

LEFT COMMUNISM IN AUSTRALIA: J.A. DAWSON
AND THE "SOUTHERN ADVOCATE
FOR WORKERS' COUNCILS"

Steven Wright

'If you were not a supporter of that low-
down (renegade) Trotsky the circulation
of the SSR would grow . . .'¹

'TO OUR READERS,' appealed the November 1948 issue of the *Southern Advocate for Workers' Councils*. 'We have LITTLE CASH to continue. Hence, in future, a smaller paper will be issued at longer intervals and only a limited number of supplement parts of "Workers' Councils" . . . We are sorry to RETRENCH, but we have exhausted our funds and printing costs are too heavy.' Appended to this front-page notice was the following: 'PERSONAL - J.A. Dawson is experiencing a personal economic struggle and cannot devote as much time as before to bringing out this paper.' The next issue, Number 48, was not to appear until May the following year. It was to be the last.

The passing of one more small magazine on the fringes of the labour movement might seem in itself to be of little importance. 'I understand,' commented the Dutch council communist Anton Pannekoek in a letter to the *Southern Advocate's* editor, 'that you do not have a large adherence among the workers of Australia; everywhere the majority follows the easy way of having themselves redeemed by leaders and politicians, and have to learn by experience the fallaciousness of these hopes.' Yet, he went on to emphasize, such a situation did nothing to alter the importance of the journal's task. 'You rightly consider yourself as a herald of uncompromising fight and clear opposition to capitalism. enabled to do that by clear understanding of capitalism and Marxian science.' And, most importantly - ' . . . your work has a broader significance than only Australian; in the English-speaking world - since Paul Mattick's *Living Marxism* ceased - there is no other organ that in criticizing all the Labor and socialist "reformers" (really defenders of capitalism) at the same time could show the *positive* aims of pure class fight.' ² With the collapse of the *Southern Advocate*, it would be nearly another decade and a half before a comparable English language journal, propagandizing 'workers' self-management of production' as the authentic form of socialism, appeared outside the United States.³

The beginning of the second half of the 1940s, in the wake of the military defeat of fascism, marked a time of resurgence of working class struggle in Europe and America – a wave whose crest the left seemed to be riding to power everywhere, much to the consternation of both Washington and Moscow.⁴ This was the time of victorious Labor governments in Australia, of the Australian Communist Party's peak in membership, of Labour MPs standing in their seats in the House of Commons to defiantly sing 'The Red Flag', and of partisans, Soviet tanks and 'Socialist Unity' parties in Eastern Europe. But for many of the cells thrown together to form that strange creature known as the 'left opposition' in the working class movement, the period was one of confusion and 'permanent crisis'. As Cornelius Castoriadis and Claude Lefort tell in their accounts of the Parti Communiste Internationale, to which they belonged during these years, the Fourth International found it increasingly difficult to analyze the class nature both of the Western European Communist Parties and the regimes set up by their Eastern European counterparts. Without Trotsky, who before his death had begun to critically re-appraise his assessment as to what sort of social formation existed in the Soviet Union,⁵ his followers variously denounced the Eastern European states as militarist-Bonapartist, state-capitalist, or degenerated workers' states, with often comic results.⁶ For the smaller groups of Bordighists, who likewise considered themselves the true heirs of Marxism-Leninism, these years were spent in intense internal bickering and unsuccessful attempts to build a Partito Comunista Internazionalista of their own.⁷

By contrast, for those in the 'left of Lenin' tradition of anarchism, council communism and Marxist 'Impossibilism', the mid-forties heralded a promising chance to fight their way back out of the political wilderness. Slowly but surely their numbers and periodical sales increased.⁸ International links were reforged. The theoretical coherence which had enabled them to weather the storms of war was now, it seemed, to be realised in practice. Such illusions were shattered, however, by the end of the decade, as the United States and the Soviet Union succeeded in asserting control over their respective spheres of influence and launching new cycles of growth and accumulation. The anti-Leninist groups began to wane alongside the official left, or else were crushed in the latter's consolidation of power.⁹

J.A. Dawson's journal similarly spanned this period, and offers us the chance to follow its editor in his personal odyssey through the myriad constellations of the ultra-left. The quest: to recover the vital thread binding daily practice to the ultimate goal of socialism, lost in the gradualist swamp of the Second International. When in 1896 Eduard Bernstein sparked off the famous Revisionist debate with his series of articles dealing with 'The Problems of Socialism', he only stated an 'empirical' truth – the socialist movement's revolutionary rhetoric bore

no relation to, indeed impeded, its day-to-day reformist experience. Despite eloquent arguments to the contrary by 'house theorists' such as Kautsky, gradualism rolled on. Bernstein's advice to drop the maximum program of revolution was not taken, however; after all, it served a useful purpose at election times, and provided a toy to distract bothersome leftist intellectuals from interfering with *serious* affairs.¹⁰ Nor could the 'restorers of Marxism' in the breakaway Third International piece together the fragments of the famous 'unity of theory and practice', no matter how developed their dialectical prowess. Instinctively grasping that a fundamental shift in class relations had begun with the Great Depression, Dawson turned to the 'outside left' to provide the key. What did this realignment mean for the Marxist tradition which had moulded his whole perspective? What was the nature of the self-proclaimed socialist countries, where class exploitation continued so flagrantly? Were these the only alternatives to bourgeois society? Finally, and most importantly, if the old Marxist vision of a classless society still meant something, how could it be brought within reach?

Each of the three streams of thought with which Dawson successively identified – the fundamentalism of the Socialist Party of Great Britain, the revolutionary syndicalism of the Industrial Workers of the World, and the Marxist 'infantilism' of the council communists – prided itself with 'breaking the umbilical cord' (Korsch) to orthodox Marxism over these issues and offered its own formula to bridge the Kantian *antinomy* of theory and practice. Simplifying somewhat, we find Dawson first turning to the SPGB for his vision of socialism, then to the industrial unionism of the IWW for the means of effecting it, informed all the while by the councilists' critique of private (Western) and state (Eastern) capitalism. By the end, Dawson had been largely won over to the position of Pannekoek, although he continued to dabble with the other ultra-leftists.

In the sections that follow, the reasons why Dawson was drawn from one 'school' to another will be explored against the place of each in the history of the labour movement, and it will be argued that their distinguishing features were tied down very firmly to different types of working classes, both geographically and temporally. Hence, their failure to accomplish their goals, in a world where the countenance of 'the worker' was rapidly changing, is hardly surprising.¹¹ This question takes on particular interest today as some of these ideas undergo a revival among many socialists disillusioned by the current 'crisis of Marxism'. Until now, however, both Dawson and his journal have lived on merely as footnotes in books charting the development of this 'anti-bolshevik communism'.¹² Before proceeding any further, therefore, it might be useful to examine Jim Dawson himself.

James Arthur Dawson was born in Melbourne in 1889. His father was a Methodist circuit preacher with investments in the timber business and Toorak real estate. 'I was not two years old when he died suddenly in the midst of the bank crash of the 90s' he noted in a brief autobiography published in 1946.¹³ Orphaned at fifteen, Dawson set out for Britain to work. Back in Australia by the outbreak of the First World War, his political views were then 'a mixture of *Clarion* "socialism" and the single-tax ideas of Henry George. I voted for, and propagated the Labor Party . . . My opposition to war was largely based on the Christian ethics I had been taught as a child, and it was a great mental shock to me to find the churches practically unanimously pro-war; also my childhood mentor, an older sister, a devout Christian soothing me to enlist in the murder-fest.'¹⁴ After hearing IWW speakers on the Yarra bank, he decided to settle in Melbourne permanently in order to take an active part in the labour movement. Joining by mistake the 'Detroit' IWW Club, Dawson came 'to be hostile towards the real IWW'. 'I was attracted to the SLP and the IWW (Detroit),' he explained to Paul Mattick, on account of their "Plan" – the average worker "wants" something in the nature of a blue-print.¹⁵ Next he found himself in the Australian Socialist Party: 'The Russian Revolution of 1917 burst upon us like an atomic bomb' he recalled. 'We went crazy about it. I wrote it up in lengthy articles in the *International Socialist* (Sydney organ of the ASP) and like most zealots distorted facts to fit in with our theoretical yearnings'.¹⁶ He then returned to the 'Detroit' IWW (now the Workers' International Industrial Union), editing the *One Big Union Herald* for two years.¹⁷ The sectarianism of the WIU, he claimed, ultimately meant that 'the AWU finally accepted the One Big Union idea in the manner that the Roman Emperor Constantine accepted Christianity – the One Big Union movement was groundwired and rendered sterile of further progress for a decade or two'.¹⁸ He was finally forced out of active politics through bad health, which continued to plague him in his later years. Dawson's personal health dogged the *Southern Advocate* as much as financial difficulties as the editor attempted to keep the journal afloat through contributions and money made in his Port Melbourne hardware store.¹⁹

When Dawson set up the Workers' Literature Bureau in the early years of the Second World War, he did so 'to offset the flood of the Stalinists' by spreading the views of the Socialist Party of Great Britain, of whose Australian 'Companion Party' he was a member. The Bureau's first publications were in pamphlet form, as the supply of newsprint was severely restricted until the end of 1944. According to a former associate, Dawson was able to beat the paper shortage through a deal with a Hawthorn printing firm; he received access to paper in exchange for setting up the type himself.²⁰ Distribution through bookshops and newsagents presented the major problem, however. Dawson complained to Mattick of receiving 'the cold shoulder' from many potential outlets

due to ACP opposition. 'The communists have successfully slandered me personally and the Workers' Literature Bureau everywhere almost that I had got a toe-hold. The bookshops find Stalinist literature sells better than mine . . . Still here and there a stray copy will get into a thinking worker's hands, and I am prepared to cast the bread of Marxist Socialism upon the waters of present-day society whilst I can raise funds to do so'.²¹ By the end of the war he had come to feel that this task could only be fulfilled outside the stifling atmosphere of the Socialist Party of Australia.

Principles First – The Small Party of Good Boys

'Every step of real movement is more important than a dozen programmes.'²²

Of all the schools of revolutionary thought toward which Jim Dawson was drawn in the 1940s, the Socialist Party of Great Britain was undoubtedly the most peripheral. Despite boasting a higher membership than previously by the end of the decade, the SPGB commanded a smaller audience within the labour movement than on the eve of the Russian Revolution thirty years before. Founded in 1904 by a London-based group of 'Impossibilists' disgusted with the widespread gradualism within H.M. Hyndman's Social Democratic Federation, it had been regarded by others on the British left as an eminent, if often irritating, authority on Marxism.²³ October 1917 changed that irrevocably. The new star in the East rendered obsolete the time-honoured charts by which revolutionaries had previously navigated the path to socialism. In the chain reaction set off by the storming of the Winter Palace, the Wobblies and European left communists set the pace for the class struggle in their respective continents, clashing head on with the state and suffering accordingly. The SPGB was simply left behind. From being one among many small socialist sects in Britain, the SPGB found itself standing haughtily out in the cold, watching the rest of the far left fight amongst themselves for official recognition from the Communist International.²⁴ If the groups emerging from the wreckage of the IWW and the workers' council movement were highly critical of the Soviet Union and the Comintern by the early 1920s, they still took as a reference point the Russian working class' attempt to assert its own autonomy through the soviet system. By contrast, the Socialist Party of Great Britain sometimes gave the distinct impression of wishing that the October Revolution had never taken place.

