.⁷⁸ This led to frenetic activity early in 1969 when protestors were arrested for inciting people not to register by standing out the front of the Melbourne General Post Office and handing out Don't Register leaflets in defiance of the law. The first day of the new registration period on January 28 saw seven anti-conscription activists arrested as they distributed leaflets outside the Melbourne. The actions of the demonstrators sought to confront the provisions of the Crimes Act, which deemed it an offence to incite or encourage people not to register for national service and those acting in this manner could be incarcerated. This act of large-scale civil disobedience, resulted in drawing public attention to opposition to the NSA, as the print media provided ongoing coverage of this campaign. It also led to a repeal of the Melbourne City Council (MCC) By-Law 418, a by law which restricted free speech in the city (For more details refer to Chapter 5).

Between August 22 and 24 1969 a draft resisters' conference was conducted at the Centre for Democratic Action (CDA) the headquarters of SDS, situated in Palmerston St, Carlton." The conference was open to those actively evading the draft or those whose actions were supportive of draft resistance".⁷⁹ This conference came directly after the registration period, and reviewed and examined the strategies of the anti

⁷⁷ Hamel-Green M., in King. (ed), *op cit*, p 112.

⁷⁸ Van Moorst H., *Street Level Opposition: the Vietnam Moratorium Campaign*, Unpublished, Werribee, 1993, p 10.

⁷⁹ Undated leaflet, *Draft Resisters Conference August 1969*, Harry Van Moorst, Personal Collection.

conscription movement and how best they could challenge and resist the attempts to conscript young men.

Not long after, on September 19 there was a notable court case at Williamstown Court House, involving Laurie Carmichael junior, a draft resister. Carmichael's father was a prominent union official with the AEU as well as being a leading spokesperson and public figure for the CPA. Progressive unions had organised a series of demonstrations at court cases of draft resisters, and, at Carmichaels' case, over 500 workers from Williamstown Naval Dockyard went on strike and attended the hearing to demonstrate their opposition. Upon the arrival of Carmichael he addressed the waiting crowd, before he was whisked away outside the courthouse by supporters, and spent the next week hidden by friends and supporters, an early experiment in the establishment of an 'underground'. Inside the court supporters expressed their solidarity with his actions as over a dozen young men and women stood up and claimed to be Laurie Carmichael when the court called for him to present himself.⁸⁰

Further court cases saw the laws challenged as radical opponents and those who were being radicalised by their experiences, made public and political statements at their trials. The detention and fining of Les Dalton at Cheltenham Court, for publicly defending the political stance of his son Tony and the 16 day incarceration of Fran Newell for non payment of fines, as a result of attending a sit- in, are examples of the

⁸⁰ Hamel-Green M., in King P.(ed), *op cit*, p116; *Tribune* 24/9/69 and 1/10/69, Mansell K., *The Yeast is Red*, MA, Melbourne University, 1994, pp 37-38 and Duras, A 'Trade Unions and the Vietnam War', <http://www.anu.edu.au/polsci/marx/interventions/workers.htm>, 2000, pp 10-11, mention the acrimonious views expressed by some union officials to prevent Albert Langer speaking at a rally following this action. At the rally union officials helped police keep radical students back from the Courthouse. This acrimony was also present in the Langer Rubin trials, refer to Chapter 5 of this thesis.

use of civil disobedience was used to challenge these laws and those that framed them.⁸¹

In mid 1970, a new phase in the anti-conscription campaign began with the establishment of the DRU, formed as a result of an all day conference of draft resisters held at La Mama Theatre in Carlton on June 20 1970. Michael Hamel-Green recalls the setting up of the organisation. "It wasn't until 1970 that there was sufficient numbers of us to form a new organisation. The other key factor was a shift in thinking, which is to confront the conscription scheme."⁸² A statement issued by those present that day laid out the purpose of the DRU as: "That there be an organisation known as the Draft Resisters' Union. Membership be open to all persons who have refused to comply with the National Service Act together with those intending future non-compliance who are willing to sign a statement to this affect."⁸³

The DRU sought a repeal of the NSA and an end to Australian support for US-imperialism. Its goals went beyond individual resistance and moral outrage to organising draft resisters and their supporters to challenge and render the NSA inoperable. This took on numerous forms including the establishment of an underground resistance, draft resisters appearing publicly literally challenging the authorities to take action, demonstrations, occupations, as well as more passive measures such as leafleting and petitions. These were some of the approaches the DRU and their supporters used to push the cause and confront the state.

⁸¹ Scates R., *op cit*, p 46; also *The Herald* 17/9/69 re Les Dalton's arrest.

⁸² Michael Hamel-Green, interview, 10/4/99.

⁸³ Hamel-Green M., in King P.(ed), *op cit*, pp 120-121.

A key aspect of the DRU's work was the fact that, in cooperation with similar minded organisations and individuals, they managed to convince the VMC of the importance of conscription, with the VMC amending its aims to include abolition of conscription in any form.⁸⁴ The September Moratorium saw DRU members Paul Fox and Ian Turner address the crowd and then burn their draft cards.⁸⁵

The increased support for draft resistance faced opposition from certain quarters within the VMC. There were concerns expressed that some VMC supporters were reluctant to support public incitement of young men to defy the laws. Others involved in the VMC were ambivalent about conscription and felt that it should not divert attention from the issue of ending the war in Vietnam⁸⁶.

A particularly novel approach taken was the DRU and SDS/Radical Action Movement (RAM) Summer Offensive. The summer of 1970/ 1971 saw the launch of the summer offensive aimed at reaching out and educating young people holidaying on tourist beaches. This occurred not just in Victoria, but also in New South Wales, Queensland and South Australia.⁸⁷ In Victoria the beaches and holiday resorts along the South West Coast received attention with holiday makers being leafleted and also being invited to listen to speakers and attend open air screenings of anti-Vietnam War, anti-conscription films and attend beach draft resistance centres.⁸⁸ This would coincide with the lead up for the Don't Register campaign for the January-February period, with the major goal of smashing the NSA by August 1971.⁸⁹ The following

⁸⁴ Saunders M., 1975, *op cit*, p 145.

⁸⁵ *Downdraft*, p 48.

⁸⁶ Harry Van Moorst, interview, 19/3/99.

⁸⁷ 'A summer offensive, its memory'. Varly, J *Lot's Wife* 2/4/71.

