LIBERTARIANISM IN AUSTRALIA'S "NEW ENLIGHTENMENT"

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CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

Libertarianism is a contemporary version of political philosophy which has been given considerable attention, at least since the publication of Nozick's, Anarchy, State and Utopia in 1974. Coincidentally it is at about this time that groups of people emerged in Australia, who at first tentatively, engaged in political activity to promote a libertarian free-market economy and a minimal state, which was to abstain from virtually all interference in people's lives. Most of these people had never before taken an active interest in politics. They were motivated by a belief in the ideals which they held, and the confidence that in politics and all realms of human action "ideas count". A decade and a half later many of these ideas are firmly entrenched at the centre of political debate.

This paper looks at libertarian ideas and the means by which people, who were at least initially novices in political activity, have over a long period of time promoted their vision of the good society, with at least some degree of success.

Chapter One discusses Libertarian ideas in an effort to establish what makes these ideas distinctive, and to suggest how these ideas might themselves act as a guide or constraint on political activity. The central chapters look at the methods by which libertarianism has been advocated in Australia over time. Finally, I look at the impact of libertarian ideas and methods on Australia with an eye to certain major trends that have been identified in political debate. These trends are also relevant to considering the changes in the libertarian movement in Australia.

CHAPTER 1

THE THEORY AND IDEAS OF LIBERTARIANISM

Libertarianism has a background which can be traced to diverse origins. In many respects it is derived from the ideas of Classical Liberalism, Individualist Anarchism and Laissez-Faire and is a fellow traveler with modern schools of Public Choice Theory, Economic Rationalism, the Chicago School of Economics, Neo-Conservatism and other theories which are concerned about the role of the state. None-the-less, when compared with these other contemporary developments, libertarianism emerges as a more radical defence of the free-market and limited government. Yet it is more than a radical development of other, more "moderate" ideas. Since libertarian theory can stand on its own as a proponent of its particular concept of liberty.

In outlining the important aspects of libertarian thought it will also be necessary to consider the most important criticisms of them.

Given the range of ideas and theories which share intellectual ground with libertarianism it is important to establish just what makes an idea or author distinctively libertarian. Libertarian influences can be seen in a number of writings, which are by no means libertarian. It is common and quite reasonable to talk of socialist, conservative, or other ideas as being more or less libertarian in inclination. Thus the distinctive elements of libertarianism must be defined.

Libertarianism can not readily be classified in terms of a "left-right" political spectrum Hyde (1.) has pointed out the free-marketeers in the French Parliament which gave rise to that classification sat on the left of the house. Despite this however those aspects of libertarianism which support property rights, the market, and oppose state provision of charity, have often been associated with the "right" in contemporary usage. On the other hand libertarians will invariably defend personal freedom in areas such as the use of narcotics or the role of the state with respect to choice of lifestyle or private sexual habits, which are more commonly associated with the label "left". In both situations the libertarian position can be described as "liberal".

Separating libertarian ideas from what has been traditionally known as liberalism is a difficult task. The term libertarian has quite explicitly been coined to overcome what was seen as changes in the use of the term "liberal", particularly in the United States, where it is used to describe "progressives" who advocate an active role for the state in the redistribution of income and the care for people and groups who are seen as disadvantaged by the operation of the market.

In "Why I Am Not a Conservative" (2.), F. A. Hayek, while expressing disappointment with changing usage's of the term "liberal", acknowledges that a new label describing the beliefs of those advocating the principle of limited government, the rule of law and free markets might now be needed. He dislikes the "libertarian" label for aesthetic reasons more than any other. In the terminology of Hayek, libertarianism, though deriving from that school of thought described as classical liberalism is sufficiently unique to make it independent from the liberal tradition with which

it shares common heritage. These differences are illustrated by the affinity which many libertarians (3.) feel with "Individualist anarchist" writers (4.). The impact of these ideas on traditional liberalism has been negligible. However, the conclusions of libertarian arguments are predominantly based on assumptions and approaches to the analysis of questions in political thought which are similar to those usually described as liberal.

Libertarianism has been thought of as a revival of the ideas of classical liberalism (5.). This elucidates some of the historical background of libertarianism, however libertarian authors and others influenced by their work have added to those earlier ideas original arguments and the benefits of contemporary experience. Liberalism in part emerged as a response to the rule of absolutist European monarchs. Libertarianism draws on the experience of an era when monarchy has all but disappeared but the power of the state is seen as not having greatly diminished, still offering a threat to people and civil society.

LIBERTARIANISM, RIGHTS AND GOVERNMENT

Libertarianism, in keeping with its heritage in classical liberalism, begins its consideration of the type of social organisation appropriate to the human race with assumptions about human nature. Only some, universally applicable, characteristics of human nature are relevant to libertarian theory. Considerations of "human nature" are the "state of nature", as examined in the classical works of Hobbes and Locke, are closely linked since the "state of nature" is developed into an abstraction within which the consequences of "human nature" for human interaction can be examined (6.).

Amongst the fundamental characteristics of human nature stressed by libertarians are the requirement for purposive action to maintain ones existence, the human capacity for reason as a means of guiding that action and the requirement for interaction between individuals to secure at least those minimal conditions for existence. From these first principles many libertarian theorists develop their entire theories of politics, economics, law and "human action". However, important distinctions must be made between those theories essentially descriptive or analytical of human behaviour (7.), and those which use them to develop normative theories about the proper role of the state (8.).

A great deal has been said of the assumption of "self-interested" individuals in libertarian writing. Similarly, the characterisation of "market man" as acquisitive, naturally unequal and self serving is regarded by critics of libertarian writing as ontologically prior to "social man" in libertarian theory and, therefore, inaccurate (9.). However, these characteristics must logically be of a secondary, or derivative, order to libertarian writers. With self-interest deriving from the reasoning of individuals and shelter and acquisitiveness deriving from the needs for existence (food, clothing). The logic of libertarian arguments must be universally applicable. Clearly, rights, and other factors in human interaction apply even to those who, like the critic, consider themselves guided by other than self-interest or acquisitiveness. Indeed, this very diversity of human ends is basic in libertarian theory.

These secondary characteristics derive from the concept of "individualism" which has two difference aspects: "ethical individualism" and "methodological individualism". Ethical individualism as typified by the works of Ayn Rand (10.), founds ethics in the consideration of individuals actions and individual rather than collective effects and benefits. Typically a morality of "rational self-interest" or "rational egoism" is proposed as a guide to individual action and as a source of generalisations about what behaviour is legitimate in public affairs.

Methodological individualism is the means which authors in the libertarian tradition propose as the basis for the study of human societies. Founded in the study of "the actions of individual men" (11.), this approach is emphasised by the "Austrian School" of economics, and adopted by Public Choice theorists (12.) who seek to explain the actions of individual decision makers in terms of furthering their own interests, however they are defined.

Though the consideration of "rights" is amongst the most difficult problems of political philosophy and related studies, many libertarian writings are grounded in a theory of rights. Rothbard (13.) establishes a "non-aggression" axiom as the basis of the "libertarian creed". He suggests three general foundations for this axiom of which the natural rights foundation is only one. Utilitarian defenders of libertarianism reject the notion of "natural law" or "natural rights" on ground widely upheld by mainstream philosophy (14.).

This central axiom is epitomised by the fundamental principle of the Australian Progress Party, which states that "No person or group of people has the right to initiate the use of fraud, force or coercion against any other person or group of people" (15.). This axiom is derived from a theory of rights rather than being a statement of the theory itself.

The foundations of a theory of "human rights" are divided between those who base the theory on a fundamental "Right to Life" (16.) or those basing it on a Lockean formulation of property rights (17.), amongst which is the essential inalienable right to property in one's person. From these rights - which form the basis of legal and ethical side-constraints against assault, slavery, conscription, murder and other crimes against the person - are derived rights to property in the form of the products of one's labour and the right to trade those products. Whilst the status of "real property" presents problems to libertarians, these are usually met by following Locke's argument that if "he hath mixed his labour with it, and joined it to something that is his own, [he] thereby makes it his property." (18.). Friedman (19.), however, points out that only a fraction of all capital in the United States is "real property"; most is improved land, machinery, household items and such, which have clear origins in either the labour or thought of individuals and has subsequently been traded.

The consequences of these rights lie in the realms of individual action, politics, the role of the state, and the law. Libertarians see the law as prior to the state (20.). The law provides constraints on the action of all individuals, even those who might act on behalf of government. At this point "anarcho-capitalist" libertarians conclude that the state itself must necessarily infringe rights to choose those who will protect person and property, to choose an independent arbitrator, and will

infringe rights to property by enforcing payment for those services which it monopolises (21.) : thus the libertarian injunction that "Taxation is Theft", turning Proudhon's claims about property (22.) on their head. Indeed taxation and theft are seen as almost exactly analogous, both involve coercively enforced appropriation of property which is then used for purposes decided independents of the wishes of the original owner.

In another formulation of the argument that taxation and therefore, the state, is immoral, Rothbard (23.) says the income tax is a form of slavery, or involuntary servitude, in which a percentage of ones labour must be devoted to the state before private purposes can be considered. The analogy is drawn between the taxpayer and medieval serfs who might give, say, a quarter of their produce or three months of the year to their overlord, in return for protection (24.).

The libertarian concept of "rights" only limits individual action to the extent that other people's equal rights are not infringed. Thus it has been branded as a system of "negative rights" (25.). Commonly, libertarians will deny a right to welfare payments, minimise sustenance, shelter or support for those unable to support themselves, on the grounds that these are in themselves not rights (although there might be reasons for voluntary support), and that providing for these claims will infringe the actual rights of taxpayers. Similarly, "negative" liberty prevents the consideration in law of "victimless crimes" such as drug taking, prostitution, lewd writing, homosexuality, and other matters of private concern, which will not directly infringe the liberty of another person. Libertarians also see the enforcement of property rights as the positive means of solving problems of pollution, the environment and disputes over the use of what are now "public goods" (26.).

To this point most libertarian who accept the "natural rights" argument agree, but in examining the question of how people's "rights" will be ensured they diverge. According to the "anarcho-capitalist", rights should be secured by the actions of agencies formed for this purpose by those wishing to secure their rights (27.). Based on the different choices which people might make about the rights protecting agency most appropriate to them, a complex system of institutional arrangements will evolve to prevent infringement of rights, provide restitution on the violation of rights and resolve disputes between parties involved (28.). This leads the anarcho-capitalist to reject the legitimacy of the state, and with it notions of sovereignty, nationhood (in particularly the modern nation state), and parliaments, among other things. This has lead critics to describe the anarchist strain of libertarianism as a denial of politics (29.). The anarcho-capitalist theorists combine the conclusions of anarchism that the state is immoral, with a well developed theory about he mechanisms for voluntary action which will perform the necessary functions which have traditionally been the role of the state.

Another libertarian response to this problem of rights is to suggest that the preservation of rights provides the sole rationale for the existence of the state (30.). Thus the state protects rights through a system of courts to prove determination of rights infringements and to arbitrate in disputes

about property rights; a system of police to enforce those determinations; and a defence force with the function of protecting this framework from external threat. For the libertarian these functions are to be minimal. Hence the "minimal state" which is an essential, though not sufficient condition for libertarian democracy. It is at this juncture that the libertarian concern about the corrupting effects of power is most discernable. Thus the need for institutional limits on both state and government through radical versions of such classic measures as constitutionalism, division of powers, Bills of Rights limiting the sphere of government interests, public scrutiny and other means. In these matters libertarians consider that the liberal state has failed, becoming manifestly etatist.

For all libertarians the essential characteristic of the state is its monopoly of the legitimised use of coercion in a given geographical area. Minimal state libertarians argue that this monopoly is legitimate if used in proportional retaliation against infringements of people's rights. For anarcho-capitalists however, this monopoly itself infringes rights, and grants monopolies in the very area where they might be most dangerous. Advocates of the minimal state are not necessarily hostile to government, however they are opposed to the extension of state power beyond strict limited.

In providing a comprehensive critique of the modern state, libertarianism, at least superficially, shares ground with Marxism. However, as illustrated by Rothbard (31.), it is grounded in concepts of natural law and shares with conservatism the idea of defending rights, not through legislation per se, but through appeals to longstanding traditions, precedents and procedures, which have evolved over time.

THE LIBERTARIAN ACCOUNT OF ECONOMICS

The "Minimal-state" libertarian's theory of government has strong affinities with the "laissez-faire" school of classical liberal thought, particularly concerning free-trade and economic regulation.