What had led Dawson to join the Socialist Party of Australia in the first place? In part it was the SPGB's evaluation of the USSR, which he

found 'more realistic' than that of the Socialist Labor Party, of which he was a member until the late 1930s.²⁵ The Socialist Party's analysis of the class nature of the Soviet Union was deductive in the finest British tradition: 'the wage system still prevails in Russia' stated an article Dawson reprinted from the American *Western Socialist*,

the exploitation being no different there than in any capitalist society. That is sufficient for us. The existence of a wage system indicated clearly that neither socialism or communism prevails. The wages system, no matter what form it takes, indicates that capitalism exists.²⁶

In his introduction to the Workers' Literature Bureau edition of Marx's *Critique of the Gotha Programme* (1946), Charles Christie of the SPA attacked Lance Sharkey's assertion that money in the USSR was a purely regulatory mechanism similar to Marx's labour-time certificates, rather than a mask for class exploitation. Christie quoted approvingly from the SPA's journal *Socialist Comment*:

If the people of Russia own and control the instruments for producing and distributing wealth, why do they pay themselves wages to buy back from themselves the things which already belong to them?²⁷

But what attracted Dawson most to the Socialist Party was its vision of a 'genuine' socialism free from such Stalinist distortions, a society 'based upon the common ownership and democratic control' of the means of production and distribution. In the second issue of the *Review* Dawson spoke of

that which [the Socialist's] nature craves – a life balanced and as free as the struggle with nature will allow; a life in which the whole faculties of man may have full expression freed from the domination of man by man.²⁸

The *Review*, it was claimed, was 'a truly Socialist undertaking', '(p)roduced according to our ability . . . distributed free', and the task it set itself was to place the knowledge of the necessity for socialism, as outlined in the SPGB's Object and Declaration of Principles 'in the hands of the working class, that they may know what to do.'²⁹

To begin this task, however, Dawson had found it necessary to leave the ranks of the SPGB's 'Companion Party', which seemed loath to fulfill the role expected of it. For their part, the forty-or-so people comprising the SPA were deeply suspicious of their former comrade's publishing activities, being hostile to all who might challenge their party's self-proclaimed title as 'the political instrument of the working class of this country'.³⁰

Matters came to a head at the end of 1945 over the Victorian State Election, a poll inconsequential in itself but crucial for deciding Dawson's relations with the Socialist Party. To understand why requires a certain familiarity with latter's position on the ballot box.

On the 'outside left', where hostility to 'parliamentary cretinism' united anarchist and Marxist alike, the Socialist Party's championing of a 'pure' parliamentary road to Socialism was truly unique. Arguing that since Parliament made and administered laws for the capitalists, it must be captured in order to usher in the classless society, the SPA and SPGB called upon workers to vote into government representatives 'WHOSE SOLE BUSINESS WILL BE TO ABOLISH CAPITALISM AND INTRODUCE SOCIALISM.' All other political parties were apologists for capitalism; only the Socialist Party could play this role. Piece-meal reforms were useless; the class system must be destroyed in one blow. Since the overwhelming majority of the working class was unaware of its task, the Socialists saw their mission as injecting the missing ingredient – education. 'Until the knowledge and experience of the working class are equal to the task of revolution', proclaimed an SPA pamphlet, 'there can be no emancipation for them'.³¹

What this meant practically was that, apart from at election times, the Socialist Parties refused to dirty their hands with the real world, concentrating instead on weekly classes designed to clarify the participants' grasp of the Socialist program, or public debates where every opportunity was taken to 'prove the case for socialism' through the forcefulness of the argument, and where necessary humiliation of the opponent.³² As 'individuals', members of the SPA were extremely active in the union movement, especially in the Melbourne Trades Hall Council's various propaganda arms such as the Victorian Labor College.³³ For the 'Party', however, elections were the only *raison d'être*.

The campaign of the SPGB's solitary candidate for the 1945 General Election was followed closely in the pages of the *SSR*. Standing for the seat of North Paddington, Clifford Groves informed residents that

your vote will show how far you have progressed in understanding your position as wage-slaves tied to the wheel of capital.³⁴

Unfortunately, the electors' class consciousness was not up to the SPGB's expectations; Groves lost his deposit.

The Socialists in Australia had not been able to afford to put up a candidate since the early thirties, and advised workers instead to write the word 'Socialism' across their ballot papers. Although Dawson generally accepted this tactic, in November 1945 he gave critical support to a former SPA member/turned communist, named Jim Coull, who was challenging Frank Crean in Albert Park. Disagreeing with Coull's view that nationalization was a legitimate means to abolish capitalism, Dawson nevertheless believed that someone like Coull, with an understanding of the 'socialist case', 'would certainly prove a good corrective to Victorian Labor in Parliament if elected.'³⁵

Members of the Socialist Party immediately attacked Dawson for being 'soft' on Stalinism. In the next issue of the *Review* he continued to support Coull while re-endorsing the SPA's policy of ballot defacement for other seats. His argument, however, could hardly have pleased the Socialists:

If a labor candidate loses the seat because of a high percentage of workers voting informally for Socialism, the Labor Party then knows that Socialism is in opposition to their pro-capitalist reform policy, and if they want the Socialist vote they will have to be Socialists in outlook and practice and cease their opportunistic appeal to both irreconcilable classes in the class war.³⁶

Coull, for his part, performed impressively, receiving 3514 votes and almost losing Labor the seat through preference manipulation.

The SPA's increasing sectarianism – its refusal, for instance, to have anything to do with the 'Open Forum' meetings organized by Dawson – resulted in the latter becoming progressively disillusioned with a group whose practical isolation from the class struggle only served to reinforce its political dogmatism. Since its inception, letters had appeared in the *Review* attacking the 'snobbish' 'armchair philosophers' and 'pure and holy pharisees' of the Socialist Party; now its editor began to echo them:

. . . in Melbourne the SP of A refuse to vacate their own aloof little room wherein only accredited members of the Party who have passed the Speaker's Test may address the few. They remain the few because the stray visitor has the intuition to recognize the air of aloof unreality pervading the scientific dissection of the present capitalist order.³⁷

In their closet socialism, the members of the SPA and SPGB expressed an eccentric version of the maxim 'knowledge is power' so widely subscribed to among the 'decent men and women' – the skilled manual workers crucial to the capitalist production process at the turn of the century – from which their numbers were drawn.³⁸ In 1904, they felt, the true path to the classless and moneyless world commonwealth had been discovered. Little interest was shown in the changing structure of capitalist society, as the objective preconditions for socialism had existed since the beginning of the 1900s: all that was necessary was to spread 'the good word'.

For Dawson, by contrast, the dilemma was still unresolved; the Socialists might be correct *theoretically*, but 'no organisation can . . . have a monopoly on what must be a *class* movement', especially one with such a limited conception of *praxis*; the *means* to realize socialism existed elsewhere.³⁹

'We Are All Leaders'

'The more one listens to non-political IWW speakers the more disgusted one becomes at the barbarous crudeness of their views . . . the anarchist is sane and sound compared with the IWW-ite whose interference in labour disputes generally leads to disaster . . . The workers ought to know by this time that the armed forces of capitalism are not to be played with by those who sing "Hallelujah I'm a Bum" and throw brickbats. The workers here will never be led by wild men from Yankeeland, but must be convinced by reason and argument . . .'⁴⁰

At the end of 1945 Dawson reprinted the famous Industrial Workers of the World 'Preamble' in his *Review*. It was something that he had wanted to do 'for a long time'. The 'Preamble', it was claimed, with its stress upon industrial rather than trade union organisation, and workers' struggles at the point of production rather than arbitration, 'conveys an IDEA that can only be proved and BUILT through practice.' It was the necessary complement of the Socialists' 'revolutionary vote', and like the latter was seen as a means to prod the hesitant 'official' labour bodies forward, both gadfly and example worthy of emulation:

The IWW is still the salt of the labor movement that needs to be rubbed into the wounds of the workers in their fight with the employing **class**!⁴¹

Seven months later Dawson repeated his argument, advocating working class organisation on both political and economic fronts in a manner not dissimilar to the (Detroit) De Leonite wing of the IWW he had once belonged to. In the article 'Socialist Construction' (*SSR* 20, July 1946) he stated that although the Socialist Party of Great Britain was still 'THE political party of socialism', the IWW remained 'a CONSTRUCTIVE ATTEMPT' to align tactics with the final goal of socialism.⁴²

August's issue of the *SSR* appeared heralding the beginning of a shift in Dawson's political loyalties. The journal had a new sub-title – the 'International Socialist Digest' – and was no longer free. Costing three-pence, Number 21 was devoted to the IWW, reporting the union's 25th Convention recently held in Chicago. The account of the latter makes pathetic reading. At one time an organisation numbering several tens of thousands, and with very many more who had passed through its ranks, the IWW had been reduced by the 1940s to an administrative apparatus with very little left to administer. During the second decade of this century the IWW had been at its peak, the archetypal Wobbly being the

unskilled migratory worker of the American West,

today working in construction, tomorrow unemployed, the day after a seasoned picker, then a textile worker, or a waiter on trains.⁴³

In a land of Pinkerton detectives and vigilante squads, excluded from suffrage by race, nationality, sex or age, the Wobbly was forced to reverse the 'traditional' relationship between strategy and tactics found elsewhere, finding *revolutionary* means necessary to achieve the purely 'minimum' goals around which he/she organised. Little time could be afforded for the theorizing of the 'Socialists'.⁴⁴ By the time Dawson contacted the IWW, however, searching for 'pie in the sky' was the only field left open to an organisation crippled a quarter of a century before by a combination of state repression and internal dissension. 'The IWW still preaches and practices the job-delegate idea in all its pristine purity', the report of the Convention announced proudly, but was forced to admit that this 'idea' had been taken over – in an 'emasculated form' – by the powerful Congress of Industrial Organisations, whose opportunism had succeeded where Wobbly principle had failed.⁴⁵ Reduced to a ginger group on the sidelines of the industrial relations arena, the only positive note struck by the assembled delegates was the call for rank-and-file control of all unions, 'whether of the IWW, AFL, CIO, or CUA variety'.⁴⁶

In contrast, the 'Australian Administration' of the Industrial Workers of the World, even at its height during the conscription campaigns of 1916 and 1917, had never broken out of pressure group status. Upon its suppression by Hughes, many Wobblies entered the new Communist Party or returned to the ALP. Some isolated individuals, nevertheless, continued to adhere to the Chicago General Headquarters, sharing its hostility to both Bolshevism and social democracy. One such veteran contacted Dawson in August 1946, his letter appearing in the newly-titled *Southern Socialist International Digest* of the following month. Norman Rancie, editor of *Direct Action* during the imprisonment of IWW leader Tom Barker thirty years before, told Dawson that

It was real refreshing to read the reports of the IWW and the suggestion that workers should organise along similar lines. He stressed the educative role the 'One Big Union' would play in the daily struggle on the shopfloor, and expressed contempt for the likes of the SPA and their 'royal road' to socialism:

Parliamentary Socialism only fools and misleads the masses . . .
If by some miraculous wave of the wand the workers of Australia were anxious for Socialism they would have to depend upon politicians to get it for them. How that name politician stinks everywhere - in all lands!⁴⁷

Instead, organisation at the point of production would encompass the whole working class, preparing it to take over the labour process when the great day came.

