DAVID BENNETT

a memoir

Race Mathews

Australian Fabian Society
Pamphlet 44
$3

Australian
Fabians.

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Fabian Archives

ABOUT THE AUSTRALIAN FABIAN SOCIETY

The Fabian tradition is one of achieving social progress through research and education. Bernard Shaw and Sydney Webb began it in 1883, and generations of Fabians have placed its stamp on every facet of British and Australian society. Gough Whitlam adopted the Fabian approach from the day he entered Parliament, and the seminal 1972 Whitlam policy speech was a drawing together of the threads of twenty years of systematic Fabian research and planning. Arthur Calwell before him was always proud to call himself a Fabian, and the tradition has been carried on through Bill Hayden, Bob Hawke, John Bannon, John Cain and Neville Wran. The present Leader of the British Labour Party, Neil Kinnock, is a Fabian, as were Michael Foot, Harold Wilson, Hugh Gaitskell and Clement Attlee before him. Australia had its first Fabian Society as early as 1895, and 1947 saw the establishment of the Victorian Fabian Society, which became the Australian Fabian Society in 1984. The Australian Fabian Society is the largest Fabian body ever to exist outside Britain itself. It operates nationally, with members in every state and territory.

The Society has no policy beyond that implied in a general commitment to democratic socialism, and it issues its publications as the opinions of their authors and not of the organisation. It does not admit members of parties other than the ALP. Its aim is to promote education and discussion on policies designed to further the goals of democratic socialism. In carrying out this aim, the Society has published books such as *Policies for Progress, Look Here* and *Towards a New Australia*, and pamphlets such as Whitlam's *Labor and the Constitution*, Hayden's *The Implications of Democratic Socialism* and Hawke's *Principles in Practice: The First Two Years* together with a periodical *Fabian Newsletter*. It also holds quarterly dinners, weekend conferences and public forums.

If you believe that reason, education and ideas should play a larger part in Australian politics, if you care about the quality of the society we live in and the direction it is taking and if you share the ethic of democratic socialism, the Australian Fabian Society would welcome you as a member.

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PREFACE

The title of this pamphlet is far too modest, for while it stands as a sensitive and balanced tribute to the life and achievements of David Bennett (1926-84) by a lifelong friend and co-worker in the causes of educational reform and the labour movement there are at least two other themes skillfully woven into it.

One is an account of factional politics in the Victorian branch of the Australian Labor Party, particularly in the period between the split of 1955 and the federal intervention of 1970. The other is the history of the Victorian Fabian Society before and after its revival in 1960.

Obviously neither of these themes is treated definitively, but at the same time neither is merely incidental to the pamphlet's main subject. David Bennett was a significant reformer of the Australian schools system, but — like the pamphlet's author — he also played a role in the two major reshapings of the ALP which took place during his life. His involvement in politics, including factional politics, sprang naturally and logically from his life-long commitment to the teaching profession.

David Bennett was also a dedicated and determined Fabian and his story cannot be told without reference to events in the Victorian Fabian Society in the 1960s and 1970s. However what may appear at first sight to be a brief outline history of the society in those years develops into a major case study of Fabianism in action. Proposals for federal funding of schools which David Bennett and Race Mathews put forward in a paper for the 1964 Victorian ALP Conference were subsequently refined into a paper on education which went before the 1966 ALP Federal Conference. They were then published as Fabian Pamphlet No. 15, *Meeting the Crisis: Federal Aid for Education*, in 1967. (The 1966 version of the proposals is included as an appendix to this pamphlet, see pp 61-67). The Whitlam Government subsequently set up a committee to recommend on how Labor's policies for schools should be implemented. This led to the formation of the schools Commission with David Bennett as one of its four full-time members. A major and lasting reform of the Australian schools system had been brought about by those years of research, persuasion, debate and discussion in classic Fabian style.

Race Mathews has done more than pay tribute to a dear and admired friend. He has written one of the most interesting and refreshing pamphlets published in Australia in many years.

K.D.GOTT

Introduction

When David Monash Bennett died on 1 May 1984, at the age of 59, he left behind him in the affairs of the Australian Fabian Society and the lives of his many Fabian and Australian Labor Party friends a gap which will be hard to fill. The growth of the Society after 1959 and its success in promoting the Whitlam[1] platform throughout the 'sixties and early 'seventies owed much to his efforts. David, like Whitlam himself, epitomised the Fabian approach to politics and policy development. Each new piece of work he undertook started from the principles of social justice and equality which gave his life its whole motivation and purpose. Facts were gathered painstakingly and meticulously analysed, so that administrative options emerged and could be tested. Once the final form of the proposition had been settled, it was fought for with all the formidable vigour and determination his passionate nature could muster. "Educate, agitate, organise" — the strategy of the Fabian Society from its inception — summarised perfectly all that David was on about, and, given his chance as one of the four full-time members of the Schools Commission set up by the Whitlam Government, he applied it to the full. The Special Projects (Innovations) Program, which he developed for the Commission, played a key role in shaking out Australian education from its then characteristic intellectual lethargy and bureaucratic torpor. He thought carefully about his Commission experience, and set out his conclusions with bleak and unsparing honesty in a contribution to *Labor Essays 1982* which has become, for many, a vital signpost to the shape of progressive thought on education in the years ahead.

Earlier, work we did together had a similar impact on the education policies of the ALP. The 1964 Victoria n ALP education policy statement *Looking to the Future*, together with a paper which we prepared for the 1966 Special Federal Conference at Surfers' Paradise, introduced the needs principle, which was seen as a means of throwing off the sectarian strait-jacket in which the party had become imprisoned by the State Aid debate, and in promoting equality among students and schools. Material prepared privately at Whitlam's request was instrumental in fleshing out the bare bones of the Schools Commission idea, which had been foreshadowed in *Looking to the Future* and developed further by Whitlam himself on the model of Menzies Universities Commission. The Martin[2] Committee Report — *Tertiary Education in Australia* — became the point of departure for a re-thinking of the party's approach to tertiary education, which events — in the shape of the 1972 elections and the formation of the Whitlam Government — overtook before it could be completed. In 1970 we involved ourselves deeply in the

campaign to make the Victorian branch of the ALP a much more democratic and effective organisation, in which policy issues could be tackled seriously. David's role as chairman of the 1970-71 ALP Reconstruction Convening Committee was instrumental in expediting the return of the Victorian branch to normalcy following Federal intervention, and winning the additional Victorian seats needed for Whitlam to become Prime Minister in 1972.

It was part of David's tragedy that circumstances intervened to prevent him from making the most of the three great opportunities which opened up for him. In 1969, the safe Federal seat of Batman was his for the asking, but he rejected it because of a crisis in his marriage. There is no doubt in my mind that, if he had gone into Parliament, he would have become a senior minister in the Whitlam Government, and a major force for orderly decision-making and commonsense. It was only as a Schools Commissioner that his capacity for creative thought and action was able to be given full rein for the first time, and the opportunity was pinched off prematurely by Malcolm Fraser's[3] Remembrance Day coup. Cancer overtook him precisely at the point where his thinking about education had finally begun to generate firm conclusions, and the books which he would have written went with him to the grave.

Origins

We first met in Moe in 1956. I was a 21-year-old teacher, posted to Newborough East Primary School, and David was ten years older, teaching at Moe High School. I went to my first meeting of the Moe branch of the Victorian Teachers' Union, and there was David, delivering himself to a half-empty classroom on some topic associated with his position as branch Treasurer. Even in that unlikely setting there was real charisma about the hawk-like profile and the flashing, slightly-hooded eyes, as I saw them then for the first time. A few days later my wife Jill and I had a chance meeting with David and his wife Sonia at the Yallourn Theatre, and discovered that our Housing Commission homes in Moe were around the corner from one another. The four of us became close friends.

David, I imagine, welcomed having someone to share his interest in a range of subjects, which included politics, history, science, education, literature and all the performing arts. For my part, he became a mentor who for the next twenty-eight years taught, encouraged, challenged, bullied, exasperated and inspired me. Initially, the friendship was one where I was given much more than I could return, but over the years the balance became more even. We supported each other in our worst personal crises, including Sonia's death in

1971, and my own loss when Jill had died a year earlier. We talked more intimately about our innermost emotional concerns than men normally do in friendship, perhaps because of David's need to give expression to the intensity of the frustrations and aspirations which intermittently wracked his private and professional life. The Bennett family world and David's experiences as an ex-serviceman, Arts student and Labor Club member at Melbourne University, a London University Teacher's Diploma student, a tyro teacher in Hertfordshire and London and a member of the British Labour Party and the Australian Labor Party became as familiar to me as if I had lived them for myself.

David's grandfather, Sir John Monash[4], was Australia's most successful World War I General. David viewed this possession of an illustrious ancestor with a mixture of pride and wry ambivalence. An essay, *My Education*, which he wrote at London University, records how, regarded inevitably as the oldest descendant of his famous grandfather by almost the entire adult world with which he came in contact, it was impressed upon him *ad nauseam* that he was the "possessor of a great inheritance" and "had something wonderful to live up to". At Scotch College, the Junior School headmaster immediately made clear the importance that he gave to David and his family. Form Captains were appointed by him, and almost every year David was allotted this exalted position. This, of course, made him increasingly apologetic towards his class-mates. He knew that he was not popular enough to have been elected, nor would he have been appointed on the basis of sporting prowess or "qualities of leadership". His sister, Betty Durre, remembers how:

> At the opening ceremony of the "Monash Gates" in Glenferrie Road, the Scotch parents and friends were gathered along the avenue leading up to the gates on the Scotch College site. An announcement was made over the loudspeaker that the entire school would now march through the gates with, at their head, the grandson of Sir John Monash — "John Colin Monash Bennett". At this moment the small boy who was standing next to me burst into howls of fear and dismay: *he* was "John Colin Monash Bennett". The band struck up, the boys began to move and, undeterred by the blunderous announcement, the real leader, *David* Monash Bennett advanced down the drive, quite alone, several yards ahead of the following phalanxes of boys. Not very tall, somewhat pudgy and with a look of determination on his face, he strode confidently ahead. Behind him came in serried ranks the entire school. The applauding parents, the continuing wails of the small younger brother at my side and the martial bearing of the elder one leading the

procession makes a picture I have never forgotten. Such a misuse of children was something on which, in later years, David would look back with horror. It was experiences such as this one which helped to form his thinking on the nature of schools, their morals and mores, which became the major theme of his working life.

David had an older brother, John, who died aged seven when David was five. Such was the strength of the "Monash connection" that when Colin Monash Bennett was born shortly afterwards, "John" was added to his name. Expectations of David were correspondingly heightened. His father, Gershon Bennett[5], recalled, in an intensely moving wartime letter to David, how he and Monash had talked of a time "... when John would wear the dark blue of Oxford and you the pale blue of Cambridge". While the passage was qualified with a reference in the following line to "... the dream of two foolish men who loved two wee boys", its message was familiar. A Monash boy was expected to aim high, and, in the eyes of the family, David's promise was limitless. Gershon Bennett's letter to his son continued: "Your power of tongue and ability to discuss problems ... will enable you to guide the destiny of men, perhaps millions of men — I speak of the Prime Minister of Australia." Instead, the army years gave David a chance to think for himself about his future. As early as 1943, he had reached the tentative conclusion that teaching would be his life's work, but he was aware that the choice would not be welcome in circumstances where the range of professions acceptable to his father was restricted, for all practical purposes, to medicine, engineering and law. Nor was he oblivious to some practical objections. The possibility of earning a great deal of money did not, for the present, seem a sufficiently important consideration to warrant taking up an occupation other than the one he most desired, but he was conscious too that, if after ten years of teaching he had different needs or feelings, the change to a more lucrative profession would be hard to make. He recalled a member of the Scotch College staff who had "... been teaching the same page of his chemistry book on any particular day of the year you like to mention for maybe forty years", and reflected on how easily the challenge and promise of teaching could give way to "a living death". For all this, by late 1945 his decision in favour of teaching had firmed, and he was ready to begin preparing for the classroom by securing his discharge from the army in time to start an Arts course at Melbourne University the following year. A level of maturity had been reached where he could respect the aspirations which others held for him without allowing them to shape and dominate what he chose to make of himself.

There may well have been a further echo of David's response to the Monash connection in the difficulty which he always experienced with authority figures. Taking orders or having to give them was alien to David's whole nature and outlook. He committed himself to each appointment he received on the basis that he would be working co-operatively with people who respected and related to one another as equals. It was a source of unquenchable astonishment and outrage to him where insufficiently perceptive principals in the schools where he taught, or subsequent hierarchical superiors, persistently tried to bring him to heel. In the uproar which followed, his motives were often misunderstood or misrepresented, and his great strengths undervalued or overlooked. Nor was David's distaste for being set over other people less vehement. Once again his stand flew in the face of the family tradition. Gershon Bennett — himself a colonel, serving on the Queensland Tablelands — reminded him that:

> Your grandfather commanded 208,000 men in battle, and I command a few myself — you were born to command and lead men not boys. I have never, by the way, understood your lack of ambition in the army, you belong to the officer class — a rare species. It is a much bigger ambition to command men and to lead and teach them than it is to command and teach boys.

David wanted no part in it. When he joined the Ninth Division in 1943 he rejected the commission which otherwise inevitably would have come his way. Demobilisation in 1946 found himself still a private, after bloody service in New Guinea and Borneo. A good story is told about David's desire to get through his time in the army without the Monash connection becoming public. As Betty Durre recalls: "On one occasion he faced a sergeant at a desk. 'What does the "M" in your middle name stand for?' After a struggle David admitted 'Monash'. For a bad moment he saw his cover blown. 'That's a coincidence' was the reply, 'my middle name is Haig!' " Betty Durre also remembers a conversation where David's son, John, at a very early age, mused on what there was left for him to become when his great-grandfather had been a General, his grandfather a Colonel and his father a Private, and came up with the answer "a conscientious objector".

David, needless to say, was delighted as much by the sentiment of John's solution as by its ingenuity. His consciousness of perfidy in international affairs and the need to campaign positively for peace had been heightened by an episode which he witnessed at first hand during the last days of his army service

on the Borneo island of Tarakan. Holland was struggling to regain its former colonies in the Dutch East Indies. Public opinion in Australia was generally favourable to the Dutch. Even so, the Waterside Workers' Federation was refusing to load Dutch munitions, and requests from the Dutch for permission to recruit Australian servicemen into their forces and arm and train in Australia were being rejected repeatedly by the Chifley[6] Government, in what appeared to be the consistent application of a firm anti-colonialist policy. Events on Tarakan showed David that there was another side to the Government's face. Weapons made in Australia and used by Australians to fight the Japanese were being turned over to the Dutch to carry out what he saw as a slaughter of the Indonesians who, a few months earlier, had been among Australia's most effective Pacific allies. A warrant officer who was making out lists of stores for transfer summarised the transaction for him as "legalised gun-running". He was able to note for himself that the unit price for jeeps accepted by the Dutch on Tarakan was £300, and he was aware that similar transactions were occurring on Morotai and throughout the Borneo area. He was outraged in particular by the prospect that the Indonesian auxiliaries, who the Australians had come to know so well and who were waiting to be repatriated to Java, might arrive there just in time to stop bullets from the rifles of men who, a few months earlier, they had helped to carry out wounded from the Borneo jungle. His feelings were poured out in a blazing letter to his friend Arthur Burns[7], in which he wrote that for once the old trite talk of "bloated capitalism", blood-stained hands and imperialist murder seemed to almost fill the bill. It was probably the closest he ever came to experiencing any real sense of identity with communism or the Communist Party.

None of this meant that David lacked respect for his grandfather's memory. Monash's portrait and sword hung on the wall of his study. One of our recurrent dialogues in the early years of our friendship was about whether he should write the Monash biography himself or allow it to be written by another. We pored together over large numbers of the Monash papers and, in the end, he was able to decide confidently that the work should be entrusted to Geoff Serle[8]. Betty Durre records that:

> It was he who at the end of Geoff's stint on the Papers gave much careful thought to their proper disposition, entering into all the correspondence and documentation on behalf of the three of us with the greatest of efficiency. Naturally, the idea had been floated that we could sell the Papers if we wished to. He dismissed it with "You don't make money out of your grandfather's old letters".

Attributes

Principle was behind most of the things he did. His commitment to parliamentary democracy was total and unreserved. Although he never entered Parliament, he was willing to throw his hat into the ring, as a personal contribution to seeing that the system worked. He missed pre-selection for the Morwell seat at the 1955 State elections, but thirteen years later, in 1968, the ALP chose him as its candidate for the by-election in the blue-ribbon Liberal seat of Higgins, which followed the untimely death of Prime Minister Holt[9]. Subsequently he was invited to contest the safe Labor seat of Batman at the 1969 General Elections. It was not to be. Increasing unhappiness at home and frustration with his work as Chief Research Officer for the Australian Council for Educational Research had temporarily undermined his usual self-assurance. At the crucial moment, his nerve faltered and the offer was declined. It was a party tragedy as well as a personal one. There was a need for Whitlam to have around him caucus colleagues who, while broadly sharing his views were also sufficiently strong-minded to head off his errors of judgement. David was ideally suited for the part. He would have stuck stubbornly to his guns where he saw the party's electoral prospects endangered. Nor was this all. In 1969 the depleted ranks of the Federal Parliamentary Labor Party were replenished with an influx of future Labor Ministers, who included Paul Keating[10], Lionel Bowen[11], Chris Hurford[12], Joe Berinson[13], Barry Cohen[14], Bill Morrison[15] and Moss Cass[16]. David's talents were equal, if not superior, to those of the best of the newcomers. He would have been an immensely valuable addition to their ranks.