⁸⁸ Scates R., *op cit*, p 78.

⁸⁹ *Summer Offensive*, No 1 5/12/70, UMA.

summer a similar offensive was launched and as well as attending the beaches and coastal holiday resorts, pop concerts such as Sunbury were attended and efforts made to publicise the struggle⁹⁰

The appearance of the four draft resisters G Cook, Tony Dalton, Tony Fox and Michael Hamel-Green at the Moratorium on June 30 1971 further upped the ante as they effectively snubbed their noses at the authorities that were hamstrung in their endeavours to capture them. Despite the fact that the four announced their actions at a press conference, on June 28, they were able to attend the rally, address the demonstrators and savour public freedom. All four were subject to warrants for their apprehension, and if arrested they faced jail terms of up to eighteen months yet, despite this risk, they attended the moratorium and publicly addressed the crowd.

In the words of Michael Hamel –Green;

If the Government wants to jail me, let them arrest me where the public can understand what's happening. Let them try to single me out from the hundreds and thousands of Australians who share my abhorrence of the Vietnam War and conscription and are equally determined to end them.⁹¹

They followed up being interviewed in *Lots Wife* speaking of the impact of their appearance, supported and surrounded by thousands of moratorium demonstrators, and the pressure it has put on the authorities. “June 30 has shown the government is powerless in the face of collective resistance, conscription is a paper tiger, now is the time to put a match to it.”⁹² The demonstrators provided a safety net for the four, as

⁹⁰ The Sunbury Thing, Harry Van Moorst, *Troll* No. 6. The DRU experienced a not overly successful time at Sunbury 1972, Initially a DRU application for a tent was refused by the concert organisers. Undeterred a tent was established on the Saturday, but by the Monday the security staff had raided the tent seizing and confiscating the DRU leaflets.

⁹¹ *Moratorium News*, June 1971.

⁹² ‘Victory for resisters: Conscription is a paper tiger’, *Lot's Wife* 8/7/71.

they marched with the crowd up from City-Square to Parliament House and then headed back to the relative safety of Melbourne University. The last part of the march saw a tightly bound grouping of demonstrators escorting the four wanted men, walk past Commonwealth Police, who appeared unable and unwilling to apprehend them.⁹³

UNDERGROUND

The underground resistance in the early 1970's was a key factor in the success of maintaining such a strong and militant anti-conscription movement. Without this structure, draft resisters would not have been able to successfully avoid incarceration and thus could not have played the pro-active role they did. It was an underground that was designed not just to allow draft resisters to evade the clutches of the authorities, but to have them come out to challenge and confront the authorities. Michael Hamel – Green recalls the aims,

We would set up a network so that people facing the final stage of being put in prison for 2 years could go underground, but not with the intention of just disappearing, but to appear in other public settings, constantly confront the government with the enforcement of the scheme and also convey community support for opposing conscription.⁹⁴

The Australian underground was unique in its formation and operations. There were draft resistance undergrounds established elsewhere, most notably the US, but there were important differences in the Australian underground. The Australian underground went beyond providing a hiding place and safe refuge for resisters to actually allowing them to organise clandestinely and challenge the authorities. Nowhere else in the world had this occurred and it allowed active bridge building

⁹³ Hamel-Green M., in King.(ed.), *op cit*, p123.

⁹⁴ Interview with Michael Hamel-Green, 10/4/99.

between the existing peace and Left organisations and the draft resisters and their radical supporters. For those members of the established groups there was an ability to assist in demonstrations, and provide safe accommodation for the draft resisters.

In a number of previous cases a temporary underground had been established for short periods of time. This provided a young man with safe accommodation with friends, relatives or colleagues, as they acted in defiance of the law. One of the examples of this was in September 1969 in the case of Laurie Carmichael Jnr. He spent a week underground, staying with friends and supporters after he had been escorted to safety outside Williamstown Court house.

The underground became 'formalised' with a public meeting on October 9 1970, which aimed to facilitate the establishment of an underground. This followed an announcement in the DRU publication *Resist*, announcing the formation of an underground. The meeting requested requirements of support stating, "While underground draft resisters can be helped by finances, supportive homes in which to live, opportunities to speak in public and employment."⁹⁵ Public pledges of support and endorsement came from a variety of sources, including the ALP, with Jim Cairns, Moss Cass and Bill Hartley all pledging support. SOS represented by Joan Coxsedg Jo MaClaine Cross and Jean McLean, *Catholic Worker* by John Ryan and the rebel unions by Ken Carr. All were publicly willing to assist with the functioning of the underground and the establishment of an Underground Fund Committee.⁹⁶ Some of these people such as Jean McLean and John Ryan went beyond assisting to actively playing a key role in organising the underground.

⁹⁵ *Resist* 7/10/70.

One of the most prominent actions of the Underground movement was the occupation by four draft resisters and three hundred supporters at the Melbourne University Union Building, from September 27 to 30 in 1971. The success of the four appearing at the previous moratorium, had given great confidence to draft resisters and their supporters. Previous appearances of draft resisters at different campuses had produced mixed results, but this time the desire was to provide a direct challenge to the authorities.⁹⁷

There had been discussions between DRU/RAM shortly after a National Conference of Draft Resisters at Melbourne University, which was held on September 18 and 19. The decision was to hold an all week resistance commune at Melbourne University at which five draft resisters would appear and be guarded by their colleagues against any effort to apprehend them. It would also provide a fillip for drawing greater attention and support to those who were involved in draft resistance. The five draft resisters that would be at Melbourne University were Melbourne resisters Tony Dalton, Paul Fox and Michael Hamel-Green, Mike Matteson from Sydney and John Scott from Adelaide.⁹⁸

To announce the arrival of this occupation Radio Resistance 3DR set about illegally broadcasting messages and interviews with the four, which could be received within a radius of 10 kilometres, from Melbourne University. All this occurred despite the best

⁹⁶ *ibid*, Armstrong P., *op cit*, p137, Hamel-Green M., *The Legitimacy of the 1964-1972 Australian Conscript Scheme*, MA, Melbourne University, Parkville, 1975 p 438.

