Factions and Fractions: A Case Study of Power Politics in the Australian Labor Party

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Over the past three decades, factions have cemented their hold over the Australian Labor Party. This has largely been due to the entrenchment of the proportional representation of factions. One of the effects of the institutionalisation of factions has been the development of factional sub-groupings ('fractions'). This article analyses the phenomenon by looking at a case study of a single ALP faction—the Left in New South Wales. Since 1971, two major fractions have developed in the NSW Left, based on ideological disagreements, personality conflicts, generational differences and arguments over the role of the union movement in the ALP. This development parallels the intra-factional splits that have occurred in many other sections of the Labor Party. Yet the factional system in the 1980s and 1990s operated relatively effectively as a means of managing power. The question now is whether it can survive the challenge of new issues that cross-cut traditional ideological lines.

Introduction

Factionalism in the Australian Labor Party (ALP) is a phenomenon much remarked upon, but little analysed. Like the role of the Mafia in Italian politics, few outside the system seem to understand the power networks, whilst few inside are prepared to share their thoughts with the outside world. Yet without understanding factions, it is impossible to properly comprehend the Labor Party.

Every organisation, and certainly every political party, contains organised power groupings. Those within the ALP, however, are far more structured than in any other Australian political party[1] or indeed any other social democratic party in the Western world.[2] The term 'faction', which retains distinctly pejorative overtones[3] in most political parties, has long since lost such connotations in the ALP.

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[1] Historically, factionalism within the Liberal Party of Australia seems restricted to loose groupings, such as the Liberal Forum (Henderson 1994, 291). However, in recent years, both personality-based and ideology-based factions have become increasingly prevalent (Jaensch 1994, 182–4; Taylor 1999, 1, 22).

[2] Although organised groupings of the Left or Right have formed from time to time (such as British Labour's 'Militant Tendency' movement, or the American Democratic Party's 'Democratic Leadership Council' and 'New Democrat Alliance'), they have not led to the creation of official counter-groupings, as occurred within the ALP. See McSmith (1997, 123–4, 137) and Woodward (1994, 29). More generally, see Piven (1991a).

[3] The *Macquarie Dictionary* defines a faction as 'a smaller group of people within a larger group, often one using unscrupulous methods to accomplish selfish purposes' (Delbridge et al. 1997, 754).

Labor's period in federal government from 1983 to 1996 cemented the hold that factions had over the Party. By the early 1980s, three main factions—Right, Left and Centre-Left—had formed (Richardson 1994, 80). They held regular meetings, elected office-bearers, produced newsletters and in some cases even formulated their own policies. In 1984, a year after Bob Hawke led the ALP to an election victory, the Centre-Left faction became nationally integrated. The Right and the Left quickly followed suit (Lloyd 2000, 57).

The most significant role factions played was in allocating party positions. Whereas previous decades had seen appointments to the front bench and to parliamentary committees decided by open ballots within the caucus, the 1980s saw the emergence of a more orchestrated system. Faction leaders would agree between themselves how many positions each grouping was entitled to, based loosely on the proportion of the caucus who supported each faction. Once this was settled, each faction would each conduct an internal ballot for the number of positions they had been allocated. All that remained for caucus to do was to rubber-stamp the agreed ticket (Kelly 1992, 30).[4]

The result was that power within the ALP now depended upon having influence within one's faction, rather than within the Party as a whole. This placed particular strains upon the factions. During the 1980s and 1990s, major intra-factional disputes occurred not only in New South Wales (Simms 2000, 97), but also in Victoria (Hudson 2000, 113–15), Queensland (Wanna 2000, 135–6, 144), Western Australia (Sayers 2000, 160–3) and South Australia (Summers and Parkin 2000, 175–80).

This article aims to investigate the development of factions and 'fractions' (factional sub-groupings). It does so by analysing the development of a single faction—the Left in New South Wales (NSW).[5] This grouping now wields significant power. By virtue of obtaining between 35 and 40% of the vote at the annual State Conference of the NSW ALP, it decides who will fill two positions in the Senate and eight positions in the NSW Legislative Council. It selects two officers in the NSW Branch—one paid and one unpaid—and around 100 members of the NSW ALP's various committees. The NSW Left also plays a major role in preselections for the House of Representatives and the NSW Legislative Assembly. Observers sometimes assume that because it stands in opposition to the NSW Right—generally regarded as the most formidable faction in the Labor Party—it must be a feeble force. This is misconceived. Factions have a tendency to create their opposites, and the modern NSW Left is one of the most powerful factions in the ALP.

Drawing on interviews with key players in the faction,[6] plus what written

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[4] The first major test of this system was in the 1983 ballot for the 23 positions in the first Hawke Ministry. All nominees on the cross-factional ticket were elected, with votes ranging from 80 to 106 out of a possible 106. Of the few renegades who ran against the ticket, the highest vote received was for Ros Kelly, who polled only 41 votes (Cohen 1990, 55). Later ballots saw some controversial exclusions, such as Barry Cohen in 1987 and Barry Jones in 1990 (Parkin and Warhurst 2000, 34).