He was impressive in many ways. This is now attested to from a variety of vantage points, by everyone who knew him. What struck you first was the physical size and presence of the man. The shoulders might be rounded, and the gait not so much a walk as a shamble, but he had only to enter a room to dominate it. The head was hewn on heroic lines, and there was immense strength and force about the face, reflecting faithfully the qualities behind it. People remember him as a great bear of a man, and that was the case, not only physically but in his loveableness and his impatience with those who gave up on the struggle to find ways of making the world a better, fairer place for everyone. He is remembered by some of his colleagues on the Schools Commission and the Commission's National Innovations Committee as an impatient, demanding and dogged defender of his point of view, who sometimes used his position as the Committee's Chairman to browbeat people who disagreed with him in meetings, and was not above filibustering to get his way. By contrast, there is the story of a visit he paid to some Aboriginal

communities in Arnhem Land, in company with his fellow Commissioners, Jean Blackburn[17] and Joan Kirner[18]. Joan recalls their breakfast together:

> We had rolls and honey. David was so enthralled with talking about this Aboriginal question that he was not watching what he was doing. He was unwrapping the butter out of the foil things and at the same time taking the lid off the little foil honey thing and trying to get butter and honey on at the same time, and he got most amazingly stuck together. I've always been a fan of Winnie the Pooh and there was this honey, this butter, this face and those eyes, and Jean and I were just sitting there in absolute stitches. We just could not stop laughing. He did not know what we were laughing at, of course, and so my great memory of David is not really of him as a bear of a man but as a honey bear.

And so he was. Creighton Burns[19], who knew him longer, perhaps, than anybody other than his family, has noted how those of us whose friendship with him was broken into episodes separated by our other commitments and paths, knew that we would always take up again with him where we had left off — that we could rely absolutely on his loyalty, his strength and his compassion. The capacity for inspiring and returning friendship was part of his capacity for caring. The passions which moved — and sometimes convulsed — him were, in the final analysis, about people — in Creighton's words "how they treated each other; how the world — or rather those who have the power to shape policies and the course of events — treated those who don't". His National Innovations Committee colleague, Michael Pusey[20], credits him with "... a view of the public world that recognised everyone else first as living acting *subjects* — with needs, hopes and ideas of their own — and only secondly as object. He had the courage and the will to demand that this attitude should be carried into the public sphere; and, more daring still, into the wholly rational sphere of administration, organisation and policy".

The compassion was linked inextricably to a powerful intellect and uncompromising commitment to rationality. Creighton Burns says David believed, with John Milton, that if one could stand the dust and the heat, one could arrive at the point of knowing what it was all about. His determination to get to the bottom of matters was not necessarily a source of delight to everyone around him. At university, his lecturers tore their hair about the consistency with which his essays were turned in late. According to Creighton, he could never finish an essay on time — but only because he could never leave the puzzle alone, because he was not content to drop the argument half-

way through, but insisted on pursuing it to the end. It was a characteristic, in Creighton's view, which did him no good in those institutions, like universities, government agencies and political parties, which need quick, and sometimes facile, answers: "As a result, they often missed the best in him. But he would see both the irony and the humour in the difficulty he had in giving up on an intellectual problem". David's chairman at the Schools Commission, Ken McKinnon[21], remembers many a Commission meeting going double the time it might otherwise have gone if David had not been so anxious to put and continue to argue the fine points that he saw as being important. A similar situation prevailed at National Innovations Committee meetings. Ten years later, Michael Pusey still feels the weariness and impatience in the room as sometimes, just when a critical decision had to be made, David would begin to fly off, with great passion, into some disquisition on a minor "matter of principle". Yet, in Betty Durre's mind's eye:

> What a searching mind he had! Caroline (his niece, Caroline Durre) tells me how he would say to her that he knew nothing of art or feminism, her two chief interests, and then proceeded to challenge her with probing questions which she found to be just 'spot-on'. This sense of inquiry never deserted him. So long as he had strength to talk he had strength to demand an answer.

Caroline Durre's observation touches on another of David's qualities. He had immense empathy and charm. Shirley Cass, who worked with him briefly on the Innovations Program, remembers him as "one of the small number of men I have enjoyed listening to, who are also good listeners themselves". By contrast, Ken McKinnon's memory is of:

> David striding about the room in a manner which makes any room seem small, expostulating, declaiming, explaining and generally holding the floor while impatiently pushing back undisciplined hair as he makes important points.

There was what Creighton Burns calls a "sadly but endearingly undisciplined" side to David. His Schools Commission office was always piled high with heaps of different material. He would search around in these heaps for references to back up his point of view in what Ken McKinnon remembers as "... the frequent debates, or rather the continuous debate, which moved from office to office on an intermittent basis over the long period it

took to reach even a resting point, let alone a resolution." He wrote in large handwriting, about eight lines to a page, scribbling and rewriting, cutting and pasting, with large arrows to indicate connections between widely separated trains of thought. Nor, as Betty Durre has pointed out, was he devoid of paradox:

> His politics, his opinions were all out in the open, the private feelings were not so readily found. For all that he was a good speaker and writer, he was not a demagogue. This was because it was the argument that was the important thing, the meat of the matter. The effect on his listeners of his personality, sheer size and vigour were not calculated or used for effect. They were part of the man, and came naturally. Perhaps that is why he was so effective. There was no guile in him. And when, with the right word or phrase, someone would puncture the mood, he would change on the instant with a laugh or a wry smile, and begin to make fun of himself and every thing else in sight.

What some mistook for stubbornness was in fact courage and determination. In Michael Pusey's view:

> The best historians will see beyond David's humiliations, defeats and failure to his real achievement which was, with respect to the Schools Commission and especially the Innovations Program, to fight off the immense pressures from technocrats and administrators to reify and 'rationalise' its own initiatives ... He would never have had the strength to keep going with undiminished passion, and despite the cancer, had he not had the extraordinary moral and intellectual courage to build a whole life on the assumption that Community is some kind of inexhaustible potential to which one ought to give one's all without cares for personal advantage.

Creighton Burns sees him as never giving up on the world: "... even — perhaps especially — when he saw things which made others despair or shrink into cynicism." Shirley Cass evokes a special meeting to discuss some Innovations Program funding crisis:

> I had heard of his cancer and dreaded seeing him, expecting to be shocked and discomforted by the effect his illness had on him. But although he looked very ill physically, thin and sallow, he carried his

> meeting entirely, by the sheer force of his realism and humour. He was a man in whom the life force was very strong, wasn't he?

As late as April 1982, when the cancer had drained away much of his strength, he wrote to me from his Canberra home that he thought he could manage 60 to 70 hours on a high pressure job if one could be found for him within Victoria's newly-elected Labor government. In 1983 he accepted a position as lecturer in the School of Education at Monash University, where he carried on his work until his health finally collapsed.

Fabians

Scotch College made a further contribution to the awakening of David's reformism. As a senior student in the early 1940s, he was encouraged by the school chaplain — the Rev. Stephen Yarnold[22], himself a Fabian — to participate in a "revolutionary" movement within the school which introduced a forerunner of today's "pastoral care" arrangements within the traditional house system, revised the traditional disciplinary procedures of prefects and probationers, fostered discussion of "current affairs" through the school magazine and a new "Senior Assembly", and pioneered the idea of an involvement of the school with the wider community through the staffing of a Boys' Club in an industrial area of Melbourne and the provision of access to a seaside camp and the school's sporting facilities for Club members during school vacations. At Melbourne University, in 1946, the impulses which Yarnold had helped to kindle in David took a more overtly political form. The Melbourne University Labor Club was heavily under the influence of the University branch of the Communist Party. David became one of a small group of students — many of them ex-servicemen like himself — who established an opposition Socialist Study Group within the Club's ranks.

The Provisional Secretary of the Group was Peter Ryan[23],who stood for the Toorak seat in the State Parliament in the later 'forties as an ALP-leaning Independent candidate. Ryan's sitting Liberal adversary was the notorious red-baiter "Exterminator" Hamilton — so known for having advocated publicly that communists should be exterminated. David played a leading part in the campaign. As Betty Durre tells it, he:

> ... would borrow his father's Buick, an enormous 8-cylinder car dating from the 'thirties, and, with companions from the University Labor Club, tour the suburbs of the wealthy at dead of night, stopping just

> long enough at the lamp-posts to plaster them with political posters. The police cars were sometimes not far behind, and I have a suspicion that they may have caught them in the act. This would not have worried Dave overmuch, but our father's position at the Naval and Military Club would have been made even more uncomfortable than it already was. The poor man had been informed by his colleagues there that 33 St George's Road, Toorak, (David's home) was known to be 'a hot-bed of Communism'.

The Group's Provisional Committee consisted of David, Creighton Burns, John Ovenden, Ian Hughes, Don Rawson[24], the late Alan Durre who became David's brother-in-law, and the late Bruce Benjamin who was his closest friend. They were joined immediately by thirty or more other disaffected Club members, who included Alan Davies[25], Ian Kelly, Ray Marginson[26], Jock Reeves[27], Geoff Serle, the late Hugo Wolfsohn[28] and the late Lionel Andrew. Successive drafts of the Group's Constitution, which survive in David's handwriting, set out its general aim as "To provide a free discussion group for those who believe in socialism (socialisation of the means of production, distribution and exchange), but who are not members of the Communist Party".

The extent of the Socialist Study Group's contribution to the ultimate eclipse of communist influence in the university is a matter for conjecture, but the Group was a highly effective Fabian nursery. David and Jock Reeves were future Presidents or Chairmen of the Victorian Fabian Society, while Ian Kelly and Geoff Serle were future Secretaries and Ray Marginson a future Treasurer. Geoff Serle and Alan Davies jointly edited the 1954 collection of Fabian essays *Policies for Progress*, which included contributions from the NSW Fabians, Geoff Sawer[29],Heinz Arndt[30] and Kingsley Laffer[31]. David wrote the education chapter in conjunction with his future Australian Council for Educational Research associate, Syd Dunn[32]. A Socialist Study Group secretary's circular, sent out in 1949 by John Ovenden, noted that graduate and ex-student members of the Group were to be "urged and aided" to join the Fabian Society, as well as the ALP and the Young Labor Association. The association between the two bodies and the progression of members from the Group to the Society were natural. Fabian socialism is deeply entrenched as the mainstream alternative to Marxism within Australia's labour movement. The Fabian tradition is one of achieving social progress through research and education. Edward Pease, Frank Podmore and Hubert Bland began it in London in 1884, and were joined shortly afterwards by Bernard Shaw and Sidney Webb. Generations of Fabians

1933 with Betty and Colin

1941

have placed its stamp on every facet of British and Australian society. Gough Whitlam adopted the Fabian approach from the day he entered Parliament in 1952, and the seminal 1972 Whitlam policy speech was a drawing together of the threads of twenty years of systematic Fabian research and planning. Arthur Calwell[33] before him was always proud to call himself a Fabian, and the tradition has been carried on through Bill Hayden[34], Bob Hawke[35], John Bannon[36], John Cain[37] and Neville Wran[38].

The British Fabian Society attracted its first Australian member — W. H. Archer, a Victorian statistician who earlier had served the State as Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages and Secretary of Lands and Survey — within six years of the Society's 1884 inception. A South Australian Fabian Society was formed in July 1891 by the Rev. C. L. Marston and the feminist and pre-school educator, Lucy Morice. It was revived in the late 'thirties, and again in 1947 by a group which included Clyde Cameron[39], Don Dunstan[40] and, later, John Menadue[41]. One of the speakers who addressed the South Australian Society early in its "third flowering" was Rupert Murdoch[42]. A Melbourne Fabian Society was formed in April 1895 when the prominent British Social Democratic Federation leader and Fabian Society member, H. H. Champion, came to Victoria in the aftermath of the London dock strike debacle, and began to publish his radical journal *The Champion* from an address in Queen's Walk. The Secretary was J. Howlett Ross, a lecturer in Voice Production at Melbourne University. Champion's Society was short lived, like the successor which was established in 1908 by his Social Democratic Federation, Fabian and dock-strike colleague, Tom Mann, together with Vida Goldstein, Vance Palmer and the poet Bernard O'Dowd. In 1947 a further initiative on the part of Frank Crean[43] resulted in the foundation of the Victorian Fabian Society, which subsequently, as the Australian Fabian Society, has become Australia's national Fabian organisation, and the largest Fabian body ever to exist outside Britain itself. A Fabian Society of NSW was launched in the late forties by Heinz Arndt and the late Clarrie Martin[44] was revived in 1968 with Gough Whitlam as its Patron, Lionel Murphy[45] as President, John Mant[46] as Chairman and Jim Spigelman[47] as Secretary, and revived a second time in 1983 by Bob Carr[48] and Michael Easson[49]. Fabian societies also exist in Queensland, Western Australia and the ACT. The propositions underlying Fabian Socialism were identified by David in a Presidential Address which he delivered for the Society in 1970:

> That a society in which economic resources are controlled by the community and in the interests of the community is superior to one in

which those resources are owned by private individuals who control them basically in the interests of private profit.

That a society in which power and privilege and social advantages are distributed on a class basis is not a good society. (And if anyone imagines that such statements seem to fit societies of earlier centuries rather than ours today, I advise them to look at the facts about entry to Victorian universities in the year 1970.)

That a foreign policy which is based purely on national interests is inferior to one which considers the welfare and the rights of human beings throughout the world.

That a primary goal of political action should be to increase real equality of opportunity.

That we should aim to bring about a more equitable distribution of wealth in the community, to reduce advantages due to inherited wealth, and to ensure the right of the least advantaged and the least fortunate to a decent life.

David's address concluded: "If such statements as these have an old fashioned ring, I suggest we ask ourselves whether that proves that they are out of date, or whether it suggests that we do not state them often enough."

Becoming friends with David in 1956 marked the point at which my long-standing fascination with politics began to assume a practical form. I had read Marx, the Webbs and Hewlett Johnson — the "Red Dean of Canterbury" — in the library at school, and led a Communist Party in the school Parliamentary Society. Now David unceremoniously disposed of the flirtation with the idea of joining the Moe branch of the Communist Party, in which Jill and I had been indulging. Instead, we found ourselves members of the local Branch of the ALP, where David ruled as Secretary with a rod of iron, and I was made Treasurer at my second meeting. At about the same time, we were introduced to the Fabian Society, which David had joined as a foundation member in 1947. Embittered Industrial Groupers — forced out of the ALP in the aftermath of Evatt's exposure of the Santamaria conspiracy— were organising to displace the ALP members of the Moe City Council, and David's baby son, John came with us in his pusher, on the interminable rounds of letter-boxing which frustrating their efforts seemed to require. Arrangements were being made for Australian delegates from unions and community groups to attend a peace conference — the forerunner of the present Congress for International Co-operation and Disarmament — in Hiroshima, and David and I organised a controversial but ultimately highly successful public meeting in Moe to support them.

Nineteen fifty-six was also the year of the Hungarian Revolution. Great numbers of communists left their party in disgust over Soviet intervention and the murder of Imre Nagy, and new "revisionist" groups were formed around journals such as *Universities and Left Review* and *New Reasoner* in Britain, and Helen Palmer's *Outlook* in Australia. David and I began attending socialist forums organised by members of the *Outlook* group when we returned from Moe to take up teaching positions in Melbourne at the end of 1957, and ultimately we joined up, along with a number of other recruits who had not been Communist Party members. In 1959, the Education Department seconded me for three years as a mature age student at Melbourne University, and I became active in the University ALP Club, which was growing rapidly under the leadership of Anthony Clunies-Ross[50], Peter Wertheim[51], John Power[52] and Jim Jupp[53]. My presence became a bridge between the Club and the Fabian Society, which had fallen away to fewer than thirty members, with a caretaker Executive headed by the indefatigable Jock Reeves and the late Cr. Albert Wallis. It was agreed that the best way of promoting the democratic socialist cause was for ALP Club and Outlook Group people to join the Society and throw their weight behind the plans which David and I were already making for putting it back on its feet.

A year later, in 1960, the Society elected a new Executive whose members included Jock Reeves as Chairman, myself as Secretary and Michael Keating[54] as Treasurer, along with David, Stephen Murray-Smith[55], Ray Burkit[56], Bernie Barrett[57], the late Madeline Flesch, the late Bill Thomas and the late Jack Grey. Over the next eighteen months, we were joined by Jim Jupp, John Patterson[58], Peter Samuel[59], Ray Evans[60], Moss Cass, Janet Hase[61], Rodney Allan[62], Leon Glezer[63], Norman Fisher[64] and John Button[65]. The ground-swell for Whitlam had begun, and the Society prospered. Membership increased over a ten year period from the initial thirty or so to around a thousand, while pamphlets by prominent Fabians such as Whitlam and Cairns[66] were easy to sell and large audiences were attracted for forums, seminars, conferences and gatherings of other kinds.

David threw himself into being a Fabian with characteristic energy and immense effect. The Bennett approach was exemplified in 1965 when he teamed up with John Button to introduce the annual Fabian Autumn Lectures. Characteristically, David insisted on making the project an object lesson in the advantages of thinking big. The Whitlamesque theme — *Australia Fair: a Hard Look at our Visual Environment* — was topical, and the speakers —Robin Boyd, George Johnson, Fred Ledger, Jock Marshall, Stephen Murray-Smith, Eric Westbrook and Jimmy Houghton-James — were the

best Australia had to offer. The venue was the capacious ballroom of the then new and highly fashionable Southern Cross Hotel, and David and John promoted their brainchild with extensive mailings of the striking brochure designed for them by Derek Watson. On the night of the first lecture, seven hundred season ticket holders packed into the Southern Cross, and a further two hundred people had to be turned away at the door. It was one of the greatest responses to a lecture series in Melbourne's history. The series also narrowly avoided being cut short. One of the first night speakers referred to some of the ballroom decorations as "excrescences". It was some time before an outraged hotel manager could be dissuaded from cancelling our remaining bookings on the spot. Ultimately, the proceedings were edited by John Button and published for the Fabian Society by Cheshires, with a cover which featured a fist brandishing a broken beer bottle, and the title *Look Here*.