The Wobblies' conception of a socialist world was remarkably close to that of the SPA. The working class in its present form constituted the

kernel of the new society; all that was necessary was to abandon the 'shell of the old'. The workers were already running the industries, claimed an article from the Chicago *Industrial Worker*, and it was now time for 'running ourselves' as well.

There will not result an historic vacuum, or a slaughtering of workers in the streets, or chaos and disorder. There will necessarily follow the next day's work, the work of keeping society alive.⁴⁸

Similarly, Christie's introduction to *The Gotha Program* had emphasized that the distinguishing feature between working under capitalism and under socialism would be the democratic management of production. Echoing Engels' 'On Authority', he argued that in modern society it was necessary that some persons should be appointed or elected to superintend and coordinate the labour process, just as 'the function of a conductor is necessary to an orchestra'. In capitalist society, such 'conductors' performed two conflicting functions. Not only did they play their 'necessary' role, but they also performed the 'bourgeois' job of driving workers on to produce ever greater amounts of surplus value. Under socialism this capitalist shell would be stripped away, enabling the rational kernel to develop freely – supervisors would be subject to the will of the workers, and not the whims of property rights.⁴⁹ As the IWW Industrial Code published in *SAWC* 34 put it:

4 Hour Day (Jobs for Everyone) – Security of Income – Abolition of the Wages System – Production for USE and not for PROFIT – A New Social Order based on the scientific administration of Industry – ABUNDANCE for workers – NOTHING for parasites!⁵⁰

We will return to this question in more detail when examining Pannekoek's *Workers' Councils*; for now it is sufficient to note the unanimity with which this conception of 'workers' management' was held by those who rejected the traditional notion of socialism as state ownership. As Dawson shifted from one group to another, this thread continued to guide his way and lend coherence to what might seem to be simply a grab-bag approach to ideology.

The change in title signified the new course in which Dawson was to steer his journal. On the front page of the first *SSID*, the editor quoted approvingly the words of local anarchist 'Chummy' Fleming concerning the 'voting cattle' ensnared in the 'parliamentary rat-trap'. Here Dawson revealed the eclecticism that had no doubt disturbed the purist SPA – until there was a One Big Union of the working class, he felt Parliament was useless, and he counselled Workers to ignore the imminent Federal Elections and 'GET ON WITH THE TASK of organizing and Educating for Emancipation'.⁵¹ The journal's new name also pointed to a problem Dawson would only become conscious of much later. The paper's increasingly 'International' stance was simply another way of describ-

ing its gradual distancing from radical groups close to home. From the Melbourne Branch of the SPA, the focus shifted to the small group of Wobblies in Sydney; later again it would move out of Australia completely, coming to rest upon the council communist groups in Western Europe.

Dawson's concern for the IWW reflected a broader interest in libertarian thought which was featured in the paper prominently throughout the rest of 1946 and into 1947. Influenced by his friend K.J. Kenafick, another Melbourne anarchist, who translated a great deal of foreign material for the *Southern Advocate*, Dawson began to reprint not only IWW writings but also articles from the journals *Freedom* (Britain) and *Le Libertaire* (France). While he considered much of the libertarians' rejection of capitalist society as ideological and moral – 'Only the scientific socialist', he wrote, 'with his understanding of the law of motion of capitalist society, knows *why* gold is God'⁵² – Dawson saw the critique of nationalization as one of the positive lessons to be learnt from the anarchists. Rancie, in an article originally written for the British IWW's paper *Direct Action*, drew conclusions from his own experience in Australia:

Nationalization simply means a change of bosses. Past history shows that the workers have always had a tougher fight, with far greater penalties hanging over their heads, when they went on strike against the Government than when they struck against private employers.⁵³

The *SSID's* attitude towards the local champion of nationalisation hardened; no longer was Labor an inert mass that could be pushed into acting in a socialist manner. Instead, Dawson adopted the position long held by the SPA:

The LABOUR PARTY and the trade union officials who support its policy are the most DANGEROUS (to the working class), because the most blatant and most insidious in dragooning the workers to accept a policy that if presented by Menzies would be immediately SUSPECT.

As demonstrated by its retention of the Crimes Act and development of Woomera Rocket Range, the ALP was 'a RACKET', to which the capitalists had turned because of the conservatives' unpopularity. ⁵⁴

The articles in Dawson's journal now fell into two mutually exclusive groups. On the one hand we find expectations of great advances for the One Big Union, on the other vain appeals to 'THE YOUNG VIRILE CLASS CONSCIOUS WORKERS' to form shop committees outside the control of the union bureaucracies. 'A few good class-conscious speakers is what is needed to jell the situation for a real IWW in Broken Hill', Dawson wrote in July 1947, placing great hopes in the Barrier miners' continued refusal to register at the Arbitration Court. A correspondent

shared the editor's enthusiasm; only the 'psychological enslavement of the masses stood between them and emancipation, but those who know the IWW Plan will soon set it going.'⁵⁵ Such optimism was not destined to last. A small group around Rancie in Sydney attempted to revive the old Australian Administration, but more effort was spent on denouncing the 'comrats' for their Stalinism and 'super-patriotism' than in organizing; 'practical' work was reduced to soapboxing at the Domain on Sunday, ironically enough the favourite stamping ground of the local SPA Branch. As one disillusioned subscriber put it,

like the Socialist Party of Australia, (the IWW) provides many ingenious reasons for doing nothing.⁵⁶

Dawson's appeals for the OBU became little better than exhortations for a closer unionism, and conscious of the fate of the last One Big Union, in which he had played a central role, he began to rethink yet again the question of relating means to ends in the attainment of socialism. His attention began to turn to a stream of Marxism – council communism – which until then had only been in the corner of his eye.

From the Bourgeois To The Proletarian Revolution (And Back Again)

'Instead of bewailing the "betrayal" of the council concept and the degeneration of the council power we must gather by illusion-free, sober, and historically objective observations the beginning, middle and end of this whole development within a *total historical panorama* and we must pose this *critical question*: What is – after this total historical experience – *the real historical and class-oriented significance of this new political form of government . . . ?*'⁵⁷

Jim Dawson's first contact with individual council communists took place before the birth of the *Southern Advocate*; a number of articles appearing in the newsheet preceding the journal bear Paul Mattick's name. At that stage Dawson appeared uninterested in 'the council concept', turning to Mattick the expert in 'the critique of political economy' rather than Mattick the revolutionary. Most of the German's contributions in the early issues of the *SSR* deal with state intervention in the economy and its limits. In September 1946 the Workers' Literature Bureau published a collection of the latter's essays in a pamphlet entitled *Rebels and Renegades*. Dawson's introduction was an appreciation of only the negative aspects of Mattick's reflections on the 'old' workers' movement (the Second and Third Internationals) – the analysis of the destructive intrusion of 'middle-class intellectuals' into the ranks

of labour, the rejection of Leninism, and the elaboration of the theory of state capitalism. Mattick's solid grounding in the method of *Capital* and dry writing style was not to everyone's taste:

From the reader's end, Jim - and the work is wasted if not read - [the] matter wants to be fairly easily understood. I know you have a thorough knowledge of dialectics, and so you and Paul Mattick feel like "we few, we happy few, we band of brothers", but Paul Mattick was far and away too heavy for us, Jim. Simple as A.B.C. to you I know, and perhaps difficult for you to see that it is beyond us. But it is. And too much of that in the Reviews will sicken people.⁵⁸

But Mattick's theoreticist tone was not the product of any particular disposition towards the 'academism' of the SPGB.⁵⁹ Quite the contrary; it was born rather of the frustration of the activist trapped in a non-revolutionary period. At such a time, he wrote, 'the mediocrity of capitalist man, and therefore the revolutionist under capitalist conditions becomes painfully obvious.'⁶⁰ The conclusions of his friend and fellow emigre in the United States, Karl Korsch, expressed in the essay 'A Non-Dogmatic Approach to Marxism'(1946), were even more depressing

There is no use in discussing controversial points in any social theory . . . unless such discussion is part of an existing social struggle. There must be several possibilities of action for the party, group, or class to which the social theory in question refers . . . In this materialistic sense, it is not even sure that the particular social theory called Marxism has ever been the subject of a discussion in this country.⁶¹

Yet as articles from the council communist press in Europe began to creep into the pages of the *Southern Advocate*, arguing that such social struggles indeed existed there, this pessimism seemed unfounded. So why does the thought of those *Rote Kommunisten* transplanted to the new world never stray far from it? We can answer this question only if we follow Mattick back to the gestation of 'the council-idea', in the revolutionary wave of the early 20th century.