⁹⁷ Van Moorst H., *op cit*, 1993, pp 30-31. Hamel-Green M., 1975, *op cit*, pp 440-441, 466, Hamel-Green M., *Power to the People, The Melbourne University Draft Resistance Siege September 27-30 1971*, Unpublished, 1973

efforts of the Postmaster General's Department to close the station down. On campus the draft resisters appeared at meetings and spent the time liaising with supporters. The supporters represented the bulk of the anti-war movement, with moratorium activists, members of the ALP and SOS, radical students from Latrobe and Monash, amongst the myriad of supporters. One group that was conspicuously absent was the Trotskyite influenced Socialist Youth Alliance (SYA) that considered draft resistance bourgeois individualism. In their Publication *Direct Action* they had lambasted draft resisters, who claimed to be revolutionaries as opportunists, whilst stating they opposed draft resistance on principle.⁹⁹

The SYA's policy was to pursue a 'correct' revolutionary line, by encouraging members to enter the army and organise resistance within the ranks. They thus bypassed the role of supporting 3DR and the draft resisters.

Finally in the early hours of September 30 around 150 Commonwealth Police armed with axes and sledge-hammers forced their way into the Union building. When the police eventually forced their way into the building, they were confronted by 150 seated demonstrators who greeted them with a collective rendition of John Lennon's 'Power to the People'.¹⁰⁰ Despite the best efforts of the police, they were unable to find, let alone apprehend, the four draft resisters, who were safely hidden away.¹⁰¹

Whilst the initiative to establish an underground was driven by the newer groups, there was support from the established Left. Les and Dorothy Dalton recall, that even

⁹⁸ For urgent personal reasons Fox was unable to attend the commune, leaving after the completion of the conference. Hamel-Green M., 1973, *ibid.* p 6

⁹⁹ *ibid.* p10; *Direct Action*, August 1971.

¹⁰⁰ Van Moorst H., *op cit*, p 31.

though there was some initial trepidation and aspects of the established Left had doubts about the role of draft resisters and resistance, eventually support for the underground was established. They recalled the early ambivalence of CICD as:

CICD was not truly anti-conscription, nor was CICD pro-conscription, but they saw it as secondary to the Vietnam War. The CPA had the same line. They weren't convinced at the beginning by the way the draft resisters went about things, but they were all supportive at the end.¹⁰²

Their son Tony recalls the support offered by older CPA members and ex members such as Stan and Nell Johns and Professor Ian Turner.¹⁰³

CONSCRIPTION V SERVICE IN THE ARMY

Unlike the United States this debate did not appear as a pivotal issue in Australia. Australia with its selective conscription scheme did not allow the same scope as the US system, where all males of a conscriptable age could find themselves in the armed forces.¹⁰⁴ For revolutionaries this allowed mass work amongst the troops to raise political questions regarding both the war and the nature of the system that they were allegedly fighting for. It also allowed access to weapons and weapon training Only amongst the Maoists, and to a lesser degree the Trotskyite SYA does this line appear to have been promoted to any great degree. In the case of the SYA I use the term lesser degree as their involvement in the struggle only really commenced in 1970. As far as

¹⁰¹ Scates ,R, *op cit*, p 80 -81.

¹⁰² Dorothy and Les Dalton, interview, 16/4/99.

¹⁰³ Quoted in Langley G., *A Decade of Dissent*, Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 1992, p 196, Turner by this stage was a key figure in Centre Unity of the ALP.

¹⁰⁴ *Troll* No 6 features an interesting article by David Day discussing the fact that if conscription is abolished Australia is left with a volunteer army and the dilemmas this poses. He talks about the class composition of the ranks of the armed forces and goes on to discuss the abolition of the standing army and its replacement with a people's militia, organised similarly to the Country Fire Authority. I have not seen this concept taken up elsewhere in literature from the period, the only obvious parallel is that proposed by the CPA in 1942 when a Japanese invasion seemed imminent.

this research has ascertained, only one person, Errol Heldzingen, put this approach into practice.

Heldzingen was a young railway worker when first required to register during the registration period January 23-February 6 1967.¹⁰⁵ He had already expressed an interest in both left wing politics and opposition to the Vietnam War, attending his first anti Vietnam Demonstration in 1964 and then joining the EYL. By the time he was conscripted in 1967 he was clear he had no desire to serve in a conflict, which he described as thus, "They were being invaded by a foreign power, including the lackey nation Australia. Those people had every right to defend themselves so I supported them".¹⁰⁶ Heldzingen recalls having discussion with figures in both the CPA and Communist Party of Australia Marxist-Leninist (CPAML), who encouraged him to enter the armed forces.

In his words, "They actually sent me into the army." He recalls conversations with CPAML leaders who told him; "What we really need is people in the army, instead of people opposing conscription." However, once he enlisted and commenced his national service, the expected support from the CPAML was not forthcoming and he remained isolated, doing his National Service very much alone. He also stated that members of both the CPA and CPAML were ambivalent towards the issue of conscription and held a private view that as conscription was happening in the socialist countries it was generally okay.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁵ Errol Heldzingen, interview, 20/12/99, Scates R., *op cit*, p 29.

¹⁰⁶ Errol Heldzingen, interview, 20/12/99.

In response to Heldzingen's position the viewpoint expressed by some other interviewees differed. Individuals identified with the CPAML such as Kerrie Miller recall, "we argued at the time people should join the army to undermine it, but it didn't go far".¹⁰⁸ The CPAML and the other Maoist groups they influenced often had ambivalent positions on the issue. Amongst their members the viewpoints ranged from considering draft resistance as being a form of bourgeois individualism preferring to push the join the army line, across to those such as Keith Langford and Karl Armstrong who were active in the anti-conscription movement.

There was discussion in the DRU journal *Downdraft* regarding the approach of infiltrating the army. They stated, "Although more difficult than non compliance with the NSA, there are possibilities for a conscript in the army to show his opposition to being conscripted. Such opposition would contribute greatly to the defeat of conscription".¹⁰⁹ Drawing upon the US experience they looked at ways in which conscripts could play an active role in exposing the nature of conscription and opposing the war in Vietnam. This included providing information to which they could argue in an informed manner, to put their lecturers and chaplains on the spot, leaflets which explained DRU's position, and how conscripts could play an active role in struggling against the nature and role of conscription.¹¹⁰ Bob Muntz who was active in the DRU believes that the issue of infiltrating the army was a peripheral one that was not seriously discussed. "Not many 20 year olds had a sophisticated understanding

¹⁰⁷ Errol Heldzingen, interview, 20/12/99, similar view points were encountered by Des Files in meetings with members of the CPA and the EYL. They opposed conscription for the war in Vietnam, yet felt that in a Socialist Australia, conscription would be acceptable.