David gave a lot to the Society's younger members. He was old enough to have been influenced powerfully by the Spanish Civil War, and his time in student Labor politics, the British Labour Party and the ALP had equipped him with a rich store of the history and tradition of the Left — including its songs — which elsewhere largely seemed to have fallen into disuse in the aftermath of the Communist Party's eclipse and the ALP split of 1954-55. Saturday night parties at Fabian conferences could never be said to have begun to fire until David and Max Marginson[67] had begun the singing. The Society's tastes were catholic, and the songs themselves disparate. There were traditional revolutionary songs such as *The Red Flag, The Internationale* and *The Marseillaise*, IWW songs such as *Solidarity Forever* and *Casey Jones the Union Scab*, Irish rebel songs such as *Kevin Barry* and *The Croppy Boy*, songs of the Spanish Civil War such as *Hans Beimler* and *The Thaelmann Column*, songs of the British Labour Movement such as *Jerusalem and The March of the Workers*, songs such as *There'll Always Be a Menzies*, *Santamaria* and *The Vatican Square Dance* from the great post-war Labor Club, ALP Club and Newman Society revues, and songs popularised by Pete Seegar, the Weavers and Tom Lehrer. As the night went on, Bill Thomas might contribute the Spanish Falange's *Hymn to the Sun* — ideologically repugnant but musically irresistible — which he claimed to have learned from Vincent Buckley[68]. Later again there might be songs which subsequently have found their place in the bawdy anthology *Snatches and Lays*. On the most memorable occasions the singers were joined by Janet Hase who, like Max, possessed the highly un-Fabian advantage of a trained voice, as well as a vast repertory of her own which was not exclusively political. David loved in particular Janet's renditions of *Swimming Under Water with the Lord*

Mayor's Daughter and *The University Council Song*. Much of what was sung was published by the Society, in the little green book of *Socialist Songs* which I edited with help from Helen Palmer[69] and Stephen Murray Smith. *Socialist Songs* carried on its cover the words of Anatole France — "Does a song serve no useful end, fulfil no useful purpose? The *Marseillaise* and the *Carmagnole* have overthrown the armies of Kings and Emperors". This gave eloquent expression to David's own convictions. As always, his goal was liberation. He believed passionately in the need to hand on the commitment to freedom and democracy which his generation had learned the hard way from the rise of fascism and World War II.

Disputant

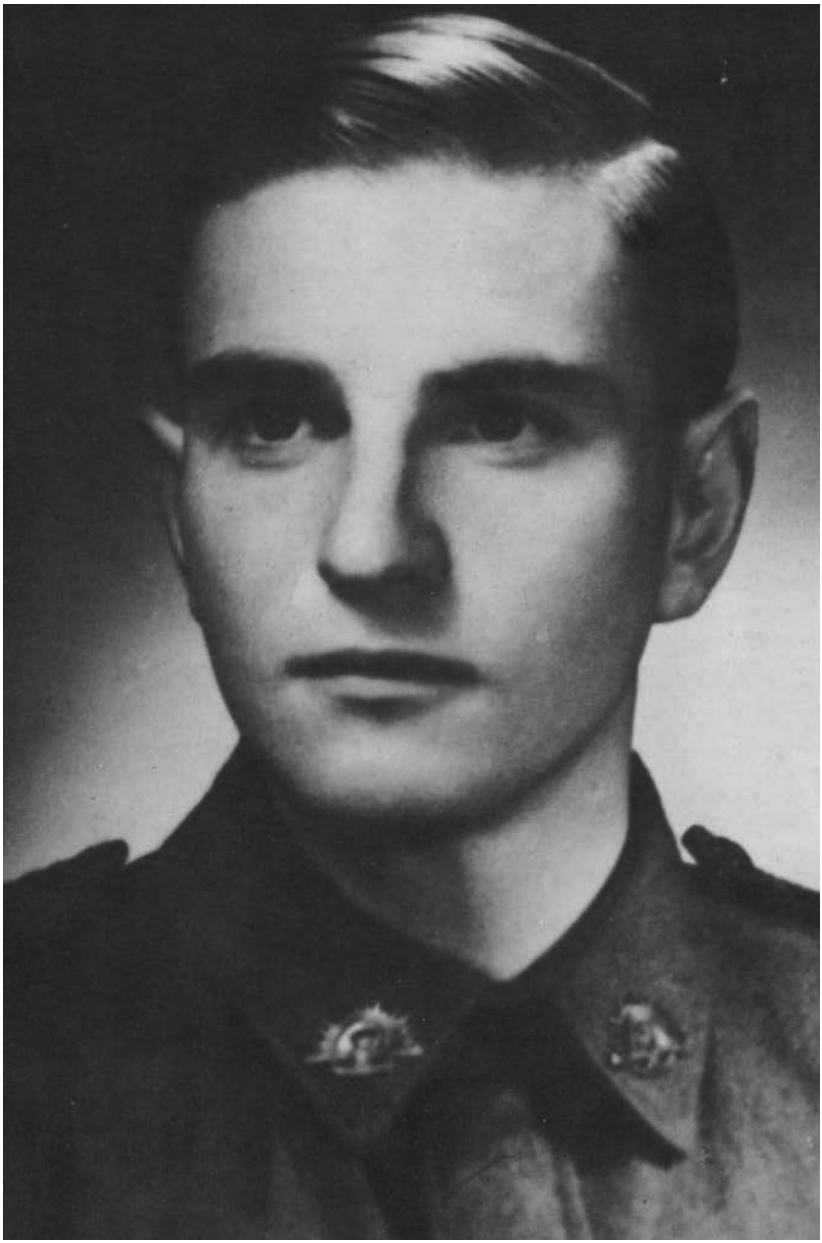
The Fabian Society brought out another aspect of David's nature — his tenacity in defending the causes and institutions to which he committed his loyalty. This took a highly combative form where he believed that the interests of the Society were at stake. David's late 1960s feud with Kim Wyman over the Society's future was reminiscent of the struggle which the Fabian "Old Guard" in Britain — led by Sidney Webb and George Bernard Shaw — conducted against H. G. Wells at the start of the century. Wells wanted to ginger up the Society, and believed, among other things, that associating too closely with the Labour Party prevented it from fulfilling its proper function of converting the educated middle class to socialism. Months of acrimonious debate followed before Beatrice Webb was able to record in her diary for 15 April 1906 that at the great open meeting of Society members at Wessex Hall in London on the previous day:

> H. G. Wells made a bad failure of his efforts to capture the Fabian Society by turning out 'with dishonour' the old Executive ... Wells has just now a great glamour for the young folk, with his idealism for the future and clever biting criticism of the present (including the Executive of the Fabian Society). But his accusations were so preposterous, his innuendos so unsavoury and his little fibs so transparent, that even his own followers refused to support him and the 80 per cent of undecided numbers swayed around to the old leaders. GBS, by a scathing analysis of his whole conduct, threw him finally to the ground, and trampled him, somewhat hardly. With a splutter the poor man withdrew his amendment and announced his intention to fall back into inactivity.

Sixty-three years later, views similar to those of Wells were expressed forcibly in Victoria by Kim Wyman[70], who was Chairman of the Society's Research Committee. It was a time when Fabians and other rank and file ALP members were deeply troubled by the inability of the party to elect governments either nationally or in Victoria. The ALP had split in 1954-55 on the issue of the increasingly malign and blatant "outside influence" exercised over its affairs by Mr. B. A. Santamaria's[71] then secret organisation, "The Movement", which later became the National Civic Council. Subsequently, the moderate elements of the triumphant anti-Santamaria coalition in Victoria — as exemplified by Pat Kennelly[72], Albert Monk[73] and Reg Broadby[74] — were swept aside, leaving the state ALP branch under the control of a group of trade union leaders who were as dictatorial in their own way as their Movement predecessors. The new autocracy within the party was known variously as "the Ticketing Committee", "the Trade Unionists' Defence Committee" or simply "the Junta". Its nature was exposed publicly by Whitlam, when he told the 1967 Victorian ALP Conference that:

> The Trade Unionists' Defence Committee is not mentioned in the Constitution of the Party. There is no formal link between the TUDC and the handful which selects the Central Executive. It happens, however, that the membership of both bodies is predominantly the same. Thirteen years ago few delegates at the Conference would have known of the Movement or Mr. Santamaria. No one now doubts the influence that they had on the Party's affairs at the time. The party's controllers have swung from one extreme to the other.

The Junta exhibited a massive capacity for driving current members out of the party without attracting new ones. It not only failed to win parliamentary seats but made a virtue of its failure. While the Junta did not share the overt, implacable hostility of the Movement towards democratic socialism and the Fabian approach, neither was it willing to give them support or encouragement. Its interest in policy development was minimal. As a result, the ALP coasted along after the Split on slogans such as "Peace", "Adherence to the Present Socialist Criteria" and, above all "No State Aid", which were bereft equally of substance and electoral appeal. At the same time, the Junta's naked and strident anti-Catholicism played into Santamaria's hands by driving Catholics into the camp of the so-called "Democratic Labor Party", which the Movement had established as its electoral front.



1944

1968 ALP candidate for Higgins

Increasingly, many Fabians and other like-minded ALP members came to see the Junta's combination of arrogance, intransigence and incompetence — together with the electoral consequences — as a near insuperable barrier to democratic socialist policies being given effect. Increasingly, the question was posed whether, instead, a new party would have to be formed, in which the democratic socialist and social democratic values of the Fabian tradition would find a more friendly and receptive ear. In this volatile situation, it was Kim Wyman's belief that the Society should delete from its Constitution the requirement that "Membership of the Society shall not be open to members of political parties other than the Australian Labor Party", and thus clear the way for what he predicted confidently would be a fruitful co-operation and interaction, not necessarily with the new party of which the Junta's more naive or extreme adversaries dreamed, but with receptive individuals of a progressive turn of mind who, he argued, were to be found within the Liberal Party, the Country Party and the Liberal Reform Group, which was a forerunner of the Australian Democrats. David's opposition to the proposal was total. Whatever the sins of the Junta might be, he was determined, for the time, that the struggle which was going on within the ALP should not spread to the Society, and that the "special relationship" between the Society and the ALP — such as it was — should remain intact.

The debate see-sawed for months, with the Research Committee providing Kim with a base from which to fire his salvoes, while David volleyed back from the vantage point of the Society's Executive, where Kim found himself in the minority, with few friends. The climax was reached finally when Kim moved to have his constitutional amendment considered at the Society's Annual General Meeting on 18 April 1969, and he and David submitted advance summaries of their respective positions in the April issue of *Fabian Newsletter*. David asserted categorically that "... the success of his resolution would within quite a short time result in the disintegration of the Fabian Society", while, like Shaw, he was able to mount a damaging attack on his opponent's credibility:

> Before putting the arguments for this proposition it is unfortunately necessary to remove some misconceptions. Firstly, an impression has been created in the minds of some members that the resolution has some degree of official support. This is not correct. The issue has been canvassed at meetings of the Research Committee and the material distributed by the Research Committee has been repeatedly used to drum up support for the resolution. However, the issue has never been

> discussed by any representative body of the Society and the mover has decided not to try to obtain Executive support for it. Secondly, there has been an attempt to suggest that evidence already exists for majority support for the resolution within the Society. When Mr. Wyman first made this claim in a report to the Executive, it was criticised as being based on a gross, even absurd, misinterpretation of his questionnaire. Mr. Wyman subsequently admitted that it was in fact a misinterpretation. However, the claim has been repeated with the addendum that technical arguments have been raised against it. I do not think that this technique will commend itself to members. The plain truth is that no evidence has been obtained one way or the other.

The amendment was rejected, when the meeting recorded 20 votes in its favour to 42 against. The attempt to sever the Society from its traditional moorings was over, but tensions arising from the material in the *Fabian Newsletter* and Kim's continuing exploitation of the Research Committee to flout the Society's traditions and practices brought about his defeat in the Executive Committee elections at the 1970 Annual General Meeting. Like Wells before him, he receded rapidly into Fabian history.

The episode illustrated not only the tenacity and persuasiveness which David was able to bring to an argument, but the immense advantage which he enjoyed as a result of the general faith in his total, uncompromising integrity. Creighton Burns recalled at David's wake that he doubted if he had ever known anyone who was more intellectually honest. He told how:

> As students at Melbourne University we would often take the tram down Swanston Street together after lectures. We would stand at the corner of Batman Avenue, he waiting for his tram to Toorak, I for my tram for Hawthorn, arguing about what Katie Fitzpatrick had really meant, or what Manning Clark had been trying to say, in the lecture we had just heard. One night, too tired and hungry to keep arguing, I started to agree with him. It was too much for David. He rounded on me and shouted 'Goddam it, Burns! Don't you 'Yes' me'.

It was an honour to be shouted at by David. It meant that you were taken seriously, and had his trust.

Branch members

By the early 'sixties, the need for change within the Victorian branch of the ALP was clear. The Victorian Junta's inability to make electoral headway did not suit the young Clyde Holding[75],who had entered State Parliament at a by-election in 1962, and became Opposition spokesman on education. Clyde was hungry for office and impatient with those, like the Junta and most of his parliamentary colleagues, whose attitudes and actions had earned the ALP the derisory label of "POP" or "Permanent Opposition Party". David and I were approached by Clyde in mid-1963 to help with hearings of expert opinion conducted by the Education Sub-committee of the Parliamentary Party with a view to revising what previously had passed for its education policy, and later, in early 1964, to join a joint Victorian Parliamentary Labor Party and Central Executive Education Policy Committee. The Committee produced a substantial policy statement, titled *Looking to the Future* for the 1964 State Conference. *Looking to the Future* introduced key elements of what later became the Schools Commission and needs-based schools funding. It also enabled the Junta to bask in the unfamiliar warmth of favourable comment from other State branches and the media. Policy development became fashionable overnight. New policy committees were created, along with a Standing Policy Committee to co-ordinate their efforts. The State ALP President, Bob Holt[76], was the Committee's Chairman, and I was secretary, while the members included Bob Hawke and Jim Cairns. The boom lasted roughly a year, before the Junta decided that the committees were becoming a focus for dissident forces within the party. At that point, the Standing Policy Committee was disbanded as suddenly as it had been created. Deprived of its support, and subjected constantly to Junta scrutiny and harassment, the specialist committees mostly withered on the vine. The proposals which David and I had developed for *Looking to the Future* had to be taken further privately through our State Aid paper for the 1966 Surfers Paradise Special Conference, and the Fabian pamphlet *Meeting the Crisis: Federal Aid for Education* which we wrote together, and published over my name in 1967.

Few of the other projected major policy statements eventuated. One which did was the seminal social welfare statement *Let's Be Human* which established a model for the Whitlam government's Australian Assistance Plan. Another was a re-examination of the M'Naghten Rules on criminal insanity, produced by a law reform policy committee, at the instigation of Dick McGarvie[77]. Dick had decided already that the Junta was beyond redemption. Along with John Cain, Xavier Connor[78], John Button and the late Barney Williams[79], he was establishing the opposition *Labor Comment* group which later became

known as "the Participants". Others, including David and myself, took the view that the Party should have a last chance to reform and democratise itself. Bob Holt, Cyril Wyndham[80] and Moss Cass — whose Fabian pamphlet *Reform in Medicine* had won him the approval of the Junta during the halcyon days of the policy development "thaw" —were able to obtain at the 1964 Conference a small but significant concession to pressures for greater intra-party democracy, in the form of an agreement that local branches should have three representatives of their own on the Central Executive, elected exclusively by and from the Conference delegates of their State Electorate Councils. In the event, this arrangement was unceremoniously abandoned the following year, after the incoming State President, Bill Brown[81] had written to all 1965 Conference delegates, stating that:

> It is the policy of the Executive that these representatives be elected by the whole Conference so as to ensure that the will of Conference and its adherence to the present socialist criteria will be maintained.

The Junta's decision provoked a strong reaction. This was evident even among members who previously had supported the group in the face of the mounting evidence of its incompetence and incorrigibly authoritarian attitudes. While Moss Cass reaffirmed his commitment to reform from within, Holt underwent a disillusionment with his former associates which transformed him over a twelve-month period into one of their most bitter critics. My contribution was a Fabian-style campaign of research, persuasion and organisation, which included writing and distributing what became known as *The Scoresby Letter*, together with the pamphlet *What Is To Be Done?* David, for the only time in my experience, equivocated. He could see clearly enough the harm which the Junta was inflicting on the ALP and all the disadvantaged groups within the community who depended on the party for support, but he was aware, too, of the debt which some Junta members were owed for their part in the undoing of Santamaria and the rescue of the ALP from Movement control. Collectively, Junta members might have come to seem contemptible to him, but he recalled times when he had seen some of them in a different light.

Ultimately David largely opted out of ALP affairs while the Junta's battles with Whitlam and his Participant allies were at their height and, instead, involved himself more deeply in the work of the Fabian Society, of which he was President from 1967 until 1970. The timing, from the Society's point of view and my own, was opportune. Whitlam appointed me as his

Principal Private Secretary in August 1967, and David — along with Jock, Russ Byard[82], Bob Ives[83] and the late Lindsay Keith — were ready to carry forward the Society to new successes.

At the same time, David kept a critical but constructive eye on the policy development work I was doing for Whitlam, not only in education but in health, welfare and urban affairs. In a broader sense, my most important preparation for the job had been knowing David. He had much of the spectacular irascibility which at times made Gough close to insufferable, but also the same ability to bring out in others the excellence which he expected of himself.

Meanwhile, matters continued to deteriorate within the Victorian ALP. In 1968 Whitlam's tenacious efforts to have the Junta overturned led to his own position being challenged by Jim Cairns; Whitlam survived by a narrow margin. Thereafter he was preoccupied increasingly with the run-up to the 1969 elections. The Participants mostly lost heart, and some left the Party to stand as Independent Labor Alliance candidates in opposition to a number of ALP candidates who notoriously had gained their pre-selections by subjecting themselves totally and abjectly to the Junta's wishes. On polling day Whitlam's worst fears were borne out. In order for the ALP to gain office, it had to make up ground substantially in Victoria. Instead, while the Party surged ahead nationally with a swing of 7.1 per cent, its Victorian gains were limited to three seats — including one vacated by the Independent Labor MHR, Sam Benson — and its numbers in the new House of Representatives fell seven short of a majority. The Victorian debacle cost the party its chance of forming a national government for the first time in twenty years. Afterwards, Dick McGarvie addressed an eloquent letter of resignation to the Federal Executive, in which he explained in detail why he had despaired of the Victorian branch reforming itself from within, and was giving up the Labor cause for which he had worked throughout his adult life.