Earlier, the Revisionist debate in the Second International was touched upon. Within the German and Dutch parties, the response of the left-wingers to Bernstein had been to search for a 'pure' revolutionary Marxism in opposition to both the opportunism of the right and the sterile orthodoxy of the centre. The mass strikes of the 1905 Revolution in Russia confirmed for the leftists the necessity of their intransigence and provided Rosa Luxemburg with the title for one of her most famous pamphlets. In it she wrote that

if the situation should lead to mass strikes in Germany, it will almost certainly not be the best organized workers who will develop the greater capacity for action, but the worst organized or totally unorganized.⁶²

By the end of the next decade, many of the left-radicals were throwing these words back in Luxemburg's face. Sickened by the subservient role played by the social democrats and trade unions in the war, the leftists called for their abandonment. Rosa had been reluctant enough to leave the first, only doing so when the tactic of 'pushing to the left' was shown to be completely futile; she was not prepared to break with the second. In early 1920, a year after Luxemburg's death, the extremists decided to abandon the Dutch and German Communist Parties they had helped to found.⁶³

The new Communist Workers' Party of Germany (KAPD), as Paul Mattick explained to the readers of the *Southern Advocate*, declared its task to be the encouragement of the 'subjective element' of class consciousness absent from an otherwise revolutionary situation. The devastation of the First World War was proof of capitalism's decadence; the gradualism of the social democrats and Trade Unions no longer served any purpose – *only communism itself* could be the minimum program. Around itself it grouped a quasi-syndicalist network of factory organisations modelled on the IWW, the nuclei of the impending German Soviet Republic.⁶⁴

At first 'more Bolshevik than the Bolsheviks', the left communists turned away from a Communist International more concerned with guaranteeing the USSR's continued existence than spreading world revolution.⁶⁵ Strangely enough, within Germany the KAPD found itself upholding the 'council-idea' against 'leadership-politics' while its followers – the unskilled and unemployed – skirmished with the council movement's backbone of skilled workers, themselves fighting a losing battle against their expulsion from the capitalist production process.⁶⁶ The left communists, isolated in a restabilized Europe after 1923, numbering only hundreds where before had been tens of thousands, abandoned the party-form altogether and chose instead to keep alive the memory of the 'pure' form of proletarian counter-power – the workers' councils.⁶⁷

In the aftermath of Hitler's rise to power, the 'council' communists, as they now called themselves, numbered even fewer than before, their main centres being around Anton Pannekoek in Holland and Mattick and Korsch in the United States.⁶⁸ Little more than propaganda circles, the councilists turned to critical reflection – the Dutch upon the nature of communism, the Americans upon the crisis opened by the Wall Street Crash. Both were deeply concerned with the nature of Bolshevism and the USSR. Their critique of Soviet 'socialism' followed the lines of the SPA and SPGB but with greater enterprise. The KAPD's assessment of October 1917 had been incorrect; the Russian Revolution was not the first proletarian, but rather the last great *bourgeois* revolution, initiated by the workers, circumscribed by the peasantry and led by the

Bolsheviks. The Communist Party, through its hold on the State, exploited the Russian working class as if the USSR was one large capitalist enterprise.⁶⁹ Unlike the Dutch, however, Mattick sought to base his critique of the Soviet Union upon the *Zusammenbruchstheorie* (theory of the crash) defended by Luxemburg and developed by Henryk Grossmann.⁷⁰ The USSR was not simply another capitalist society, Mattick argued in *SSID* 29; it was the first of a *new* kind of capitalism, where the centralized state was forced to play the role of traditional 'private' entrepreneurs:

The Bolsheviks, of course, were convinced that what they were building in Russia was, if not socialism, at least the next best thing to socialism, for they were completing the process which in the Western nations was still only the main *trend* of development. They had abolished the market economy and had expropriated the bourgeoisie; they also had gained complete control over the government. For the Russian workers, however, nothing had changed; they were merely faced by another set of bosses, politicians, and indoctrinators. Their position equalled the workers' position in all capitalist countries during times of war.⁷¹

The state's new role, taken to the extreme in Soviet Russia but essential to one degree or another in all capitalist nations, was due to an underlying shift in the nature of bourgeois society. 'With the beginning of the 20th century the character of capitalism changed', Mattick wrote. *Laissez-faire* as a principle was doomed; 'the "automatic" workings of the market' were no longer sufficient to guarantee capitalist reproduction.⁷² As he explained in another article in the *Review*, state capitalism was a new countertendency to the stagnation of capital accumulation, which could rationalize but not overcome capital's internal contradiction between use-value and value.⁷³ But it could stave it off in the short and medium-terms, as the otherwise very different experiences of America (New Deal), Russia (Stalinism) and Germany (Fascism) showed. Only the culmination of the 'planned economy's' long-term inability to square the capitalist circle could open up the possibility of proletarian revolution; in the meantime, revolutionaries could expect little better treatment than that accorded Jeremiah.⁷⁴

In a number of editorials Dawson took up Mattick's argument and pushed it further. 'The Receivership of the State over the capitalist system', he felt, signified the *overcoming* of the law of value and thus capital's traditional difficulties.⁷⁵ Like Korsch, Dawson saw capital's weakness as standing *outside it*, in the inter-imperialist struggle for world domination. In one corner the United States, supported by Bretton Woods and Marshall Aid; in the other, the USSR and its Red Army and Cominform.⁷⁶ The working class stood in the wings – could it prevent the coming world war? Within Australia the ALP government's Keynesian policies served to weaken the class through devalu-

ation of real wages, proving that Labor was nothing more than a 'Supporter of Imperialism Barbarism'.⁷⁷ Yet despite the increasingly urgent note of the *SSID*, Dawson was too little the pessimist to abandon all hope. The workers would win through, no longer via the mediation of their traditional organisations, but instead via the organs of 'pure class fight' – the councils.

The Finally Discovered Political Form?

'An astronomer who spends his life contemplating the stars, and therefore never sees a flesh and blood worker'.⁷⁸

Anton Pannekoek's *Workers' Councils* represents the culmination of fifty years of struggle in the name of revolutionary Marxism, first as a left winger within the Dutch social democracy, the opponent of Kautsky in a pre-war polemic over mass action, then founder of the Dutch Communist Party and later major theorist of the ultra-left. As Paul Mattick noted in an obituary of the Dutchman, the book

was a summing-up of his life experience with the theory and practice of the international labour movement and the development and transformation of capitalism in various nations and as a whole.⁷⁹

Begun in Holland in 1942, its author expecting imminent arrest at the hands of the occupying army, *Workers' Councils* is Pannekoek's major work, 'the only one of his books that he considered to be definitively political'.⁸⁰ For Jim Dawson as well, the publication of this book meant the fulfillment of a life's propaganda for socialism. *Workers' Councils* brings together all the themes we have examined so far; in it parliamentarianism, unionism and the gloom born of isolation in the United States are all rejected, while the notion of socialism as a society based upon the democratic management of production, born within the womb of capitalist society and ushered in through the removal of parasitic encumbrances, is taken up and expanded. The book's release was also literally the climax of the Workers' Literature Bureau's career; the expense crippled it financially once and for all and led to the eventual demise of the *Southern Advocate*.

Pannekoek first communicated with Dawson in late 1946, after Mattick had intimated to him that the Australian might be able to help with the English version of *Workers' Councils*. Such an edition was necessary, he felt, because the British and American workers were 'the chief masses on which the future depends'. Flattered by the request, Dawson nonetheless did not take it seriously at first and instead appended a note to Pannekoek's letter (published in *SSID* 26 December 1946) appealing for a 'Publisher Angel' to come to the rescue.⁸¹ Pannekoek's next letter appeared in the February issue, informing Dawson that the SPGB was helping him in the search for a British publisher. He expressed his belief that the world had entered into 'the transitory state between capitalism and free communism', and although too old to live to see the latter, he foresaw it 'with confidence'. Formerly, council communist propaganda 'had too little positive content to direct and attract [workers'] thoughts'; his book sought to remedy this neglect by emphasizing 'the higher ideals of self-action, self-reliance, self-mastery over the means of production [and] self-responsibility' necessary for members of the classless society.⁸²

Over the next six months the influence of Pannekoek and other European council communists grew steadily in the pages of the *SSID*, slowly overtaking the IWW's contributions. This reorientation was formalized in May 1947 by another change of title – henceforth the journal would be known as the *Southern Advocate for Workers' Councils*. According to a front-page editorial, there would be 'NO CHANGE IN POLICY', simply 'a more realistic' approach to the workers' struggle. The SPA's parliamentarianism was abandoned once and for all, and attention was now fully turned to the industrial front, where 'less unions [and] MORE UNIONISM' were deemed necessary. The new 'IDEA' of councils was not foreign to Australia, Dawson claimed, and as proof pointed to the labour movement's long tradition of job control.⁸³

Pannekoek's 'Five Theses on Marxism' replaced the Wobbly Preamble, but the latter's ideas were not simply discarded. Rather, councilism was felt to be the fulfillment of the IWW's revolutionary stance within the context of a 'State' capitalism unforeseen at the beginning of the century. '1947 is not 1905', Dawson pointed out.⁸⁴ After Rancie wrote to the *SAWC* disassociating himself from such a position, arguing instead that the IWW Preamble and the ideas contained within it were adequate in themselves, Dawson criticized the Australian IWW for having become practically isolated like its 'political' counterpart of the SPA.⁸⁵

Numerous articles were now translated by Kenafick from the Dutch council communist weekly *Spartacus*, dealing with 'the coming world war', Stalinism, state capitalism and the need for workers' councils. An editorial in the *SAWC* for November 1947 announced Dawson's decision to publish *Workers' Councils* himself, parts of which would appear in successive numbers of the *Southern Advocate*⁸⁶. But, eclectic as ever, he still did not wholly subscribe to councilism, and in the following month expressed his admiration for the 'Value of Anarchy', with its stress upon the autonomy of the individual freed from bureaucratic constraints.⁸⁷ Pannekoek's riposte was short and sharp:

In the present times of increasing submission of the workers under powerful State tyranny, it is natural that more sympathy is directed towards anarchism with its propaganda of freedom . . . [but] . . . The problem and goal for the workers is how to combine freedom and organisation. Anarchism, by setting up freedom as its goal, forgets that the free society of workers can only exist by a strong community-feeling as the prominent character of the collaborating producers . . . It seems that in the present times there is among anarchism a certain approach towards the idea of workers' councils, especially where it comprises groups of workers. But the old pure anarchist doctrine is a too narrow doctrine to be of value for the workers' class struggle now.⁸⁸

Rebuked thus, Dawson dampened somewhat his enthusiasm for traditional liberation thought. His primary concern became instead the printing of *Workers' Councils*, the first part of which appeared in the issue for March 1948.⁸⁹

Pannekoek's book contains six chapters, but most of its arguments can be found in the first two. Chapter 1 sets out 'The Task' facing the working class, while Chapter 2 examines the fate of traditional methods advocated and postulates an alternative. Just as with the IWW's One Big Union, the workers' councils are seen as both the organs of struggle and the 'economic cell forms' of the new society. Two elements strike the reader throughout the book – Pannekoek's concern with the centrality of class consciousness in achieving social change, and the extremely narrow definition of the working class upon which he pins his hope. Together they characterize his personal brand of Marxism, but more than being simply points of idiosyncrasy, they serve to severely circumscribe Pannekoek's attempts to move beyond the dominant thought of his time.