¹⁰⁸ Kerrie Miller, interview, 2/2/99 In other interviews, ex CPA members Bernie Taft and Dave Davies have no recollection of this strategy, though Davies recalls members of the Eureka Youth League being conscripted back in the 1950's.

¹⁰⁹ *Downdraft* Vol 2, p18.

¹¹⁰ *ibid*, pp 18-19.

of the differences between the US and Australia. Entering the army, I don't think was seriously or significantly discussed within the DRU".¹¹¹

The SYA had a position that appeared far more premised on their parent grouping in the US than on Australian conditions." The US position was for young revolutionaries to be with their class and that entailed being in the army".¹¹² Draft resistance was opposed on principle as being a form of bourgeois individualism and the correct line was to enter the armed forces to organise resistance within the ranks.¹¹³ Yet despite their organisational stance on the issue tactic the SYA were not able to put it into practice in Australia, with John Ebel recalling, "The tactic of going into the army was feasible if a lot of people did it, otherwise it was futile".¹¹⁴ With a small membership, and being late arrivals on the scene, the SYA were not in a practical position to implement this tactic.

CONSCRIPTION V VOLUNTARY EXILE

There were those who felt unable to avoid the law, with no desire to either end up being gaoled or accepting conscription. Some sought to escape Australia and find political sanctuary elsewhere, including in the socialist countries, Albania and China.¹¹⁵ Unlike the US, which with its shared borders with Canada made it possible for young men to seek political exile, Australians who wished to flee abroad were

¹¹¹ Bob Muntz, interview, 14/12/98.

¹¹² Jamie Doughney, interview, 25/3/99.

¹¹³ Refer August 1971 edition of *Direct Action*.

¹¹⁴ John Ebel, interview, 29/4/99.

required to find alternatives more geographically distant. One of those was Karl Armstrong. For Karl and his partner Jan, Albania offered a safe haven from conscription or incarceration. Armstrong was a member of the Printing and Kindred Industrial Union (PKIU) and came from a family with a long history in the CPA. He eventually moved to the left and became influenced by Maoism, joining WSA and by the virtue of his status as a draft resister was an active member of the DRU. Inside DRU he and fellow WSA member Keith Langford advocated a very strong NLF line, to raise the level of politics within the group. However Armstrong was confronted with 18 months in prison and decided that it would be safer outside Australia.

However getting there would prove to be a challenge and entailed Karl leaving Australia surreptitiously, avoiding the Federal authorities and disappearing from friends and family. He was reunited with Jan in China when she arrived with a group of fellow travellers from the WSA. Both Jan and her colleagues were surprised to find Karl in the sanctuary of Socialist China.¹¹⁶ He and Jan ended up residing there for nine months. After a meeting with CPAML chairperson Ted Hill, then in China, there were discussions about being moved across to Albania. In January 1972 he and Jan flew across to Albania and remained there until after the victory of Whitlam on December 2 1972 and the suspension of the conscription scheme.¹¹⁷

There were others such as John Sinnott and Garry Hutchinson who found sanctuary in cooler climes, both finishing up in England. Hutchinson, not feeling comfortable either

¹¹⁵ It was not just to the Socialist Countries that young men fled, seeking to avoid conscription. Drew Snedden, son of Federal Minister Billy Snedden, chose to further his career with Qantas seeking and obtaining a clerical position in London. Scates R., *op cit*, p84.

¹¹⁶ Karl Armstrong, interview, 1/2/99.

¹¹⁷ Karl Armstrong, interview, 1/2/99, also refer to Armstrong K., quoted in Langley G., *op cit*, pp 195–196, 208.

going underground or being incarcerated spent time in the United Kingdom, before returning to Melbourne to push his anti-conscription case through the courts.¹¹⁸

Sinnott had been active in the early Monash Labor Club activities including the Aid to the NLF campaign. He had managed through a variety of methods including deferments, living under an alias and direct assistance from Jim Cairns, to avoid being conscripted, before tiring of the stress of the situation, moving to England in March 1972 and finding a sanctuary from conscription.¹¹⁹

ELECTION OF WHITLAM

Whitlam's election victory on Saturday December 2 1972 meant the release of those incarcerated and the dropping of charges against many others. Despite Whitlam's conservative position on both the questions of conscription and opposition to the war, his actions gave de facto acknowledgment for the hard struggle of the anti-conscription forces that had swung public opinion sufficiently for him to act in this manner.

Sunday December 3, the day after the election result saw members of the underground, such as Bob Bisset, Tony Dalton and Bob Muntz feel free and confident enough to visit their incarcerated colleagues in Pentridge.¹²⁰ In the following days the Deputy Prime Minister, Lance Barnard, directed Commonwealth and State Police forces not to execute any outstanding warrants for those in breach of the National Crimes Act;¹²¹

¹¹⁸ Hutchinson G., quoted in *ibid*, pp 122-123.

¹¹⁹ John Sinnott, interview, 11/3/99.

¹²⁰ Scates R., *op cit*, p 102.

¹²¹ *ibid*, p 103, *Age*, 6/12/72.

and then announced the ending of all liability for national service as prescribed by the Act.¹²² Coinciding with this was a Government decision to withdraw all Australian troops from Vietnam, except for a small group to guard the Australian embassy.¹²³ The ability of the state to conscript young men to fight in wars overseas, or be punished if they refused was now suspended, at least temporarily.

CONCLUSION

The opposition to conscription for overseas service went through a variety of phases, from protest, to defiance, to resistance. Whilst the direct impact of anti-Vietnam War activities in terms of influencing Federal Government decision making can be debated, the anti- conscription movements direct influence is noticeable, especially on the incoming Whitlam Government. The increasing opposition to conscription is evidenced in public opinion polls demonstrating how people's perceptions had changed in ways that governments could not afford to ignore.

Amongst the anti-Vietnam War movement a consensus was reached that conscription for overseas service must be resisted. The nature of opposition had become more radical over time. The early period was marked by its initial hopes of a Federal ALP victory in the 1966 elections. When this did not eventuate it did not mean the demise of the struggle, though organisations such as YCAC dissolved. New organisations such as DRM arose and the political approach moved to the support offered to conscientious objectors and generally peaceful resistance, with people whose actions broke the laws and were prepared to face their legal penalties, changed. The rise of

¹²² *ibid*, p 103.