There was no direct response, but when the ALP Federal Executive met in Broken Hill in August 1970 the Junta finally played into the hands of its adversaries. Clyde Cameron had come to agree with Whitlam that the Junta would have to go. The blundering arrogance of its delegates — Bill Brown and Bill Hartley[84] — gave Whitlam and Cameron their chance. Fuel was added to the fire when the Victorian President, George Crawford[85], described the Executive meeting publicly as "a mad hatter's tea party". The Executive recognised that the Junta's activities as an "outside influence" on the affairs of the Victorian branch had created a case which would have to be answered. In Canberra, Dick Hall[86] and I organised a petition calling for Federal

intervention, which instantly attracted signatures from some 500 Victorian branch members. The Executive met again in Melbourne's St. Kilda Road Travelodge on 5 September 1970 for 9 days of hearings, which resulted in the charge of outside influence being upheld. The affairs of the state branch were taken over by the Federal body, and a caretaker advisory council took office while a new Victorian branch constitution was prepared.

Reconstructionist

David's finest hour in the ALP was underway. His long-standing unwillingness to countenance the idea of intervention had crumbled in the face of the Junta's insistence that Clyde Holding should include a proposal for "phasing-out" State Aid in his 1970 election policy speech, together with subsequent Junta sabotage of the State election campaign and the humiliation of Labor's Legislative Council Leader, John Galbally[87], at the 1970 State Conference.

Following the Federal Executive's meeting at Broken Hill, David sent the Federal Secretary, Mick Young[88], a telegram which read:

> AM PRESIDENT VICTORIAN FABIAN SOCIETY WHICH INCLUDES HUNDREDS OF ACTIVE ALP MEMBERS INCLUDING MANY PROMINENT IN BRANCHES AND UNIONS STOP CANNOT SPEAK FOR SOCIETY WHICH HAS NO POLICY ON ALP MATTERS BUT AM CONVINCED FROM WIDESPREAD DISCUSSIONS WITH MEMBERS CONSIDERABLE MAJORITY WOULD NOW SUPPORT IMMEDIATE FEDERAL INTERVENTION STOP MANY FORMER LONGTIME SUPPORTERS OF CENTRAL EXECUTIVE LIKE MYSELF NOT PARTICIPANTS CHANGED VIEW RECENT MONTHS STOP SPECIAL CONFERENCE UNDER PRESENT RULES WOULD BE DISASTROUS FOR PARTY STOP WE BELIEVE ESSENTIAL NEW EXECUTIVE APPOINTED IMMEDIATELY TO RESTORE PARTY MORALE AND CREDIBILITY AS POLITICAL PARTY SEEKING OFFICE.

In his letter of confirmation the following week, he wrote that:

> Since 1955 I have in general supported the position of the Vic. Central Executive (though often critical of it on particular points). I have never been a member of the "Participants" group nor have I previously supported Federal intervention. However, since last May I have become

> convinced that there is no chance that Labor will make electoral progress in this State or Federally while the present regime retains control in Victoria. The events during the State election demonstrated conclusively, I believe, that the C.E. is simply not interested in winning elections. Rather it sees its role explicitly as being one of defending the ideological purity of the Party on particular issues, against threats of betrayal by 'untrustworthy' parliamentarians and anyone else who believes that electoral victory is of prime importance.

He described how:

> As Secretary of the Executive's own Education Policy Committee I was to some extent involved in the events leading up to the State Aid debacle. It became quite clear that the Executive was not really concerned to produce or argue for any sensible policy on the issue. Indeed, they never put forward a serious alternative. They were explicitly concerned only to wait to ensure that Clyde Holding be not allowed to get away with the policy which he and others had developed over a long period.

He concluded that:

> One last point: I think the general view among members is that any reform which did not include the removal of Bill Hartley would not improve, or be seen to improve, the situation. It would simply lack credibility. There is a widespread feeling that he bears a very heavy responsibility for the position in which we now find ourselves.

Once the Federal intervention was a fact, David was determined that the greatest possible measure of democratisation should be gained from it. This meant, among other things, winning over the support of the great majority of the rank and file members of the party who had not had the salutary experience of seeing the unacceptable face of the Junta from the inside. It meant, as well, drafting a new Constitution which would prevent future monopoly control of the state branch, either by resurgent Junta forces or anyone else. No such happy outcome could be taken for granted. The over-confident Participants had given notice of a meeting, on 20 September, to endorse a final statement of principles of organisation for submission to the State Advisory Council, and finally wind up their organisation, while the forerunners of the Labor Unity Group — the so-called " Innes[89] - Holding - Hawke - Redlich[90] Group"

— were pre-occupied with the internal dynamics of the caretaker State Advisory Council, and — in the case mainly of Ted Innes — ensuring that the Participants were for all time denied their place in the sun.

Ted's vindictive obstinacy was the undoing of much of what intervention had sought to achieve. He was determined that the Participants should be punished for having successfully challenged the Junta while he and his friends held back. The posts of Victorian Branch Chairman, Senior Deputy Chairman and Junior Deputy Chairman were contested at the first post-intervention conference by Ted himself for the Labor Unity Group, George Crawford for the Junta in its new guise as "The Combined Unions and Socialist Left", and John Button for the "Independents" as the former Participants and others such as myself were beginning to be known. The Labor Unity Group and the Independents jointly had the numbers to make Ted Chairman and John Button Junior Deputy Chairman, but Ted's refusal to countenance a joint ticket resulted in the top job going to George Crawford. The vicious spiral of mutual distrust and recrimination which followed saw the Independents for years afterwards cold-shouldered by the Labor Unity Group and denied the parliamentary pre-selections to which their merit and hard work otherwise would have entitled them. Ultimately the utterly unnatural alliance of the Independents with the Socialist Left emerged, and the Labor Unity Group, in its turn, had to learn the hard way the meaning of being a minority, to the immense detriment of the long-term ALP interest.

In 1970, immediately following intervention, the Junta re-grouped under a seductive new label — "The Combined Unions and Socialist Left". Bill Hartley and Bob Hogg[91] — respectively State Secretary and State Organiser of the dissolved Victorian Branch — were employed to discredit intervention and its supporters, and to secure a post intervention constitution for the Victorian ALP through which the former position of the Junta could be restored at the earliest possible opportunity. The views of the Junta in its new guise were conveyed in a new journal, titled, with revealing arrogance, *Inside Labor: Organ of the Victorian Branch of the ALP Committee*. An early issue of *Inside Labor* carried Bob Hogg's admission that the Junta's arrangements between 1954 and 1970 had been "... designed to enable the essential control of the Labor Party to remain in the hands of a number of key trade unions, many of whose officers were not politically very active or skilled". Bob further admitted that the Junta had been controlled "... during most of this period by a few trade union officials, basically anti-socialist, anti-youth and anti-intellectual. They were not originators of work or action, but worked basically to maintain their control and power."

Such reservations in no way diminished the zeal with which he and Bill Hartley went about their work on the Junta's behalf. *Inside Labor* proclaimed to ALP members throughout Victoria that "The whirlwind events which spun the Victorian ALP into dissolution were created by stronger forces than the mere ambitions of the Whitlams, Holdings and Hawkes, and the paranoid vindictiveness of Cameron. They are a direct result of the class struggle in a capitalist society, and reflect the fear this society's controllers held of the policies expressed by the Victorian Branch". It stigmatised the Advisory Council as "the Judas 12", and argued that "The majority of members of the ALP Federal Executive, during the proceedings at the Travelodge in South Melbourne, divested themselves completely of any moral respectability in dealing with other members of the Party with whom they disagreed". It said of Hawke: "Mr. Hawke, by alienating a large section of the Left through his political activities, now appears to have placed his ACTU position in jeopardy. Those who believe the Left can be kicked to death and Left support still assumed are in for a shock". Of Innes it said: "Mr. Innes was a drinking companion and back-slapping confidant of Mr. Holding. As State Secretary of the Electrical Trades Union he had for some time had a fairly left-wing reputation, although it was spurious". It constantly sneered at "The pragmatic Mr. Whitlam as Federal Leader with his ambition for power fed by an obsessive belief that the electoral prospects in Victoria were his great barrier to success".

It was apparent to David that a myth comparable to the "stab in the back" legend of post-World War I Germany was being manufactured. In the absence of a strong countervailing influence within Victoria, the Federal Executive could find itself faced with the choice between restoring the Junta to power or presiding indefinitely over members who were being subverted increasingly from supporting intervention to opposing it. David's response was prompt and decisive. If other opponents of the Junta were unwilling or insufficiently organised to take up the renewed challenge, we would have to do so for ourselves. A basic list of two contact people in each of Victoria's thirty-odd Federal electorates was prepared, and a well-attended and enthusiastic meeting took place on October 11, 1970 at Box Hill South, where the Reconstruction Convening Committee was born. David was elected President, together with Horrie Lowe[92] of the Australian Transport Officers' Federation and myself as Vice-Presidents, and Frank Costigan[93] as Secretary.

The Junta, characteristically, saw Whitlam's hand — and mine — behind these developments. *Inside Labor* reported them under the headline "The

Whitlam Plan is Being Put into Effect", but the credit largely belonged to David. Within two weeks, the first of the Committee's four sets of *Reconstruction Notes* was in the mail to ALP members throughout Victoria. While the material set out in detail the circumstances of the Committee's inception, together with a concise definition of the issues raised by intervention and a summary of the options for constitutional reform, its main thrust was directed at obtaining a mass turnout of rank and file members at the general meeting of the party convened by the Federal Secretary for Sunday, 22 November, to hear a report on progress with the preparation of the new party constitution.

The front page read, in part:

> 22 November can be remembered as a day on which the voices were heard of the great majority of Labor men and women who want their Party to be characterised by unity of purpose and tolerance of diversity in its pursuit; by decision-making processes proportionately representative of a wide spectrum of opinion within the Party; by enhanced opportunities for participation in Party affairs; and above all by the implementation of democratic policies through electoral success. Alternatively, and by default, it can be the day of the anonymous minority who want a return to monolithic unrepresentative, winner-take-all control of the Party; a restoration of TUDC domination in the decision-making process and a substitution of the politics of the street for the democracy of the ballot box. These are the issues; 22nd November is the day to make your stand clear.

In the event, *Reconstruction Notes* number 2 was able to record that:

> Sunday 22nd November was a day to be remembered. It was a good day for the Australian Labor Party. It was a day on which we of the rank and file, for the first time in recent memory, were allowed to exercise our commonsense. On that day the great majority of us created a basis whereby tolerance of diversity, as well as unity in pursuing our common aims, will be the key note of the Party. ... 22nd November was also a day when the noisy minority, who wanted to dismiss the Advisory Council and return to the status quo ante were defeated. ...Above all, we must turn up on 30th-31st of January in even greater numbers to ensure that the optimism created by 22nd November is not misplaced.

The third set of *Reconstruction Notes* contrasted the Advisory Committee's proposals for constitutional reform with those put forward on behalf of

the Junta by the "Combined Unions, Socialist Left and Victorian ALP Organisations", and again urged members to attend the January meeting, while *Reconstruction Notes* number 4 — distributed at the meeting itself — was a final call to members to support the Advisory Council recommendations in preference to those of the "Old guard". No further *Reconstruction Notes* were necessary, because the fight to democratise the Party had finally been won.

David refused to align himself with any of the new faction s. He was never able to take seriously the "Independents" group, because he believed it was based purely on personalities and personal ambition, while what he saw as the rampant pragmatism of the Labor Unity Group — which I joined in 1976 — repelled him. His ideals told him that the Socialist Left was less objectionable than either of the other two factions, but his detestation of its ratbag anti-semitic fringe held him back from becoming a member. He did not live long enough to read late 1984 reports that an enlightened "new guard" with the Socialist Left was challenging the faction's Bill Hartleys, and renouncing their "Troglodyte Left" values in favour of a more practical socialist creed, but the news would have delighted him. He would have welcomed the fact that by 1985 it seemed possible that the opportunity might be opening up for a major factional re-alignment to take place in Victoria, and for the unfinished business left over from 1970 finally to be cleared away.

Whitlam's dream of an ALP where the democratic socialist mainstream dominated and extremists of the Left and Right were isolated once again seemed as if it might come true.

School principal

While David was steering the work of the Reconstruction Steering Committee towards its triumphant conclusion, he was also entering on a new phase in his professional life. Progressive education more than any other single issue always commanded his total loyalty and outspoken advocacy. As a university student he had had his imagination fired by visits to Joseph Clive Nield's Koornong progressive school at Warrandyte. In Britain he had sought out A. S. Neill at his school "Summerhill", and taught under the inspired principalship of Michael Duane at the Howe Dell Secondary Modern School in Hertfordshire. When we met for the first time in Moe in 1956, he was struggling to put into practice at Moe High School the principles he had learned from Neill and Duane — principles which also had captured my imagination through the heady presentation of my English lecturer at Toorak Teachers' College, Vic Fitcher. David's students were hard at work writing

and producing a musical play — "Trouble at Mudjdttguttgy Homestead" —which subsequently toured other schools in the Moe area. Backed to the hilt by a notable principal in the person of Elias Greenwood, he was able to inspire and galvanise the school community.

From the outset of our friendship, one of our most frequent topics of conversation was how the progressive approach could be made general throughout the government school system. David believed passionately that education was about providing an environment in which children could learn to make choices for themselves and accept responsibility for their actions, but he remained utterly undoctrinaire and open-minded about the means by which his goals should be achieved. A school, in his view, was primarily a group of people, and it was paramount, he believed, and that they should be able to interact with one another in a reasonably free and natural way. This involved, as he saw it, removing or modifying the grading, rigid timetables, didactic teaching and large, inflexible groups which characterised the authoritarian, rigidly structured pattern of conventional schools, in favour of arrangements which enabled students to learn independently both as individuals and in groups. It was his belief that, similarly, the ability to make choices and decisions was part of the process of developing one's values and the capacity to deal with the world. He was convinced that children could not learn to make choices unless there was freedom for them to do so. It followed, as he saw it, that a school had to select problems and develop situations which enabled students to make decisions on matters which were of real significance to them. He did not expect to see the specific mechanism for this purpose arising from the application of some formula or "concept", nor from the introduction of some set of techniques adopted elsewhere, no matter how valuable those might be as a source of ideas. Instead, it was his expectation that they would evolve from particular groups of professional staff, parents and students working co-operatively towards common general goals at particular places and times. General educational theories were less helpful, he believed, than the ability of qualified teachers working in the right context to devise, develop and try out worthwhile answers to problems. On this basis, the good school, as he saw it, had of necessity to be experimental. It would be, he hoped, a flexible institution, capable of continuing to evolve in response to new ideas, to changing situations and to new social demands.

Given David's views, it is not surprising that he experienced intense frustration in his subsequent position as Assistant Principal at the newly opened Rosanna High School. The Principal lacked Elias Greenwood's stature in both human and professional terms. The climate which he created around

him was oppressively rigid and authoritarian. David resisted strenuously having the exercise of his professional freedom and judgment so sharply curtailed, but it was still the era of the autocrat principal and the struggle was hopelessly uneven. It was always possible to gauge his morale roughly by his ability to get up on time in the morning, and increasingly throughout the years at Rosanna there were days on end when he was consistently and monumentally late. When the position of Research Officer with the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) became available in 1961 he accepted it eagerly. He was a Senior Research Officer for ACER between 1962 and 1967 and Chief Research Officer from 1968 to 1970.

The ACER appointment involved him in taking responsibility from 1961 until 1963 for the Council's various services to schools, education departments and psychologists throughout Australia, including advisory services to teachers and organisations, sales and distribution of tests and materials, a special testing service for school systems, publishing and liaison with departments and schools and the introduction of new types of materials and aids, such as those for primary mathematics; for assisting with in-service training in most states; and for developing the new administrative structure which the ACER needed in order to support the immense expansion which he was bringing about in all these activities. After 1963 the emphasis of his work shifted to research and development, although its focus remained on materials for use in schools. Improved methods for evaluating materials in curriculum areas such as reading, writing skills and spelling were developed. The Primary Study Skills Project was planned and supervised. He initiated the Social Science Materials Development Project, conducted the 1968 national survey on the study of society in secondary schools, convened the Australian National Civic Education Achievement Project and established the National Information Centre for Social Science Education. Increasingly, however, the role of research worker and administrator was becoming stultifying. There was insufficient scope for him to practise directly the principles which in the first place had prompted his choice of teaching as a career. By 1970 he was ready to break out into a new field, where his egalitarian ideals could be given more effective expression, and, later that year, the opportunity to do so presented itself.

In 1968 a number of education minded people had joined up with Latrobe University's education prophet and publicist, Henry Schoenheimer, to form the Education Reform Association (ERA). The group included remnants of the moribund New Education Fellowship, together with parents associated with Miss Margaret Lyttle's successful Preshil progressive primary school

in Kew, and education faculty members from various universities and other tertiary institutions. The aim, ostensibly, was to establish a new progressive secondary school although, with hindsight, it seems likely that the group was held together more by a shared distaste for the absurdities and inequities of education as it was offered at the time more or less uniformly throughout the government and Catholic school systems and other non-government schools.

Enrolments for the 1971 school year had been sought actively and accepted, but preparations for the opening lagged. As late as November 1970 only two teachers had been engaged. No consensus had been reached on what the aims of the school should be, the curriculum which should be offered or the methods which should be employed. Land had been purchased at Donvale — itself the subject of a two-year debate between advocates respectively of inner- and outer-suburban education — but the building had not been commenced. David described it later as "surely the most romantic ever produced for a school, and almost completely unusable". A principal — Bill Callender — had been appointed, but on the eve of the meeting called to determine whether the project should proceed immediately or be deferred for a further year, he suddenly resigned.

David's offer to fill the gap was accepted by the school council with alacrity. With equal alacrity his troubles commenced. He had sighted and agreed to sign a formal contract, and, on this basis, he addressed the assembled parents on the Saturday following his appointment, assuring them confidently that there would be no need for them to find other schools for their children, as all his efforts would be devoted to seeing that the 1971 opening went ahead. However, a number of Council members disputed whether the contract had ever been shown to them, and whether it should be approved, and David spent the next week worrying about his future. The doubters grudgingly allowed themselves to be won over, but a certain sourness had been engendered.