Let's look at Chapter 2 first. Pannekoek begins with a pertinent critique of trade unionism. Once a weapon of the working class against the caprices of the individual capitalists, unions had by necessity grown alongside big business, developing like the latter elaborate bureaucracies to regulate day-to-day affairs. In this manner they reproduced within the working class all the forms of bourgeois domination. A minority

comes to rule the unions just as a minority rules in 'democratic' society. The unions, as negotiators for the price of labour power, find that they are crucial to the state for its planning. On the other hand, realizing that their own privileges are inextricably bound up with the maintenance of capitalism, the union bureaucracies tend to act as a brake upon workers' struggles. As their class collaboration since the First World War had shown, the unions were now 'organs of Capital'.⁹⁰

An argument along identical lines was presented against parliamentarism. It too was based upon the capitalist division of labour, between leaders and led, and no matter how democratic the state, the workers remained subordinate in the factories.⁹¹

As an alternative Pannekoek examines the various forms of non-institutionalized working class struggle, chief among which is the workers' councils. 'One of the elements of weakness' in such struggles before 1905 'was the lack of a distinct goal'.⁹² The soviet form discovered after the Russo-Japanese War provided such a goal – the workers' self-management of production. By constituting themselves into councils and taking over their places of work, proletarians

put into practice what Marx theoretically anticipated but for what at that time the practical form could not yet be imagined. When production is regulated by the producers themselves, the formerly exploiting class automatically is excluded from taking part in the decisions, without any artificial stipulation. Marx's conception of the dictatorship of the proletariat now appears to be identical with the labor democracy of council organisation.⁹³

Chapter 1 elaborates the nature of this 'labor democracy'. If the working class as it exists within capitalism already contains within itself the new socialist order, then the process of production around which it is structured provides the new material basis:

The great task of the workers is the organisation of production on a new basis. It has to begin with the organisation within the shop. Capitalism, too, had a carefully planned shop-organisation; but the principles of the new organisation are entirely different. *The technical basis is the same in both cases; it is the discipline of work imposed by the regular running of machines.* But the social basis, the mutual relations of men, are the very opposite of what they were. Collaboration of equal companions replaces the command of masters and the obedience of servants⁹⁴. [My emphasis]

Pannekoek has a very 'technologist' understanding of the Marxian category of 'relations of production'. For him, as for the SPA, IWW and Dawson himself, this phrase refers to how people relate *around* a labour process considered immutable. Remove the mode of distribution which allows parasitic 'shareholders' to cling like leeches to 'productive' labour, institute workshop democracy and most of the battle is won.

Indeed, capital itself is undertaking this process of weeding out the superfluous:

With the joint-stock companies the two-fold character of the capitalist factory-owner, that of directing the production and that of pocketing the surplus value, is splitting up. Labor and property, in olden times intimately connected, are now separated.

Property, 'simply pieces of paper' living off the honest sweat of worker and manager alike, must be destroyed.⁹⁵

Most of Pannekoek's arguments for workers' self-management can be found in the work of Proudhon a century before. Here too we have a 'good' side and a 'bad' side to capitalism, with the problem being how to keep the one while discarding the other. And like the ultra-left, Proudhon wanted the new society to be regulated not by money but by labour time — one would receive goods and services in accordance with the amount of work performed. Socialism equals soviets, electrification and the bookkeeping necessary to keep track of labour time expended. Not surprisingly, Pannekoek saw such a society as a fulfillment of man's 'natural necessity' to labour:

The old popular saying that whoever does not work shall not eat, expresses an instinctive feeling of justice. Here it is not only the recognition that labour is the basis of all human life, but also the proclamation that now there is an end to capitalist exploitation and to the appropriation of the fruits of others' labour by the property titles of an idle class.⁹⁶

The differences between these views and Marx's are striking. For the latter, technical relations were not 'natural', but the very essence of social relations appearing in a fetishistic form. The 'wonderful growth of science' in the hands of capital and the 'dismemberment of the human being' were one and the same thing, he argued in *The Poverty of Philosophy* (1847). The point of communism was not to suppress the division of labour upon the purely formal level of 'workshop democracy' — here one only retained the distinction between 'burgher' and 'citizen' — but to abolish labour itself as a sphere separate from praxis.⁹⁷ Similarly with labour time chits; as he stressed in the first chapter of the *Grundrisse*, such vouchers simply retained the content of capital as self-expanding value while abandoning its form. Instead, Marx counterposed labour time to the *disposable* time available to society's members, arguing that only the latter would be the measure of wealth in a classless world.⁹⁸

In his debate with Mattick in the 1930s over crisis theory, Pannekoek had based his argument upon a 'dogmatic and basically ahistorical faith in the revolutionary potential of the masses'.⁹⁹ The main factor holding the latter back was the 'spiritual hegemony' of the bourgeoisie and a

lack of 'self-confidence' in their own capacities. *Workers' Councils* repeats this argument in terms reminiscent of the SPA:

Minds submissive to the doctrines of the masters cannot hope to win freedom. They must overcome the spiritual sway of capitalism over their minds before they can actually throw off its yoke.¹⁰⁰

Later on in the book, however, Pannekoek takes a quite different tack, appealing to the workers' 'instinctive' sense of self-preservation in the face of a world bent on suicide. The two arguments sit together rather uneasily – would there be time for the necessary consciousness to develop?

The extremely homogenous nature of the working class presented by Pannekoek serves to empty his analysis of much of its usefulness. He rightly believes that at the level of capital, the class is purely another input, a mass of undifferentiated labour-power. But no attention is paid to the *concrete* divisions within it, which Australia had begun to experience as never before in the 1940s – divisions along sexual and cultural lines. What is important to note is that Pannekoek's failure to take these questions into account is not the consequence of his professional role as 'star-gazer' with his head in the clouds, but rather of the isolation in which he and other councilists were forced to defend, against all comers, their belief in the working class' ability to manage its own existence. Pannekoek's abstract optimism is no more than the obverse of Mattick's caution, and his championing of autonomy was reduced to the self-rule of the 'mediocre', of the workers as capitalist social relations defined them.¹⁰¹

'Go Your Own Way, And Let The People Talk'

'We are, in 1946, John the Baptists ranting in the wilderness to the naturally opportunistic multitude.'¹⁰²

In the May 1946 issue of the *Southern Advocate*, Dawson surveyed his work over the past decade. The 1950s seemed to offer only two alternatives to the working class – either gradual integration into the new Welfare State ('the British way') or total submission to authoritarianism ('the Russian way'). In light of this he felt a need to debunk much of what had been previously diffused through his journal. The Socialist Party's Principles had nothing to say, he claimed, about capitalism's 'war economy phase', a stage opened with the First World War and coming into fruition after the Second. He failed to even mention the IWW, and the idea of workers' councils was only upheld because of its

immediately 'PRACTICAL' bent. No longer could Marxism serve as an 'anticipatory science', but simply as

the critical understanding of the present circumstances and a knowledge of the history and cause of those circumstances.

In fact, the very point of the continued publication of the *SAWC* was in question:

Until by PRACTICE the conditions of the present mode of production ARE CHANGED, the idea that the world *can be changed* is no more than an ideologic aspiration or myth.¹⁰³

Since this was now the case, he declared that he was

becoming more and more distrustful of ideology, and here-with publicly renounce all the ideology which I have in earlier years propagated.¹⁰⁴

With a final plea to unionists to combat the twin evils of Stalinism and the 'clerical-fascist' Industrial Groups, Jim Dawson turned his full attention to private matters. The remaining parts of *Workers' Councils* were bound and published as a book in 1950. A few years later Dawson married a woman much younger than himself, having a daughter before dying in his late sixties in 1958.¹⁰⁵

The new decade saw out not only the *Southern Advocate*, but also most of the 'outside left' which had formed its audience. For those that survived, the fifties were lean years. Alan Barcan's survey of the Australian left during this period notes that the Socialist Party of Australia could still be found on the Sydney Domain on Sundays, while Paul Brissenden, in the 1957 introduction to his history of the IWW, mentions the continued existence of an Australian Administration. Both, however, only really existed on paper.¹⁰⁶

In Western Europe the council communists fared little better. A small circle around Pannekoek continued on after his death in 1960. In France and Belgium many of the ultra-left groups disintegrated; some militants entered the French group *Socialisme ou Barbarie*, which defended workers' self-management until its collapse in the mid-sixties.¹⁰⁷ Korsch died in 1961, and Mattick confined himself to writing articles for various small left socialist journals. For all intents and purposes, left communism had become merely another page in labour history, the concern of 'specialists'.

With May 1968 workers' councils were in the air again. Danny Cohn-Bendit and ten million striking workers in France, factory committees in Czechoslovakia, were followed by the Italian 'Hot Autumn' of 1969 and mass strikes in Poland the year after.¹⁰⁸ In the context of general revival of interest in Marxist thought, the works of Pannekoek, Korsch,

Ruhle and others reappeared in half a dozen languages. Mattick, now in his sixties, published his definitive work on *Marx and Keynes*, and leading members of *S ou B* such as Castoriadis and Lefort re-emerged in the polemics of a growing international far left.¹⁰⁹

With their decisive emphasis on the autonomy of the working class in the face of various 'parties' parading as Marx's (or Lenin's or Stalin's) gift to the workers, the advocates of self-management have been an important influence on the left in the last decade, performing much of the hard work of stripping away the falsifications that had built up around the words 'communism' and 'Marxism'. But remaining bound to the vision of blue collar 'productive' workers as the heart of the proletariat, many of the ultra-leftists have had little to offer in a *positive* sense. Of course, this myopia is widespread on the left today: witness the recent debate over the mapping out of the 'good guys' and the 'bad guys'.¹¹⁰ More time has often been spent in solemn discussion of the 'class location' of particular social strata than in trying to understand what the working class is in fact *doing*. For in the meantime, both capitalism and the 'proletariat' have left such debates far behind.

Throughout this paper an attempt has been made to relate different ideas concerning socialism, and the means to its attainment, to varying types of working classes, be they skilled or unskilled. Today, it is not difficult to see that 'productive' workers form only a small minority of the population, a point which raises difficulties for the scrupulously 'democratic' left communists. Nor have blue collar workers shown much interest in 'revolutionary' theory or taking over their factories in order to run them themselves. If anything, 'less work and more pay' has been the popular sentiment:

There is no longer any need to preach against the "work ethic", that "strange affliction" which Paul Lafargue thought he saw infecting the working class years ago. Workers have already rejected capital's definition of living time as work time and have not only demanded the "Right to be Lazy" but have also been increasingly achieving it.¹¹¹

In the meantime, other social groupings have 'emerged' that challenge traditional Marxist notions of class, chief among which have been women.¹¹² There is no doubt that the ideas of Pannekoek, the Socialist Parties and of the IWW have little to offer in understanding these new developments. Despite their modest revival in the forties, the 'outside left' have spent most of the fifty years after 1920 as the custodians of a vision of 'genuine' socialism, shielding its purity from the corrosion of capitalist 'reality'. Thirty years ago this vision was already outmoded; in the present day, much of what they believed seems merely quaint. Those who have attempted to take stock of the world around them have often felt the need to break with Marxism altogether.¹¹³ In each

case, a desire to defend working class autonomy from its 'official' representatives became instead the defence of a stultifying conception of the 'joys' of work, and now that 'self-management' has become a plaything of planners in many countries both East and West, its practical possibilities as a means of emancipation have become even more dubious.¹¹⁴ With this in mind, Jim Dawson's efforts over ten years might appear to have been completely wasted. Few people ever heard of the *Southern Advocate*, and most of these were outside Australia. His local readership began literally dying out even in the 1940s.¹¹⁵ What the yellowing pages of his journal have left behind, nonetheless, is the record of one man's search for something more than what his society, including its most radical 'critics', had to offer him, a search yielding many critical insights into what passed as socialist thought despite its ultimate defeat by an 'opportunistic' reality. Today more than ever it seems necessary to follow Dawson in his rejection of obfuscating ideology, turning instead to what that 'reality' of an 'integrated' working class has to offer:

Perhaps we will then discover that "organizational miracles" have already occurred and keep always occurring in these "miraculous" working class struggles that nobody knows, that nobody wants to know, and that yet all by themselves have made and make more revolutionary history than all the revolutions the colonised people have ever made.¹¹⁶

If so, Dawson's hours and years consumed in producing the *Southern Advocate* will not have been completely in vain.