¹²³ Saunders M.,1975, *op cit*, p 346.

more militant opposition, which challenged and resisted, best exemplified by the establishment of an underground which gave support to resisters and allowed them at times to appear publicly, challenging the scheme, before retreating to the sanctuary of the underground, was the high point of opposition to conscription.

The fact that members of the more established organisations such as the ALP, CICD and CPA were all prepared to provide shelter and support for the resisters indicates the new relationship that had developed. Though there were elements amongst the Maoists who expressed ambivalence towards the strategy of draft resistance, out of the left groups only the SYA stood aloof from this struggle, though individual party members were prepared to break party solidarity. The ability of a wide range of people and groups with quite disparate political agendas; who disagreed and debated constantly the right way to analyse the war in Vietnam; and thus what the 'correct' stance was, to then be able to work together in a cooperative manner, highlights the way the anti-conscription movement had progressed by the end of Australia's military involvement in the Vietnam war.

The underground as well as being the high point in the struggle, was also a uniquely Australian feature. Though underground's existed in America, they did not play the role of the Australian version, which acted both as a sanctuary and a base to make public appearances to challenge the system. This major development gave a level of strength to anti-conscriptionists that frustrated the State whilst boosting the morale and hopes of those involved in the struggle.

As has been stated the bringing together of differing perspectives on Conscription was a major accomplishment, within the left groupings. The fact a group of young New Left anti-conscriptionists in the DRU were willing to take part in blatantly illegal actions, combined with developing a political position that was explicitly anti-imperialist, yet were still able to obtain both practical and verbal support from the more conservative elements of the anti-Vietnam War movement, shows a development highlighting the 'positive' relationship that developed around the anti-conscription struggle.

Throughout the period in question, only one organisation remained as a constant. That organisation was SOS, which provided a staunch, strong backbone for the anti-conscription struggle, with its female membership and its non-heirarchical structure, it might have appeared quite a change to the male dominated and heirarchically structured organisations within the Left. Its durability, leadership and resilience proved invaluable in the struggle and the efforts of the members of SOS are pivotal in any understanding of this period.

The effectiveness of the anti-conscription activities in this period played a key role in drawing the attention of the population towards the inequity of conscription, linking it in with the fight against the perceived unjust war in Vietnam. The bringing together of diverse groupings, and the ongoing radicalistion and left ward push of the struggles mirrored the broader anti-Vietnam War campaign, as the radicals helped shape the agenda.

CONCLUSION

Although the Vietnam War did not end until 1975, the anti-Vietnam War movement declined sharply after 1972. This decline was due to a series of factors, including the electoral victory of the Federal Australian Labor Party (ALP) in 1972, and their decision to withdraw Australian military presence in Vietnam, and to discontinue conscription of young males to fight in Asia, together with the decision to discontinue legal proceedings against draft resisters. The lessening of the United States of America (US) military presence in Vietnam and the ensuing victory of the Liberation forces were also factors in this process.

Yet, despite the winding down of the struggle, the movement had made a radical impact both on the Left of Australian politics and the broader Australian society. The Left, which had seen itself be marginalised during the height of the Cold War in the 1950's, had undergone a major resurgence and expansion.

In 1967, the anti-Vietnam War movement, which appeared to have been defeated in the landslide conservative victory of the 1966 Federal election, resurrected itself quickly. It was able to overcome key ideological, strategic and tactical differences within its constituency, and to challenge the political orthodoxy and leadership of the day. Along the way its hard work, research, and argued positions saw many people who were previously unaware of or hostile towards the movement take a stand. Academics, pensioners, students and unionists were some sections of the public involved in this

process. The success of this process enabled the movement to build the 1970 Moratorium, the largest demonstration seen in Australia up until that time.

One factor that helped mobilise this movement was the willingness to take radical positions that confronted and crossed the boundaries that had hemmed in the established left and groups within the peace movement since the early 1950's. To move beyond peaceful protests, petitions and slide shows, and to take up civil disobedience, mass sit-downs and occupations, was not an easy step. The stance taken in 1967 by members of the Monash Labor Club and some supporters to openly back the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam (NLF) was not supported by the established Left and groups within the peace movement. But this early radical stance and other militant actions, such as the July 4 1968 demonstration outside the US consulate, showed a willingness to challenge the orthodoxy, and say 'your approach is not working, this is how we will do it!' The July 4 demonstrations of 1968 and 1969 showed a clear break between the established Left and newer, more radical groups. From the radicals' standpoint petitions, public meetings, slide nights and peaceful marches, were no longer sufficient to get the message across. Militant, confrontational tactics, involving attacking symbols of the 'enemy' and confronting the police, were now being put forward as an alternative. In a way not seen since the clashes of the 1930's depression, demonstrators were prepared to physically resist the police. Civil disobedience, including, sit-downs and sit-ins and deliberate flouting of unjust laws such as Melbourne City Council's (MCC) By-Law 418, saw unaccustomed challenge to the authorities. These challenges were very successful in raising issues and achieving victories.

From late 1969 the influence of the radicals in the anti-Vietnam War movement began challenging the hegemony of established groups. The desire of these groups to establish the Vietnam Moratorium Committee (VMC) as a way of reasserting the authority over the movement can be seen as a response to this, with its initial desires to limit its membership to a constituency that excluded the radical groups.

Although the radicals never controlled the movement, their actions, and their willingness to engage in debate levered the movement further to the left. Their established counterparts began to give ground and move to the left, though rarely as far as the radicals wanted. The lack of any major public splits, especially with the VMC, helped ensure that opposition to the war appeared united.