The two years which followed were among the most rewarding of David's career, and also the most difficult. Initially, no obstacle seemed insuperable. The teaching staff was built up to six. Each of the appointees had a specialty. Each had attained some degree of reputation for excellence, and, in David's opinion, two were "quite brilliant". Although the new buildings at Donvale were still eight months away from being finished, David was able to fend off a range of wildly impractical stopgap schemes which included sending the students on a six month round-Australia bus tour, or housing them in tents on a part of the still totally unserviced Donvale construction site which was actually a swamp. Instead, the school opened at a Warrandyte hall known locally as the "White House", where appallingly cramped and

inconvenient conditions indoors were more than compensated for by the limitless possibilities of the Yarra River and the bush. Curriculum had to be developed on the run, but the school's first science teacher, Peter Tadich, rose magnificently to the challenge with a raft-making project which in David's admiring eyes was "... something which everybody could do, something which virtually everybody wanted to do, something which led people to work together". As Tadich himself recalled in a collection of essays on ERA published by Deakin University in 1983 under the title of *The ERA Alternative*:

> The rafts were fantastic, huge, weird shapes, that sunk, spun in circles, got stolen and cost half our science budget ... 90 per cent of the children were doing what I felt was really worthwhile. They were roaming and innovating according to their own agenda, not ours! The skills I had learnt as a senior scout came into use far more than the skills I had learnt as a teacher; flying foxes, huts, camps, all were the order of the day. We became creative dancers (horrors), PE teachers, bus drivers, serious home-group counsellors and confidants of parents twelve hours a day.

According to David's Deakin Essay:

> Within a couple of weeks children were saying that they didn't want to leave the school, begging to be allowed to sleep down at the creek at night. They never wanted to go home. For some, it remained always like that, they complained bitterly when the holidays came. For the first six months, it was a tremendous experience for the majority of them.

Even so, what is remembered now as the ERA "golden time" already contained the seeds of David's undoing. His contract gave him absolute power within the school. At the outset, he turned over a great deal of it to the students. The result, inevitably, was a decision that attendance at lessons should not be compulsory. Two students opted immediately to spend their days sitting in the creek bed — as later, at Donvale, others sat in trees — while the majority concentrated on savouring to the full their new-found freedom. It was a situation which rapidly brought to the fore the unresolved and potentially explosive divergences of approach and outlook within the school community.

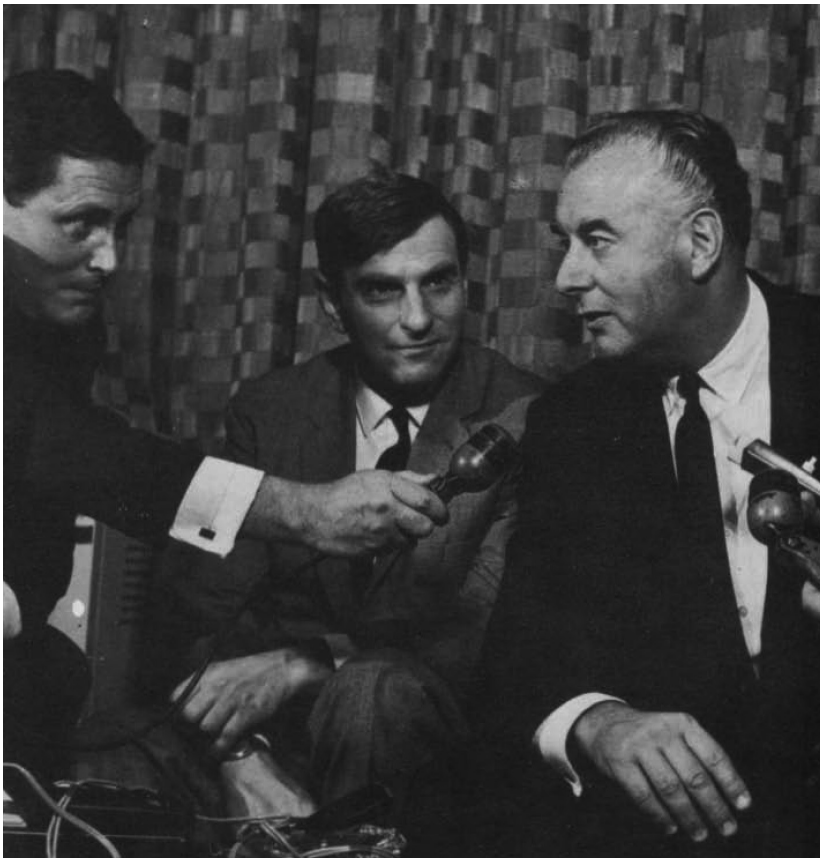
The outstanding professional credentials of the staff did not mean that they were all necessarily adherents of the progressive education approach which

David espoused and had been led to believe at the time of his appointment was likewise ERA's guiding philosophy. Where differences existed, they were rapidly made worse by the personal anxieties and professional frustrations which the "White House" phase of ERA's history inevitably generated. The more conservative teachers simply could not cope with circumstances where their prospective students voted with their boots against classes which they found far less attractive than ranging far and wide across the Warrandyte countryside. As David observed: "They were worried about their own roles, their own effectiveness and the dreams they had of what they could accomplish once they were released from the bonds of traditional structures". Nor were matters improved by a daily grind which figured, even for the incomparably flexible and resourceful Tadich, as:

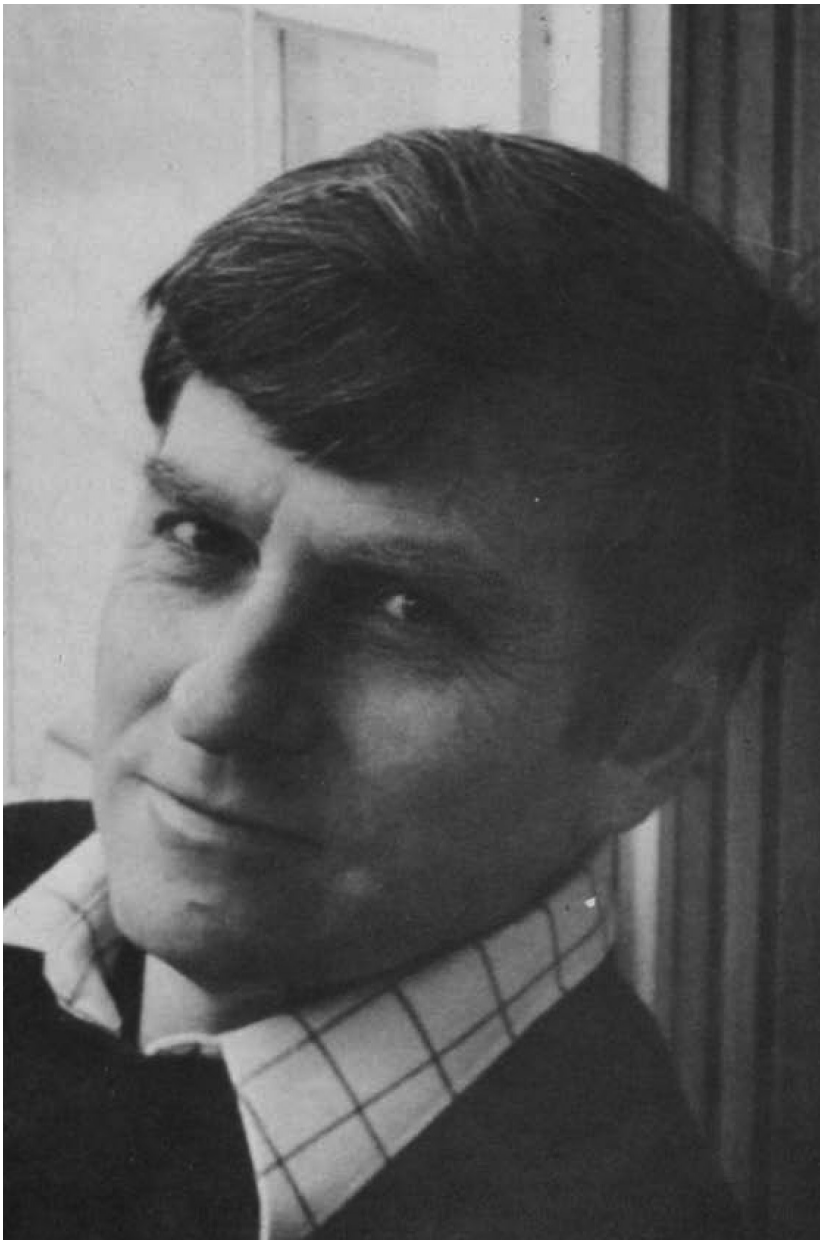
> ... a desperate group of teachers trying to cajole, entertain, educate and restrain ninety 11 to 12 year-olds in a crowded, noisy, filthy, wooden building while observed from the perimeter by anxious parents and academics from LaTrobe University ... (on the verandah) the rain just kept blowing in on us and we huddled behind 'educational modules' — ghastly wooden structures that had nasty surfaces and no storage space — and tried to keep dry.

In David's view, his greatest failure was to get the staff to work together properly. The staff's inability to achieve cohesion militated — disastrously in David's view — against the establishment of sensible norms and ways of working for the school, and the use of the staff's joint influence to persuade the students to agree with and observe those norms.

The ERA Council was a prey to similar rifts and tensions. Seven of the thirteen Council places were reserved by the school's constitution for "educationists". In practice, these turned out to be mostly teachers from universities and other tertiary institutions. At first, being involved with ERA enabled the "educationists" to bask in a measure of academic approval. This ceased to be the case as the harder issues associated with running a progressive school surfaced, and the usual rumours about student misconduct began to spread. Instead there were common room queries and gossip, which the incompletely thought-through intellectual and philosophical positions of the Council majority left them ill-equipped to answer. In some instances, personal embarrassment was exacerbated by the fear that their association with ERA might become prejudicial to their careers.



1968 campaigning with Gough Whitlam in Higgins



1975

Elements of the parent minority on the Council had anxieties of their own. ERA's financial planning rested on the assumption that an initial enrolment of around 120 students would be increased by a further 60 annually until a total of around 400 was achieved, and a large part of David's time as principal was spent "... persuading some (often dubious) parents to send their children to ERA and other dubious or anxious parents not to take their children away". While, in David's words, "Any less intelligent basis for recruiting students to a progressive school, or for deciding whether or not to advise that they should remain in it, is hard to imagine", the implications of the financial commitments undertaken prior to his appointment were inescapable. Inevitably, any transfer elsewhere of students from conservative families was seen by some as a threat to the school's survival.

Increasingly, those for whom financial considerations were paramount began to act in concert with the bruised and disaffected "educationists". The situation called for a scapegoat, and David was available. More and more, once the move to Donvale was completed, he came under attack from those who either never at any stage really shared his commitment to progressive education, or else were unwilling to stick with him long enough for it to work. As David noted:

> One councillor began a systematic policy of inviting members of staff to dinner in order to pump them for information and to try to influence their attitudes to the school. One member of the staff was so outraged by this that he moved a resolution at a staff meeting that all teachers should agree to refuse any further such invitations. To me this sort of action seemed simply subversive. When members of council set out to form an alliance with unhappy members of staff and any disgruntled parents who could be found, we were obviously headed for real trouble.

The constant undermining of his position, together with the long hours and immense physical and emotional effort required simply to keep the school functioning, was more than any but the most exceptional principal would have tolerated. Events culminated in a situation where David was told that, unless he resigned, a group of councillors would do so in a body and publicly denounce the management of the school. At the same time, other members of the school community were planning to hold a parents' meeting, where the offending councillors could be given their marching orders forthwith. The schism spread finally to the staff, whose solidarity in support of David — regardless of their differences over other issues — had hitherto encouraged him to soldier on. Faced with the loss of this last firm footing, he resigned his

position as principal barely twenty-three months after assuming it.

Years later, David recalled "It was the bitterest moment of my life". Nor was the bitterness his alone. The school community reacted to the news of his going with grief and outrage. The students, in particular, were distraught. An overwhelming majority of them prepared and presented to the School Council a petition calling for his return. A covering letter noted that more would have liked to sign, but feared that taking sides would split the school. The tributes which David received, both privately and in public, were numerous, and moved him deeply. One mother wrote to him, in terms usually reserved for lovers, "... it has only just really struck me that you are leaving. Before it seemed like an unreal nightmare, and that when the fog and mist had disappeared you would still be there". Her letter continued "... you have been attacked, insulted and constantly put under pressure from a multitude of outside pressures, and withstood all this and managed at the same time to create an environment and community which is second to none". A student's letter read "No headmaster can ever replace you, however fantastic or full of ideas they are ... I stir you like the others, but underneath in my heart you will be remembered as a wonderful person, not perfect but irreplaceable". The mood overall was encapsulated by a poem which appeared in the school magazine *Eratica*:

Our World is torn apart
He, whom we saw as
Father of us all,
Has gone from us.

He, in whose shadow we
Felt secure and strong
Knowing his concern for each and all
Is tumbled cruelly

We, in our ERA years
Have doubted, fought and often
After time have seen more clearly,
Through this we learnt.

Around us now we see
Confusion. Our staff have
Gone from us, in mind and time
We need you, David.

The lack of support for David's adversaries was plain. Their triumph had been hollow. Before long they too had taken their departure, little noticed and unlamented. Moves to invite David back were initiated, but he gave them no encouragement. The ERA chapter in his life was closed. ERA itself lived on. What had been created was far too precious to be relinquished. For some, the school's claim to continued support rested on the creativity, concern, honesty and humour of the students. Others valued most highly the relationship of trust and mutual respect which grew up between the students and their teachers, and the way most of the students came out "with a sense of responsibility for themselves, and not a sense of the world owing them a living". Certainly no other school in Victoria allowed its students so large a say in the conduct of its affairs, or embodied more all-embracingly in its procedures the democratic and participative principles. Above all, some important points of progressive education philosophy were tested and proved to be sound. As Jim Pittard[95] wrote in his Deakin essay:

> I think we have established a number of things: that it is possible to run a school without all the heavy disciplines of the traditional system; that children in these circumstances can apply themselves to serious study and do well at external examination; that it is possible to create an environment in which children can develop into mature responsible people by assuming responsibility for their own lives and making their own decisions; and that it is possible to help parents grow and to understand what they're about and what their kids are about by obliging them to participate in the whole education business.

The harsher national economic climate which was already emerging when David resigned was not conducive to the example being taken to heart and applied, other than in the new Preshil Secondary School, but its time will come again. David, for his part, never doubted that the high personal cost of his ERA sojourn had been justified. His Deakin essay concluded "I can honestly say now that I wouldn't have missed it."

Policy analysts

The time was approaching for implementation of the education policies which David and I had shaped systematically for Whitlam over the previous decade. Our interests centred on the needs of educationally disadvantaged schools and students, but they were also linked inextricably to the socially and

politically divisive issue of government aid for non-government schools. As Graham Freudenberg[96] has pointed out, "The oldest, deepest, most poisonous debate in Australian history has been about aid to Church schools. The mystic incantation 'State Aid' has broken governors, governments, parties, families and friendships throughout our history". Following the split of 1954-55, the ALP adopted a policy of uncompromising opposition to any and every form of State Aid. While the architect of the policy was the Secretary of the West Australian Branch, Joe Chamberlain[97], its stronghold was Victoria. Years later, Bob Hogg acknowledged that the policy was agreed upon "... not so much on philosophical as on sectarian grounds", as a result of the Split, where "... the right-wing Catholic power group was removed, leaving a group in control within which the Masonic influence dominated". At the same time, the Movement members and Industrial Groupers in their newly-formed Democratic Labor Party took up the aid cause and made it central to their electoral strategy.

The electoral cost to the ALP of pandering to the sectarian prejudices of its extra-parliamentary leaders was horrendous. The "State Aid" cry broke the lifelong Labor allegiance of countless Catholic families. Long after the initial electoral appeal of the DLP's anti-communist rhetoric had begun to wane, it was able to sustain itself through the sense of injustice experienced by parents of Catholic school students. Menzies[98] followed suit at the 1963 Federal elections, with his offer of Commonwealth funding for science teaching facilities in non-government schools. At each subsequent Federal and State election, the Liberal Party was able to attract Catholic support with further aid measures which the parliamentary leaders of the ALP were forbidden to counter.

The interest in the issue which David and I developed was twofold. In the first instance, it was clear that the forward march towards a democratic socialist Australia, which was interrupted by Chifley's defeat at the 1949 Federal elections, could not be resumed unless and until a resolution to the State Aid impasse was achieved. Secondly, even complete success in preserving the "No State Aid" principle might seem poor consolation to its proponents if its price turned out to be "the maintenance of an expanding section of the electorate in a condition so under-educated as to make them a prey to every demagogue capable of couching his appeal in the catch-calls of their faith", or if the difference between national survival and destruction some day turned "on the capacities left underdeveloped in the educational slum at the bottom of the private sector".

Looking to the Future — the education policy statement which we drafted for the Victorian ALP between mid-1963 and mid-1964 — avoided making the

sort of specific recommendation for a move away from the party's "No State Aid" stance which would have resulted inevitably in its publication being vetoed by the Junta. Instead, the statement directed the party's attention specifically to the predicament of Catholic primary and secondary schools operating in the inner industrial areas, where neither the income group of the parishioners nor the resources of the parish were such that anything like adequate educational standards could be achieved. At the same time, *Looking to the Future* acknowledged presciently that the danger of a purely pragmatic political approach to the problem was that, in order to justify helping out disadvantaged Catholic schools without arousing sectarian feeling, governments would also make grants to well-endowed private schools, with the result that, to that extent, educational inequality would become more pronounced and entrenched. The conclusion reached was that Labor policy should aim at allowing a dual or multiple school system to prosper, while ensuring that the State system was made equal or superior in educational terms.

The mechanism for achieving this goal which *Looking to the Future* proposed was, in effect, a Schools Commission prototype. The statement argued for a "statutory body, a permanent advisory council or commission" which, while operating within the general framework of the Education Department, would be formally independent of the Department, and responsible directly to the Minister. It was envisaged that the commission would have power, subject to the approval of the Minister, to conduct inquiries into the education system and report publicly through Parliament. *Looking to the Future* recommended that the commission's initial task should be to undertake a comprehensive inquiry into aid for non-government schools, encompassing matters such as whether payments should be made, and, if so, in what form; whether administrative supervision of recipient schools was necessary, and, if so, the form it should take; whether the State had a right to determine syllabus items for recipient schools, and, if so, how; the right of children attending denominational schools to either opt out of religious education or else receive it in a form other than that espoused by the school authorities; the purpose of the education system within a plural democratic community, with special reference to the role of denominational schools; and the sources and availability of funding for both government and non-government schools.