[5] Unless otherwise stated, the 'Left' will be used to refer to the organisation known as the Combined Branches' and Unions' Steering Committee until 10 November 1989, when it changed its name to the NSW Socialist Left.

[6] In 1994, as a member of the Left faction, I interviewed Anthony Albanese, Meredith Burgmann, Rodney Cavalier, Bruce Childs, Laurie Ferguson, Luke Foley, Tim Gartrell, Arthur Gietzelt, Christine Kibble, Michael Knight, Jeannette McHugh, Brad Norington, Paul O'Grady, Chris Siorokos, Ann

material is available,[7] this article traces the development of the Left—from its effective genesis in the early 1970s, through a turbulent phase in the 1980s, a major split in 1989, and a period of relative stability over the last decade. The story of the NSW Left in some ways mirrors that of the ALP over this period. Not only did it fundamentally rethink its ideological precepts, it also saw the development of multiple organised groups competing for control of the organisation. Just as factions came to command the ALP, so 'fractions' came to dominate the factions—and the NSW Left was no exception.

The 1970s: The Genesis of a Faction

As with most political cliques, power groupings and factions, it is difficult to pinpoint the time at which the NSW Left was born. Since the mid-1950s, a body known as the Combined Branches' and Unions' Steering Committee had been in existence.[8] This was essentially an umbrella group for those who opposed the Catholic-dominated leadership of the ALP.[9] The Steering Committee had its genesis in the 1955 Split which saw a group of Labor members leave to form the anti-communist Democratic Labor Party (DLP). The original *raison d'être* of the Steering Committee was to oppose the role which the DLP-influenced Industrial Groups played in the ALP (Cavalier 1992, 118).[10]

From the 1950s onwards, however, the grouping that was to become the NSW Right maintained its tight control over the Labor Party. The exodus of Catholics from the ALP to the DLP was much greater in Victoria than in NSW (Tanner 1991, 10). Whilst the Victorian Branch therefore became dominated by the Left, the NSW Branch continued to be run by the Right.[11]

The year of 1971 was important in the evolution of the NSW Left. The year

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Symonds, Ken Turner, Tom Uren and Frank Walker. This took place on the understanding that the resulting piece of work would not be published, and would only be circulated within the faction. In 1999, feeling that sufficient time had passed since the damaging split of 1989, I prepared a revised paper for publication, which was circulated for comment to all interviewees who were members of the Left, plus Jan Burnswoods, George Campbell, John Faulkner, Martin Ferguson, Brian Howe, Ian Macdonald, Daryl Melham, Damian O'Connor, Peter Primrose, Janelle Saffin, Jeff Shaw and Carmel Tebbutt.

[7] Three particularly useful works on factionalism are Parkin and Warhurst (1983), Burchell and Mathews (1991) and Warhurst and Parkin (2000). Otherwise, most published material on the topic is in the form of newspaper articles. Because mainstream political journalists have only a limited degree of knowledge about the nuances of factional politics, and because some players are more prepared to air their views than others, these pieces often give rather distorted accounts of the events.

[8] The original Steering Committee developed in the period between 1955 and 1958. Its founders were moderate union officials, led by Australian Workers' Union official Charlie Oliver. Subsequently, these union officials were co-opted into the leadership of the NSW Branch (with Oliver serving as President from 1960 to 1971). Once they had abandoned the Steering Committee, it was taken over by more left-wing members.

[9] According to one of the faction's senior powerbrokers, Leo McLeay, 'the common thread of the Right is the fact that most of them were Catholic' (quoted in Cumming 1991, 48).

[10] In the decade leading up to the demise of the Democratic Labor Party in 1974, the Steering Committee lost its original *raison d'être* (to oppose the Industrial Groups), and became more of a left-wing organisation.

[11] Though mostly referred to as 'the Right', they tended to formally promote themselves as 'the Officers' Group' or 'Centre Unity' (a name coined by Paul Keating in 1980, when he was President of the NSW ALP).

before, the ALP's Federal Executive had ordered an inquiry into the conduct of the NSW Branch. The report, written by Federal President Tom Burns, was highly critical of the Party leadership, revealing 'contempt for proper procedures in financial dealings and the pursuit of factional advantage in a variety of practices, including stacking of annual conferences, instances of bias by the conference chairman, 'rorted' preselections and exploitation of the party journal' (McMullin 1992, 332). The leadership of the NSW ALP had no alternative but to introduce proportional representation, a step which proved to be critical in institutionalising a role for the Left (Simms 2000, 94). Proportional representation applied to the election of delegates to the Federal Conference, the Federal Executive, the Administrative Committee, machinery committees, policy committees and (most importantly) to the election of two salaried Assistant Secretaries. This meant that, so long as it won over one-third of the vote at the 1971 State Conference, the Left would gain a full-time paid officer of the ALP.[12] The position of Assistant Secretary has remained a vital one for the Left faction. After leaving the job, the Assistant Secretary has typically moved into the Federal parliament.[13]

Despite these gains, 1971 saw the faction far from united. The first murmurings of unrest came from a group of student radicals, ex-students and Trotskyists. They reacted against what they perceived to be the (demographically and ideologically) 'old Left'. The issues that motivated them were the new social movements—an end to the Vietnam War, nuclear disarmament, feminism, the environment, gay rights and Aboriginal rights. Their entrée into the ALP was via the Right-dominated ALP Youth Council[14] and the establishment of regional Young Labor Associations.[15] This naturally led them into the mainstream of the ALP—and the Left faction.