As mentioned in the literature review, the dialectical proposition advanced by Verity Burgmann that more radical and extreme political positions influence the political agenda so that what was once radical becomes more acceptable, can be seen at work here. "By carving out political space for themselves, the more defiant within any movement manoeuvre the less defiant into an advantageous political position."¹ Actions of the newer, more radical, groupings which forced the hand of the more conservative and established groups, helped achieve gains which whilst as not as radical as they might have desired, were certainly more radical than those favoured by the established groupings. An example of this was the campaign for support for the NLF, which

eventually found itself taken on board in a qualified way by the VMC.² Likewise the issue of mass sit-downs to block city streets became an accepted tactic to be used, despite initial arguments about its effectiveness.³

Harry Van Moorst takes a variant of this position. He claims the positions the radicals took, were supported by the established Left, but they were not openly prepared to say so. He talks about this in the context of an anti-imperialist position, stating, "Monash Labor Club and Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) were prepared to present it as an anti-imperialist war, and it wasn't that the Old Left didn't see it as an anti-imperialist war. Of course they did. But they did not want to say that, because tactically they felt it would alienate people and it would require too big a commitment against capitalism and imperialism, where as they wanted to keep things at a lowest common denominator."⁴

The fact that the VMC eventually took a decision to adopt an anti-imperialist stance vindicates both Van Moorst and Burgmann's interpretations. The Old Left could see the war was about imperialism, but were unwilling to openly take such a stance and were finally forced to accept a position that was openly anti-imperialist. Whilst accepting the root cause of the war in Vietnam was imperialism, they did not go a step further and call for a world- wide struggle against capitalist imperialism. Thus the radical and extreme

¹ Burgmann V., *Power and Protest*, Allen and Unwin, St Leonards p 262.

² Murphy J., *Harvest of Fear: A History of Australia's Vietnam War*, Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 1993, p 245, Saunders M., *The Vietnam Moratorium Movement in Australia 1969-1973*, PHD, Flinders University Adelaide, 1975, p 33, quoting from VMC Sponsors meeting, 1/2/70.

³ Saunders M., 1975, *ibid*, pp 33-35, quoting from VMC Sponsors meeting, 1/2/70 and VMC Executive meeting, 13/4/70.

⁴ Harry Van Moorst, interview, 19/3/99.

demands that were not initially accepted created a political 'breathing space' to allow a more moderate position to be acceptable to the bulk of the anti-Vietnam War movement.

Other writers of the period such as Murphy and Saunders tend to downplay the role of the more radical sections of the anti-Vietnam War movement. Rather than perceiving the radicals as having a limited or a negative influence, they would do well to consider Burgmann's hypothesis that would seem to have been substantiated in the movement studied. The radical actions of supporting the NLF, handing out leaflets urging young men not to register for the draft, and explicitly making the links between the war in Vietnam and imperialism were all vindicated and supported to varying degrees. The newer, radical groups did shift boundaries and open up space for different ideas and viewpoints to be put forward. These views, whilst not to the liking of the established groups, undermined their hegemony and they were required to justify themselves by engaging in dialogue, and accepting positions put forward by their newer colleagues.

In looking at my findings in relation to Murphy's work, the key point of difference is in relation to how the newer, radical groupings influenced the agenda, something that Murphy acknowledges, but not in a positive manner. In some ways Murphy acknowledges Burgmann's position, conceding that the Communist Party of Australia (CPA) and the peace movement were required to move beyond lowest common denominator politics. As discussed in the literature review Murphy tends to give undue weight to the CPA line of the time. Whilst not overly critical of the role of SDS he is

negative regarding the influence of the Monash Labor Club and other Communist Party of Australia Marxist-Leninist (CPAML) influenced groups. His acknowledgement of them is begrudging and in particular with the Monash Labor Club non-existent. Without singling that organisation out, their role in publicising the Aid to the NLF controversy was the first major sign of a break with the established peace movement. Despite this stance being radical and unpopular, it pushed the parameters of debate further, opening up space to argue and discuss anti-Vietnam War perspectives, as well as commencing a process that saw the support for the NLF position become accepted by the VMC.⁵ The same VMC that Murphy considers as being successful because the ultra lefts were controlled, was able and willing to endorse a position put forward a few years previously by the ultra- left, which was at the time not able to gain support within the Left.

As covered in the literature review, Murphy's view of the relationship can be read as a negative one. The fact that the anti-Vietnam War movement did not adopt the more radical stances proposed by the new, radical groups does not simply have to be perceived as a failure of these groups. Murphy disparages the contributions of the radicals to building an effective movement, and dismisses their actions as radical posturing.⁶ At the same time he lauds the CPA as holding the movement together and restraining the ultra left whilst still endorsing and supporting 'advanced' actions.⁷ Yet this denies the fact, that the CPA and the other established groups were required to take on board these stances in a context where they were being attacked from their left over issues such as sit-downs,

⁵ Refer Moratorium Chapter, also, VMC leaflet for September 18 1970 Moratorium, "support the NLF, support their independence struggle, support the Moratorium", Ralph and Dorothy Gibson Collection, University of Melbourne.

⁶ Murphy J., *op cit*, p255.

publicly opposing imperialism and supporting the NLF. If these more radical positions had not have been taken by the newer groups and the space for political debate had not been further expanded, it is doubtful if the anti-Vietnam War movement would have easily taken these positions.

In the introduction to his Doctorate Saunders draws an artificial separation between the anti-Vietnam War movement and the VMC. This does not appear to be a premise that can be sustained, as there is not some arbitrary cut off point to the anti-Vietnam War struggles, after which a new structure, the VMC, materialises. The VMC is best viewed as a new and more advanced phase of the anti-Vietnam War struggle, probably its zenith. It is an entity that comprised those existing groups, from both the established Left, as well as the newer more radical Left, and became open to anyone who wished to take a progressive stance on the war in Vietnam. It was not a mass movement that supplanted the anti-Vietnam War movement it was the anti-Vietnam War mass movement.

Saunders is right when he says that the moratorium achieved more publicity than the results of the anti-Vietnam War movement and the five years of work preceding it. But, to endeavour to put some sort of 'Chinese Wall' between different stages and opposition to the war does not equate with the facts. The same groupings and individuals who had been active in their opposition, had a new vehicle, a new structure, to both work together within a well resourced coalition and attract the support and attention of many more people who found themselves willing to take an active stand on the war.⁸

⁷ *ibid*, pp 256-258.

⁸ Saunders M., 1975, *op cit*, pp 1-4.

Saunders discusses two major themes in his work. One is the support and opposition to the VMC and the concept of a Moratorium the other is the struggle between the moderate and radical factions.⁹ Saunders considers that the VMC was at its most successful in the period up until May 1970, where the moderates controlled it. Whilst this is true, an important contribution is missing from this equation. What would have happened if the young radical, Left groups had been successfully frozen out of the VMC process. The fact that the initial planning was conducted by the established peace groups, ostensibly in relation to counter the growing influence of their more radical counterparts, culminating in the limited number of invitees to the planning meeting at the Caprice Restaurant, can be perceived as a desire to run the moratorium as a homogeneous body comprising only the established Left and peace groups. If this process had been allowed to unravel this way, the numerical and organisational success of the VMC and its influence on the political landscape would not have happened. It is quite conceivable the two key components of the Left would have organised separate activities, with less impact. The fact that the radicals were able to be involved in the Moratorium was a key to its success. Their willingness to challenge the Left orthodoxy, to influence younger people and to challenge authority, all helped bring about this large successful campaign.