The "one-off" inquiry idea in the form put forward by *Looking to the Future* was short-lived. By the time the statement was published, the State Aid issue was rapidly overtaking "Unity Tickets" — an arrangement, contrary to party policy, whereby ALP candidates and Communist Party

candidates contesting trade union elections agreed to appear together on the same how-to-vote cards or otherwise share up the available positions among themselves — as a matter of dispute between Whitlam and his Junta adversaries. The flashpoint arrived in February, 1966, when Joe Chamberlain was able to win Federal Executive support for the proposition that implementation of the promise of science teaching facilities for non-government schools which had won Menzies the 1963 Federal elections should not only be opposed in Parliament but challenged in the High Court. Whitlam's response to the decision of the twelve-member Federal Executive evoked an earlier electorally damaging episode in 1963, where the thirty-six Federal Conference delegates kept the two Federal Parliamentary leaders waiting outside the Hotel Canberra while a decision on the party's attitude to the North-West Cape United States Communications Centre was being reached. Menzies was thus handed the "36 faceless men" catchcry which he used to such lethal effect in the 1963 Federal elections. Whitlam commented acidly to a television interviewer that "I can only say we've just got rid of the thirty-six faceless men stigma to be faced with the twelve witless men". At the same time, he wrote to Labor MPs in Queensland, where a state election was impending, alerting them that "members and candidates for Queensland electorates can be the first victims of the Federal Executive's transgressions of policy and promotion of faction at its meeting last week", and seeking their help in having the offending resolutions overturned. While Chamberlain and his allies were unsuccessful in their subsequent attempt to have Whitlam expelled on grounds of disloyalty, the numbers on the Executive were balanced far too finely for it to be able to resolve the State Aid issue, and it was decided instead that a Special Federal Conference for the purpose should be held at Surfers' Paradise in July.

David and I saw plainly that, in the absence of a compromise proposal, a further deadlock could all too easily emerge, with incalculable damage to Labor's prospects at the Federal elections later in the year. Our *Looking lo the Future* proposals were refined, firmed-up and argued far more trenchantly in a paper headed *State Aid in Education* which we had taken to the Surfers' Paradise conference for us by the then MHR for Wills, Gordon Bryant[99]. *State Aid in Education* replaced the "statutory body, permanent advisory council or commission, which the earlier statement had advocated, with a "Commonwealth Schools (Grants) Commission", which was envisaged as working in conjunction with a new "Commonwealth Agency for Education Development" — the prototype for the Curriculum Development Centre — and new arrangements for Commonwealth funding for teacher training. The

Commission's role was defined as making grants to schools on a needs basis, taking into account their current facilities and the economic, cultural and social character of the students who attended them and the communities to which they belonged.

In the event, the Surfers' Paradise Conference defeated a West Australian proposal that Labor Governments should be allowed to give direct aid to church schools, with Western Australia, New South Wales and Tasmania voting in favour, and Victoria, Queensland and South Australia against. Subsequently, a further West Australian proposal, authorising Labor governments to introduce any form of aid other than direct capital grants, was carried, when the Federal Leader, Arthur Calwell, deserted his fellow Victorian delegates to support it. While our *State Aid in Education* paper was not discussed formally by the conference, its concept of the Commonwealth Schools (Grants) Commission caught Whitlam's eye. The lawyer's instinct for establishing legitimacy through precedent led him to link it with the Menzies Government's Universities Commission. Further detail was added by our 1967 Fabian pamphlet *Meeting the Crisis: Federal Aid for Education*, where the functions which *State Aid in Education* had divided between two separate agencies were brought together under the common roof of a Curriculum and Materials Development Division within the structure of the Commonwealth Ministry of Educational Science.

It was envisaged that this further Schools Commission prototype would monitor educational needs, and provide recommendations for the Minister on the payments to be made to particular authorities and schools. Additionally, we argued, the new Division would need to engage in educational research and development; ensure the availability of the widest possible variety of high quality educational materials at accessible prices; where necessary, subsidise schools for the purchase of the educational materials of their choice; and provide in-service training and advice with the aim of promoting the use of new materials and methods. The concept was enriched again as a result of our reading the Plowden Committee material which Whitlam and Graham Freudenberg brought back from a visit to Britain in 1968, and by the arguments which Whitlam developed in the course of the great public meetings on education which figured so prominently in his 1969 and 1972 Federal election campaigns.

Schools Commissioner

The trough in David's affairs following his resignation from ERA was short-lived. Whitlam led Labor back to office at the 1972 elections, and I moved from his private office to the government backbench, as MHR for Casey. In December 1972 one of the first decisions of the new government was to appoint a committee headed by the Chairman of the Universities Commission, Professor Peter Karmel, to determine how the Labor policies for schools should be put into effect. Early in 1973 most of the recommendations of the Karmel Committee's seminal report on *Schools in Australia* were accepted by the Government, and I was able to persuade Whitlam and his Education Minister, Kim Beazley, that the new Schools Commission should include David as one of the four full-time Commissioners and Joan Kirner as a part-time Commissioner. In Michael Pusey's view, the continuing inspiration for the socially imaginative and creative things the Commission did came principally from David and Joan, along with Jean Blackburn.

The Commission provided serviceable framework for the pursuit of serious social and educational goals. David's previous career had equipped him to make the most of it. The aims, as identified by Karmel, were equality, devolution and diversity. Equality was an evening-up of the resources available to schools, with special emphasis on the needs of those with heaviest enrolments from disadvantaged groups such as aborigines, migrants, public housing tenants, single parent families and social security beneficiaries. Devolution, in Karmel's words, was about "... a conviction that responsibility will be most effectively discharged where the people entrusted with making decisions are also the people responsible for carrying them out, with an obligation to justify them, and in a position to profit from their experience." Diversity was allowing the proverbial hundred flowers to bloom, in the recognition not only that "... diversified forms of schooling are an important part of the search for solutions", but also that "... better ways will not necessarily be the same for all children or for all teachers." The Commission as a whole was involved constantly in determining how effect could best be given to the broad thrust and purpose of the report. Individually, the full-time Commissioners had projects of their own. David's assignment was the Commission's Special Projects (Innovations) Program. He was about to create, in Michael Pusey's words "one of the few grand successes in the rather miserable history of public schooling in Australia since the Second World War."

The Innovations Program turned out to be utterly unlike anything attempted previously, either within Australia or elsewhere. Its uniqueness flowed from a major change in David's outlook. *Looking to the Future, State Aid in Education*

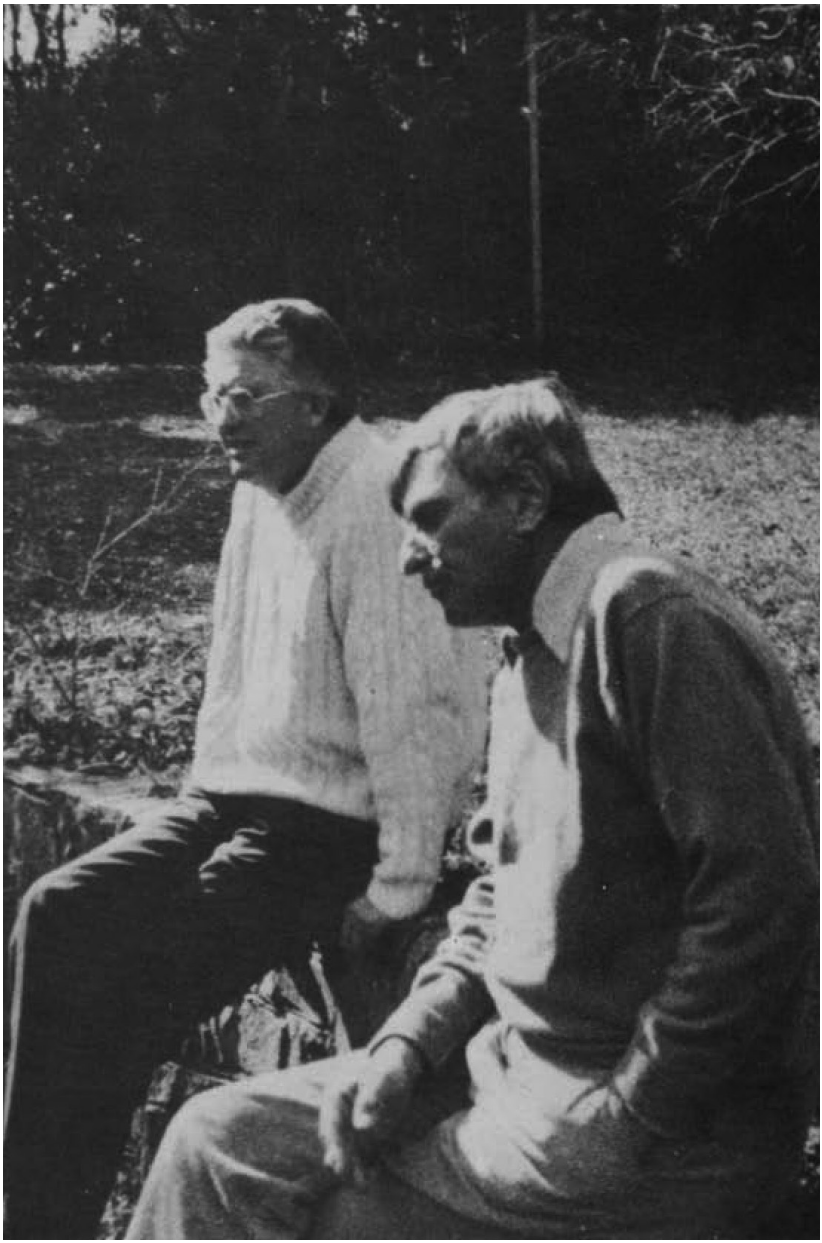
and *Meeting the Crisis: Federal Aid for Education* all embodied his ACER experience in oversighting the introduction of learning materials such as the SRA Reading Laboratory. This "traditional" form of innovation was product-oriented. It reflected the view that new courses, teaching techniques, learning materials and other innovatory "packages" would serve to boost school productivity in much the same way that a newly-invented piece of agricultural machinery, a new way of reducing salinity or a new variety of grain boosts the productivity of farms. It was seen as appropriate that promising "packages" should undergo "development" and "trialling" before being "adopted" and "diffused". The assumption was that what worked in one school would have general applicability. It was thought to be unnecessary to have schools initiate change for themselves, since introducing or imposing it from outside demonstrably was far more scientific, economic and effective.

By 1973 David saw the situation in a completely different light. While not discounting completely the benefits which might be gained from innovation in its traditional "lighthouse" mode, he had come to believe that the whole issue of product was secondary. He started from the axiom that "... effective and worthwhile change in schools can *only* be brought about through the initiative and energy of those working in them". Instead, in the world around him, it was to just such "ordinary" men and women to whom the system denied both incentive and opportunity. Generally the classroom teachers as he had come to know them were conditioned to believe either that they were incapable of initiating change for themselves, or that it would be inappropriate for them to try. Principals, inspectors and senior departmental officers, he had learned, were likely to feel threatened by change, while parents had come to know their place, which the system defined as outside the classroom door, if not the school gate. In his experience, even in schools where change was not stigmatised implicitly as unimaginable or undesirable, it was frustrated, more often than not, by lack of resources. It did not follow, in his view, that resources alone were the answer. He foresaw that those for whom they were intended might have insufficient self-confidence to apply, or insufficient skill to set out their plans on paper. Additionally, state education departments might prohibit or discourage applications, either for the sake of protecting their own authority or, perhaps, in deference to the "states' rights" doctrines of conservative Ministers and governments.

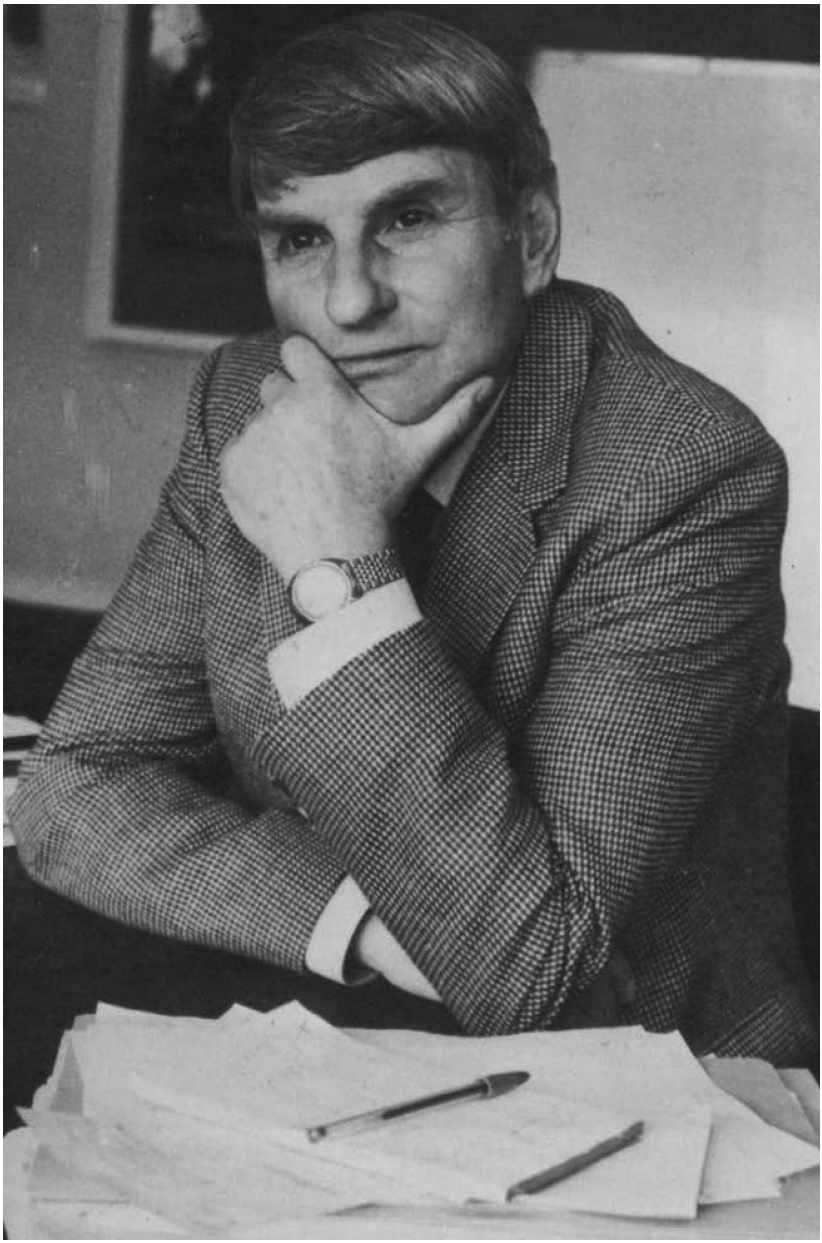
David's approach was geared to overcoming these obstacles. The aim, as he saw it, was two-fold. Particular groups of children — a school, a class or even a group within a class — were to have the quality of their education

upgraded. Teachers and other people who worked in or for schools were to have their skills and aptitudes improved, either individually or as groups. The method chosen was to make it possible for new projects to be attempted, where otherwise they would have remained out of reach. It was not necessary, for this purpose, to have an "innovation" which was the first of its kind in the world, or even Australia. The requirement was simply that a project should be new in the particular school or classroom where it was undertaken, or otherwise "innovative in its own context". People were what mattered, along with the change which doing something new could help them to bring about in themselves. Greater capacity for identifying and analysing problems — for perceiving situations more clearly, devising possible solutions and successfully putting them into effect — would follow. The system as a whole would be elevated to a new plane, as a result of becoming more adaptable and capable of self-improvement.

Grants for innovations were considered on two premises. First, the transaction was seen as being between the Commission and the individual applicant. Superior authorities such as principals, inspectors and the Education Departments themselves were not asked for their blessing, nor were they allowed a veto. Secondly, conventional administrative yardsticks, such as the time taken to process applications and their unit costs, were less important than seeing that the best possible outcome was obtained. On this basis, the innovations consultants network was brought into being. The consultants were a scattered group of deeply committed men and women who shared David's vision and were known personally to him or recommended by other Commission members. The appointments were part-time, and went to people with "open minds and a positive approach who were willing to maintain another full-time occupation". This enabled them to appear sufficiently independent of the system for the less conformist teachers to regard them as potential allies, and, more important, be prepared to discuss frankly with them practical difficulties, including the attitudes of superiors. It was a further prerequisite that their full-time jobs should be in schools or associated directly with them, and that they should have either undertaken innovatory projects personally or supported others in doing so. Consultants were expected to get down to work on such practical tasks as regularly visiting schools in order to interview applicants and potential applicants, appraising applications, writing reports and participating in review panels. Their efforts were co-ordinated by a state or territory convenor, who assigned them their clients. David saw the consultants as "amateur bureaucrats". They become known in some other quarters as "Bennett's radicals''.



1980 with Race Mathews



1982

Radicals or not, the consultants were not able to keep the Special Projects (Innovations) Program completely immune from deviation or back-sliding. Problems arose where there were attempts to shift the focus away from schools, in a mistaken expectation of expediting change at the systemic level. Elsewhere, criteria other than those of the Program were imposed, so that projects were subject to requirements such as that they should be innovative in absolute terms rather than "innovative in their own context", that they should be of more or less permanent duration or that they should be "generalisable" on the traditional "lighthouse" model. Luckily, in the final analysis, the impact of these aberrations was inconsequential. Instead, as Michael Pusey sees it:

> The Program quickly succeeded in circumventing the State bureaucracies and in responding in a very direct way to a host of individuals — teachers, community people and others — who were desperately frustrated by the system and who were just dying to "have a go". For the most part they were people with immense enthusiasm, skill and good sense. The Innovations Program responded to them, to projects that they had designed to meet their perceptions of what was needed to squirt some life, care and practical ingenuity into the system. It worked, and for once the thick fringe of imaginative teachers, who are always half-alienated and punished for their hopes and efforts, were suddenly given a recognition and a little money, and, with this, the help and protection they needed to give concrete expression to their frustrated talents.