NOTES

- (1) Extract from a letter sent by an anonymous critic, reprinted in the *Southern Socialist Review* 21 (August 1946) p. 4. The *Review (SSR)* was later to be renamed the *Southern Socialist International Digest (SSID)*, and finally the *Southern Advocate for Workers' Councils (SAWC)*.
- (2) Pannekoek to Dawson, October 12th, 1947 and reprinted in *SAWC* 39 (November 3, 1947) p. 3.
- (3) In the early 1960s a group of British ex-Trotskyists, inspired by the review *Socialisme ou Barbarie*, began to publish *Solidarity*. A similar group in the United States, also in contact with *S ou B*, and known as the Johnson-Forrest Tendency, left the Trotskyist movement in 1950. Their mouthpiece was the newspaper *Correspondence*. See Andre Liebich, 'Socialisme ou Barbarie: A Radical Critique of Bureaucracy,' *Our Generation* 12/2 (Fall 1977); Harry Cleaver, *Reading "Capital" Politically*, (Austin 1979), pp. 45-51.
- (4) Gabriel Kolko, *The Politics of War: The World and United States Foreign Policy, 1943 - 1945* (New York 1968); Mario Tronti, 'Workers and Capital', *Telos* 14 (Winter 1972), pp. 41-4.

(5) The Nazi/Soviet Pact and Second World War split the Fourth International over the question of defence of the USSR; the 'Minority' within the American section considered Russia no longer a workers' state of any description, but rather a bureaucratic collectivist society in which the proletariat was exploited by a new dominant class. Trotsky's views on the subject can be found in his book *In Defence of Marxism* (New York 1973). For the debate see Isaac Deutscher's *The Prophet Outcast: Trotsky 1929-1940* (London 1963) pp. 463-74; Antonio Carlo, 'The Socio-Economic Nature of the USSR', *Telos* 21 (Fall 1974); Peter Beilharz, 'Trotsky's Marxist - Permanent Involution?' *Telos* 39 (Spring 1979); Adam Buick & W. Jerome, 'Soviet State Capitalism? The History of an Idea', *Survey* 62 (January 1967); Antonio Carlo and Umberto Melotti, 'In Memory of Bruno Rizzi', *Telos* 33 (Fall 1977); "Calvin", 'Theories of State Capitalism', *Revolutionary Perspectives* 1 (n.d.).

(6) 'An Interview with Cornelius Castoriadis', *Telos* 23 (Spring 1975); 'An Interview with Claude Lefort', *Telos* 30 (Winter 1976-77). c.f. Paul Thompson and Guy Lewis, *The Revolution Unfinished? A critique of Trotskyism* (Liverpool 1977) pp. 14,15. In January 1944 Dawson published *Trotskyism, Communists, the Labor Party, and Socialism: A Critical Review*, in which he reprinted the manifesto of the Balmain (NSW) Trotskyists led by Origlass. Since the Balmain group was having great trouble obtaining newsprint, Dawson ended up giving their manifesto a circulation far beyond what they could have hoped for, as he related in a letter (December 12th, 1944) to Paul Mattick. (The latter sent me the original). Although never a Trotskyist, Dawson seems to have received odd copies of Origlass' *The Socialist*. The SAWC also carried advertisements for lectures by Ted Tripp, then as again later in the local section of the Fourth International; see *SSR* 20 (July 1946) p.1.

(7) The followers of Amadeo Bordiga, the original leader of the Italian Communist Party, broke with the Comintern in the late 1920s. Dawson was in contact with most of the 'Italian Left' groups after the Second World War, and reprinted many of their writings in the SAWC. For an introduction to this wing of revolutionary Marxism, see Earlene Craver, 'The Rediscovery of Amadeo Bordiga', *Survey* 20/3-4 (1974); Jean Barrot, 'Notes on Trotsky, Pannekoek, Bordiga', in Jean Barrot and Francois Martin, *Eclipse and Re-emergence of the Communist Movement* (Detroit 1974).

(8) Of course, such organisations were usually so small that the addition of a dozen new adherents could easily increase their total membership by over 10 per cent. 'One recalls,' writes Robert Barltrop in his history of the SPGB, 'Joyce Millen pushing out of the Executive Committee Room at Rugby Chambers, shouting deliriously into the General Office "We've got a thousand! We've got a thousand!"' *The Monument the Story of the Socialist Party of Great Britain* (London 1975), p. 126

(9) The *SSID* for November 1946 carries on p.3 two letters from German council communists struggling to survive in East Germany: 'Very early the Communist Party started to work against us. We are refused recognition as victims of fascism, despite years of concentration camps. The reason: our anti-bolshevist communist past.' The previous issue contained a report on the extermination of radicals in Bulgaria – *SSID* 24 (October 1946), p.10 c.f. 'A Short History of the Anarchist Movement in Bulgaria', *The Cienfuegos Press Anarchist Review* 3 (Autumn 1977). For an overview, see Joyce and Gabriel Kolko, *The Limits of Power: the World and United States foreign policy, 1945-1954* (New York 1972); Harry Cleaver, 'Food, Famine and the International Crisis', *Zerowork* 2 (Fall 1977) pp. 13-21.

(10) Wiser heads, such as Ignaz Auer, secretary of the German Social Democratic Party (SPD), counselled Bernstein thus: 'My dear Ede, one doesn't formally make a decision to do the things you suggest, one doesn't say such things, one simply does them.' cited in J.P. Nettl, *Rosa Luxemburg* Volume 1 (Oxford 1966), p. 156. See also Karl Korsch, 'The Passing of Marxian Orthodoxy', in Douglas Kellner (ed.) *Karl Korsch: Revolutionary Theory* (Austin 1977), pp. 176-80.

(11) Many of the arguments in this thesis are indebted to Sergio Bologna's much maligned and misunderstood essay, 'Class Composition and the Theory of the Party at the origin of the Workers-Councils Movement', *Telos* 13 (Fall 1972).¹

(12) As the authors (Yvon Bourdet et. al.) of *Que lire? bibliographie de la revolution* (Paris 1975) tell us with respect to Pannekoek's major work, *Workers' Councils*, 'l'auteur le traduisit alors en anglais mais il ne etre edite qu'en Australie, a Melbourne, en 1950, par un petit groupe de gauche' – p. 239. In Serge Bricianer's selected anthology of Pannekoek's writings, we are informed that in addition to works by Pannekoek, Dawson' also published studies by other Council Communists (Mattick, Korsch) and by non-conformist anarchists (Lain Diez, translator of *Lenin as Philosopher* into Spanish, and Kennafick)' – *Pannekoek and the Workers' Councils* (St. Louis 1978) p. 259. Kellner *op. cit.* (pp. 292-4) merely presents us with a letter Dawson received from Korsch, offering no comment. Other recently published books concerning council communism include D.A. Smart (ed.) *Pannekoek and Gorter's Marxism* (London 1978), and Paul Mattick, *Anti-Bolshevik Communism* (London 1978).

(13) *SSR* 21 (August 1946) p. 14.

(14) *ibid.*

(15) Dawson to Mattick, *op. cit.*

(16) *SSR* 21, p. 15. On the ASP, see Ian Turner, *Industrial Labour and Politics*, (Canberra 1965), Chapter 1, and Miriam Dixon, 'The First Communist "United Front" in Australia', *Labour History* 10 (May 1966).

(17) For a personal account of the WIU, see Tom Audley, 'A Short History of the WIU', *Recorder* 3/2 (February 1968). Also available is Andrew Reeves, *Industrial Unionism in Australia – the development and decline of the WIU*, (B.A. Honours Thesis, History Department, Melbourne University, 1973); Ian Bedford, 'The One Big Union, 1918-1923', in *Sydney Studies in Politics* 3 (Melbourne 1963).

- (18) *SSR 21, op. cit.*
- (19) 'My brain is not as good an instrument as it should be as I am an allergic asthmatic' he told Mattick; Dawson to Mattick. *op. cit.*
- (20) See 'Socialism and Reformism in New Zealand', *World Socialism 69* (London 1969), p. 22. *World Socialism* is a publication of the SPGB.
- (21) Dawson to Mattick, *op. cit.*
- (22) Marx to W. Bracke, May 5th, 1875, in K. Marx and F. Engels, *Selected Correspondence* (Moscow 1965), p.297.
- (23) 'Impossibilists' was an epithet first applied to Jules Guesde's followers in late nineteenth century France, who opposed the 'Possibilism' (gradualism) of the Socialists Brousset and Jaures. In Scotland in 1903, a group of left-wingers around James Connolly (later executed for his role in the Easter Uprising of 1916) left the SDF to form another 'Impossibilist' group, the Socialist Labor Party. The SLP was the British equivalent of the American Party of the same name, and of the Australian SLP to which Dawson had belonged. Cf. R. Barltrop, *op. cit.*, pp. 4-8.
- (24) On the struggles in Britain over the right to be the 'official' section of the Third International, see Raymond Challinor's history of the Scottish SLP, *The Origins of British Bolshevism* (London 1977).
- (25) Dawson to Mattick, *op. cit.*
- (26) 'Do Socialists Hate Russia?' in J.A. Dawson (ed.) *Russia, Stalin and the Peace* (Melbourne 1943), p. 40. Although this argument – as far as it went – was sound in Marxist terms, the 'pure' Socialists felt little need to identify the precise nature of the class extracting surplus value from the Russian workers, a problem which generated much debate among the rest of the 'outside left'. When it did search for a dominant class, the SPA usually characterized it within traditional terms of individual capitalists; such, for instance, is its pointing the finger at Kolkhov (collective farm) chairmen made millionaires through purchase of war bonds - 'Name the Capitalist', *ibid.*, p. 43.
- (27) Charles Christie, Introduction to K. Marx, *The Gotha Program* (Melbourne 1946), p. 9.
- (28) *SSR 2* (July 25th 1945) p. 5. On this page is Dawson's endorsement of the SPGB's Declaration of Principles: '(J.A. Dawson) accepts full responsibility for the contents and deny (sic) interpretation of the above Principles of Socialism is his own individual interpretation'.
- (29) *ibid.*
- (30) Letter from the Melbourne branch of the SPA to Dawson, October 8th, 1945 and reprinted in *SSR 9* (November 1945) p. 7. SPGB doctrine was brought to Australia at the end of the First World War by British seamen, who helped to set up not only the SPA but also the SPNZ.
- (31) *The Socialist Party: Its Principles and Policy* (Melbourne n.d.) p. 19. Within the Socialist Party itself clarity was considered essential. Prospective members were required to sign a copy of the Declaration of Principles before 'satisfy(ing) the branch before which the application came that they understood and accept(ed) the points in question . . . Effective socialist organisation cannot develop more

quickly than the spread of socialist knowledge'. — *ibid.* p. 3.