Once active in the mainstream ALP, these young recruits developed the perception that the background and outlook of the Steering Committee's leaders was markedly different to their own. They reacted against the strong influence of communist-controlled unions on the faction as a whole. Although some of the faction's leaders—particularly Arthur Gietzelt, Tom Uren and Bruce Childs—were strongly committed to the new social movements, others were not. At a time when nearly three-quarters of the delegates to NSW State Conference were from affiliated unions, it was hardly surprising that the Steering Committee's leadership was similarly influenced by industrial concerns.

The response of the young activists was the same as it had been to the Right-dominated Youth Council: to leave and establish their own alternative power structure. In sheer frustration, a group of young radicals and Trotskyists, led by Warwick McDonald, Rod Wise and Bob Hunt, broke away from the Steering Committee in early 1971 and established their own faction—the Socialist Left. This group also included Bob Gould (now a left-wing book proprietor), Hall Greenland

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[12] The fact that the Left had one of the Assistant Secretaries also changed the power balance within the Left. Before 1971, its political leader had been the Secretary of the Steering Committee.

[13] Bruce Childs (1971–80) and John Faulkner (1980–89) both took their places as Senators within a year of retiring as Assistant Secretary. Anthony Albanese (1989–95) won the federal seat of Grayndler the year after his retirement.

[14] Later to become known as Young Labor Council, the body was then controlled by the five men dubbed by author Fia Cumming as the Labor 'mates'—Graham Richardson, Paul Keating, Bob Carr, Leo McLeay and Laurie Brereton (Cumming 1991, 49–55).

[15] The provision for establishment of Young Labor Associations had always existed in the Party's rules, but no one had ever taken the opportunity before.

(now a lecturer at the University of Technology, Sydney), Jeff Shaw (now NSW Attorney-General), and two members of the NSW Parliament, Frank Walker and George Petersen.

At the 1971 State Conference, the Socialist Left ran candidates against the mainstream Left faction—the Steering Committee—for the critical positions of Assistant Secretary and delegates to the Federal Executive. They counted on supplementing their base vote with preferences from the Right but narrowly failed.[16] Their loss did not prevent the Steering Committee from achieving two major milestones: a delegate to the Federal Executive, and an Assistant Secretary of the NSW Branch. For the first time, the Left faction had gained a degree of recognition within the ALP. Bruce Childs, aged 37, formerly the joint state secretary of the Printing and Kindred Industries Union, became the Left's first Assistant Secretary, providing the faction with a salaried organiser based in the Party's head office.[17]

In November 1971, the Socialist Left group collapsed. Critical to its demise was the extremism of leaders like Gould and Greenland, and the fact that only one union supported it (Cavalier 1976, n. 146). The process was also hastened by some well-timed overtures made by the Steering Committee leadership to some of the Socialist Left's more moderate members. But its demise did not usher in an era of harmony within the Left. Friction had been developing for some time between two fractions in the Left, one led by unionist Jack Heffernan and another led by newly elected Senator Arthur Gietzelt. The key differences were on tactics (the Heffernan group were more inclined to compromise with the Right[18]), the balance between branch and union support (the Heffernan group were heavily union-dominated[19]) and the split which had occurred within the Communist Party over the invasion of Czechoslovakia.[20]

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[16] Socialist Left faction leaders had reckoned on a 10% base vote, plus a 23% spill over from the Right (Cavalier 1976, n. 46). The most closely fought contest was for delegate to the Federal Executive, with Sutherland Shire President Arthur Gietzelt (from the Steering Committee) beating MP Frank Walker (from the Socialist Left).

[17] Childs' successors were even younger: John Faulkner (who was 26), Anthony Albanese (25) and Damian O'Connor (31).

[18] This came to a head in mid-1972, over the preselection of seven members of the NSW Legislative Council. The Right initially offered to place two nominees of the Left on their ticket, in exchange for the two Right faction nominees being placed on the Left ticket. The only proviso was that either side had a right of veto over the other's nominees. The Gietzelt supporters nominated Delcia Kite for the first position, whilst Heffernan supporters wanted Bill Rigby to fill the spot. The Right, however, saw Kite as too hardline, and refused to place her on their ticket. The ensuing debate made the different tactical positions crystal-clear. Gietzelt's position was that: 'Decisions must be made in properly constituted bodies on the basis of principle. The types of compromise of the past are over'. Benson (a key supporter of Heffernan) argued that: 'We have the right to decide who ours are—okay—but they have the guns' (both quoted in Cavalier 1976, 40). Eventually, Heffernan and his supporters walked out of the Steering Committee. At the State Convention, each group ran a ticket, but the Right took all seven positions.