Whilst the rights based theories of libertarianism are founded in philosophical speculation, utilitarian proponents of liberty base their conclusions on the study of the means appropriate to achieving given ends. They argue (and other libertarians agree) that if the desired ends are individual freedom and maximum prosperity then, of the alternatives proposed, that of the free-market is the most efficacious means of preserving liberty and economic prosperity. The market, according to libertarians, is based on voluntary exchange agreements and contracts, which through mutual consent can infringe the rights of neither party (32.). (There are some interesting issues here - Rothbard argues that since property rights in one's body and will are inalienable - a voluntary commitment to service in the form of selling yourself into slavery is illegitimate and therefore void. Similarly, contractual agreements must not infringe the equal rights of third parties).

In this, libertarians have been greatly influenced by the "Austrian" school of economics. Through its critique of the "labour theory of value", Austrian theory provides substantive grounds to challenge Marxism as an alternative means of examining capitalist production (33.). In particular, the Austrian

school rejected the "economic planning" of socialism (34.) and the very idea of a "mixed economy" which, Hayek, in *The Road to Serfdom* (35.), argues will lead to an ever increasing intervention in people's affairs by government.

In the tradition of "value free" social science, the Austrian theory can not comment, for example, on the ethical proposition that taxation is wrong. It can demonstrate the effects of different systems of taxation and provide criticisms of the uses of tax funds. According to the "Austrian" economists regulation will fail for numerous reasons. Amongst these are the Principle of Uncertainty (or imperfect knowledge) and the assumption of purposive human action (36.). Uncertainty will hinder regulation since the regulator can never know all of the factors which might impact on decisions and flow from them. The market, as a complex system of price signals sending information about the decisions of all participants, can not be duplicated or anticipated by the regulator.

The classic example of the type of problem faced is that of price control (37.). If governments, or their agents, determine a fixed price for a good, they will do so either below the price it would otherwise trade at to prevent consumers becoming unable to afford the product, or above that price to provide support for producers. It is almost a truism in economics that the lower than market price will lead to shortages, as example being the availability of housing under rent controls, while the high price will lead to surpluses as the "mountains" of European Economic Community agricultural produce illustrates. Thus the would-be controller of prices must often seek to approximate the market price anyway. Event to know the consequences of a control, the market or equilibrium price must be known. It is this prediction which is not feasible since the number of individual decisions which lead to a market price, are too large to anticipate and are not known in advance of the decisions which a control preempts.

The conundrum of price control has wide ramifications since it applies not only to markets for goods but also to markets for labour and money. To the extent that subsidies send incorrect information to market participants they will also lead to an allocation of resources which would not otherwise be the case and is based on the false assumptions of market participants. The discovery o this error can have drastic effects as appropriate changes are made to correct past actions. Again, these effects can be very wide as a subsidy, for example, to a tin producer, sends false information to the tin market, the stock market which listed the tin producer, the finance market which provided credit for the producer, the labour market which supplied labour to the producer and so on.

The mechanisms of such decisions lead to the Austrian theory of the business cycle which need not be examined here in detail. This theory has important implications for the understanding of the history of capitalism and the reasons why some people reject it (38.). The Great Depression is explained not as a failure of capitalism to automatically reach equilibrium between aggregate supply and demand and hence full employment as in a Keynesian model (39.). Nor as just the result of the monetary policy of the Federal Reserve Board, as suggested by Monetarists (40.). Rather, the Austrian analysis, based on the trade cycle work of Hayek (41.), looks at the effects of the monetary

system on decisions and allocations of economic participants. The conclusions to be drawn from this analysis are not that an appropriate economic policy mix or a sound monetary policy would have solved the problems, but that in the dynamic mechanism of the economy, any attempt to guide the economy will potentially upset its operation (42.). According to Austrian theory a market free of regulation will not eliminate cyclical movements in the economy but will see the effects being limited to particular markets, thus ensuring less extreme cycles and the more rapid righting of the problems involved.

Ludwig von Mises (43.) has described international free-trade as the best means of preventing war and preserving peaceful co-existence between different nationalities. Tariffs, quotas and bounties are all condemned by a large body of economic theory as costing particular consumers of goods for the benefit of sectional interests. Libertarians place particular emphasis on global free trade and its corollary of free-movement around the world for all individuals. State protectionism to secure the employment of people in Western countries is presented as one of the principle external limits to the further economic progress of "third-world" countries. Whilst accepting the good intentions of those who propose the protection of people and industries, their policies are rejected as misguided and counterproductive. They draw on historical experience to illustrate that protection actually increases conflict between people and nations, and compounds the problems it seeks to solve.

Other economic arguments drawn on by libertarians include the suggestion that safety and quality regulations setting minimum standards inadvertently produce a maximum standard and reduce the incentives for improvement, in effect reducing average levels of safety or quality and depriving the consumer of the protection which reputation or goodwill can provide (4.). They also argue that the provision of welfare not only removes incentive, but in combination with minimum wage laws reduces the welfare of people whose labour would otherwise provide an income between the value of welfare and that of the minimum wage. A great deal of recent Australian writing considers the impact of labour market regulation, concluding that its detrimental effects include higher unemployment, lower wages for some, inflationary effects and productive inefficiency (45.).

Economists provide two standard arguments for the larger role of government in an essentially capitalist economy (46.). The libertarians are necessarily revisionist in this area. Some economists suggest that "market failure" is manifested in the rise of monopolies, or collusion between the major competitors at the expense of smaller competitors. The solutions offered include measures such as the United States antitrust laws. Libertarians attribute the rise of most monopolies to the granting of privilege through tariffs, subventions, infrastructure support, and similar measures to established firms, limiting competition. It is suggested that on a free market, collusion will inevitable break down and fail as the benefit of being the first firm to breach an agreement and the costs of being the last adherent are weighed up. The monopolist will always be subject to smaller competitors. It is also pointed out that the largest monopolies are controlled by the state. Legislation is the basis of monopolies in post and telecommunications, the marketing of agricultural products, railways,

suburban transport, public utilities, duopoly in airlines, and similar circumstances in other industries (47.).

The other aspect of "market failure" is in the provision of "public goods". Public goods are goods of such a nature that they can not be provided to an individual without also providing them to a wider group. Given this, there is an incentive for each person to opt out of paying for the good, in which case it will not be provided at all even if each person would benefit from its provision. The solution is to force each person to pay for the good, through the taxation system. Thus government becomes the provider of "public goods", a function envisaged by Adam Smith (48.).

Examples of "public goods" are clean air, national defence, open roads and items of aesthetic beauty. The "public good" problem is considered in detail by David Friedman (49.) the libertarian son of economist Milton Friedman. He suggests that several solutions to the problem exist. The include contracts with unanimous acceptance clauses, making a public good private through the institution of property rights (or in the case of pollution, enforcing rights which government legislation has waived), or voluntary sanctions on those who don't chip in. However, national defence still provides the most difficult problem for libertarians (50.).

The consideration of economics by libertarians outlined above leads them to the conclusion that market solutions are efficient, in accord with peoples rights and better at securing people's welfare than any of the alternatives. However, the libertarians strongest reasons for endorsing laissez-faire derives from the argument that denial of economic liberty in whole or in part leads to the arrogation of liberty in general. This is the thesis of Hayek's *The Road to Serfdom* (51.).

In an argument, which has had a profound impact on contemporary advocates of the free-market, Hayek suggests that the central direction of economic resources necessarily involves ever-increasing infringements on liberty. For example:

* The determination of uses of paper and limited printing resources, if not determined by choices in a free-market, will lead to judgments by those in authority over what should be printed, limiting freedom of speech.

* The difficulties of many people desiring entry to the same jobs and none wanting to perform others will prompt central labour planning if a wages market is not allowed to operate.

* Limited means available to support artists, musicians and others whose income is based on the different valuations of a multitude of people would require judgements to be made by arbitrary means.

Apart from these restrictions in a more totally planned economy, Hayek argues that the economic problems with planning of any kind will lead to increasing restrictions on individual choices and actions as well as greater limits to the operations of business. The limited knowledge of the planner can only be rectified by directing the operations of the economy. This process of

misconceived planning leading to economic restrictions, undermining democracy, promoting the "rise of the worst" to positions of power is what Hayek described as the "road to serfdom".

For Hayek the alternative path of capitalism provides many benefits which act against the tendency for a concentration of power. In traditional pluralist terms Hayek and his successors point out that capitalism provides the means by which its opponents propagate their ideas (52.). It disperses economic resources widely so that no group or government can have a monopoly on sources of information or media presenting it. These are benefits in addition to those of prosperity and justice.

THE ETHICAL FOUNDATIONS OF LIMITED GOVERNMENT

If one accepts the economic achievements claimed for laissez-faire capitalism, and many do not, it is relevant to question why it is not popular with either governments or voters. Many critics dispute the claims made for laissez-faire, blaming it for child labour in coal mines and textile factories, the relatively poor living conditions of most people in 18th century Britain, massive inequality in wealth, and powerful economic, and landed interests dictating terms to governments (53.). Libertarians would challenge many of these assertions about the effects of laissez-faire capitalism contrasting this period with earlier periods and alternative systems (54.). Other critics, including Marx, have accepted that capitalism has increased people's welfare and produced great material wealth, but none-the-less reject it as a desirable form of government (55.). The reasons why they do this, point to one of the major characteristics of contemporary libertarian thought: the attempt to define a moral basis for laissez-faire. There are many approaches to this, but two are broadly representative of others. The first points to the utilitarian aspects of a superior performance in providing for people's wants and needs, before it attempts to demonstrate that laissez-faire, or libertarian proscriptions do not infringe moral constraints and they fulfil other desirable functions, a libertarian society would be moral, indeed more moral than any of the proposed alternatives (56.). This approach can be further bolstered by introducing the consideration of rights.

The second and most distinctive approach to a moral defence of libertarianism is that typified by the work of Ayn Rand (57.), which proposes a morality of "rational self-interest" which is uniquely compatible with a political order based on laissez-faire capitalism and the minimal state. Whilst Rand's political theory is rights based, her system of ethics rejects altruism as a basis for ethical behaviour. Rand's system of ethics is based on an individual hierarchy of values. Living one's own life is necessarily the foremost of these. Rand condemns altruism on the ground that it sacrifices higher values for the sake of lesser ones, and raises this to a supreme virtue. Thus she dismisses the idea that citizens have a duty to attend to the material welfare of others. She argues that the individual value of ones own life is supreme. Within this framework Rand sees a role for benevolence based on the free choice of an individual to assist others in recognition of ones own values manifested in another. For Rand it is a denial of the most fundamental rights for the state to use private monies (which might be used to finance support for family and friends, charitable trusts, a

new car of a fashionable hairdo) for general purposes which they might not agree with and have no duty or obligation to observe.

Rand has many strident critics. According to some of them her "philosophy" amounts to little more than a justification of a narrowly based self interest and hedonism (58). This is also a common response to the libertarian minimal state, which will not protect people's moral wellbeing, but only their rights. These responses to Rand do not recognise the subtly of her position (which might however be challenged (59.) on other grounds). Whilst her account of politics insists on complete liberty to pursue subjective values as long as the rights of others are not infringed, her account of ethics seeks to place personal ethics on an objective basis. In some ways it is a highly radicalised version of Enlightenment thought combined with more recent variants of political economy. She posits reason; productivity and self esteem (60.) as the personal virtues on which civil society and mutual benefit are founded. However, for Rand, objectivity eschews collectivism since each person must come to these conclusions by themselves. She assumes that these conclusions are not only desirable and necessary for human progress, but are also likely to be reached given the removal of the intellectual, moral, and ethical stumbling blocks to what she posits as right reason.

The major writings of Ayn Rand are contained in fictional novels and are therefore open to a variety of interpretations, so much so that the former Australian Prime Minister, Malcolm Fraser, found an affinity with her writing (61.). However, integral to Rand's moral defence of capitalism is a rejection of altruism, collectivism and anything that might involve mystical belief. In these areas, the work of Rand is indispensable to any understanding of contemporary libertarian thought and directions.