(32) Instances are liberally sprinkled through Barltrop's informal history of brilliant SPGB oratory reducing opponents to nothing. — e.g. p. 120. While within the Party the Socialists denied the existence of any leadership, one certainly existed in the form of the 'orators' — those who had passed the 'Speaker's Test' and were authorized to present the Socialist case to the outside world.

(33) Bertha Walker, *op. cit.*, p. 198. To this day *The Labor College Review* contains articles reprinted from the SPGB's *Socialist Standard* and the American SLP's *Weekly People*. Walker also recounts the escapades of Moses Baritz, an SPGBer, in Melbourne at the end of the First World War, pp. 173-8.

(34) Quoted in *SSR* 4 (August 13th, 1945), p.3. Compare with 'The Revolutionary Vote', in J.A. Dawson (ed.) *Russia, op. cit.*, p. 32.

(35) 'Socialist Contests Albert Park', *SSR* 10 (November 1945), p. 1. Coull, Dawson claimed, 'ignores the FACT that the paternal role of the STATE in assisting the capitalist class is THE TREND everywhere today'.

(36) 'Vote for Socialism'. *SSR* 11 (November 1945). p.1.

(37) "'Socialist Comment": Ourselves', *SSR* 16 (March 1946) p. 12.

(38) Without wanting to revive the notorious thesis of the 'labour aristocracy' — after all, skilled workers were in the forefront of the upheavals of 1917-1923, something this theory can't explain — the connection between this figure of 'the worker' and a particular approach to 'politics' occurred too often to be coincidental. For a helpful discussion, see Chris Goodey, 'Factory Committees and the Dictatorship of the Proletariat', *Critique* 3 (Autumn 1974). On the social composition of the SPGB, see Barltrop, *op. cit.*, pp. 15, 172.

(39) 'Ourselves: Fearful of Competition', *SSID* 21 (August 1946), p. 16. The immutability of the 'Socialist Principles' was echoed by part of the 'Italian left', who believed in the 'invariance' of the 'communist program' since 1848! New members of Bordiga's party were supposed to swear 'not to revise, add or leave anything aside, to support, defend and confirm the whole as a monolithic bloc, and to do this with all one's strength' — cited in *International Review* 13 (Spring 1978), p. 38.

(40) J.W.R., 'Regarding the Non-Political IWW', *International Socialist* (September 6th, 1913).

(41) 'IWW Preamble', *SSR* 12 (December 1, 1945), p. 7. The comment of the *Industrial Worker's* editor accompanying it is worth reprinting: 'This preamble is a marvel of simple, limp language, and has performed miracles in opening the eyes of wage workers to the facts of life.'

(42) 'Socialist Construction', *SSR* 20 (July 1946), p.7. In 1908 the Socialist Labor Party led by Daniel DeLeon was expelled from the IWW, which then defended direct action alone. The three year old Preamble was rewritten, with all references to politics removed, although ironically the IWW continued to defend a conception of politics much wider than that of the SLP. See Bill Haywood's 1911 speech

reprinted in Joyce L. Kornbluh (ed.), *Rebel Voices: An IWW Anthology* (Ann Arbor 1972), pp. 45-51.

(43) Bologna, *op. cit.*, p. 23. There has been a great deal of interest in the last decade in the IWW among sections of the Italian left, much of which is connected with Bologna's journal, *Primo Maggio*.

(44) 'It's a mighty long way between theory and practice; and when you're theorisin' on a full stomach, you hain't the least idea wot you'd do if you was practicin' on an empty one' — Bert Willard, 'Farmer Jones on Party Problems', Kornbluh, *op. cit.*, p.56. 'The IWW was never "eye-dee-logical", as Bill Haywood pronounced it in perplexity about the Russian Communists among whom he spent his last years' — Joseph Conlin, 'Review of R. Musto's *Gli IWW e il Movimento Operaio Americano: Storia e Documenti; 1905-1914*', *Labor History* 20/1 (Winter 1979).

(45) Gabriella Bonacchi, 'The Council Communists between the New Deal and Fascism', *Telos* 30 (Winter 1976-77), pp.43-9, 53-6.

(46) 'The IWW Convention', *SSR* 21 (August 1946), p.8.

(47) Letter from Norman Rancie, September 6, 1946, in *SSID* 22 (September 1946), p. 16. An obituary for Rancie appears in *Recorder* 3/7 (December 1968).

(48) 'Running Ourselves', *SAWC* 37 (August/September 1947), p. 4.

(49) Christie, *op. cit.*, p.8.

(50) 'The Task Before Us', *SAWC* 34 (June 1947), p. 4.

(51) 'Importance of Election', *SSID* 22 (September 1946), p.1. A short biography of Fleming can be found in *Recorder* 1/1 (July 1964).

(52) 'Capitalism Calls the Tune', *SSR* 14 (January 22, 1946), p. 11.

(53) 'State Capitalism', *SSID* 26 (December 1, 1946), p. 13. See also Rancie's 'Nationalisation', *SAWC* 38 (October 1947), p. 1.

(54) '“Labor” Press Dope', *SSID* 25 (November 1946), p.6; 'Labor Party Machine', *SSID* 27 (January 1947), p.1; 'The Labor Party as A RACKET,' (February 1, 1947), p. 6. The latter is an address given by Dawson to the League for Freedom Forum, the pacifist organisation led by the late Maurice Blackburn during the war; then it had been the No-Conscription Campaign. Its moving force seems to have been K. J. Kenafick.

(55) 'Solidarity Still Lives at Broken Hill', *SAWC* 35 (July 1947), p. 8; Letter from Tom Gilmore, March 30, 1947, reprinted in *SAWC* 34 (July 1947), p. 10.

(56) Letter from E. M. Higgins, March 5, 1947, reprinted in *SAWC* 33 (May 1947), p. 9.

(57) Karl Korsch, 'The Revolutionary Commune', in Kellner, *op. cit.*, p. 202.

(58) Letter from "Don", no date, in *SSR* 1 (July 17, 1945), pp. 4-5. In fact, Dawson, like all of us, was extremely confused about 'dialectics', his position range from the cosmic ('Dialectics is the law of perpetual MOVEMENT and CHANGE which is inherent in all nature, and which is inescapable') to the historically specific (see the

article 'The Rebels of Yesteryear', in *SAWC* 48, May 1949). Another exchange between "Don" and Dawson on the subject is reprinted in *SSR* 6 (September 3, 1945), pp. 11-12.

(59) An article entitled 'The Practice of Class Struggle versus "Pure Socialist" Exclusiveness' appeared in *SAWC* 42 (February 1948), pp. 7-9. It said in part: 'There are always individuals who get a kick out of philosophizing, holding bull sessions, attending study classes, and engaging in theoretical polemics. The WSP (the American 'Companion Party') and SPGB are composed mostly of such "student" types.' Korsch's opinion of the WSP is probably not very far from Mattick's: '(this) group represents at best, the ideas of the revolution of the nineteenth century, while I am only interested in that of the twentieth century' – Korsch to Dawson, May 3, 1948, published in *SAWC* 46 (July-August 1948), pp. 9-10. Many articles by Mattick, Korsch and Pannekoek appear, however, in the WSP's *Western Socialist*, partly due to the fact that both Mattick and Korsch lived in Boston, where the World Socialist Party also had its headquarters.

(60) Paul Mattick, 'Anti-Bolshevist Communism in Germany', *SAWC* 37 (August-September 1947) p. 24. An earlier (and longer) version of this article, called 'Otto Ruhle and the German Labor Movement', appeared in Dawson's pamphlet *Essays for Students of Socialism* (Melbourne 1945). It has now been reprinted in Mattick's *Anti-Bolshevik Communism op. cit.*

(61) This essay has been reprinted in Kellner, *op. cit.*, pp. 274-81. An excellent introduction to Korsch is provided in *Telos* 26 (Winter 1975-76).

(62) Rosa Luxemburg, *The Mass Strike, the Political Party and the Trade Unions* (New York 1971), p. 68.

(63) Otto Ruhle, *From the Bourgeois to the Proletarian Revolution* (Glasgow 1974).

(64) Karl Radek's autobiographical sketch tells how in Hamburg he met 'a young agitator called Wolfheim (sic), full of the ideas of the American "Industrial Workers of the World" organisation' – Georges Haupt and Jean-Jacques Marie, *Makers of the Russian Revolution* (London 1974), p. 370. Fritz Wolfheim, active in the IWW before the First World War, was later a theorist of National Bolshevism. Ruhle's breakaway group (AAUD 'Unitary') took the Wobbly line to its logical conclusion, attacking the KAPD as being unnecessary when the AAUD encompassed both economics and politics.

(65) For the reminiscences of a KAPD emissary to the Comintern, see Bernard Reichenbach, 'Moscow 1921 – Meetings in the Kremlin', *Survey* 53 (October 1964). For a general background, see Alfred Rosmer, *Lenin's Moscow* (London 1971).

(66) Bricianer, *op.cit.*, pp.225-7; Guido De Masi and Giacomo Marramo, 'Councils and State in Weimar', *Telos* 28 (Summer 1976); Enrico Rutigliano, 'The Ideology of Labor and Capitalist Rationality in Gramsci', *Telos* 31 (Spring 1977). Bologna's article 'Class Composition and the Theory of the Party' has come under attack – from Mattick's son among others – for claiming that the council movement was the rearguard action of skilled workers in the face of Taylorism and Fordism, rather than the 'economic cell form' of com-

munism. As Rutigliano points out (pp. 98-9), while Bologna is basically correct, he ignores the fact that the new unskilled workforce – the ‘mass worker’ – was also present, and provided the KAPD and AAU with many of their members. For a critique of Bologna’s thesis, see Eduard Lucas’ *Arbeiterradikalismus*, reviewed by James Wickham in *Capital and Class* 1 (Summer 1977), and by Martin Chalmers in *Social History* 4/2 (May 1979).

(67) Peter Rachleff, *Marxism and Council Communism* (New York 1976); “Raden”, *The Origins of the Movement for Workers’ Councils in Germany 1918-1929* (Birkenhead n.d.)

(68) Ironically, Mattick and other left communists emigrated to the U.S. in 1926 because ‘they saw the U.S. as the strongest capitalist country with the most radical labour tradition (the IWW) – hence, as providing the ideal conditions for the rapid development of that class autonomy which in Europe had been handicapped by capitalism’s structural backwardness and by the labor movement’s tradition of reformism’ (Bonacchi, *op. cit.*, p. 49), this precisely at the time the Wobblies were becoming peripheral to industrial conflicts.