Overall, the Program's achievements matched triumphantly David's highest expectations and most exuberant hopes. Some 4,400 grants, totalling in excess of $16 million, were made available over the Program's eight-year lifetime, from 1974 to 1981. For example, Sister Ann Moor-Bussy of the Santa Teresa School and Community near Alice Springs in the Northern Territory received $5,113 for "A long-term program to revitalise the teaching of English as a second language and introduce literacy in the local Aboriginal language of Eastern Aranda, using audio-visual equipment and locally-written, produced and printed materials". A $496 grant was made available to Mr. B. L. Thompson of the Kangaroo Inn Area School in Lucindale, South Australia, in order that "The provision of books and other materials, together with research trips to Adelaide, will allow a broadening and deepening of a fully integrated music and drama course which is run on a voluntary basis in

an isolated area school". A $500 grant so that "An isolated primary school will implement an individualised approach to the teaching of numeracy and literacy skills within a 'Family Grouping Environment' ", went to Mr. B. Burns of the Central School on Lord Howe Island. The development of a solar power system and its linking to a methane digester in a program to explore alternative energy sources and their environmental implications at Victoria's Lavers Hill Consolidated School was backed with $1,000.

A report on the outcomes of a stratified random sample of forty-five projects from three states prepared for the Commission by C. K. Malcolm and J.M. Owen concluded that in all cases the effect on those involved had been positive, while in two-thirds of them "the overall professional impact has been high". The report noted that for 42% of the teachers the "impact has been broad and deep. With an increased sense of adventure and independence, they have greatly expanded their professional activity, critically appraised their own views on education and re-defined their roles both in the schools and beyond". It continued that, for a further 21%, the effects were similar "... except that philosophical shifts have been less and the expansion of the teachers' activities more in tune with their earlier interests and convictions." Moreover, this was done at an annual per capita cost for the school population as a whole totalling no more than $1. As David himself summarised the situation:

> ... about one-third of all Australian schools have had some experience of what can — and what cannot — be achieved when ordinary teachers and schools and members of the community are given the resources to carry out projects of their own devising. We have also learnt a good deal about the constraints on change in schools, about the way in which power — including power over resources — is distributed in the system, and about the kinds of encouragement and support teachers need to innovate. Finally, I believe, we have learnt something about what makes schools work.
>
> The program has successfully harnessed the energies and goodwill of thousands of people prepared to work hard for the improvement of schools and it has demonstrated in practice the effectiveness of a previously untried strategy for bringing about change through action at the national level.
>
> Schools have not been radically changed. Rather we have begun to acquire some sense of the part ordinary people, especially teachers, could play in bringing about such a change.

Back to the drawing board

David's assessment of the Program was offered from outside. In 1977 the Liberals refused to renew his Schools Commission appointment. The years which followed were a time of intense professional frustration for him, and self-inflicted loss to the ALP policy-makers who resolutely refused to avail themselves of his experience, knowledge and capacity for lateral thought. The Commonwealth Education Research and Development Committee commissioned him to prepare a study of the Special Projects (Innovations) Program, as Visiting Fellow in the Education Research Unit at the Australian National University, but the transition from running the Program to writing about it was difficult, and his progress was slow. The offers of help which he made to the ALP Federal Secretariat and to Ken Wriedt[100] and John Button as successive Labor Shadow Ministers for Education elicited no responses. It may be that their indifference reflected the general turning away of the ALP from the Whitlam values and priorities which were associated so painfully in its mind with Malcolm Fraser's 1975 Remembrance Day coup. Alternatively, they may have been too demoralised and distracted to welcome a partner with the reputation for being monumentally difficult which David had acquired.

My own policy development partnership with David had been interrupted, as a result of his move to Canberra having placed 400 miles between our homes, and my increasing parliamentary commitments. Casey — my House of Representatives seat — was lost to the Liberals in 1975, but, after three years as Principal Private Secretary to the Leader of the Opposition in the Victorian Parliament, I won the Oakleigh seat in the Victorian Legislative Assembly at the 1979 elections. In Opposition, between 1979 and 1982, I was Shadow Cabinet Secretary and then Shadow Minister for Economic Development and Tourism, and, following Labor's 1982 election victory, I became Minister for the Arts and Minister for Police and Emergency Services. Increasingly, David and I found our meetings restricted to the Australia Day weekend which I spent annually in Canberra at the Australian Institute of Political Science Summer School, and his occasional visits to Melbourne.

Knowing, as we did by 1979, how little time he had to live, it seems extraordinary that we failed to make better use of it.

In 1980 the Victorian Fabian Society was put back on its feet after half a decade of decline, and I once again became its secretary. David cheered on the revival from Canberra, and rejoined the Society's Executive when he returned to Melbourne in 1983. Between 1980 and 1984, membership recovered to around 850. Ten new pamphlets, including contributions from

Gareth Evans[101], Gough Whitlam, Ralph Willis[102], Barry Jones[103] and Bob Hawke, were published, and an immensely successful annual Remembrance Day Dinner was added to the Society's calendar, with addresses delivered to it in 1982 by Bob Hawke, in 1983 by Donald Horne[104], and in 1984 by Michael Kirby[105]. In 1984 a change of name to "The Australian Fabian Society" was adopted, in recognition of the fact that we had long since become a national body, with members in every territory and state. David was too ill to resume his former organising role in the Society, but his enthusiasm and the encouragement which he gave to a new generation of its members were instrumental in sustaining the new surge of activity and growth. The hope of keeping alight the democratic socialist "Light on the Hill" which we had seen in the Society twenty-five years earlier was once again being fulfilled. On April 22, 1984 — nine days before his death on May 1 — David wrote the Society a last letter, apologising for the Executive Meetings which he had been unable to attend. It read in part:

> When I accepted nomination to the Executive last year, I hoped to be able to make at least a minimum contribution, but this has turned out to be not possible ... I hope and intend to continue as an active member of the Society and should be pleased to give help on specific matters as the opportunity arises.

Meanwhile the policy development energies which David was not permitted to use on behalf of the ALP were channelled instead into a remarkable essay which he wrote at the request of Gareth Evans and Jock Reeves, for *Labor Essays 1982*. The essay was titled *Education: Back to the Drawing Board*. Its reservations about the Schools Commission experience were formidable and far-reaching. David acknowledged freely that the commission had raised standards of staffing, equipment and accommodation for Australian schools, and, to a lesser extent, the morale and competence of teachers and other school community members. It had failed signally, he argued, to make the schools or the society more equal.

This was attributable, in his view, to three factors. In the first instance there had been confusion in the minds of Labor's policy-makers, including ourselves, between the meritocratic ideal of equality of opportunity, where education figured as a mechanism for enabling gifted individuals to overcome barriers of economic disadvantage and cultural deprivation in the pursuit of upward social mobility, and equality in the socialist sense of upward mobility for the working class as a whole. Socialism, David concluded, had lost out.

Secondly, as he saw it, the expectation that the Commission would be able to determine standards of resourcing for schools had been unrealistic from the start, because, on the one hand, its general recurrent grants were small by comparison with the education outlays of the states, and, on the other, the capacity to enforce guidelines or require accountability had been denied to it by the Government. Thanks to the efforts primarily of the states, David pointed out, the Commission's 1979 resourcing targets were equalled or exceeded in government schools years earlier, but the resource gap between government and Catholic schools remained wider than it had been before the Commission was established. Catholic schools, he noted, were recouping some 66% of their outlays from the public purse, but their per capita resources were no more than 70% of the government school level, and the Church was continuing to use Commission funds for the creation of additional under-resourced school places in defiance of the clear intention that it should first up-grade to acceptable standards the places it already possessed. At the same time, he observed, Commission funds were being used to further assist that lucky minority of other non-government schools which had been incomparably better housed, staffed and equipped than either Catholic or government schools, even prior to the Commission's inception.

Finally, David reasoned, much of what had been hoped for from education could be achieved in reality only through a much broader process of social reconstruction and reform. His argument took into account new and compelling evidence that giving greater resources to schools had little or no pay-off in terms of more equal opportunities for their students; that inequalities actually increased as students moved through their schools; that "schools do in fact help to transmit privilege and disadvantage, power and powerlessness from one generation to the next", and that, in countries like Britain, where education outlays had increased enormously in the post-war period, there had been an increase at the same time in indices of inequality such as a role of social class as a determinant of university admissions.

Education, David asserted, had been done no kindness by its over promotion as the panacea "... to establish an equal society, maintain economic growth and promote national prosperity, while at the same time providing everyone with higher incomes, interesting jobs and a pleasant middle-class life". He foresaw that, as a result, it would be necessary, even within the ALP, to fend off critics who held that education was a rat-hole, down which no further public money should be poured. His own assessment was different. Where others were turning their backs on education, he saw the possibility of a new agenda for policy development and reform. What was needed fell

logically into four parts. First, education still had a central role to play in bringing about a more equal Australia, but it could do so only in the context of a tightly-integrated program, which also included policies for welfare, industrial democracy, prices and incomes and industry and employment. Secondly, mainstream education still had much to learn from the progressive movement about "... what a school appropriate to a more egalitarian, humane and democratic society should be like". It was this tradition, David wrote, which had created schools concerned to develop individuals who are able to make free choices and to deal confidently with their own lives — the type of autonomous person necessary for building a free society:

> It has refused to accept the oppressive, authoritarian and hierarchical structures which both duplicate and help to reproduce the worst features of the industrial process and in their place has tried to create democratic structures through which children learn that even the weakest members of a community have equal rights and that all should participate in making decisions. Above all, it has refused to accept that society should be based on competition for individual success, on the sorting and labelling of human beings and on the manufacture of failure and inferiority.

Thirdly, education had to be made lifelong, in order to give a second chance to those for whom conventional schooling was inappropriate or ineffectual. Fourthly, the Schools Commission had to be made over into a more effective agent for change. The emphasis of the Commission's work would need to be shifted away from areas such as the Government General Recurrent Program where so few tangible results had been demonstrated, in favour of "... a series of programs carefully designed, if possible in co-operation with system authorities, to achieve specific purposes", along the lines pioneered so successfully by the Disadvantaged Schools Program, the Innovations Program, the Education Centres and the Development Program.

Last things

Tragically, time ran out for David before the policies needed to give effect to these key objectives could be developed. There was no opportunity for us to explore together the worker co-operative movement experience in which I had become deeply interested, or to analyse the implications of schools which either —as at Mondragon in Spain — were themselves worker co-operatives, or — as elsewhere in Europe — had student bodies organised along worker

co-operative lines. We had no chance to grapple with related practical issues, such as the crippling legacy of indiscriminate teacher recruiting in the 'fifties and 'sixties; how to make devolution operate effectively where events had overtaken David's observation that "... women whose traditional role had been to prepare lunches in school canteens became active members of well-organised and politically-effective interest groups", and neither parent was available to participate in the school community because both were in paid work; and, above all, the fact that, while being a parent is the most awesome responsibility most of us ever shoulder, it is also the one which often we are least adequately or appropriately prepared.

David had re-married in 1973. The great happiness which it brought him was overshadowed five years later by the news that he had cancer of the prostate. He responded by turning a stoic face to the world, which was associated with an intense curiosity about his illness. Masses of professional literature, including immensely technical longitudinal studies of prostatic cancer from the US Veterans' Affairs Administration, were analysed with his friends and the more communicative of his doctors. At the same time, he developed a strong sense of unfinished business — in Robert Frost's words "But I have promises to keep. And miles to go before I sleep". Time was needed to finish his Innovations Program book, and answer the questions which *Education: Back to the Drawing Boar*d had posed. He relished the opportunity to teach at Monash University which came his way in 1983, and would dearly have liked to carry on longer with it.

It was not to be. The spread of secondary tumors and the side effects of the treatment distracted him throughout. Late in 1983 his condition began to deteriorate sharply. His doctors were uninterested or uninformed in pain management, with the result that he came to hope for a quick death. Instead, a new oncologist was found, who enabled him to live out his last weeks with a clear mind and relative freedom from pain. One Saturday afternoon in late April 1984 we had a happy couple of hours together, arguing about some aspect of education or politics as had been our habit for the previous twenty-eight years. On Monday he was asleep when I called to see him, and the following morning I learned that he was dead.

David never looked for personal recognition or reward. It was enough for him that the causes he cared about benefited. It may well never have occurred to him that, within the Labor Party, the Fabian Society and the world of education, there were men and women younger than himself who looked up to him with respect and admiration, amounting in some instances to veneration. This stemmed from the fact that, more than anyone else in

his generation, he embodied and exemplified all the best qualities of the Democratic Left. The model he set was observed and internalised more widely than he would have credited, and the lives and work of those who were shaped by it now constitute his memorial. It remains for them to see that the search for solutions to which he devoted himself so wholeheartedly is resumed without interruption where he left off.

Notes

1. Prime Minister 1972-75, Ambassador to UNESCO since 1983.
2. Chairman, Australian Universities Commission 1959-66.
3. Prime Minister 1975-83.
4. Commander Australian Army Corps in France 1918, Chairman, State Electricity Commission of Victoria 1920-31.
5. Deputy Director, Army Dental Services 1944-45.
6. Prime Minister 1945-49.
7. Emeritus Professor, Australian National University since 1982.
8. Historian, General Editor, *Australian Dictionary of Biography* since 1975, Chairman, Victorian Fabian Society 1951-53.
9. Prime Minister 1966-67.
10. Minister for Northern Australia 1975, Treasurer since 1983.
11. Deputy Prime Minister since 1983.
12. Minister for Housing and Construction 1983-84, Minister for Immigration and Ethnic Affairs since 1984.
13. Minister for the Environment 1975, Attorney-General (WA) since 1984.
14. Minister for Home Affairs and Environment since 1983.
15. Minister for External Territories 1972-73, Minister for Science 1972-75, Minister for Defence 1975, Ambassador to Indonesia since 1985.
16. Minister for the Environment and Conservation 1972-75, Minister for Media 1975.
17. Member of Schools Commission 1974-80, Chairperson for Ministerial Review of Post Compulsory Education (Vic.) 1982-85.
18. Member of Schools Commission 1974-79, Minister for Conservation, Forests and Lands (Vic.) since 1985.
19. Editor of *The Age* since 1981.
20. Senior Lecturer, School or Sociology, University of New South Wales since 1978.
21. Chairman Australian Schools Commission 1974-81, Chairman, State Board of Education (Vic.) 1983-85, Vice-Chancellor, University of Wollongong since 1981.
22. Moderator, Presbyterian Church 1963.
23. Director, Melbourne University Press since 1962.
24. Senior Fellow in Political Science, Australian National University since 1964.
25. Professor of Political Science, Melbourne University since 1967.
26. Vice Principal, Melbourne University since 1966, Chairman, Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works since 1982, Treasurer, Victorian Fabian Society 1951-53.
27. Associate Dean of Commerce, Melbourne University since 1978, Secretary, Victorian Fabian Society 1948-50, Chairman, 1956-66.
28. Foundation Professor of Politics, LaTrobe University 1967-82.
29. Emeritus Professor of Law, Australian National University since 1982.
30. Emeritus Professor of Political Science, Australian National University since 1982.
31. Professor of Industrial Relations, University of Sydney 1964-74.
32. Chairman, Education Research and Development Committee 1975-81.
33. Leader of the Opposition 1960-67.
34. Minister for Social Security 1972-75, Treasurer 1975, Leader of the Opposition 1977-83, Foreign Minister since 1983.
35. Prime Minister since 1983.
36. Premier (SA) since 1982.
37. Premier (Vic.) since 1982.
38. Premier (NSW) since 1976.
39. Minister for Labour 1972-74, Labour and Immigration 1974-75, Science and Consumer Affairs 1975.
40. Premier (SA) 1970-79, Chairman, Victorian Tourist Commission since 1982.
41. Principal Private Secretary, E.G. Whitlam 1960-67, Secretary, Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet 1975-77, Ambassador to Japan 1977-80, Secretary, Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs 1980-83, Special Minister of State 1983-84, Trade since 1984.
42. Chief Executive, News Corporation Ltd.
43. Treasurer 1972-74, Minister for Overseas Trade 1975, Deputy Prime Minister 1975, President, Victorian Fabian Society 1942.
44. Attorney-General (NSW) 1941-53.
45. Leader of the Government in the Senate, Attorney-General and Minister for Customs and Excise 1972-75, Justice of the High Court of Australia since 1974.
46. Solicitor, Principal Private Secretary, E.G. Whi1lam 1975.
47. Barrister, Principal Private Secretary, E.G. Whitlam 1972-75, Secretary, Department of Media 1975.
48. Minister for Environment and Planning (NSW) since 1984.
49. Assistant Secretary, NSW Trades and Labour Council since 1984.
50. Professor of Economics, University of Strathclyde, Scotland since 1980.
51. Lecturer in Philosophy, University of Queensland 1964-78.
52. Professor of Politics, Melbourne University since 1977.
53. General Editor of *Encyclopedia of the Australian People*, Research School of Social Sciences, Australian National University since 1984 (Bicentennial Project).
54. Secretary, Department of Employment and Industrial Relations since 1983.