Moral and ethical considerations are important in many libertarian critiques of contemporary politics and government. Hayek's critique of the very concept of "social justice" is also motivated by moral and ethical considerations (62.). In fact, his position is advanced in defence of morality, ethics and justice. Hayek argues that "with reference to a society of free men, the phrase (social justice) has no meaning whatever" (63.). He further argues that only the conduct of individual actors can be termed just but not the result of their actions, assuming that their conduct was itself just. Thus the process of a market with a series of individual actions, be they guided by beneficent processes which give rise to the "invisible hand" analogy, or not, can not be subjected to criteria such as justice. The market is like a game in which if the rules are followed the end result is valid. It might not be considered laudable that Michael Jordan is a richer man than the great scientist or painter, but it can not be considered unjust, and none can be held responsible for an injustice. If justice is a term with meaning then in Hayek's system it must refer to those rules of individual conduct, which, once observed, can not be contradicted by a situation which emerges after the event. In order words, one cannot do the right thing in terms of justice and at the same time do the wrong thing according to "social" justice.

At this stage Hayek's argument becomes very similar to that of Nozick (64.) in his critique of "end state" principles of justice. Not only do "end state" or "patterned" principles of justice infringe rights themselves, but under liberty they are not stable and will inevitably be upset. For Nozick procedural justice and just acquisition are the relevant considerations for a "just" society. However, Nozick's conception of justice can still lead to proposals for radial reform. It is quite possible that, particularly with land, a just procedure for acquisition and transfer has not been followed. As Nozick (65.) points out, the concept of "social justice" begs the question as to what type of "end state" distribution of distributional pattern is to be considered just.

CRITICS OF LIBERTARIANISM

There are many important critiques of libertarian ideas which date back to the responses of Marx or Hobhouse (66.) to laissez-faire. However, a number of works have considered libertarian ideas, and others are specifically relevant to the application of these ideas in Australia. Whilst not debating these criticisms they should be kept in mind as possible explanations for any resistance to libertarian ideas in Australia.

The most prolific academic critic of libertarianism in Australia is Marian Sawer (67.). Her critique draws on criticisms of earlier "liberals" which dismissed laissez-faire for its lack of social provision for those who fail in the market place and for failing to tackle the problems of unequal power based on wealth, in contractual arrangements. Sawer starts with the libertarian notion of property, suggesting that it ignores the social basis of property, knowledge and the products of the entrepreneur. In suggesting that individual rationality might add up to collective irrationality (the fallacy of composition) 68.), Sawer asserts notions of social justice as a historical reality and a response to "collective irrationality". In these areas Sawer is representative of critics of libertarian ideas, and seeks to tackle them head on by reasserting the ideas libertarian authors have rejected. However, in considering the libertarian concept of human nature Sawer presents a caricature of "libertarian man" which reflects what she sees in later works as the merging of "neo-liberal" and "neo-conservative" thought in Australia (69.). This caricature relies on extending the notion of the way in which people interact in a market to all realms of human action, and an emphasis on a perceived hostility to women and their interests. Whilst libertarians do not suggest a split in human nature between business and the rest of people's lives they do envisage a range of voluntary forms of collective action, which do not involve the state and the ultimate sanction of legislation. Libertarians do not seek to deny those aspects of people's nature which complement the distinctive and relevant characteristic of rationality. Similarly, the tensions Sawer sees between an emphasis on the family as a basic social unit and the interests of women (70.) is not a tension within libertarian thought, but, as Sawer acknowledges elsewhere (71) a tension between libertarians and others who defend the free-market. Libertarian thought can not encompass any legislative or social restrictions on the actions and careers women might wish to pursue. Whilst Sawer suggests that the desire to do away with the

public sector will remove the area where women have been most successful (72.), it might be pointed out that women are least well represented in the most heavily unionised industries. It should also be noted that this correlation need not represent causal effects.

The most common point raised against libertarian thinkers is that they have not developed an understanding of the full sweep of power (73.). It is suggested that libertarians are obsessed with political power and consequently ignore the exercise of economic and social power. Economic power is wielded through the necessity to purchase the rudiments of survival and through disproportionate access to the origins of justice in the legal system. The libertarian response suggests that its critics here can not see the other side of the coin, with the link between political and economic freedom.

Some typical Australian responses to libertarian ideas suggest that whilst they might be relevant in America they are inimical to the Australian character (74.). These critics point to the historical dependence of the Australian people on the state for the provision of infrastructure, the convict heritage, the long tradition of protectionism and an "egalitarian" national tradition.

Many other areas exist in which libertarian ideas can be tackled. They include the realms of rights theory, economics, historical context and logic. These remain part of ongoing debate which can be followed up elsewhere. Typical of this debate is that surrounding the work of Rawls and Nozick. There is also a conservative critique of libertarianism which denies libertarian concepts of human nature, asserting that man is innately flawed by original sin, rejects most concepts of "rights", and suggests some essential need for order, direction and community links. These arguments, typified by the response of Edmund Burke to the French Revolution (75.) or more recently expounded by Roger Scruton, are important, but have few articulate Australian Exponents.

SUMMARY

There are a number of libertarian authors who consider a range of other aspects of social thought, including philosophy, democracy, the role of women, critiques of egalitarianism, welfare state policies, vested interest groups, corporatism and public corruption, revisionist history, the history of ideas and the rise of fascism. Not all of these can be considered here, but they are based on the essential characteristics of libertarian thought discussed above.

These characteristics include:

- A concept of human nature based on rational individuals pursuing self determined ends.
- An emphasis on ideas as motivating human action.
- A defence of limited government based on a theory of rights or a rejection of any more extensive functions as undermining the pursuit of individual (subjective) ends. In some cases the state is limited to no functions at all.

- Support for a laissez-faire free market based on a system of property rights and contractual arrangements.
- "Social" as well as "economic" liberty, based on the removal of government from the sphere of "victimless crimes" which, by definition, infringe no ones rights, such as homosexuality, drug taking, being a communist, a bigamist, a capitalist, etc, etc.
- The pursuit of limited government through procedural limits such as bi-cameralism, constitutions, federalism, democracy based on a wide franchise and other measures with a basis in the liberal tradition.

To consider a person or group libertarian, all of these positions should be reflected to some degree. In the diversity of thought that makes up the intellectual climate of a country or people will accept some aspects of libertarian thought and dismiss others. They will derive ideas similar to libertarian ideas independently or from difference sources. Libertarians themselves will be influenced by other ideas and by circumstances independent of intellectual debate. The extent to which libertarian influences are manifested in Australia is considered in the rest of this paper.

Libertarians question the role of government in every aspect of its activities. Yet, it has traditionally been thought that to change something in society, like government, one must get involved in it. However, for libertarians, modern government is not just in error and capable of being altered. At every step governments and their agents are seen as being involved in immoral activity. How then, will libertarians change government without themselves becoming a part of its activities? This presents a difficult problem for libertarians. The recent efforts of Australian libertarians at achieving change by "moral" means are the subject of the following chapters.

CHAPTER 2
THEORY IN PRACTICE 1: POLITICAL PARTIES

In many areas libertarian ideas follow the same lines of thought as those presented in the rhetoric of the major political parties and other significant actors in the political process. Liberal or conservative parties call for less taxation while libertarians would look to its eventual abolition. "Civil Libertarians" associated with the left and the Labor Party call for freedom of thought and conscience, but libertarians advocate the further freedom to trade, even if this results in monopoly or the concentration of economic resources. There is a role for people advocating libertarian ideas to do so within the major political parties, yet the experience of people doing this has led to disenchantment, cynicism about the motives of the members of large parties, and a range of attempts to find other means of achieving their goals within the democratic process. The distaste of libertarians for many aspects of the political process derives directly from their ideas about what the state should do and how it should be done.

Libertarians' primary political goals are to stop or limit the political means rather than gain control of it. Since this is seen as a matter of principle rather than prudence, institutional barriers to the actions of parties and governments are preferable to simply having a favourable government. Measures such as a Hare-Clarke electoral system, differently constituted dual chambers, Bills of Rights enforced by a High Court, federalism, division of powers, constitutional enforcement of balanced budgets and constitutions themselves are seen as the long term means of maintaining a free society. These are the type of projects which find little favour or low priority with political parties pursuing government. However, these themes are not themselves exclusively libertarian.

There are many important criticisms of the operation of the political process which have particular relevance to libertarians. The Public Choice argument (1.) that politicians pursuing votes will favour particular interest groups who can deliver a definite parcel of votes, at the expense of all other people, supports the implicit reluctance of libertarians to place their faith in particular politicians. Hayek's (2.) description of modern democracy presents it as confusing the "Nomos", or the Rule of Liberty which is universally applicable, with "Thesis", the law of legislation which dominates the consideration of most parliaments. Many parliamentary systems can be seen as majoritarian rather than representative. Given that a legislature is restricted to those minimal functions of preserving people's rights it should, in a libertarian model, be as broadly representative as possible. Tullock (3.) has gone so far as to propose a system where each person could be individually represented in the decisions of the Legislature if they desired. Many authors have identified a tension in Australian politics between an American model of democracy, and a Westminster model (4.). In considering democracy most people in the libertarian tradition would come down on the side of the

American model. However, effective means of promoting these ideas to those people who's actions they seek to constrain are not readily apparent.

The short term considerations of winning elections and governing people are alien to many libertarians who wish to live by the creed "live and let live". The choices which emerge in the daily work of a Legislature or the debate of a political party are seen by libertarians as being between different types of intervention, regulation and taxation, ignoring the more fundamental option of non-intervention.

The experience of libertarians with each of the major political parties in Australia has differed, reflecting the divergent origins of those parties, but leading to similar conclusions.

THE LIBERAL PARTY

The Australian party apparently closest to the ideas presented in libertarian thought is the Liberal Party. It claims to adhere to "Liberal Philosophy", believe in free-trade, property, and, like all parties liberty and freedom (5.). Because of this it is the party which has drawn to it the largest number of people who have been influenced by libertarian thought. It is also the party which has contributed to the disenchantment of more people who combine a belief in both social and economic liberty than any other Australian political party.

In practice Liberal governments at the State and Federal level can, with some justification, be seen as neither particularly inclined towards the free market or individual liberties. No libertarian would expect to dominate that wide historical alliance of different views represented by the Liberal Party.

What has lead to disenchantment with the Liberal Party is that even when free-market policies have been widely accepted in the party and the electorate, Liberal governments have not lived up to the expectations of their more libertarian supporters (and no doubt others) and often acted contrary to some of the most important libertarian principles.

Perhaps the most important departure from the more libertarian principles of Liberal Party members was the introduction of retrospective tax avoidance legislation by the Fraser government in 1982. Before then a long tradition of protectionism under the Menzies government, particularly under the influence of Country Party Trade Minister McEwen, was only opposed with any degree of consistency by Mr Bert Kelly M.H.R.. This is a tradition which has only been withdrawn from reluctantly and over a long period of time. Similarly, state Liberal governments preside over a panoply of subsidies and market interventions in agriculture, mining and housing; restricted trading hours; transport regulation; government owned banks, insurance companies, utility monopolies; licensing of professions, tradesmen, vehicles, businesses, and a range of other interventions which are a long way from the ideals of proponents of the free-market. Liberal Party governments have been

reluctant to remove any of these measures and despite the suggested change towards a "dry" or economic rationalist policy many leading Liberal politicians remain skeptical about such change.

Beyond the economic policies of Liberal governments are the more conservative responses of the Liberal Party to such issues as the primacy of the family and "proper" social institutions, a reaction against "alternative lifestyles", and a defence and foreign policy which is seen as having interventionist pretensions, which those with libertarian inclinations are likely to reject. The best examples of controversy over these issues are the attempt to ban the Communist Party in 1951, and the debate over conscription, particularly at the time of the Vietnam War. These challenges to civil liberties aroused the more libertarian feelings of Australians across partisan political affiliations.

The actions of Liberal Party governments have drawn particular acrimony from free-marketeers who, with the benefit of hindsight, see the Liberal Party as having discredited the ideas of free-enterprise and individual liberty. From a libertarian viewpoint, Bob Howard and John Singleton, describe the platforms of the Liberal and National-Country Parties as "a sick joke" (6.) and characterise the senior members of these parties as charlatans interested only in power.

The small group of "dries" on the back bench of the Fraser government were people who whilst not "libertarian", were influenced by libertarian writings and sentiments. They believed in free trade and were amongst the more "liberal" parliamentarians on those social issues which rarely come before the federal parliament (7.). When in government this "dry" influence appeared to have a minor but constant influence on such issues as trade and tariffs, welfare policy and the de-regulation of airlines and financial institutions. These positions were backed up by a number of reports from the Industries Assistance Commission, and government committees such as that which produced the Campbell Report (8.).