[19] The Heffernan group had almost no support from branch delegates. The unions that supported it were those that had aligned themselves with the Socialist Party of Australia: the Seamen's Union, the Sheet Metal Workers' Union, Actors' Equity and sections of the Building Workers' Industrial Union.

[20] After the Communist Party of Australia (CPA) condemned the Soviet Union's 1968 invasion of Czechoslovakia, divisions began to arise within the CPA. They culminated in the expulsion of pro-Soviet elements who had been attacking the CPA, and the formation of the pro-Soviet Socialist Party of Australia (SPA) in 1971. Various Left-affiliated unions were then forced to choose between the CPA and the SPA. Since some members of the Steering Committee were strongly influenced by communism, any split in the CPA was bound to spill over into the Left of the ALP. The cleavage within the Steering Committee

In mid-1972, Heffernan and his supporters walked out of the Steering Committee. They began meeting formally a few months later. In 1973, they coined the name 'the Socialist Objective Committee', and produced a newsletter which was highly critical of the Steering Committee. The Socialist Objective Committee remained a viable force within the Left until 1975, when Jack Heffernan was appointed to the Commonwealth Conciliation and Arbitration Commission. At that year's ALP State Conference, the number of Socialist Objective Committee representatives on the Administrative Committee (the Party's governing body) fell from three to nil. The Socialist Objective Committee collapsed shortly afterwards, and its members either left the ALP or rejoined the Steering Committee. Briefly, the Left was united once more.

By the early 1970s, another group of young activists had begun to get involved in the Steering Committee. In 1972–73, this group had earned substantial kudos in the Left by winning control of the Youth Council from the Right faction.[21] Over subsequent years, these younger activists (including three men who were subsequently to become Labor Cabinet Ministers: Rodney Cavalier, John Faulkner and Peter Baldwin) made major inroads into Right-controlled areas, notably northern Sydney and the inner city. Factional conflict in the inner city was particularly vicious. Suspicions that elements of the inner-city Right were linked to corruption and drug-running gained veracity when Baldwin was badly beaten by an unknown assailant. The incident spelled the end of the Right's control over the inner-city branches (Wheelwright 1983, 48–52). It also caused a bitter dispute within the Left over whether to call for Federal intervention. The young activists were apparently furious at the decision of their older Left colleagues not to force intervention into the NSW Branch (Wilkinson 1996, 156).

Despite some resistance from the official leaders of the Left—Deputy Premier Jack Ferguson, Federal parliamentarian Arthur Gietzelt and Assistant Secretary Bruce Childs—the young activists quickly established themselves within the Left. When in 1976 a vacancy arose in the NSW Legislative Council, Ferguson, Gietzelt and Childs informed the group that they could select one of their number to take the position. They chose Baldwin. Four years later Childs resigned and his place was taken by Faulkner.[22] Unlike the ill-fated Socialist Left grouping, the second generational takeover of the Left had been successful. At the age of 26 Faulkner held the faction's key organising position.

When Faulkner began work as Assistant Secretary in November 1980, he was immediately placed under severe pressure by the Right.[23] But that pressure had

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mirrored the split in the CPA, with Heffernan and his supporters strongly aligned to the SPA whilst the remainder of the Steering Committee were closer to the CPA.

[21] After the 1972 election, the two factions came to a power-sharing arrangement within the Youth Council. In 1973, the Left won control of the organisation outright.

[22] There was some conflict over this position. Gietzelt and Ferguson had met with State MP Frank Walker in 1976, and persuaded him to take student activist Ian Macdonald on to his staff so he could prepare to succeed Childs as Assistant Secretary. By 1980, however, it was clear that Faulkner had majority support, and Macdonald did not run. Since Macdonald had moved from Melbourne to Sydney, he was understandably somewhat bitter, but the episode was not an entire failure for him since he became a member of the NSW Legislative Council in 1988.

[23] The attacks from the Right ranged from a farcical attempt to have Faulkner removed from the position for allegedly using the office for factional purposes, to an incident in December 1980 when the office Christmas party was held outside his office but he was not invited (Ramsey 1994, 19).

always been there[24] and still exists today. It was the conflict *within* the Left which was to make Faulkner's time as Assistant Secretary one of the toughest in the history of the faction.

The 1980s: The Fault Lines Form

The 1980s were marked by the division of the NSW Left into two competing groups or 'fractions'. Often referred to by members of the faction as 'the Split', the division had eerie resonances with the 1955 Split that led to the DLP breaking away from the ALP. To many in the Left, the stakes in this rift were just as high as they were when the Labor Party itself was split asunder.