The progressive sections of both the trade union movement and the major parliamentary opposition party, the ALP, also played important roles, in supporting and building the struggle. The Victorian ALP played a consistent and active role in opposing the war in Vietnam. Of all the state branches of the ALP, the Victorians were the most consistent in

their stance on the war and supporting opposition to the war. Their branch officials and ordinary members were active in various ways ranging from passing resolutions at their state conferences which were supportive of the anti-Vietnam War forces across to some ALP branches providing the nuclei for some suburban Moratorium branches. Office bearers such as Bill Hartley, George Crawford and Jim Cairns were all publicly active both in supporting and participating in anti-Vietnam War activities. Their Federal parliamentary colleagues, worried by the 1966 Election debacle, were more circumspect in their stance on the war, offering qualified support only when they felt it would not hinder their electoral prospects. Whitlam as their leader took a far more conservative stance than had his predecessor Arthur Calwell.

The 'Rebel Unions' marshalled resources and people to varying degrees behind the struggle. There were isolated actions by groups of unionised workers, as well as actions by individual union members that helped build the movement. Examples, such as the involvement of Trade Union Committee Against Conscription (TUCAC) in the John Zarb case, threats to impose boycotts on commercial goods produced by companies that were linked to conservative councilors during the By-Law 418 campaign; stoppages in a number of industries including manufacturing and maritime, in support of VNC actions; stoppages by seamen in response to the jailing of the 'Fairlea Five' and the public statement of representatives of the 'Rebel Unions' giving young men advice on their options to refuse to submit to the draft, are all examples how the more progressive unions played a positive role in this struggle.

⁹ Saunders M., 1975 *ibid*, pp363-366.

The two communist parties, the CPA and the pro-Chinese CPAML, also contributed to the movement. A cautious, at times conservative CPA, scarred by the effects of the Cold War and the Sino-Soviet split played an important role within the established Left, and peace movement. They were able to mobilise both people and resources, and also sought to recruit and influence sections of the newer radicals, probably best exemplified by the Left Action Conference of Easter 1969. In their publications the CPA was a constant commentator on events in Vietnam, and its implications for politics in Australia. Party officials such as Bernie Taft played key roles in the VMC, whilst CPA members active within the unions such as Laurie Carmichael and Roger Wilson were prominent both as individuals as well as seeking union involvement in the struggle. Throughout this struggle the role and presence of the CPA remained a constant in the anti-Vietnam War struggle.

As events unfolded the Maoist CPAML increased its influence amongst young recruits. A party that had split away from the existing Australian communist party, the CPA, and with limited influence beyond sections of the union movement, found itself with influence beyond its actual size. The events in China, with the Cultural Revolution revolutionising Chinese society, combined with the anti-Vietnam War movement, capped off by the world- wide upsurge of militancy, especially amongst young people, breathed life and purpose into this small, secretive body. Its links with activists in Monash and Latrobe Labor Clubs, as well as the establishment of front groups such as Worker Student Alliance (WSA), saw them attract many talented young radicals, and provide an ideological leadership.

The opposition to conscription that had seemed dormant after the 1966 Federal elections took new forms and directions over the ensuing years. The constant presence of SOS gave a stability to the anti- conscription cause, whilst other organisations were formed that allowed direct representation for draft resisters. The short lived Draft Resisters Movement (DRM) and its follow up the Draft Resisters Union (DRU), were radical vehicles in which draft resisters could mobilise to challenge the law, as well as getting their message across to help build support. Their success in linking in with other sections of the anti-Vietnam War movement probably was at its zenith when they linked in with the VMC and highlighted the reality that the struggles against Australian involvement in the Vietnam conflict, and the issue of conscription was inseparable.

The success of the VMC was undoubtedly the highpoint of the period, with its ability to draw huge numbers of people onto the streets to show their opposition to the war and Australia's role in it. Despite the earlier efforts of the established peace groups to control the composition and direction of the VMC, they failed to stop the newer radical groups participating in and influencing the VMC's direction. The VMC as a vehicle that could and did take public stances on issues pertaining to Vietnam, such as support for anti-conscription and criticisms of US imperialism, provided a political development not seen in Post World War 2 Australia. A broad coalition of the Left arguing strategies and tactics, able to mobilise many thousands of people, could be viewed as an extra parliamentary opposition, able to reflect and wield large public interest.

The hypothesis that the dialectical relationship between the New and Established Left was pivotal to the development and success of the anti-Vietnam War struggle in Victoria is confirmed in this research. These newer, radical, groupings disputed the leadership of the movement and whilst at times being prepared to work co-operatively, were never subordinate to the established leaders of the Left. But rather were always able to confront and challenge. It was a left that was no longer dominated by tight party structures and beholden to lowest common denominator politics. Without these New Left groups, the movement against the Vietnam War would not have taken the shape and paths it did. Their willingness to use different, more radical approaches to that employed by their established counterparts, saw constant debates and challenges within the Left. The timidity and attempts at respectability, long employed by the established organisations were challenged and they found themselves having initially to justify their positions, and gradually to move further left, to ensure they did not lose influence over the direction of the opposition to the war. Though no opposition movement can ever hope to achieve their gains in entirety, the anti-Vietnam War movement in Victoria stamped its mark on our political history. It challenged, influenced and altered the polity of the period, in a way not seen since the anti-conscription struggles of World War One, and not seen since.

This period of political history saw the beginnings of a number of important social movements such as the environmental movement, and a resurgent women's movement. This period saw the emergence of a New Left, a different, more eclectic Left. People began to challenge authority and the established social system it protected in a way that had not happened in the previous three decades. The success of the anti-Vietnam War

movement, which made a public stand in challenging the foreign policy of the federal Government, inspired these new social movements to challenge authority in other social and political domains. Revitalised forms of radical left wing thinking, and collective empowerment, altered the focus of the traditional Left response to authority, which had been centred around the working class as the force for change, particularly the working class as represented by the organised labor movement.