Since the 1983 election loss of the Fraser government it has been widely suggested that the Liberal Party opposition is dominated by a "dry" point of view. This is more accurate in relation to the economic policy of the party than other policy areas. It reflects changes in economic theory and a response to the stagflation of the 1970's as much as a fundamental change in the orientation of the party to a "dry" philosophy. These are changes that have been reflected in the policy of the Labor government of the same period, which has continued the efforts at financial deregulation of their predecessors and proposed measures such as ending the two-airline agreement. The changes in the Liberal Party towards a "dry" policy stance mirror the changes in almost all other political parties. Although it is too soon to make such judgments in a definitive way, it would seem that the ideas current in the Liberal Party are, with a few exceptions, influenced more by trends outside the party than a "classical liberal" revival from within. There have been no "libertarian" parliamentarians, or speeches indicating a large debt to libertarian ideas, from Liberal Party members of state and federal Parliaments. Debate on such issues as the Bill of Rights Bill 1986, aboriginal land rights, and social policy would tend to reinforce the point of view that conservatism is a powerful influence on the Liberal Party. Few members of the Liberal Party, would make the mistake of Ronald Reagan, who,

after describing himself as a libertarian, was criticised in an avalanche of letters from libertarians defending the meaning of the term. The loose catch-all labels "liberal-conservative", "neo-conservative", "economic rationalist", "economic libertarian" or "social libertarian" are usually more amenable to the major political actors in the Liberal Party.

It is perhaps significant that in the eleven factions which Professor O'Brien (8.) has identified in the Liberal Party non is "libertarian". Yet of those across the factions many would have read or have an opinion on the works of Hayek, Milton Friedman, or Ayn Rand, and a few know of Murray Rothbard, David Friedman and Robert Nozick. Many libertarians have lost interest in the Liberal Party, but it seems that sections within the Liberal Party have not lost interest in libertarian ideas.

THE NATIONAL PARTY

The evolution of the National Party from its origins in the rural lobbying organisations shows little impact of any explicit theories of politics or ideas about politics. The support of rural industries was sought through protectionist policies and subsidies pursued by the Menzies Governments of the post war period. McEwen was seen to actively court industrial leaders through the offering of protection to manufacturing industries. Later, the National Party under Doug Anthony was blamed for the failure of the coalition government to float the currency.

With the continued electoral success of the National Party in Queensland some libertarians have thought that its small size and very lack of ideas provided an opportunity for the National Party to become the new party of "free enterprise". The influence of some libertarians on the National Party can be seen in the recent advocacy of single-rate tax. This was evidenced by explicit statements in libertarian journals and the National Party's endorsement of James MacDonald, formerly a prominent member of the libertarian Workers and Progress Parties, as a Senate candidate in Western Australia.

Earlier, the Western Australian National Country Party had been supported by Lang Hancock, who had also expressed moral support for the objectives of the Workers Party. However, his support for the aborted "Canberra push" of Joh Bjelke-Petersen was not an indication of their common libertarian belief, but rather common attitudes to development of the north, conservation and mining and a shared picture of social and economic ills of the country (9.). The role of the Queensland National Party is linked with the notion of the "new right" which will be considered later. Support for the National Party is certainly not an obvious course for libertarians. The record of the National Party in Queensland is a long way from the libertarian ideal (10.). Evidence about the role of the state in health, business investment, regulation and patronage does not show the influence of free-market ideas. The infamous restrictions on public assembly, homosexuality and contraceptive vending machines suggests that the Queensland National Party would be the subject of criticism from those promoting libertarian ideas. None-the-less some libertarians have identified the need for some links with people who have different but related objectives and hence attempt to influence mainstream

parties through a broad alliance. The idea of an anti-labor popular front is what leads to the involvement of some libertarians (particularly those who see the ALP as a socialist party) in the National Party, rather than ideas or policies which are other than incidentally similar.

The National Party has tended to draw support from its image as a party of farmers, miners and "rugged individualists", but behind this image is the lingering suggestion that it is only the "rugged" individual which is of value rather than the celebration of diversity, innovation, intellectual thought, and uniqueness which characterises most libertarian thought.

THE AUSTRALIAN LABOR PARTY

The Australian Labor Party (ALP) is apparently the party least susceptible to libertarian influence. However the endorsement by the Hawke Government of financial deregulation and the proposals to sell certain business operations of the government (privatisation) combined with the support for the ALP by former Workers' Party Chairman, John Singleton, raises interesting questions. Singleton and Howard in *Rip Van Australian* conceded that the ALP was the most honest, consistent and principled major party (11.); believing openly in socialism. It was suggested that many who had been "seduced" by socialism has a genuine commitment to individual liberty. All that they needed was to understand the importance of the free-market in preserving liberty. It has been the New South Wales based Labor Unity faction of the ALP which has shown the most interest in market based solutions for problems which have been the traditional concerns of the ALP.

Any changes in these elements of the ALP can be se as the result of much wider trends in thought rather than the specific influence of libertarians or libertarian ideas. Robert Nozick has been widely read amongst academics and many involved in the Labor Party. His work and others might aid in a questioning of some traditional socialist values and methods. For a long time ALP professionals formed the basis of the Civil Liberties Councils, which were faced with a dilemma over support for the ID card proposals of the Labor Government. Faced with this dilemma it was the libertarian response which was predominant.

The ALP is also important as the focus for a response and opposition to the goals and ideas of libertarians (12.). Thus many libertarians have been grouped with others in speeches by members of the ALP warning against the "new right". That these responses are made is an indication of the impact of libertarian ideas in a range of unexpected places.

THE WORKERS AND PROGRESS PARTIES

The Workers Party has its origins in Sydney amongst a group of libertarians who met under the banner of the "Alliance for Individual Rights". The Alliance had begun as an Ayn Rand discussion group (13.). Some members had published the journal *Free Enterprise* since October 1973 (14.). The Party was launched after the successful advertising executive John Singleton had

expressed an interest in forming a new political party, having become disenchanted with the Liberals in New South Wales. At its launch on the 25th January 1975 the Workers Party brought together libertarians, people involved in the mining industry, small business people, professionals such as Dr John Whiting (he Foundation President) and Dr Duncan Yuille (a Party Director), and a number of others who were frightened by the apparent future of Australia under the Whitlam Labor Government, but were cynical about the Liberal Party alternative. The publicity which the Sydney Opera House launch received contributed to an early growth in membership from a broad spectrum of supporters. By 3rd May 1975 the new party had a National membership of 600 (15.). Its first electoral test was the Greenough by-election on 1st November 1975, where the party gained 841 votes representing 13% of the total votes cast (16.). This result and the hope of a Senate seat lead to a vigorous National campaign in the double dissolution election of 13th December 1975. In the dramatic battle between Malcolm Fraser and Gough Whitlam the Workers Party was unable to gain a foothold with figures of about 1% of the vote in Western Australia, and only slightly better results elsewhere (17.).

Arguably, the Workers Party never fully recovered from this. The overwhelming electoral success of the Liberal Party in the 1975 election mitigated against potential support from those believing that the Liberal Party was ineffectual, although perhaps its record in government contributed to the revival of the Progress Party in later years. At the time, the issues identified (18.) as the biggest problems of the Party in various states were, by and large, the pragmatic considerations of its name, the organisation and constitution and the role and status of its platform. These problems represent the concrete manifestations of more general difficulties which the Party had.

It was primarily these problems which were at issue in the Party split of 1977 which saw the inception of the Progress Party and the literal end to the Party which had begun to decline after the 1975 election. Before this the fledgling Party in Western Australia had divisions over what, in retrospect, can be seen as minor organisational matters. Seeing the Workers Party as a party committed to the implementation of certain well established ideas, its early members were concerned about the risk of being dominated by an influx of people less committed to the objectives of the new party. Howard has said that they "did not want to start the party only to see it pass into the hand of some organised group of political opportunists" (19.). The Constitution emerged as a document giving great power to the Governing Directors, making the name almost impossible to change and the platform sacrosanct (20.).

The Party Platform was seen as the primary means of ensuring that the Party remained libertarian. It outlined the Party objectives, the fundamental that "no man or group of men has the right to initiate the use of fraud, force or coercion against any other man or group of men" (it was later amended to include women) (21.). It derived from that, a platform outlining eventual goals and objectives. These included such issues as voluntary voting (22.), opposition to conscription (23.), a constitutional "Bill of Rights" designed to limit government (24.), and support for a form of Aboriginal Land rights based on returning Common Law title to land now held by the Crown (25.).

In the realm of economics and all other areas of contemporary political concern the writers of the Platform outlined market solutions to problems. These solutions were based on property rights and free trade. In keeping with its philosophical background the Platform took a stance on Foreign Affairs which had considerably less pretensions to intervention in politics on a world stage than that of the other major political parties (26.).

Bob Howard recognised the Platform contained some very "unpopular political positions" (27.) about drugs, economics and welfare, which, in accord with the objectives of the Party, had to be adopted. These unpopular positions were fundamental to the formation of the Workers Party: but, to the extent that these positions affected electoral success, they were the source of discontent amongst members not committed to libertarian philosophy. The position of the Platform on areas such as drugs limited support from businessmen and more prominent public figures worried abut their reputations. In the end these unpopular parts of the Platform were maintained, but rarely emphasised. This added to a concentration on economic matters. The Party's name was controversial for two major reasons. Firstly, it could easily be confused with the names usually adopted by socialist parties. Secondly, it was readily dismissed as an advertising stunt, designed by Singleton for greater publicity. The consensus at the end of the day was that even if the name was a good idea, it did not really work.

The concept behind the name is the belief that a libertarian party represented the "real workers"; those on salaries, the business operator who invests capital and labour and the competitive entrepreneur. Those excluded were people unwilling to work: the alleged parasites on the workers such as most public servants, and the businessmen who benefited from coercive monopolies, tariffs and other forms of protection. The very name was a challenge to many of those people whom the party later was held to represent.

Moves to change the name were acknowledged as early as June 1976 (28.). The main barriers were the resistance of some members and States to change, and the original Constitution which made change difficult.

The Workers Party constitution formed the basis of controversy during the split in 1977. This split challenged not only the particular Workers Party experience, but the very notion of using a political party to promote libertarian ideas. A New South Wales party member, Hugh Frazer, wrote that, "the organisational structure of the party is critical. In the same way that governments consume wealth and do not create it, our experience with the Workers Party structure indicates that too much organisation consumes much money and a great deal of time but produces little" (29.).

At the same time as a debate along these lines raged in the Workers Party and fledgling Progress Party, the Australian Democrats were formed around a constitution which specifically emphasised the rights of members and instituted National referenda of members to decide on policy and elect important office bearers (30.).

This further illustrated one of the dilemmas confronting libertarians. The very notion of bureaucratic organisation and other than individual enterprise does not come easily to most

libertarians. Yet, the Workers Party constitution was very thin on measures that involved the participation of Party members, and rather strong on attempts to prevent the Platform and objectives being "watered down".

The split in the Workers Party which saw the formation of the Progress Party was initiated by Viv Forbes (31.), the initial convener of the Workers Party in Queensland. The Northern Territory and Western Australian branches followed closely behind in forming a new party. They drafted a slightly revised and less important Platform or policy statement. The strongest opposition to the change came from the South Australian branch, home base of the National President John Whiting, which maintained the Workers Party name until the 1980 elections when they adopted the name, Libertarian Party (32.). Eventually, New South Wales joined the new loosely federated Progress Parties with a new constitution (see Appendix). This process produced some heated exchanges and lingering cynicism amongst Australian libertarians. It was effectively the end of a National libertarian movement. However, the new Progress Party overcame many of the organisational problems which had plagued the Workers Party, with its loose federation of independent, state-based and like-minded parties and the drafting of new, and extraordinarily open constitutions.

In its first electoral test in the Northern Territory in 1977 the new Progress Party performed relatively well across the state with an average vote of 13%. Many could have seen this as vindicating the decision to abandon the Workers Party label. However, the 1977 Federal election results were well below expectations as the Liberal Party swept to power on policy and with rhetoric very similar to that which the Workers Party had campaigned on. In Western Australia the Progress Party secured the former Liberal Party member for Tangney, Dr Peter Richardson, to lead its Senate team. Dr Richardson had left the Liberal Party because of disenchantment with the centralism of the Fraser Government and what he perceived as the diminishing role of Parliament in general. He saw his candidacy as the best means of protecting against the Liberal government whilst lending support to a group which he considered had valuable ideas. Richardson's candidacy and other changes however, had no real impact on the electoral result.