The culmination of the division in the NSW Left occurred in 1989. Two critical events occurred that year. The first, in March, was Anthony Albanese beating Jan Burnswoods in an internal faction ballot for the position of Assistant Secretary of the NSW ALP. The second, in November, was a walkout by about 20 of Burnswoods' supporters after the Left had voted to adopt a new constitution.

The two groupings were referred to by various different names. The Burnswoods supporters were known variously as the 'Cavalier-ites', 'Mensheviks', 'Radicals', 'Dealers', 'Broad Left', 'Labor Left' or 'Soft Left'. The Albanese supporters were known as the 'Walker-ites', 'Bolsheviks', 'Ratbags', 'Doers', 'Industrial Left', 'Socialist Left' or 'Hard Left'. For convenience, I will use the names most commonly given to the fractions by my interviewees—'Soft Left' and 'Hard Left'.

The split had its genesis in a range of other forums including the State Parliament, the Federal Parliament, the Labor Women's Conference and Young Labor. In each case, the differences began on an ideological or tactical level, and were soon exacerbated by personality differences.

Labor Women's Conference

Through the early part of the 1970s, a power-sharing arrangement between the Left and the Right existed with respect to Labor Women's Conference. The Left appointed the Secretary and Assistant Secretary, the Right appointed the President and Treasurer, and each faction appointed a Vice-President. But in 1977 the Left finally won absolute control of the Conference, and found itself in the difficult position of contemplating whether to continue the arrangement. A slightly older group of women, later to be aligned with the Hard Left, maintained that it should be preserved.[25] To this end, they passed a resolution in Left Women's Caucus that the Left not stand a candidate for President.

The Soft Left, however, had other ideas.[26] After some internal discussion, they chose to disobey the resolution, nominating a candidate for President just five minutes before the ballot closed and using the Left's numbers to defeat

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[24] Bruce Childs had been placed under similar pressure in his early days as Assistant Secretary. He was given an office with a glass wall—so he could be watched by the Right. Whilst everyone else in the office had new desks, Childs was given an old desk which had been used by Bill Colbourne, the longest ever serving Secretary of the NSW Branch. He was sometimes referred to by the Right as the 'Junior' Assistant Secretary, and given inordinate amounts of party work, in an attempt to ensure that he would not have time to organise for the Left. Yet at that stage, the job was not seen as that of a factional organiser. This steadily changed during the 1970s as the NSW Branch became more factionalised.

[25] The group was led by Delcia Kite, Win Childs, Ann Symonds and Jeannette McHugh.

[26] This group was led by Jan Burnswoods, Pam Allan, Christine Kibble, Kate Butler and Katherine Taylor.

the Right's nominee.[27] Whilst this helped to bring about the Left's overwhelming dominance of Labor Women's Conference (by the mid-1980s, they had over 90% of the vote), it also contributed to the 1986 decision by the NSW ALP to disband the forum. By this stage, not only had divisions arisen over the issue of power-sharing with the Right but also over the Soft Left's perceived unwillingness to share power with the Hard Left.[28]

Fractionalism in Labor Women's Conference was produced by generational differences. This led one observer to draw a parallel with the phenomenon of younger American feminists 'trashing' their older counterparts in the 1970s and 1980s. Other key factors were disputes over power-sharing, ideological divergences and personal antagonisms. The development of two blocs in Labor Women's Conference fed into the larger conflict which was steadily building in the Steering Committee.

Young Labor

After nearly a decade of being controlled by those who were to become the Soft Left,[29] the early 1980s saw the formation of an alternative power grouping. Led by Anthony Albanese, who was at the time shifting his focus from student politics to internal ALP politics, members of this grouping were soon to align themselves with the Hard Left. In general,[30] this group was more concerned than the Soft Left with international issues, and maintained closer links with broader left-wing groups, such as the Communist Party of Australia, People for Nuclear Disarmament and the African National Congress.

By 1984, bitter conflicts had erupted between the two groups in Young Labor Left. At this stage, control of the caucus see-sawed between the two groups. During 1984, Paul O'Grady—later to become an MLC (member of the NSW Legislative Council)—won a ballot for the Assistant Secretary of Australian Young Labor, but failed to muster support within the Left to run as President of NSW Young Labor.[31] However, the disputes did not spill over into the Steering Committee until the following year.

In 1985, the Left had controlled Young Labor in its own right for 12 years. Albanese was a key player by this stage, and was to become President (by a narrow margin[32]) at that year's annual conference. But in January 1986, a Young Labor Left caucus meeting was held to decide who would be the three delegates to the Central Steering Committee caucus. When the issue was forced to a ballot, the Soft Left took all three positions. The loss hardened Albanese's resolve to defeat the Soft Left.

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[27] Butler won 73% of the vote—an indication of the strength of the Left women even in 1977. Many of the Hard Left women were torn between honouring an agreement with the Right (by supporting a candidate from the opposing faction) and voting for a member of their own caucus.