New social forces led the struggle against authority. It was no longer the traditional working class model of struggle. Instead other social groupings such as students and white collar professionals also became active forces for challenging and changing society. Struggles also took place in a more diverse range of areas. The local community, universities and academia, high schools and white collar, workplaces all became areas where challenges to authority, could and were made.

Whilst the role of the CPA, highlighting the interconnectedness of issues within the social system, was now reduced by these new challenges to authority, it did not mean there was a lack of leadership or that there was a lurch to the right. Whilst the communists had played dynamic, leadership roles in the 1930's and 1940's, a combination of the Cold War and the splits in the international Communist movement had reduced their ability to radically influence and lead a major Left wing struggle. Without diminishing their role and importance, the leadership of the Left was no longer in the hands of one party, or as the CPA had wished a coalition of the Left, with the CPA being the leader. Instead a new

generation of activists, inspired by successful challenges to authority emerged to challenge the social system on a myriad of fronts.

While this study has focussed on the relationship of the New Left and established Left groups in the anti-Vietnam War movement there remains many areas of the anti-Vietnam War movement that need further investigation. The roles of women, ex-servicemen and high school students in this struggle, are all possible areas of future study, as we seek to understand the influence and importance of the anti-Vietnam War movement.

For the importance and influence of the New Left itself, there is a wealth of material still to be researched and analysed. The anti-Springbok demonstrations, radical activities on the campuses and within high schools, student support for the General Strike organised in support of jailed union official Clarrie O'Shea, the re-emergence of the women's movement, the rise of the counterculture, are all areas where the New Left were active within this period, yet are beyond the boundaries of this work. Hopefully future researchers utilising information from this study and similar studies can begin to comprehensively analyse this period of political change.

The anti-Vietnam War challenge to authorities and established structures was an important contribution to the Australian Left. Firstly it revitalised the influence of the Left, which suffered enormously, after the onset of the Cold War, gripped by a combination of inertia and a fear of not appearing respectable. Secondly it took its place

in the history and tradition of the Australian Left through its willingness to challenge and oppose the injustices they saw associated with the war in Vietnam. The anti-Vietnam War forces directly confronted the authorities in a myriad of ways, including but not limited too, burning of draft cards, sit-downs and militant demonstrations. These approaches all gave confidence to the many social and political struggles emerging around that time. The fear and inertia that had been so prevalent among the Left since the height of the Cold War in the early 1950's began to disappear. It did not disappear of its own accord, but was a result of challenge from new groups who sought to reinvigorate, and create new radical traditions for the Left.

CHRONOLOGY

1967

Jan Anti Ky Demonstration
Jan Feb Registration period. Errol Heldzingenn, Mike Matteson and Chris Campbell (NSW) publicly refuse to comply with conscription
Feb Hanging of Ronald Ryan
Feb 8 Gough Whitlam replaces Arthur Calwell as leader of the Federal ALP
May 24 Demonstration outside the US consulate and Melbourne Town Hall
July 4 Rally and vigil outside the US consulate drawing over 1,000 people
July 21 Monash Labor Club establish Committee to collect medical and unspecified aid to the NLF
October 2 Monash Forum on Vietnam
November 15 Suspension of 'Rebel Unions' at Victorian Trades Hall Council

1968

Jan 31 Commencement of the Tet Offensive as Viet Cong and North Vietnamese forces attack enemy military points throughout South Vietnam
Feb 7. Draft Resisters Movement established in Melbourne. Their slogan 'wreck conscription, not oppose it'
March 16 US forces massacre innocent Vietnamese civilians at My Lai
July 2 Police attack demonstrators at anti-War demonstration in Sydney
July 4 Violent scenes outside the US consulate in Melbourne as demonstrators and police fight pitched battles
July 19 President Dubcek makes speech in Prague greeting the 'Prague Spring'
October 14 Conscientious objector John Zarb jailed for 2 years
Dec Students arrested and charged under the Crimes Act and Melbourne City Council By-Law 418. Their crime? Handing out 'Don't Register' leaflets
December 30 Commencement of national SDS conference

1969

Jan-Feb. First intensive Don't Register Campaign Launched
April 9 By-Law 418 repealed
June 2 Trial of Albert Langer and Dave Rubin commences relating to charges from the July 4 1968 demonstration
July 4 2,500 demonstrate in Melbourne 99 Arrested across Australia
July 25 SDS Conscription teach in at Latrobe University
October 15 Massive anti-War Demonstrations in US. First Moratorium conducted
October 22 CICD executive endorse idea for a Moratorium proposal
October 25 ALP defeated in Federal Election despite a swing of 7%
December 9 First meeting of the Vietnam Moratorium Committee in Melbourne

December 15 200 delegates from 27 unions issue the mutiny call for young men to refuse to fight in Vietnam

December 16 Prime Minister Gorton announces the withdrawal of an unspecified number of Australian troops in line with US troop withdrawals

1970

February 1 First VMC public meeting at Richmond Town Hall

April 22 Prime Minister John Gorton announces the withdrawal of a battalion of 900 troops from Vietnam

May 4 Large anti-War demonstrations in the US 4 shot dead at Kent State

May 8 Over 200,000 people across Australia participate in Moratoriums to end the war. In Melbourne over 100,000 march

June 20 Draft Resisters Union formed at La Mama at a conference of 45 draft resisters

September 18 100,000 people attend the second moratorium around Australia. In Melbourne over 50,000 march

October 7 DRU announce the establishment of an underground for draft resisters

1971

Feb 8 Five SOS members arrested and charged with trespassing under the National Service Office. They will become known as the 'Fairlea Five'

Mar 3 Prime Minister McMahon announces the withdrawal of 1,000 more troops

April 3 'Fairlea Five' jailed for 14 days

July 3 Anti Springbok Demonstrations in Melbourne

September 18/19 National DRU conference at Melbourne University

September 27-30 Melbourne University Draft Resistance Commune and Siege

September 30 Commonwealth Police raid Melbourne University early in the morning seeking to apprehend draft resisters

1972

Jan 1972 Sydney and Canberra Moratorium Committees wind up

Mar 7 Draft Resister Bob Bisset arrested at work

Mar 8 Draft Resister Bob Scates arrested at work

December 2 Gough Whitlam's ALP elected to Federal Power. They end conscription, though do not repeal the National Service Act

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