The 1977 election marked the end of real prospects of electoral success for the libertarian parties and gradually the emphasis moved from the expensive attempts at fighting elections, to education and interaction between members and the use of elections to expose voters to new ideas and a choice. The Progress Parties and their allies in South Australia continued to run candidates in elections, but on an ad-hoc basis as interested people emerged.

Since 1977 the people who were involved in the Workers Party and Progress Party have by and large maintained an interest in the promotion of libertarian ideas through other means. The Progress Party still exists and is fairly active in New South Wales while the same people have continued to maintain the structure of the Party in Queensland and South Australia. It can be said that whilst the libertarian parties are no longer an active participant in the electoral process, they have kept

open the option of such activity in the future. Any future libertarian party would be likely to maintain continuity with past organisations, and have an awareness of their problems.

MYTHS ABOUT HE WORKERS PARTY / PROGRESS PARTY

Over time a number of myths have emerged about the Workers Party which have served to obscure the real basis of the Party and its history. Amongst the greatest of these was the suggestion that the Party was supported by, and the tool of "Big Business". Party members tried to point out that there is nothing big business fears more than free competition. An examination of Party financial records shows no examples of support from major public corporations. Most of this has gone to major political parties. This myth obscures an understanding of the break down of the actual membership of the Party and the extent to which members were willing to contribute a great deal of time and personal resources to the Workers Party thereby furthering libertarianism. The Party had a diverse membership. What unified members was a commitment to ideas in the libertarian tradition rather than support for a particular interest, or socio-economic group. In any case the number of people involved is too small for more sociological explanations to be either accurate or useful. Indeed, the reluctance of large corporations and their employees to associate themselves with the Workers Party and its radical libertarian ideas is a more fruitful path for analysis than trying to attribute great corporate support for the Workers Party.

A related myth which perhaps reinforced the first is the suggestion that the Party was heavily funded or manipulated by Lang Hancock. It is quite true that the Workers Party and Progress Party sought support and finance from Hancock and that Hancock's reservations about the Party prompted him to advocate changes in the Party to members. Some people involved in the Workers Party and Progress Party were either friends of Lang Hancock or met with him. Some of them flew to his Wittenoom property to discuss their plans and goals with him. The involvement of Hancock in other political parties and the WA Secession movement is also widely known. However, Hancock is not a libertarian and had grave reservations about "the image of anarchy which it germinated at its launching" (33.) and certain other aspects of the libertarian package of ideas. In part this was based on the common conservative mistrust of "ideology". His daughter, Gina, was perhaps more inclined to support the new party and both thought there was a need for advocating "free-enterprise" and perhaps a new "genuine free-enterprise party". The result of these reservations and Hancock's well-founded doubt about the electoral prospects of the Workers and Progress Parties was that he never gave any financial support but offered "moral" support through attendance at the launch and by speaking at meetings in acknowledgement of the fact that he and the Workers Party were on the same side on many issues (34.).

The image which John Singleton's role in the Party produced is the source of another myth about the Workers Party. The idea that the Party was a clever advertising campaign designed to con people in to supporting certain interests, and to allow Singleton to vent his fury at the New South

Wales division of the Liberal Party, has some elements of truth, but is more misleading than helpful. Many people who were involved in the Workers Party have questioned Singleton's commitment to libertarian ideas. This is reinforced by his role in the 1987 election campaigns of the ALP. Some have put the failure of the Workers Party at his feet. His close associate at the time, Bob Howard is more magnanimous (35.). He does not question Singleton's general commitment and indeed compliments his ability to grasp the implications of the draft Party Platform and accept it. Howard's assessment is that they used Singleton's talents poorly. Mass marketing, Singleton's forte, should not have been a goal, until more fundamental elements of the Party had been developed. Singleton's high public profile made him the most sought after spokesman for the Party, against his wishes and those of the Party. Despite this, recordings of early party meetings in Sydney suggest that Singleton was an effective exponent of many of the Workers Party positions (36.). The reason why the role of Singleton has been questioned by former members of the Workers Party is that the "marketing image" is so far from the ideal of putting "principle before votes". It was precisely the impact of the emphasis on winning votes through clever tactics and catchy advertising which in the first instance lead to disenchantment with the major political parties.

Although members of the Workers Party maintained some communications with the American Libertarian Party and many Australian libertarians subscribe to journals and publications produced by US libertarian organisations, it would be wrong to suggest an undue influence on the Party by Americans. Certainly, libertarian ideas have had their greatest proponents in the United States as have many other causes. But the Workers Party never received money or financial assistance from those American libertarian groups. Indeed, through donations and subscriptions the flow of money was probably in the opposite direction (i.e. towards the US).

The Workers Party was occasionally categorised by opponents as "far right", "fascist", or "neo-fascist". Indeed, some former Workers Party members have suggested that groups which would better fit such descriptions made early and unsuccessful attempts to take over the Workers Party. As the earlier examination of libertarian ideas makes clear these suggestions of "authoritarian" leanings are unfounded. Supporters of authoritarianism usually shun libertarian ideas seeing them as a later date variant of anarchism.

CONCLUSIONS

It is not possible to judge whether or not the Progress Party / Workers Party complex failed or succeeded in its goals - although it is directly no longer an influence on politics, it can be argued that it has had a degree of influence. Certainly the Workers Party / Progress Party experience has had an influence on the contemporary advocacy of libertarianism.

A number of problems can be pointed to other than those organisational problems which contributed to the 1977 split. Not the least of these were the problems of operating in a federal

system. The simple logistic problems of coordinating and financing national campaigns proved an enormous hurdle. Differences between states on matters of tactics revealed more basic issues about how a political party should promote liberty.

Former members pointed to the perennial gripe of those involved in politics - a lack of media coverage. This was particularly pronounced in WA where the Greenough by-election result attracted less attention in local newspapers than it did in the Sydney and National press. Certainly, when compared to the Australian Democrats during their first years of existence, the Workers Party / Progress Party gained little coverage despite some electoral successes. However, a number of issues of concern to the Workers Party were given a hearing in the media. In particular, the economic problems of taxation, inflation, unemployment, tariffs and a highly regulated economy, were aired in the media at the time as were debates concerning sexual relations, censorship and drugs. However, the Workers Party was never seen by the press as the natural spokesman on these issues. Rather, they tended to concentrate on academic commentators, journalists and columnists or the Liberal Party dries, frequently ignoring the fact that without the input of the libertarians, these debates, and the issues which they raised may never have reached the proportions which they did.

In matters of strategy and tactics the Workers Party and Progress Party were torn between different means of achieving their goals. Some advocated an "activist" approach which emphasised publicity through, for example civil disobedience over seal belt laws or public demonstrations (37.). The alternative was the long-run task of educating members and the public through debate, writing, reading and arguing. This was illustrated by meetings with long speeches explaining Party policy, criticising the current state of affairs and by the various "Schools for Workers" conducted at a state level. There was also the conflict over whether organisation of the Party should be rigid and efficient or more open and participatory. It was also a conflict over the role of central direction and party hierarchy in running or organising a political party. This involves two rather contradictory characteristics common in libertarian movements. On the one hand, it revels an antipathy towards the organisation or structuring of any group of people, but on the other hand illustrates personal drive and direction which seeks emphasis on efficiency in personal business activity. Personality conflicts tended to take place on this level rather than over major differences in philosophy, or specific policies.

In addition, a large number of people who were supporters of the libertarian ideas of the Workers Party / Progress Party found themselves reluctant to offer support because of the prescriptions of Ayn Rand (38.) with respect to organised "objectivist" political activity. If anything the experiment with the Workers and Progress Parties reinforced this view. Rand argued that an organised political movement was putting the cart before the horse. She expected political activity to be the result, rather than the cause of an intellectual movement and the acceptance of the ideas of liberty and the free-market.

Bob Howard (39.) suggests that the dilemmas of the Workers Party and Progress Party result from a dichotomy between ideological and pragmatic political parties. He says that the essential

problem of the Workers Party was in defining success and seeking to achieve it on the terms of those parties which are not based on ideology. Howard, like Murray Rothbard (40.) and other American libertarians, is not frightened to draw the parallel between some of the methods of operation of the Marxian parties of Western Europe and the way which they think a libertarian party might work. This parallel stops at a similar concentration on long-run success and developing the ability to members of the Party to promote their goals.

The problem of seeking the wrong type of success was reflected in the Party membership (41.). The drive for numbers, a broad base and money inevitably lead to the recruitment of people not well grounded in the values, ideas and the commitments of libertarianism. Howard stresses that the image projected by the Party failed to attract the young, radical elements of society, who he believes must form the core of any such party.

Despite the ideals of their founders the Workers Party and Progress Party were always in competition with the Liberal Party. The support for the Workers Party might properly be categorised as reactionary. People were reacting to a growth in the size and functions of government, intrusive bureaucracy, high and new taxes, ineffective major political parties, failures in economic policy and other related problems. As an opposition, the liberal party also counts on such support. When in government Liberal Party promises to make these concerns of people no longer reactionary, but a possibility. With no real chance of winning government minor parties receive many negative or protest votes. The hope of winning the battle of ideas is difficult to communicate to voters.

Singleton, Howard, Richardson, McDonald and other prominent figures in the Progress Party and Workers Party were all aware that the major impact of the Party would be to influence the overall political debate, the hope being that the major parties would take on board Workers Party and Progress Party policies. None-the-less, some of the most important aspects of libertarian thought are unlikely to win acclaim in these terms. The ideas of limited government, decentralisation in a federal system, absolute individual liberty and non-intervention of the political process in many matters of great importance, must win debates on their own terms since they offer little in political advantage to those seeking higher office and political power.

The extent of achieving the influence sought will be the subject of the final chapter. However, it should be noted that the idea of a new libertarian party is now on ice, with the old Progress Party and Workers' Party a small but dedicated group, whilst most libertarians pursue other means of achieving their goals.

CHAPTER 3
THEORY IN PRACTICE 2: THINK TANKS AND ASSOCIATIONS OF IDEAS

The experience of Australian libertarians with active involvement in politics has lead fairly directly to the widespread support by libertarians for groups promoting the free-market through education, publication and research. For a variety of reasons these groups have concentrated on the economic aspects of libertarian thought.

One of the earliest models for this approach to the dissemination of libertarianism is the American, "Foundation for Economic Education" (FEE), formed by Leonard E Reed in 1946. It is an approach backed up by the libertarian concept of human nature and its understanding of politics. The resort to education, reflecting the belief in the capacity of men and women to reason and exercise choices based on that reason, is the mainspring of much liberal thought and at the basis of many liberal proscriptions for public policy.

The reaction against deliberate political involvement has affinities with Ayn Rand's approach to guarding her philosophy against an unholy alliance with American conservatives and urging her supporters to involve themselves only in ad-hoc groups formed for specific purposes in which no compromise of ideals is required. Rand (1.) was consistently opposed to involvement in political parties or groups formed in her name. Much as Rand's views have been criticised for failing to accommodate differing opinion, her understanding of the mechanisms by which ideas, and in particular her ideas, can influence the future development of society is sophisticated. Rand acknowledges that the widespread acceptance or rejection of ideas by people is required for them to be properly implemented rather than just a short term political success. In her essay "For the New Intellectual" (2.) Rand describes the transmission of ideas through an intricate process, from the originators to the people who adopt, criticise, comment and propagate them, to a wider movement with popular support then into the mainstream of influential ideas, and ultimately in to the particular policies of governments.

Whilst the Randian emphasis on ideas and a broad movement would seem to typify the current approach of free-market advocates, her unwillingness to compromise with promoters of other ideas, particularly with those of conservatism, has not been reflected in Australia. This in turn is a reflection of the extent to which some libertarian positions have become an orthodoxy amongst a range of different people involved in the study and practice of politics.

As the libertarian advocacy of laissez-faire has contributed to growing acceptance of the free-market ideal (the failures of Keynesian economics might well have contributed as much), the libertarian is found in an alliance with people ranging from conservative to classical liberal, dry, neo-conservative and others unified by a reaction against the growth in the power of the state and the areas in which it has grown.