[28] Kate Butler remained president from 1977 to 1986, whilst Christine Kibble was secretary from 1977 to 1985.

[29] This group included Peter Baldwin, Peter Crawford, John Whitehouse, Rod Cavalier, John Faulkner, Pam Allan, Laurie Ferguson, Martin Ferguson and (subsequently) Paul O'Grady.

[30] An obvious exception is Laurie Ferguson.

[31] O'Grady realised that he lacked sufficient support within Young Labor Left, so chose not to stand against the Hard Left candidate, Caroline Staples.

[32] Albanese received 223 votes, whilst the Right's candidate, John Hatzisterjos, received 211. This was to be the closest margin in a Young Labor ballot until 1992, when the Right won back control of the organisation.

The response by Albanese and his supporters to their defeat in Young Labor was not limited to Young Labor Left.[33] They also set about winning control of the zones. Unlike the Right, the Left faction is made up of a series of regional zones, each of which elect eight delegates to the central panel.[34] In Zone Two (which covers Sydney's inner city and eastern suburbs), the Hard Left recruited heavily[35] and ensured that in 1986 not even Federal MP Peter Baldwin was elected as a delegate to the Central Steering Committee.

The disagreements within Young Labor had some grounding in ideology but were mostly personality-based. Because the body wielded little power, its internal schisms were largely irrelevant to the ALP. Yet its disputes came to have a major effect upon the Steering Committee because within a relatively short space of time, many of the protagonists—including O'Grady and Albanese—had shifted their focus to the Steering Committee.

NSW Parliament

To understand the rift within the NSW Parliamentary Left, it is necessary to comprehend in some detail the events that followed the resignation of Jack Ferguson, Deputy Leader of the Opposition from 1973 to 1976, and Deputy Premier from 1976 to 1983.[36] A strong leader who operated on his instincts, Ferguson was none the less criticised by some for his failure to consult within the Left, preferring instead to make decisions through a loose 'kitchen cabinet' which even included some members of the Right.[37] Despite the exclusivity of the Left, however, he was admired as a natural leader by many in the faction, including two rising stars of the Left—Rodney Cavalier and Frank Walker.

Following Ferguson's resignation in September 1983, two positions—the Deputy Premiership and Ferguson's ministerial position—fell vacant. This provided two opportunities: for an MP to become a minister, and for an existing minister to become Deputy Premier. The internal Left ballot for the ministerial vacancy was a tight contest, with Cavalier eventually winning the position.[38]

The contest for the Deputy Premiership was far more bitter. If the Left won the position again, the Deputy Premier would naturally be one of the faction's leaders. Some in the Left therefore argued that the candidate could not merely be selected in a ballot; rather, he or she had to *emerge* with full support from the Left.

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[33] They did ensure that for the next five years, all Young Labor delegates to the Central Steering Committee supported the Hard Left.

[34] This structure was once described by Graham Richardson as 'Stalinist' (Cumming 1991, 249).

[35] At the Zone Two meeting which followed the January 1985 ballot in Young Labor Left, the Hard Left nominated 65 people for membership of the Zone.

[36] Ferguson gained a great deal of kudos both within the Left and in the broader Party for his role (with Gietzelt and others on the Steering Committee Executive) in making Neville Wran leader of the NSW Parliamentary Party. In his account of how Wran beat the other leadership contenders (Pat Hills and Kevin Stewart), Rodney Cavalier (1985, 31) described Ferguson as 'the essential ingredient of [Wran's] victory'.

[37] The Ferguson 'kitchen cabinet' always included Ken Booth and Frank Walker, plus occasionally Rod Cavalier, Pat Flaherty, Roger Degen and Merv Hunter. Those from the Right who attended included Rex Jackson, Bill Crabtree and Paul Landa. A formal Left caucus was formed by Walker but it did not attain any great prominence until after Ferguson's resignation from Parliament.

[38] Cavalier's opponents in the Left were Ken Gabb (the favourite) and Pat Rogan. Upon becoming a minister, Cavalier served for a brief period in the Energy and Finance portfolio before moving to Education, where he remained until 1988.

Walker, a senior minister with 13 years' parliamentary experience, felt that he deserved the Deputy Premiership. He was buoyed by what he saw as a clear assurance of support from Ferguson[39] and the knowledge that he would be certain of majority support within the Left caucus. But this confidence was dashed only minutes after Ferguson tendered his resignation. According to one newspaper report, at the press conference where he made the announcement, Ferguson 'said that he favoured Mr Booth as the new deputy because he was tried and proven and would add stability to the Government' (Steketee 1983, 1).

Despite lacking Ferguson's backing, Walker easily beat Booth (21 to 7) in the subsequent ballot of Left faction members, thus becoming the official Left candidate.[40] Yet at the full caucus meeting, he lost to a candidate from the Right. The circumstances of this loss, and the allegations of treachery that surrounded it, greatly exacerbated the split within the Left.