(69) ‘Theses on Bolshevism’, *International Council Correspondence* 3 (December 1943). The ICC (later *Living Marxism*) was the American councilists’ journal, edited by Mattick and published from 1934–1943. See Mattick’s ‘New Essays’, in Joseph Conlin (ed.), *The American Radical Press 1880-1960* Volume 1 (Westport 1974).

(70) The polemic between Mattick and Pannekoek over Grossmann’s work has been analysed in Bonacchi, *op. cit.*, Russell Jacoby, ‘The Politics of the Crisis Theory’, *Telos* 23 (Spring 1975); Giacomo Marramao, ‘Theory of the Crisis and the Problem of Constitution’, *Telos* 26 (Winter 1975-76). Mattick’s argument can be found in ‘The Permanent Crisis: Henryk Grossmann’s Interpretation of Marx’s Theory of Capitalist Accumulation’, *ICC* 2 (November 1934), Pannekoek’s in ‘The Theory of the Collapse of Capitalism’, in *Capital and Class* 1 (Summer 1977). Korsch’s ‘Some Fundamental Presuppositions for a Materialist Discussion of Crisis Theory’, in Kellner *op. cit.*, is a commentary from the side-lines. See also Marramao’s ‘Political Economy and Critical Theory’, *Telos* 24 (Summer 1975).

(71) Review of ‘Trotsky’s *Stalin*’, *SSID* 29 (February 7, 1947), p. 10. See also Mattick’s ‘The Lenin Legend’, *SSR* 19 (June 1946), p. 12, now reprinted in *Anti-Bolshevik Communist*, *op. cit.*

(72) ‘Trotsky’s *Stalin*’, *op. cit.*

(73) ‘Planned Economy’, *SSR* 7 (September 19, 1945), p. 7. For a similar argument from within the Frankfurt School, see Max Horkheimer, ‘The Authoritarian State’, *Telos* 15 (Spring 1973), an essay dating from 1940.

(74) Bonacchi, *op. cit.* pp. 63–72. In the late 1930s Mattick began his analysis of Keynesian economics for which he has since become famous *Marx and Keynes* (London 1974).

(75) *SSID* 29 (February 7, 1947), p. 1.

(76) ‘The Military Pattern of Power’, *SSID* 25 (November 1946), p. 1; ‘Bretton Woods’, *SSID* 28 (February 1, 1947), p. 1; ‘Bretton Woods and the Law of Value’, *SSID* 30 (March 1947), p. 9. A great

deal of Dawson's material on the Soviet army in Eastern Europe came from Ruth Fischer's *Newsletter on Communism*. Another former left oppositionist in the German Communist Party, Fischer was also in exile in the United States. Some of Korsch's views can be found in his review of Trotsky's *Stalin*, in *SSID* 27 (January 1947), p. 10.

(77) 'You are Robbed', *SSID* 26 (December 1946), p. 1; 'Supporters of Imperialist Barbarism', *SAWC* 35 (July 1947), p. 1.

(78) Karl Radek, speaking at the Third Comintern Congress in 1921, quoted in Bricianer, *op. cit.*, pp. 35-6.

(79) Paul Mattick, 'Anton Pannekoek (1873--1960)', *New Politics* 1/2 (Winter 1962). It also appears as a postscript to Anton Pannekoek, *Lenin as Philosopher* (London 1975). For the years before the Russian Revolution, see Bricianer, *op. cit.* Chapter 3; Smart, *op. cit.* pp. 53-74, where Pannekoek's polemic with Kautsky is reprinted; E. Hansen, 'Crisis in the Party', *Journal of Contemporary History* 11/1 (1976); finally, the somewhat misleading article by H. Schurer, 'Anton Pannekoek and the Origins of Leninism', *Slavonic Review* 41 (1962-3).

(80) Bricianer, *op. cit.*, p. 269.

(81) *SSID* 26 (December 1946), pp. 11-12.

(82) *SSID* 29 (February 7, 1947), p. 5. The SPGB's co-operativeness is quite remarkable; the party consistently refused to be drawn into the conferences organized by the European councilists – see 'First Brussels Conference', *SAWC* 41 (January 1948), pp. 12-13; Barltrop, *op. cit.*, p. 129.

(83) *SAWC* 33 (May 1947), p. 1.

(84) 'The IWW and Capitalism Today', *SAWC* 37 (August-September 1947), p. 3.

(85) 'In the absence of *local practice* in the organising of units on the job, the IWW in Australia has allowed itself to become but one more small ideological group' – 'A Disclaimer', *SAWC* 43 (March 1948), p. 2.

(86) 'Our Task: We Carry the Torch to Pass it on', *SAWC* 39 (November 1947), p. 2.

(87) 'The Value of Anarchy', *SAWC* 40 (December 1947), p. 3.

(88) 'Not Suitable: A Necessary Corrective Criticism of our Attitude Towards Anarchism', *SAWC* 42 (February 1948) p. 2.

(89) Now reprinted in Root and Branch (ed.), *Root and Branch: The Rise of the Workers' Movement* (Greenwich 1975). Root and Branch is a councilist group whose leading member is Paul Mattick, Jnr.

(90) *ibid.*, pp. 448-54.

(91) *ibid.*, pp. 435-40.

(92) *ibid.*, p. 472.

(93) *ibid.*, p. 438.

(94) *ibid.*, p. 402.

(95) *ibid.*, pp. 396-7.

(96) *ibid.*, pp. 409-10.

(97) Karl Marx, 'The Poverty of Philosophy', in K. Marx, F. Engels, *Collected Works* Volume 6 (London 1976). pp 127 134. 165-7, 183, 186-70, 207.

- (98) Karl Marx, *Grundrisse* (Harmondsworth 1973), pp. 126, 134-46; Jean Barrot, 'Leninism and the Ultra-Left', in Barrot and Martin, *op. cit.*, Negations, *The Self-Managed Counterrevolution* (Detroit 1975); Rachleff, *op. cit.*, pp. 230-2; Sergio Bologna, 'Money and Crisis: Marx as Correspondent of the "New York Daily Tribune" 1856-1857', in John Merrington (ed.), *Money and Proletarians* (forthcoming).
- (99) Bonacchi, *op. cit.*, p. 51. In this question of the proletariat, work and consciousness Pannekoek is deeply influenced by Joseph Dietzgen. See John Gerber's introduction to Bricianer, *op. cit.*, - 'The Formation of Pannekoek's Marxism'; Adam Buick, 'Joseph Dietzgen', *Radical Philosophy* 10. Buick, who is a member of the SPGB, introduces Pannekoek's contribution to the crisis theory debate, and notes the similarity of the Dutchman's position to that of his own group - *Capital and Class* 1, *op. cit.*
- (100) 'Workers' Councils', in *Root and Branch. op. cit.*, p. 414.
- (101) Enrico Rutigliano, *op. cit.*: 'Workers' Councils, Self-management and developments in Proletarian Autonomy', in Bratach Dubh, (ed.) *Workers' Autonomy* (Glasgow n.d.)
- (102) 'Socialist Comment: Ourselves', *SSR* 16 (March 1946), p. 12.
- (103) 'The Democratic Way of Life', *SAWC* 48 (May 1949), p. 4. Note the similarity of this sentiment to Korsch's 'A Non-Dogmatic Approach to Marxism', *op. cit.*
- (104) 'The Rebels of Yesteryear', *SAWC* 48, p. 5.
- (105) Interview with C. A. Sundberg. Dawson's wife and daughter moved to Western Australia after his death and I have been unable to contact them.
- (106) Alan Barcan, *The Socialist Left in Australia 1949-1959* (Sydney 1960), p. 10; P. Brissenden, *The IWW: A Study of American Syndicalism* (New York 1957), p. vii.
- (107) Liebich, *op. cit.* An exchange of letters between Pannekoek and Castoriadis has been reprinted in the latter's *L'Experience du Mouvement Ouvrier* Volume 1 (Paris 1974). East Germany's crisis in 1953 and the Hungarian Workers' councils of 1956 offered some hope - Andy Anderson, *Hungary '56* (Detroit 1976); Bill Lomax, 'The Workers' Council of Greater Budapest', *Socialist Register* (London 1976).
- (108) Alain Schnapp and Pierre Vidal-Naquet, *The French Student Uprising November 1967 - June 1968: An Analytical Record* (Boston 1971) *passim*; Cleaver, *op. cit.*, pp. 45-64, where he traces the influence of *S ou B* and the Johnson-Forrest Tendency on the "workers' autonomy" wing of the Italian far left; I. C. O., *Poland 1970-71: Capitalism and Class Struggle* (Detroit 1977); Richard Gombin, *The Origins of Modern Leftism* (Harmondsworth 1975).
- (109) Mattick's *Marx and Keynes* has been responsible for reopening the debate on Marxist crisis theory. Interestingly, the foremost standard-bearer for Mattick's position - David Yaffe - is a former member of the SPGB. See his essay 'The Marxian Theory of Crisis, Capital and the State'. *Conference of the Socialist Economists*

Bulletin (Winter 1972). While Yaffe became a Trotskyist, a council communist group broke with the SPGB in the early seventies, republished *Workers Councils* before merging with Solidarity - Barltrop, *op. cit.*, p. 182.

(110) Here we need only mention the names Poulantzas, Olin Wright, Carchedi, and O'Connor.

(111) Cleaver, *op. cit.*, pp. 124-5. See also Mario Tronti, 'Struggle against Labour', *Radical America* 6/3 (May-June 1972), and John Zerzan, 'Organized Labor versus "The Revolt against Work": The Critical Contest', *Telos* 21 (Autumn 1974).

(112) Some writers on the subject, particularly from Italy where the far left has been forced to take notice of a powerful feminist movement, have argued that the new capitalism, whose 'laws of motion' Dawson tried so hard to grasp, has been as much dependent upon those responsible for the reproduction of 'that peculiar commodity' labour power - and here 'women' play a central role, both in the family and in the service sector - as upon those actually selling the labour power and 'producing' surplus value. See Selma James and Maria Rosa Dalla Costa, *The Power of Women and the Subversion of the Community* (Bristol 1975); Red Notes, *Italy 1977-8: Living with an Earthquake* (London 1978).

(113) For instance, the former members of *Socialisme ou Barbarie*.

(114) Ian Clegg, *Self-management in Algeria* (New York 1971); Negations, *op. cit.*

(115) A small notice in one *Review* cheerily asked readers: 'IF YOU MAKE A WILL REMEMBER THE CAUSE OF SOCIALISM' - *SSR* 21 (August 1946), p. 15. A quick glance at the list of donations acknowledged on the back page of each *Review* will show just how many of its readers were old-age pensioners both here and in the U.S., still remembering the great days of 1914-1921.

(116) Mario Tronti, 'Lenin in England', in Red Notes, (ed.) *Workers' Autonomy and the Crisis: Italian Marxist Theory 1964-79* (London, 1979).