Thus the increasingly significant private "think-tanks" are by no means predominately libertarian in terms of their supporters and publications, despite the often significant influence of libertarian authors on those involved. Some groups are more, some less, libertarian than others.

The result of the advocacy of libertarianism in Australia in the 1970's is a greater diversity of approaches to promoting libertarian ideas in the 1980's. Any suggestions of a conspiracy or putsch, of the "New Right" should be examined in this light (3.).

THINK TANKS

Amongst the most obvious and widely publicised efforts to further the ideals of the free-market is the emergence of "think-tanks". These organisations concentrate on research, publications, public debate, and lobbying. They aim to publicise, teach and convince people of the value of free-market and libertarian ideas in the community on a non-party political basis. A number of prior overseas models for these organisations exist promoting a range of different ideas (including conservative, American liberal democrat, etc.). They include the American, Foundation for Economic Education, and the British based Institute for Economic Affairs or Adam Smith Institute, though there are of course others. More conservatively oriented think-tanks such as the Heritage Foundation in the United States have been credited with considerable influence, particularly on Republican administrations (4.).

A number of these Institutes, Foundations and other associations have been actively encouraged by well known advocates of libertarian or free-market ideas, such as F.A. Hayek. He had described their method of promoting the ideal of the free-market as "the only one which promises any real results" (5.). These institutes have been formed on a national basis, but they have done so with international encouragement and the experience of overseas organisations. In 1981 the Atlas Economic Research Foundation was formed with the aim of supporting such institutes internationally through the provision of information, experience, a base for communication and some funding support. However, it does not provide any significant financial support to Australian think-tanks.

In the United States some research is done through libertarian organisations such as the Institute for Humane Studies, which are affiliated with private universities (6.). However, in Australia it would seem that the broad support required to fund a research organisation on the think-tank model requires an appeal to more people than those interested in libertarianism. This has lead to a few Australian think-tanks which are quite well funded producing a range of material to which at most there could be attributed libertarian "influences". Some much smaller groups produce more consistently libertarian material. However prominent libertarians have supported the whole range of free-market oriented think-tanks in Australia and overseas.

Amongst the Australian think-tanks there is something of a division of labour with different groups emphasising different aspects of those activities which they might pursue. This is a function of the money available and the areas of expertise of the small numbers of staff employed.

Unifying the methods of the think-tanks is an emphasis on the secondary stage of the transmission of ideas which aims to take up the ideas of their originators in academic and other circles and disseminate them more widely through the options suggested above.

The first of the new wave of free-market think-tanks to be formed in Australia was the Centre for Independent Studies (CIS) based in Sydney under Greg Lindsay (Executive Director). Founded in 1976, the CIS has gradually grown in size, funding and scope to a position where it is widely acclaimed as producing some of the best books and papers in the examination of the "principles underlying a free and open society" (7.). The CIS can also be identified as having a particularly strong libertarian influence when compared to other Australian think-tanks. Formed whilst the Workers Party was still hoping for greater influence, it drew on the support of many people who were involved in the libertarian political parties. An early contributor to research was the economist Sudha Shenoy who had worked with Ludwig von Mises (8.). Members of the first council of advisors included well known libertarian Mark Tier and Murray Rothbard. F.A. Hayek has also been a member of the Advisory Board (.9).

CIS publications are notable for the range of issues which they cover, from economic debate about, for example, the Two Airline Policy (10.) to a response to a combined churches statement on public policy in *Chaining Australia* (11.). Publications also include examinations of matters of interest to the student of politics such as constitutionalism in *The Constitutional Challenge* (12.), Public Choice theory in *Democracy in Crisis* (13.) and constitutional change through initiative and referendum in *The Peoples Law* (14.). The CIS has promoted libertarian and related ideas through holding forums with prominent speakers and major conferences. It was the sponsor of the Mont Pelerin Society's Pacific Regional Meeting in 1985 and, in 1987 conducted a critical conference on "The Liberal Tradition" with papers by John Gray, Shirley and Bill Letwin, Alan Ryan, Kenneth Minogue and others examining he extent to which Locke, John Stuart Mill and Adam Smith could be considered liberal or should be endorsed by those holding liberty as their ideal (15.). These activities demonstrate the concern of the CIS with the basis and dissemination of ideas as much as any attempt to influence day to day matters of public policy.

The wealth of publications of the CIS is dependent on the commissioned work of academics and commentators outside the paid staff of the Centre. These publications have been available through direct subscription and are in the collections of many university and some public libraries. Subscribers include a number of politicians, academics and other public figures.

As a think-tank the CIS provides a model of a well established organisation which draws on the belief in the efficacy of ideas and rational debate. A measure of its success at least in organisational terms might be the recent expansion of the Centre into New Zealand (16.).

The Institute for Public Affairs (IPA) dates back to the time of the dissolution of the UAP in the 1940's. Its interest in ideas along the lines of other free-enterprise think-tanks, is more recent, reflecting the influence of its Director Rod Kemp a son of its founder. The activities of the IPA

concentrate on two publications, *IPA Facts* and the IPA Review, although two series of Occasional Papers are also published. These publications are notable for the influence of "economic rationalism", the promotion of market solutions, the defence of private property and the deregulation of industry and the advocacy of traditional concepts of rights. There is a tendency towards conservatism in moral and ethical questions which conflicts with libertarian positions. However the wide distributions of the *IPA Review* in its magazine format since 1985 has included a range of "free-enterprise opinion", from the libertarian to conservative (17.). The "Review" can be seen as evolving into a critical journal with an inclination towards economic matters along with considerations of philosophy, foreign affairs, public policy and a limited government.

Another major feature of the IPA is its recruitment of prominent academics and public figures as Visiting Fellows and staff. These have included John Stone and Les McCary from the Public Service and Dame Leonie Kramer will be attached in 1988. As the names of these fellows suggest that there is no particular libertarian influence on the IPA. In the main the history of the IPA has reflected the wider changes in ideas holding sway with businesses and in economic theory towards a greater emphasis on the importance of the private sector and devaluing the role of government in economic management. Its Western Australian unit studies the expenditure and activities of state governments, further reflecting a concern with the overall size of government.

In the division of labour between Australian think-tanks, the IPA has achieved predominance in the market for a regular magazine. With councils in four states and the Australian Capital Territory it is amongst the most widely based think-tanks, but it remains strongest in Melbourne and Victoria.

On leaving federal parliament after loosing his seat in the 1983 election John Hyde joined with other Western Australian advocates of the free-market to form the Australian Institute for Public Policy (AIPP) in Perth where he is the Executive Director. However, his links with the Liberal Party have been used by opponents of its ideas to associate the Institute with a partisan political affiliation, though this is not the case (18.). Hyde was a strong critic of the Fraser Government in its later years (19.). The formation of AIPP provided the means by which Hyde, and others, could respond to the problems of presenting necessary but potentially unpopular ideas through political parties. The Institute assumes that any political party is likely to assimilate good ideas if they are well presented and have been tested in the market place of opinion. The evidence suggests that several AIPP proposals (especially those relating to budget cuts and the deregulation of public utilities) have been adopted by a Federal Labor Government. AIPP's method effectively illustrates the libertarian assessment of the effectiveness of parties as a means of achieving limited government. As to the Liberal Party, many of its prominent members are reluctant to be seen as being influenced by an outside group such as the AIPP.

Hyde is not a libertarian in the intellectual mould of a Rand or Rothbard, but has ideas more akin to the utilitarian laissez-faire liberals of the late 19th century. AIPP has a particular concern in its publications with the more immediate matters of public policy. Its "Policy Papers" series includes

monographs about government regulation (20.), State monopolies (21.) and health (22.). The "Critical Issues" papers present a broader perspective on subjects from arts (23.) and environmental policies to land rights (24.). The particular interest of the Institute in labour market studies is presented in a number of those papers and in the published book *Wages Wasteland* (25.). The major project *Mandate to Govern* (26.) produced a detailed sketch of problems confronting Australian government and offering guidelines for policy. The AIPP also conducts dinners and forums for guest speakers in an attempt to broaden the reach of the ideas which it promotes. Its "Economic Witness" papers seek to produce timely commentary on topical issues such as the federal budget (27.).

These publications reflect the nature of the interests of AIPP and the concentration on the analysis of short term policy. Libertarians have criticised two particular positions taken in AIPP publications. Firstly, the position that the taxation structure should not be significantly altered without first addressing other economic problems. Secondly, they have condemned a gradualist approach to removing Medicare, which has long been a particular libertarian concern. Similar criticisms have been made of the gradualist approach taken in *Mandate to Govern* (28.).

AIPP employs six full time staff with experience from politics and journalism to academic study. However, the reputation and respect for John Hyde as one of the few to criticise the Fraser Government and an instigator of the "dry" influence on the Liberal Party is still important to the support, and credibility of the Institute.

The Centre of Policy Studies at Monash University has produced a number of papers and academic analyses of the effects of regulations, high tax, debt and "big government". COPS has provided support for those urging tax reform through economic modeling and computer based analysis of different plans, from flat-rate tax to the Liberal Party's 1987 election policy. The emphasis of COPS is on the study of economic policy decisions and their consequences (29.). Like the institutes already mentioned COPS has a greater interest in the micro-economic analysis of a wide spectrum of human activity. Frequently, the conclusions of this analysis can provide support for libertarian skepticism about the role of the state. However COPS is more interested in study than the spread or dissemination of ideas and, in the tradition of "value-free economics" will not produce work prescribing particular ends for people or government, by they libertarian or otherwise.

These four groups represent the major think-tanks which might be said to have an interest in libertarian ideas or have been influenced by them. Whatever ideas they promote these groups use methods of operation in accord with the libertarian experience in Australia. Because of this and the general direction of the ideas which they promote they have received the support of many people who have a more direct interest in libertarian ideas. A number of other "think-tank" groups exist including the S.A. Based Institute for Labour Studies and the now small but more conservative Australian for Common Sense, Freedom and Responsibility lead by Professor Mark Cooray. Amongst small groups are those with a more libertarian output, deriving from the libertarian movement of the 1970's. There are also efforts other than think-tanks to promote the spread of libertarian ideas. These associations

draw on the experience of other community groups who seek maximum public exposure with very limited financial resources.

Centre 2000 in Sydney, closely linked with the Adam Smith Club, has, since its formation in mid 1983, developed programs to distribute libertarian literature, publishes *The Optimist* (30.) magazine, runs tax freedom day campaigns (involving the humorous "Taxtralia Dollars"), launched the Grassroots 2000 campaign to mobilise local opposition to excessive government intervention and forms political action committees on topical issues. The Centre 2000 has amongst its Sydney supporters a number of people who were involved in the Progress Party. *The Optimist* takes its name from a series of libertarian journals. The original aims of *The Optimist* (31.) were similar to the *IPA Review* drawing on the whole range of thought sympathetic to the free-market and hoping to achieve a wide distributional base. However the print-run of about 2000 copies suggests that this is unlikely to be achieved. The Centre 2000 seeks an audience amongst all people disenchanted with "big government, big business and big unions". Clearly, this involves many people who are not necessarily libertarian, or sympathetic to other libertarian ideas. This has led to controversy over support for the "Canberra push" of Joe Bjelke-Petersen and the Queensland National Party. To secure funds Centre 2000 developed closer links with some small business groups during 1987. This must eventually lead to a questioning of the credentials of Centre 2000 as a traditional think-tank.

Despite this more populist appeal of Centre 2000 it has tried to maintain credibility as a traditional think-tank through doing commissioned research for other organisations and publishing its own papers.

The Foundation for Economic Education (Australia) (32.) has primarily served as a source for material from its United States counterpart, and the self education of its members. Founded in 1976 by Viv Forbes and a number of others familiar with the work of Leonard Read and the FEE (US), the FEE is amongst the most consistently libertarian groups in Australia. Whilst it concentrates on education rather than the research typical of other think-tanks, it is able to maintain a relatively high level of activity on small funding from private sources. FEE (Aust) is perhaps best considered as a part of a group of organisations formed by Viv Forbes to promote libertarianism.

LIBERTARIAN CLUBS AND SOCIETIES

Before the growth in free-market oriented think-tanks which became possible with an increased availability of funds through individual and corporate sponsorship, many private clubs and associations of people with an interest in ideas promoting individual and economic liberty existed.