The ballot for Deputy Premier was held in February 1984, with three candidates—Terry Sheahan, Ron Mulock and Frank Walker—contesting the position. For the first time, the system of pairing[41] extended throughout the caucus. Sheahan and Mulock (both from the Right faction) paired their supporters with each other. The Left also paired their supporters, to ensure a solid vote for Walker. In theory, pairing allowed the result to be predicted exactly but, prior to the ballot, Walker was confident that several of the Right's pairs would vote for him or at least give him their second preference. When the ballot papers were tallied, Walker received 32 primary votes, Mulock 20 and Sheahan 17. Yet after the distribution of second-preference votes, Walker lost 33–36 to Mulock.[42] If two more people had given Walker their first or second preference, he would have won.

There are two interpretations of the ballot result. The first is that since Walker was of a similar age to several ambitious young members of the Right,[43] they would have made sure he was defeated, since he could stand in the way of their eventual promotion. Under this interpretation, Walker's primary vote consisted of the entire Left caucus (28 members) plus Wran and three others, and he was lucky to even receive one extra preference. Those who argue for this interpretation also claim that Booth would have received far more support across the caucus, since he was due to retire soon after, and posed no threat the 'young turks' of the Right faction.[44]

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[39] This assurance is disputed by others in the Left, and it has been suggested that there was tension between Walker and Jack Ferguson for several months prior to Ferguson's retirement (Steketee 1983, 1).

[40] This ballot was unusual in that the Left had an 'official' candidate. The concept became entrenched at a federal level in 1983, and this ballot signified the point from which it was accepted within the NSW parliamentary Left.

[41] 'Pairing' is where factional leaders insist that each caucus member pairs up with another, the two then showing each other their ballot paper in order to ensure that both are following the correct caucus ticket. The only way it can fail is if both people decide not to vote for the approved candidate.

[42] The figures are derived from a newspaper article published the following day (Steketee 1984, 1). Incidentally, the Right's party officers were also surprised by the result. They had expected Sheahan to win (Turner 1985, 195).

[43] Such as Bob Carr, Laurie Brereton, Terry Sheahan and Peter Anderson.

[44] This argument was supported by a newspaper editorial the day after Ferguson resigned, which described Walker as 'a younger and abler minister [who] could not draw sufficient support from outside the left-wing faction' (*Sydney Morning Herald* 1983, 8). A front-page report the day after the vote adopted a very similar explanation (Steketee 1984, 1).

The other interpretation is somewhat more controversial. Supporters of Walker maintain that the curious thing about the ballot was that Mulock had received one more vote than any of their previous calculations had suggested. This led them to conclude that the extra vote had not come from a Sheahan supporter, but instead from a pair of Left caucus members who had both voted for Mulock.[45]

In the final analysis, what was most important about this ballot was not so much the result (in fact, the Left would regain the Deputy Leader's position just four years later[46]) as the hostility it engendered between the two camps. The thought that members of the Left were so hostile to Walker that they would vote for a member of the Right before their own faction's candidate greatly angered Walker's supporters and intensified tensions between fractions in the Left.

Following the ballot, Walker made a decision to increase his involvement in the Steering Committee. It had previously been quite hostile towards him, even to the extent of passing judgement on disputes within the state parliamentary caucus.[47] Walker worked with Ian Macdonald and Michael Knight to build support for the Hard Left—partly among branch activists, but mostly with union officials. The breakthrough came on a relatively unimportant vote: the election of the Assistant Secretary of the Steering Committee. At the 1984 Annual General Meeting of the Steering Committee, John McCarthy (Hard Left) beat Laurie Ferguson (Soft Left) by 46 votes to 45. Many in the Left claim that this vote signified the point at which the Hard Left seized control of the Steering Committee.

Meanwhile, conflict between the fractions continued to build in the State Parliament. Although the differences were to a large degree due to personalities, one key policy difference became the attitude each had to the union movement. The Soft Left had its principal power-base in the ALP local branches.[48] The Hard Left had its in the union movement. This particular split found expression in the debate over whether the Left should support changes to the ratio in which unions and branches were represented at State Conference. Since 1975, the rules of the NSW Branch have stated that the ratio of union delegates to branch delegates at State Conference should be 60:40.[49] During the late 1970s and early 1980s, many in the Soft Left argued that the Left should support changing the ratio to 50:50, on the grounds that the numbers of union members were declining and that unionists were becoming increasingly conservative. Pragmatically, since the Left as a whole had a higher level of support in the branches than in the unions, such a move would see a significant increase in the Left vote. Opposition to such a move came primarily from the Hard Left, which argued that, on principle, the Left should

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[45] By a process of elimination, certain members of the Left argued that if this interpretation was correct, the pair was Ken Booth and Don Bowman. This seems unlikely, given that Michael Knight and Frank Walker drew up the list of pairs, and they would not have put Bowman with Booth if they had had any doubt about Bowman. Indeed, Bowman had voted for Walker in the internal Left ballot.