55. Reader in Education, Melbourne University since 1975, Editor *Overland* quarterly since l954.
56. Member, Victorian Housing Commission 1966-75.
57. State Historian (Vic.) since 1978.
58. Director-General, Department of Water Resources (Vic.) since 1984.
59. *The Australian* Correspondent in United States since 1984.
60. Executive Assistant to Executive Director, Western Mining Corporation since 1982.
61. Officer in Charge, Melbourne Student Service Centre, Education Department since 1970, Treasurer, Victorian Fabian Society 1962-67.
62. Senior Lecturer, Department of Philosophy, Flinders University since 1970.
63. Senior Lecturer in Politics, La Trobe University since 1967.
64. Director, Bureau of Labour Market Research since 1980.
65. Leader of the Government in the Senate since 1983.
66. Deputy Prime Minister and Treasurer 1974-75.
67. Senior Lecturer in Biochemistry, Melbourne University since 1976.
68. Personal Chair in Department of English, Melbourne University since 1967.
69. Author, Historian, Educationalist, Editor, *Outlook* 1957-70.
70. Head of Community Services, Chisholm Institute since 1974.
71. President, National Civic Council since 1957.
72. ALP State Secretary (Vic.) 1930-49, Federal Secretary 1946-54, Deputy Opposition Leader in the Senate 1956-67.
73. President, Australian Council of Trade Unions 1949-69.
74. President. ALP Victorian Branch 1949-50, Secretary of Australian Council of Trade Unions 1949-56.
75. Leader of 1he Opposition (Vic.) 1967-77, Minister for Aboriginal Affairs (Aust.) since 1983.
76. Minister for Lands and Soldier Settlement (Vic.) 1952-53, ALP State President (Vic.) 1962-65, President, Victorian Fabian Society 1963-65.
77. Judge, Supreme Court of Victoria since 1976.
78. Judge, Supreme Court ACT 1972-82, Federal Court of Australia 1978-82.
79. Federal Secretary, Australian Council of Salaried and Professional Associations 1956-75, Deputy President Australian Conciliation and Arbitration Commission 1973-75.
80. ALP State Secretary (Vic.) 1961-63, (NSW) 1968, ALP Federal Secretary 1963-68.
81. ALP State President (Vic.) 1965-68, Chairman, Federal Parliamentary Labor Party 1972.
82. Barrister, Secretary, Victorian Fabian Society 1969, Chairman since 1983.
83. Member Elect for Nunawading Province (Vic.) 1985, Secretary, Victorian Fabian Society 1970-71.
84. ALP State Secretary (Vic.) 1963-70.
85. ALP State President (Vic.) 1971-72 and 1983-85, Member for Jika Jika Province, (Vic.) since 1985.
86. Private Secretary, E.G. Whitlam 1967-72.
87. Minister for Electrical Undertakings (Vic.) 1952-55, Labour 1954-55, Leader of 1he Opposition in the Legislative Council (Vic.) 1955-79.
88. ALP State Secretary (SA) 1968-73, Federal Secretary 1969-73, Special Minister of State since 1983.
89. ALP State Chairman (Vic.) 1972, MHR for Melbourne 1972-83.
90. Solicitor, ALP State Chairman (Vic.) 1975-76.
91. ALP State Secretary (Vic.) 1977-83, Ministerial adviser to the Prime Minister since 1983.
92. Secretary, Australian Transport Officers' Federation 1968-77.
93. Barrister, Royal Commissioner on Royal Commission on the activities of the Federated Ship Painters and Dockers Union 1982-84.
94. Chairman, Department of Microbiology, Melbourne University since 1981.
95. Press Secretary, E.G. Whitlam 1967-77, Neville Wran since 1976, R. J. Hawke since 1983.
96. ALP State Secretary (WA) 1949-74, Federal President 1955-61, Federal Secretary 1961-63.
97. Prime Minister 1939-41, 1949-66.
98. Minister for Aboriginal Affairs (Aust.) 1972-73, Capital Territory 1973-75.
99. Minister for Agriculture (Aust.) 1972-75, Minerals and Energy 1975, Leader of the Opposition in the Senate 1975-80.
100. Leader of the Opposition (Tas.) since 1980, Attorney-General (Aust.) 1983-84, Minister for Minerals and Energy since 1984.
101. Minister for Employment and Industrial Relations since 1983.
102. Minister for Science and Technology since 1983.
103. President, Australia Council since 1984.
104. Chairman, Law Reform Commission 1975-84, President, NSW Court of Appeals since 1984.

APPENDIX

STATE AID IN EDUCATION

Without committing myself to its conclusions, I circulate this as a very thoughtful comment on the problem of aid to non-state schools.

It is by two very active members of the ALP, both engaged in specialist fields of education.

(G. M. Bryant) MP
July, 1966

A. *Introduction*

1. For many years the ALP has in general been in an uncommitted position on the question of state aid. Until recently, this was a reasonable position for the party to occupy: the majority of the electorate were not in favour of State Aid, the principal opposition parties were against it, and a considerable majority of those demanding Aid, i.e. Catholics, were Labor supporters. This position has radically changed; many non-Catholics have modified their attitudes on the question, many Catholics who were previously Labor supporters either do not vote Labor automatically or do not vote for it at all, and, most importantly, the Liberal Party has abandoned its implicitly anti-aid position.
   These and other developments have made it quite impossible for the ALP — or any other major party — to remain in an uncommitted or vague or inconsistent position on State Aid. If the ALP retains such an approach, it will continue to be maneuvered into a position where it is made to appear either irresponsible, or dominated by sectarian bias, or both.

2. There are two alternatives which are worth consideration. The first alternative is that the Party should adopt a rigidly anti-State Aid position on the grounds of principle. The necessary conditions for such a policy are:-

   (i) the policy would have to be fairly rigidly enforced on all sections of the Party, and
   (ii) leaders of all sections of the Party would have to be prepared to openly and consistently campaign for the policy and argue for the principles on which the policy would be based.

There is no doubt that powerful arguments can be put for such a policy (compare the campaign now being conducted by supporters of the state systems, and also the position generally accepted in New Zealand). However:

(i) it seems to be widely accepted that such a policy is no longer electorally viable or desirable. Although a campaign for such a policy might swing many voters back to an anti-Aid position, this might still be an undesirable position for a national party.
(ii) It does not seem that *either* of the conditions set out in the previous paragraph could be met, many sections of the Party would not accept such a policy, and many leading members who would privately accept it would not be prepared to publicly argue the case for it.

The remainder of these notes are based on the assumption that a straight anti-Aid policy will not be accepted — for these or other reasons.

3. The only alternatives worth consideration is a policy which:

(i) states clearly *the principles* on which aid should be given,
(ii) specifies as exactly as possible *what kinds and degree of aid* should be, and will be, given,
(iii) specifies *the conditions* on which aid should be given,
(iv) *makes State Aid an integral part of a progressive and coherent educational policy*.

B. *Electoral Considerations*

1. A dangerous and stupid attitude has grown up which implies that all that Labor has to do to gain electoral office is to accept State Aid. This view seems to imply that all, or the majority of Catholics will then vote Labor. It also implies that for every additional dollar spent on State Aid, the Party will gain an additional vote. Both these propositions are nonsense.
   It is our view that, even if all principles were ignored, a vaguely pro-Aid policy could be at least as *electorally* disastrous as a thorough-going anti-Aid policy.

One of the main arguments put for adopting a new policy is the electoral argument. The Committee, we feel, should therefore at some stage carefully consider the problem *from a purely electoral point of view*.

2. The electorate can be divided for this purpose into four groups:

   (a) Strong advocates of State Aid (mainly Catholic).
   (b) Strong opponents of State Aid.
   (c) A group — mainly non-Catholic — who are not strongly in favour of Aid, but who are now sympathetic to it, mainly because they feel that the present situation is unjust to many Catholic children, i.e., they have accepted the argument that the community cannot tolerate an "educational slum".
   (d) Those who do not care about the issue one way or another. We would contend that both Group (a) and Group (b) are smaller than Group (c) or Group (d).

3. Group (a) — Advocates of Aid — includes many who might change their vote to Labor if Labor adopts a pro-State Aid policy, *but this would not apply to the majority of the Group*.

   (i) Many of them already vote for Labor.
   (ii) Many others will continue to allow their votes to be controlled by the DLP, no matter what educational policy Labor adopts.
   (iii) Others would continue to vote Liberal no matter what educational policy Labor adopts.
   (iv) Others might change their vote on the basis of this issue, *but this decision would depend on which Party offered the best bargain. It must be assumed that whatever bid labor makes for this vote, the Liberals will try to make a comparable or greater bid.* The choice of these voters will therefore be not between pro-Aid and anti-Aid policies, but between two pro-Aid policies. Our conclusion is that a significant, but probably small, percentage of Group (a) might change their vote to Labor if it adopts a pro-Aid position.

4. In both Group (b) and Group (c) there are a significant number of voters who might well change their vote *against* Labor if it moves too far towards a pro-Aid position. In Group (b) are many people to whom State Aid is just as much a matter of conscience as it is to Catholic

advocates of Aid. Some of these certainly vote Labor because it is the nearest to an Anti-Aid party.

However, the most important group is Group (c). These people, while sympathetic to the Catholic position, *have not by any means accepted the principles on which the campaign for Aid has been conducted*. For example, they have not accepted that each parent has the right to demand that an equal share of public money be devoted to the education of his child in the school of his choice. They would find Aid acceptable only on certain conditions, in particular:

(i) that Aid does not strengthen a particular church and is not used to promote particular religious views,
(ii) that the provision of Aid will not undermine the state systems,
(iii) that it will be primarily devoted to solving a particular problem — the inequalities of educational opportunity suffered by some Catholic children (or the difficulties experienced by some Catholic parents),
(iv) that it will help to solve the general "educational crisis".

Some of the conditions may be held to be quite inconsistent with the notion of Aid: *any* aid could claim to strengthen the churches and to undermine the state system. Nevertheless, they must be taken into account in framing ALP policy. Otherwise, by adopting a pro-Aid policy the Party could lose as many votes as it gains.

5. Groups (b) and (c) contain a significant number of people — many of them opinion leaders in the community — who are sufficiently knowledgeable about education not to be fooled by some proposal which purports to solve the problem, but which they know to be of very little value.

   Teachers, those active in parents' organisations, and many others, know quite well what the major problems of the education system are — even if they do not know the solution. They will ridicule any proposal which avoids the basic issues or diverts attention from it.

6. In a difficult situation the ALP has one advantage: the position of Liberal and Country Parties is opportunist, is generally regarded as opportunist, and is likely to remain so. The ALP has very little to gain by participating in a public auction, but if it can produce an integrated

policy, based on proclaimed principles and seen to be a serious attempt to solve the problem, it could gain a great deal of respect and support, even if some disapprove of specific features of the policy.

C. *Principles*

1. We submit that the Committee's first task is to clarify the principles on which any specific scheme for assistance to private schools should be based.
   The following principles are based on the arguments set out above and on the general principles already laid down in the Federal education platform. These principles are not repeated here but they are assumed and it is taken for granted that they would be included in any public statement.

   (a) *Any action should concentrate on — and be seen to concentrate on — helping to meet the greatest existing needs.*
   This means that such action would reduce existing inequalities of opportunity. As far as the private schools are concerned, it means, in particular, helping to raise standards in certain Catholic parish (primary) schools.
   (b) *Any action should be — and be seen to be — of real educational value* — i.e., it should take account of established educational priorities and should help to solve the national educational crisis.
   (c) *Any action should be of real assistance to a significant number of Catholic parents* in meeting the problems they face in educating their children — and should be seen by them to be of real assistance.
   (d) *Any action should (as far as possible) NOT undermine, or appear to undermine, or lower the prestige or status of the State schools.*
   As far as possible, the state system should benefit equally. To say that any action aimed at helping the private schools should benefit the state schools more is a contradiction and mere self-deception.
   (e) *Any action should (as far as possible) NOT increase power or wealth of any church, or assist the propagation of particular religious beliefs, or further the interests of some particular group.*
   (f) *Any action should provide the minimum of aid to economically privileged individuals or groups.*

To say that it should provide no aid to these people is unrealistic. But the effect of the action should be to reduce, and certainly not increase, the advantages of these people.

2. *Notes to Principle (a) above:*

(i) The Committee should, we submit, reject the notion that any aid has to be given equally to every individual or school. The aim should be *to remove existing disabilities* as well as increasing standards in general. We believe that, in the present social and educational situation, a scheme which operates on the principle that for every dollar provided for the education of a poor child, a dollar must be provided for the education for everyone else, including privileged children, would be both morally and politically indefensible — and above all indefensible for the Labor Party.

Similarly, the principle of providing for the greatest need, and of overcoming the greatest social and economic handicaps, should be applied to *schools*. We agree, for example, that state schools like Richmond High School in Melbourne should be given *better* buildings, facilities, surroundings, etc., than many other High Schools and, if State Aid is to be given, we would apply the same reasoning to the poverty-stricken parish school in some "culturally deprived" area, as against some well-endowed Catholic school in a wealthy area. *Any Federal Aid, whether to schools or to individuals, should be provided on the basis of educational and social priorities*.

(ii) The Federal Government should control the flow of its aid according to these priorities, and this alone is sufficient reason for ensuring that Aid is given *direct to the school or to the individual, not to the system, and that it is used for the purpose for which it was intended.* A situation such as that resulting from the Menzies science laboratory grants, in which the church authorities selected the recipients of aid, would then be impossible.

This principle should apply to the state systems as well as to the private systems. Neither a state government nor its administrative officers should be able to distribute federal aid intended to meet certain needs according to its own priorities.

Obviously, this will raise objections to intervention in state responsibilities, but this difficulty, we believe, may be illusory.

The process of providing aid should be a co-operative one, without *either* authority resigning its responsibilities.

(iii) As the policy would be to meet *existing* needs, the question of providing for capital developments would not arise. However, it is obvious that if the provision of aid is not to be used by, say, a private authority, as a means of creating a further need, conditions must be laid down to prevent this. If, for example, the Commonwealth decided to provide certain aid (by, e.g. training teachers and providing equipment, etc.) in order to bring up to standard certain schools within a particular system, the authority controlling that system should not be allowed to withdraw finance or facilities from other schools (which would then qualify for aid) in order to, say, build new schools. *One of the conditions of aid would be specific undertakings by the authority concerned*. Such undertakings (reached by agreement and after a full investigation and discussions) might include an undertaking to either bring the standards in certain schools (e.g. in staffing) up to a certain point within a specified time, or to close those schools. To meet the required conditions, and to ensure that undertakings are carried out, some form of inspection — either directly, or through *efficient* State authorities — would be essential.

3. *Notes to Principle (e) above:*
To meet this principle:

(i) No money for land or buildings would be provided.

(ii) Equipment, books, etc., could be provided (or their purchase subsidized) on the basis that they were expendable and therefore were not a capital gain. Alternatively, they could be regarded as the property of the Commonwealth, to be retained by the school as long as they were properly used for the purpose intended. It would be necessary to ensure that they were so used.

(iii) Sensible control could ensure that money was not mis-used — e.g., for sectarian purposes — thus, e.g. if it were decided to subsidize (or provide free) library books for certain schools, it would be necessary to check that this money was not used to purchase books only for religious education or used for some different purpose.

(iv) Obviously such Aid would be dependent on full access to the schools concerned. Any provision of aid would follow a full factual survey.

D. *Proposals*

The general aim of these proposals would be *to improve the standards of teaching and material facilities in the schools of the nations*.

(a) *Commonwealth Aid for Teacher Training*

In general, the proposals of the Martin Committee would be adopted. Teacher training would be free financially, and free of the control of any education system. Teachers' Colleges would be largely independent institutions, with standards generally supervised by one or more independent Institutes. Neither state nor church authorities would be allowed to control training or selection.

(b) *A Commonwealth Agency for Education Development (Title?)*

(i) *To conduct research and development projects* with the aim of improving educational practices, including curricula, teaching methods, facilities, administration, etc.

(ii) *The development of materials (including books), aids, equipment, devices, etc*. for these purposes.

(iii) *The production, of these materials and aids produced by others available as cheaply as possible* (e.g. by mass production).

(iv) *The provision of in-service training and advice* with the aim of improving methods and increasing efficiency in general, and of training teachers to use new methods, materials and aids in particular.

This would include the provision of specialist in-service training courses where required.

(v) *The provision of advice to the Schools Commission* (see (c) below) as to the action required to meet general and particular educational problems — e.g. What provisions would improve the standards of science teaching, especially in schools without qualified teachers?

What action could reduce the handicaps of children in rural schools? What provision for educational T.V. is justified (as compared with films or other methods)?

(c) *Commonwealth Schools (Grants) Commission*
Tasks:

(i) To survey educational needs in the schools. (This task might be carried out by the Agency above.)
(ii) On the basis of these surveys, of the principles set out above, and of the advice tendered by the Agency for Educational Development, to make grants to:

(a) all schools of a particular kind (e.g. all primary schools, all rural schools), and
(b) particular schools selected according to priority of need, taking into account their present facilities and the economic, cultural and social character of the pupils and the community.

Grants could be in either cash or kind — i.e., schools might be given a certain credit to spend on materials or equipment of a certain kind, or the materials might be provided free.
The Commission would lay down the conditions on which grants were made, after full discussion with the educational authorities concerned. It would ensure that these conditions were observed.
The above proposals would meet the criteria set out in the previous section.
They are clear, definite, positive proposals which are defensible in their own right as contributions to educational progress, not simply as bids to satisfy particular groups in the community. Unlike an endowment scheme, they should be seen by the electorate as taking account of educational priorities, and by Catholics as a step to meeting *their* greatest needs.
Proposals to provide aid direct to parents may be desirable in themselves but they are *not* solutions to the present problem:

(i) They are not related to established educational priorities and needs *— the electorate does not regard them as a serious solution to educational problems.*
(ii) The Catholic Church, or significant sections of it, disapproves of the idea and will campaign against it.
(iii) Much of the money will *not* be devoted to educational purposes, even in the widest sense.

(iv) Such a scheme would probably result in very large sums of government money being transmitted indirectly to the churches without control of any kind. It is therefore objectionable to a large section of the electorate.

Aid for Teacher Training would make a very significant contribution to solving the problems of the Catholic system. (However, this is not generally realized and must be clearly pointed out to the electorate.) Moreover, the Liberals have rejected it.

To those unacquainted with educational developments, the provision of "Materials, aids and equipment" may seem a minor or peripheral means of aid. This is no longer so. Most authorities agree that new methods based on planned materials offer the best prospects of improving standards and all departments and schools are now spending increasingly large sums for this purpose. Moreover, such a scheme may be taken as including and extending the notion of "free text books", with the qualifications that in general it is undesirable for the pupil to use a textbook.

The school should acquire a wide range of materials which all pupils can use according to their needs — an arrangement which is much better from both an educational and an economic point of view.

Both the Teacher Training and the Development Agency proposals would, we believe, be significant contributions to improving standards in *all* Australian schools.

28.4.66

D. M. Bennett

C. R. T. Mathews

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Victorian Fabian Society pamphlets

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