Internationally some of these groups have assumed a leading role in bringing together scholars, businessmen, politicians and others to examine the directions which countries and governments take, as measured against the standard of free-market liberalism. The Mont Pelerin Society formed in 1947 at the instigation of F.A. Hayek (33.) is the best known of these. A number of Australians have had involvement with the conferences and discussions which are the raison d'être of

the Mont Pelerin Society. The loose "Libertarian International" with a membership in many countries, which also holds regular conferences, has also drawn on Australian support, particularly from those who have had involvement in the libertarian political parties (34.).

With objectives which do not require wide popular support it is in these associations that the most active consideration of consistently libertarian thought can be found. In Australia, as in many other countries, a number of small groups have formed to study the work of Ayn Rand through such taped lecture courses as "An Introduction to Objectivism". These groups have existed on university campuses and elsewhere. Objectivists are an important part of the development of libertarian movements both in Australia and the United States.

These libertarian groups illustrate the observation that as small groups predominantly concerned with philosophy and ideas expand in an attempt to appeal to a wider audience they often loose their distinctive character as a "libertarian" group. The Adam Smith Club is the result of a merger between the Libertarian Dinner Club and the newsletter *Optimism*. The club has been extremely successful with many people wearing the club tie who are not at all inclined towards many libertarian views. Amongst Adam Smith Club members there are many libertarians and people interested in the free-market. The main activities of the Adam Smith Club revolve around dinners with prominent guest speakers and the annual Adam Smith Award, presented to outstanding proponents of the free-market. Recipients have included Bert Kelly, John Hyde, the philosopher Lauchlan Chipman and libertarian Viv Forbes (35.). The Adam Smith Club has branches in Sydney, Canberra and Melbourne with members throughout the Country.

The "Libertarian Movement of Australia" based around people who were part of the Workers Party in South Australia, publishes a regular newsletter and has some claim to being a loose umbrella group for the affiliated libertarian political parties who continue to maintain fairly close, but informal links. The Libertarian Movement is also associated with Libertarian International.

Libertarian Review has served as a source for libertarian literature for many years. Similarly the "Free-Market Institute" is one of a number of small operations producing or disseminating libertarian material.

In an attempt to form a libertarian oriented interest group, Viv Forbes, founded "Taxpayers United" to lobby for limited government, balanced budgets and flat-rate or proportional taxation (36.). This group with thousands of members nationally was explicitly designed to reach people other than libertarians. It publishes a journal *Trim* (Tax Reduction Immediately) and makes regular press statements on matters of interest. Viv Forbes has observed that many people are unwilling to get involved with the Progress Party because they see it as a failed political movement (37.). Taxpayers United is an attempt to cater for these people. It is ironic that the publications of Taxpayers United, which strive for the wide support of all taxpayers, are more identifiably libertarian than those of many other groups with libertarian origins. Other small groups of people from time to time form groups to promote or discuss libertarian ideas. They emphasise the approach of Leonard Read or Ayn Rand

concentrating on self-development through debate, the acquisition of knowledge, wide reading, public speaking and writing as the first step towards the achievement of libertarian goals. Australian versions of the Society for Individual Liberty, a Society for Austrian Economics and Libertarian Clubs have served as sources for libertarian ideas and literature.

Other voluntary associations promoting political positions which in many ways parallel libertarian ideas, have recently emerged. These include employer groups, foundations to finance public advertising, and ad-hoc groups with particular interests. These are best left to be considered in the section on the impacts of libertarian ideas. However they do not reflect an application of those methods of promoting ideas and seeking long-run influence which have typified the efforts of libertarians and the think-tanks outlined above.

OTHER MEANS OF PROMOTING LIBERTARIANISM

Individual libertarians have also made a number of efforts to influence the climate of Australian politics. These include writing letters to editors, poetry, magazine articles, monographs and books.

Libertarians including Viv Forbes, Rob Ryan and Hal Soper are prolific writers to the editorial pages of national and local newspapers. Libertarian ideas are also seen in letters to the columns of professional and industry journals (38.). These letters are seen as being an effective means of reaching a wide audience with little cost in a timely manner on topical issues. The poetry of Viv Forbes has appeared in *The Australian* whilst the former Kalgoorlie Chairman of the Workers Party, Ron Manners, has published a book of poetry titled "Mannerisms" (39.).

Apart from the publications of think-tanks other libertarian magazines have emerged, occasionally with some commercial success. The magazine *Free Market* (40.) was published for a number of years and *On Liberty* (41.), *Optimism* (42.), *Free Enterprise* (43.) and their successors have had as much difficulty sustaining contributions as finding subscribers. The Journal *Quadrant* (44.)has presented many ideas over a period of time including some more libertarian ideas critical of the actions of governments and politicians.

Viv Forbes publishes *Common Sense* which is distributed through the "Common Sense Network" promotes, libertarian ideas and is self-funding.

The United States which has much larger numbers of active libertarians, if only because of a larger population has seen associations of libertarian feminists, libertarian lawyers, pro and anti-abortion libertarians, Christian libertarians as well as libertarians pursuing particular political interest. Few similar groups have emerged in Australia and libertarian writings do not reflect debates between these often contradictory ideas (45.).

Similarly in the United States there is a growing community of scholars in a number of fields who are interested in libertarian ideas. This is reflected in articles presenting a libertarian perspective in mainstream journals and in the publication of many books by about libertarianism and related

matters. Perhaps the only published book by Australian libertarians is the book *Rip Van Australia* (46.) by Singleton and Howard. Published in 1977 this book was set out as a dictionary of Australian politics and public life in general. Although often drawing on libertarian arguments in its presentation *Rip Van Australia* did not aim at becoming the definitive statement of libertarianism in Australia. The book has many other virtues, but its position as the pre-eminent local libertarian writing is by default. Although some have pointed to the difficulty of publishing writings contrary to the main stream, as libertarianism has often been, little is offered to publishers from a libertarian point of view. As those people who have been active in Australian libertarian groups and organisations move in to fields such as journalism or academic study this might well change over time.

The spread of libertarian ideas in Australia has probably been furthered, more by individuals reading libertarian authors, than by any other means. Recognising this, Australians interested in promoting libertarianism have sought to have libertarian books read as widely as possible. People have become involved in schemes to pay for books to be sent to politicians and senior public servants. There have also been small mail order book services run by Ron Manners in Kalgoorlie (the Libertarian Bookshop), Viv Forbes in Brisbane, and a bookshop associated with Centre 2000 in Sydney.

Other notable efforts to promote libertarian ideas, such as that of Western Australian small businessman Adam Dollar who was prosecuted for stamping "When government expands liberty diminishes" on every banknote which passed through his business, have, from time to time, achieved some publicity or renown for libertarians. Also libertarians have suggested questionnaires for public servants and politicians as well as appropriate modes of address for those in authority ("you remain my humble servant") if you must correspond with them.

These organisations and individual efforts to promote libertarian ideas are unified by a concentration on argument, writing, reading and other aspects of the consideration of ideas. There have been no major efforts by "libertarians" to organise public demonstrations, or take control of other groups. Whereas the effectiveness of this strategy will be assessed later the comparative failure of the support for Bjelke-Petersen through the Grassroots 2000 campaign, which was a matter of controversy amongst libertarians, is likely to reinforce activity geared to long-term influence rather than wielding short-term political power.

CHAPTER 4
IMPACTS OF LIBERTARIANISM

"Libertarianism is dead in this country"

Dr Peter Richardson (1.)

"Although a healthy suspicion of government has been central to our political life as a nation, the radical antistatist tradition has been a dissenting and ultimately marginal viewpoint."

S. L. Newman (2.)

In the past the term libertarianism was best known to Australians in association with the Sydney libertarians formed around the philosopher John Anderson or the members of councils of civil liberties described themselves as civil libertarians. The growth of the free-market based libertarianism in the United States is illustrated by Rothbard (3.) amongst notable features of this examination are:

1. The recent origins of libertarian ideas in the "Randian" objectivist movement and the laissez-faire FEE.

2. The impact on these of Vietnam and the draft, and the split within Young Americans for Freedom.

3. The link between the growth of libertarianism and the anti-authoritarian ideals of the new left.

The growth of the Australian libertarian movement of the 1970's shares some of these origins. Many libertarians in Australia were introduced to libertarianism through the novels of Rand or the journal of FEE ("The Freeman - Ideas on Liberty"). However, although Australians were affected by the draft and libertarians were opposed to it, the emergence of a libertarian movement in Australia only became clear after the withdrawal from Vietnam in 1971 and after the demise of the "New Left". What the American experience suggests is that the rise of libertarianism should not be seen as wholly a phenomenon of the political "right".

An international comparison close to Australia in this context is Britain. As in Britain the resurgence in free-market orientated through stems principally from a reaction to interventionist governments, high taxation and economic crises. Libertarian thought in Britain never gave rise to a political party but was reflected in libertarian groups such as the Libertarian Alliance, the Alternative Bookshop, and general free-market think-tanks such as the Institute for Economic Affairs and the Adam Smith Institute. As in Australia the wider awareness of libertarianism is limited to seeing it as a variant of other ideas promoting liberty and the free-market in general.

EARLY INFLUENCES

The impact of libertarianism in the 1970's can be examined without reference to a concept such as the "New Right". A fairly distinctive libertarian movement was manifested in those associated with the Workers / Progress Parties and the non-party groups which sprung up around them in various states. Their immediate impact can be assessed in a number of ways, and their long term impact is tied up in the rise of more broadly based groups, less consistently libertarian.

The major objectives of libertarians in the 1970's were maximum possible electoral success through the Workers Party and the Progress Party, influencing the major parties, publishing and spreading libertarian ideas and solutions for contemporary problems and developing the understanding of libertarian ideas amongst libertarians. The electoral success of the libertarian political parties can be assessed by comparison to other minor parties and to libertarian parties in other countries. The percentage of the vote for the Workers Party in the Greenough by-election and Progress Party in the Northern Territory elections where a relatively small population could be concentrated on with direct campaigning, was high compared to the first attempts of other minor parties, including the Australian Democrats. However, in the national campaigns of the late 1970's the parties did not come close to achieving a Senate quota or the same national profile as the fledgling Australian Democrats under Don Chipp. Compared to the older Libertarian Party of the United States the Workers Party and Progress Party did well. In the elections of 1986 Libertarian Party delegates to the Presidential College received a maximum vote of 3.1% in Alaska but a national vote of 0.25%. In voting for the House of Representatives in the strongest Libertarian Party states an average of 2.6% of the vote (4.) was the best result (in California). In the United States this represents a very large number of people and supports a party which holds conferences with thousands of people. The Republican Party in that election would have drawn on many more libertarian voters, but these results do question the suggestion that the Americans are any more amenable to libertarian ideas than people in Australia.

The influence of the Workers Party and Progress Party on the major parties is more difficult to measure. In the 1977 election the Liberal Party emphasised the small government-lower taxes line and in recent times has continued with the theme. Viv Forbes has written that "some of our (Workers Party and Progress Party) earlier converts now try to forget their origins, but I could probably produce some surprising names on old lists of supporters" (5.). Forbes has also suggested the publications sent to John Howard, Jim Carlton and John Stone (6.), amongst others, might have had some influence on their subsequent development and policy stance. The attempt to convince politicians that policy based on libertarian ideas could be popular as well as prudent might be reflected in the rush of the political parties and politicians to be considered "economic rationalists". As the Workers Party and Progress Party declined, former members, who maintained links with think-tanks and other libertarian groups, became involved with other political parties and groups. In the early 1980's the Australian Liberal

Students Federation was strongly influenced by libertarian ideas with one former member suggesting that a "libertarian caucus" operated across often strong state boundaries. Such influences have potential to show greater impacts in the future.

The efforts of libertarians in the 1970's to spread libertarian literature and ideas widely have had some impact. Many libraries contain books such as *Rip Van Australia* (7.) and also have copies of the works of Hayek, Nozick, Rothbard and others in the libertarian tradition. The early efforts of journalists Peter Samuel and Maxwell Newton (8.) contributed to a wider presentation of free-market based solutions to political and economic problems as well as being critical of the interventions of all governments. In Western Australia the *Sunday Independent* owned at the time by Peter Wright (9.) presented a series of articles based on the writing of Ludwig von Mises which lead to a large number of orders for his books from the Libertarian Bookshop. The tours of Australia by Milton Friedman (10.), Hayek (11.) and Eugene Guccione exposed people to free-market or libertarian economics, through media coverage, dinners and speeches. Interested people has an opportunity to expand their knowledge of libertarian ideas through the availability of the popular novels of Ayn Rand or Science Fiction author Robert Heinlein in most bookshops.

Through this variety of means there was during the later half of the 1970's a loose libertarian movement in Australia promoting the ideals of individual liberty and free-market economics, with an emphasis on the latter. Whilst perhaps a relatively small movement numerically the ideals of the libertarians involved were presented widely and capable of a significant impact.

The effects of this movement and the ideas they promoted on later public policy is impossible to measure or gauge directly. However, it has been suggested by many authors that a change in the nature of the ideas dominant in Australian politics has taken place, that this change is more amenable to libertarian ideas and indeed reflects many of them. Whether or not this change is caused by the earlier advocacy of libertarian ideas is hardly a useful question. The two are intimately linked and mixed with the influences of other ideas and circumstances. To quote one commentator, "one could easily conclude and quite correctly I believe that the rather chill winds of change presently blowing through this country have been generated by the money market and exchange rates and not by exhortations from the federal government or the "think-tanks" of the so called new right" (12).

Taking one step back from this point of view and asking what influences the money market and why are exchange rates important is, however, more interesting. Money markets are dominated by perceptions about the future in terms of economics and political stability. They are important because a number of governments decided to float their currencies. Amongst other reasons this reflected break down in the post-war "Keynesian Consensus". Amongst the alternatives to Keynesian economic policy considered by governments were those of the free-market monetarist and supply side economists who drew parts of their theories from insights of Austrian economics. These circumstances of economic problems are those where libertarian advocates of free-market economics

can offer solutions. Many of these solutions are the subject of present debate and action by government.

Amongst these changes applauded by libertarians are financial deregulation including entry of foreign banks, removal of exchange controls, floating the dollar and the freeing of the banks from many statutory requirements. People who prepared papers for the Campbell inquiry included Fane, Swan, and Hewson (now a federal member of parliament for the Liberal Party) names associated with the free-market think-tanks. Privatisation was suggested in the original Workers Party Platform of 1975 (13.) and has since been advocated in turn by think-tanks, Liberal Party oppositions and senior members of the Labor government of 1987. Successive governments have talked about lowering taxation, even as a percentage of gross domestic product, although paying tax is as much as ever considered a necessary duty rather than theft. State governments have made tentative steps towards deregulating trading hours and taken a slightly more liberal attitude to gambling, casinos and prostitution. The arguments for tertiary fees presented by libertarians and others have been advocated by ministers in ALP governments. A report for the Economic Planning Advisory Council, a significant advisor to the government, about education recommended the "complete privatisation of all educational institutions" (14.) as its first option.

All of these examples suggest a "climate of ideas" sympathetic to proposals made by libertarians over a number of years. However, many of these proposals have been initiated by governments and reinforced their legitimacy rather than served as a means to limited government. If drawing up a list of negatives in the "intellectual climate" from a libertarian point of view one might include continued high tariffs and protection, the negative attitude to tax evasion, industry planning, ID Card proposals, the reaction against "moral permissiveness", harsher penalties for victimless crimes, wider powers for police, tax office investigators and other government authorities, the involvement of government in development policies and other general concerns about economic policy, civil liberties an property rights. The libertarian ideal of limited government is debated in academic journals but while governments might find many libertarian suggestions useful they are unlikely to limit themselves along the lines which libertarians prescribe. The adoption by governments of market based solutions to economic problems can be attributed to many sources other than libertarian. However, specific arguments, theories and solutions to problems do not acknowledge such labels. It is the ideas themselves which the libertarians argue, count under any label.

THE LIBERTARIAN MOVEMENT IN 1987

As far as many critics and commentators on public affairs are concerned the impact of libertarian ideas is manifested in the rise of a phenomenon described as the "New Right". This is

associated with the Thatcher and Reagan governments as well as a vast array of other ideas seen to be influencing contemporary political events. The term is however, shunned by many to whom it is applied. In particular libertarians object. They see it as associating their ideas with the religious "right", more authoritarian ideas, and , in any case as being an inappropriate description of ideas often not "new" or of the "right". English libertarian, Chris Tame (15.), has identified as least 14 different applications of the term "New Right", many of these being unassociated and inconsistent. He offers instead the term "New Enlightenment" to describe the resurgence of Classical Liberal and libertarian ideas across the political spectrum. This description attempts to separate the long term influences and factors of ideas and intellectual debate from what is recent currency in the realm of public policy and day-to-day politics. There are links between the two since activity in the political process is often motivated by ideas and long term objectives. As a motivating force in this "New Enlightenment" libertarian thought must often be seen as a motivating influence rather than a daily guide for public policy.

In Australia the term "New Right" has been applied to the "free-market" think tanks, new business groups critical of the effects of government intervention, the "Joh for PM" campaign, certain members of the federal parliamentary opposition, journalists, academics, and also the older advocates of libertarianism considered above. This represents an extremely diverse group, with many different interests. Sawer suggests that it represents an amalgamation between "neo-liberal" and "neo-conservative" thought. Not only does this description fail in explaining the ideas of any particular person associated with the "New Right" in Australia (e.g. John Hyde might fit either description whilst the Queensland Premier fits neither, and both have divergent views on almost every important issue in current political debate), but it also oversimplified the consideration of the origins, objectives, and methods of the people involved.

The methods of the think-tanks have been heavily influenced by the experience of libertarians in Australia and overseas. They are founded, not - as Alex Carey suggests (16.) - on the basis of propaganda and "mind management", but on the libertarian and liberal belief that through the rational presentation of ideas to whoever is willing to listen, good ideas will find their way to the fore. In contrast to this many of those associated with the "New Right" label, in populist appeals to the electorate, concentrate on advertising, demonstrations, campaigns for political power, and seek an immediate an direct influence on political outcomes. These more populist groups typified by the "Joh for PM" campaign and locally based small business and farmers groups, are also more "conservative" in their interest in such areas as immigration, "moral decline" in society, abortion, pornography, law and order, and the status of the flag and crown. These concerns and the methods of the more populist strands of the "New Right" are almost the opposite of a libertarian approach. Yet, on the issue of taxation some Australian libertarians including the Progress Party of New South Wales and Taxpayers United, have offered nominal support to the Queensland National Party because of its endorsement of a "flat tax" policy. This had long been a central feature of the policies of the libertarian political

parties. Even if support is limited to this issue, most National Party members and radical libertarians make strange bedfellows.

This support of some libertarians for the National push of Bjelke-Petersen, and the idea of a broad "conservative alliance" represents an illuminating commentary on the contemporary state of the libertarian movement which had been so active in the latter half of the 1970's. That movement did have considerable influence on the margin of political debate, but how well has it survived its partial success in Australian debate? The person suddenly enthused about libertarianism after reading, say, *Atlas Shrugged* (17.) could once, through a meeting of the Workers Party or reading *On Liberty* (18.), have come in contact with many other people with similar views. Now that same person is asked to join the very conservative groups which libertarian authors like Rand have blamed for the decline of capitalism, in an alliance designed to ignore differences which have been of particular concern to libertarians, who argue that in the long run ideas, not numbers, count.

It is in this sense that the observation of Peter Richardson which introduces this chapter is true. There is no general libertarian movement in Australia today. Libertarian ideas can be seen to be best represented, along with other ideas, in the free-market think-tanks and the continuing individual efforts of people who first became interested in libertarianism through involvement with the earlier libertarian movement. These representatives retain the Australian preoccupation with economic issues and barely reflect the radical libertarian antipathy towards the very existence of the state.

Considering this Australian libertarians can be comforted by the words of von Mises (19.) that;

> "…Liberalism had drawn no other conclusion than that in the long run truth and righteousness must triumph because their victory in the realm of ideas cannot be doubted. And whatever is victorious in this realm, must ultimately succeed in the work of affairs as well, since no persecution is capable of suppressing it. It is therefore superfluous to trouble oneself especially about the spread of liberalism. Its victory, is in any case certain."

But should be cautioned by those of Lord Action (20.) that;

> "…At all times sincere friends of freedom have been rare, and its triumphs have been due to minorities, that have prevailed by associating themselves with auxiliaries whose objects often differed from their own; and this association, which is always dangerous, has sometimes been disastrous."

APPENDIX

NOTES

NOTES CHAPTER ONE

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2. Hayek, F.A. "Why I Am Not A Conservative" in *The Constitution of Liberty*, Routledge and Kegan, Paul, London, 1956.

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4. eg see Lysander Spooner, "The Indefensible Constitution" in Woodcock, G. *The Anarchist Reader*, Fontana, Glasgow, 1980. pgs 103-107.

5. pgs 20-21, Sawer, M. (ed) *Australia and the New Right*, George, Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 1982.

6. eg see Nozick, R. *Anarchy, State and Utopia*, Basil Blackwell, London, 1984. pgs 3-25.

7. such as Mises, L von. *Human Action*, 3rd Revised Edn., Henry Regnery, Chicago, 1966. esp. pgs 11-29.

8. such as Rand, Ayn. *Atlas Shrugged*, Signet, New York, 1956. Or Nozick, R. *op.cit.*

9. see Sawer, M. *op.cit.* pgs 34-35.

10. esp. Rand, Ayn. *The Virtue of Selfishness*, Signet, New York, 1965. pgs 13-35.

11. Mises, L von. *Human Action*, op.cit., pg 41.

12. see Buchanan, J.M. and Tullock, G. *The Calculus of Consent*, University of Michigan Press, Michigan, 1962.

13. Rothbard, M.N. *For a New Liberty*, (1st edn.), Macmillan, New York, 1973. pgs 23-24.

14. This is the approach of von Mises, who as a Utilitarian liberal dismissed the "nonsense upon stilts" of Natural Law. His Utilitarian position is examined by Murray N. Rothbard in Dolan, E.G. *The Foundations of Modern Austrian Economics*, Sheed and Ward, Kansas City, 1976. pgs 99-109.

15. see Appendix The Constitution of the Progress Party of New South Wales.

16. eg Rand, Ayn. "Mans Rights" in *The Virtue of Selfishness*, op.cit., pgs 92-106.

17. eg Nozick, R. *op.cit.*, pgs 28-35, 178-182.

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22. Proudon in Woodcock, G. *op.cit.*, pg 65.

23. Rothbard, M.N. *For a New Liberty*, op.cit., pgs 93-95.

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27. *ibid.* pgs 219-250.

28. eg see Barnett, R. "Pursuing Justice in a Free Society" in *Criminal Justice Ethics*, Summer/Fall 1985 and Winter/Spring 1986.

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30. eg see Rand, Ayn. *The Virtue of Selfishness*, op.cit., pgs 107-115.

31. Rothbard, M.N. *The Ethics of Liberty*, op.cit.

32. Barnett, R. *op.cit.* pg 48.

33. eg see Mises, L von. *Socialism*, Jonathon-Cape, London, 1936. pg 133.

34. *ibid.*, pgs 211-222.

35. Hayek, F.A. *The Road to Serfdom*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1975.

36. eg Mises, L von. *Human Action*, op.cit., pgs 11-29, pgs 105-118.

37. eg see Shenoy, Sudha R. (ed.) *Wage-Price Control: Myth and Reality*, CIS Readings No. 1, Sydney, 1978.

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40. *ibid.* pgs 190-194.

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46. This can be found in almost any elementary economics text. eg Jackson, J. and McConnell, *Economics* (Australian edn.), McGraw-Hill, 1980. pgs 99-114.

47. Examples of analyses of these problems abound. eg see Albon, R. *The Telecom Monopoly: Natural or Artificial*, AIPP, Policy Paper No. 5, Perth, 1986.

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50. On this issue minimal state libertarians suggest that defence could be paid for by the surplus generated from the user paying for certain governmental services such as the enforcement of contractual arrangements by the courts. This has problems if a choice of using private services of arbitration is allowed. These services which do not have the burden of paying for defence will necessarily be cheaper and undermine the official service. Other proposals include provision by insurance, which faces similar problems, and Friedmans suggestion that in the process of dismantling the government, defence providing institutions might emerge endowed for that purpose. Friedman concedes that if hostile nations continue to threaten others, the last vestiges of coercive taxation and government might linger a bit longer.

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23. *ibid.*, Section 4.3

24. *ibid.*, Section 1.2

25. *ibid.*, Section 1.1.4

26. *ibid.*, Section 4.

27. Howard, Bob. *op.cit.*, pg 106.

28. Letter from Bob Howard to Ron Manners June 1976.

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