[46] Andrew Refshauge served as Deputy Leader of the Opposition from 1988 to 1995 and as Deputy Premier from 1995 onwards.

[47] Following Jack Ferguson's resignation, the Steering Committee passed a resolution (which Walker ignored) urging him not to oppose Booth for the Deputy Premiership.

[48] The Soft Left did also have strong union support, particularly from the Federated Miscellaneous Workers' Union after 1984 (when Martin Ferguson replaced Ray Gietzelt as Secretary).

[49] Rule B.26. In 1971, the unions were given one delegate per thousand union members, but a growth in union membership saw the union delegation in 1975 rise to 73% of Conference. Fixing the ratio at 60:40 ensures that unless there is an increase in the total number of branch delegates, an increase in any one union delegation can come only at the expense of another union.

campaign to maintain majority trade union representation at State Conference. Unsurprisingly, any reduction in union representation would have damaged the Hard Left more than the Soft Left.

Among the Soft Left, Rodney Cavalier was one of the strongest advocates of reducing union representation. He described majority trade union control of State Conference as a 'major defect', on the grounds that 30–40% of trade union members voted for the Liberal and National parties. He went on to comment that '[p]reservation of this anachronism spawned some of the most ingenious thinking since the believers in a flat earth had been forced to come to terms with the voyage of Columbus' (Cavalier 1985, 25). Cavalier was no stranger to conflict with the union movement, frequently coming into dispute with the Teachers' Federation during his period as Education Minister (1984–88).[50] This further intensified the perception that the difference between the two fractions was their attitude to the union movement.

To sum up, fractionalism in State Parliament appears to have stemmed from the ballot for the Deputy Premiership (and the interpretations of the ballot that prevailed), strong personality differences, and a degree of contention on the issue of union involvement in the ALP. The divisions in State Parliament probably had most effect on the eventual 1989 split.

Federal Parliament

Federal Parliament was the arena in which intra-factional conflict was most shaped by ideological questions. During the late 1980s, a perception arose that the Left's ministerial representatives had 'sold out', or become co-opted into supporting the agenda of the Hawke Government.[51] Some of the criticism was directed at Brian Howe who, as Social Security Minister had been appointed to Cabinet in 1984 and to the powerful Expenditure Review Committee (ERC) in 1987—the only Left member of the ERC during Hawke's Prime Ministership. He and factional colleague Gerry Hand (Minister for Aboriginal Affairs from 1987 to 1990) adopted a more pragmatic approach to policy making than had their predecessors, Tom Uren and Arthur Gietzelt. As a Cabinet Minister and ERC member, Howe accepted the Government's economic direction and eventually came to form a strong alliance with Keating to implement a needs-based welfare strategy (Kelly 1992, 273; Hawke 1994, 389–91; Saunders and Whiteford 1991, 119–96). Age Pensions, the Family Allowance Supplement and Rent Assistance were all targeted more carefully, but made more generous for those who remained eligible.

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[50] One journalist wrote that Cavalier's view of some public sector unions was 'that they have been taken over by middle-class careerists who do not address the traditional needs of unionists' (Shanahan 1986, 19). During 1985, motions from some Steering Committee Zones strongly condemned Cavalier and even recommended his expulsion, but the motion eventually passed by the Central Steering Committee was merely a general condemnation of the Wran government which criticised both Cavalier and Walker (Hagan and Turner 1991, 220).

[51] Most of the criticisms levelled at Labor in this period may be found in Jaensch (1989), Johnson (1989), Maddox (1989) and Beilharz (1994). The reassessment of traditional ideologies was by no means uniquely Australian, as the 1980s and 1990s saw labour parties everywhere struggling over questions of identity and history. In a comparative analysis of social democratic parties, Frances Fox Piven (1991b, 9) attributes this to 'the impact of shifts in the world economy on their constituencies, infrastructures, and intellectual moorings'.

Whilst Howe and Hand were both Victorians, their decisions had by the late 1980s triggered a debate between members of the NSW Left who supported them and others who felt that they were failing to implement a 'true' Left agenda. By the mid-1990s, both would find themselves marginalised within the faction. Yet frustration at the leadership of the Left was just beginning to mount by 1989, and was thus only a minor factor in the NSW split.

1989: The Split

By late 1988, it became generally known within the Left that Senator Arthur Gietzelt was due to resign and would be replaced in the Senate by John Faulkner, then Assistant Secretary of the ALP. Attempts to organise a consensus candidate for the position of Assistant Secretary were quickly rebuffed by both Hard and Soft Left.[52]

The ballot took place in March 1989, just a month after Gietzelt's resignation. Both sides had agreed that a short campaign period would minimise the risk of adverse publicity to the faction. As had been widely tipped, Anthony Albanese (Hard Left) beat Jan Burnswoods (Soft Left). In fact, Albanese claims to have exactly predicted the margin of 50 to 43. The bitter contest marked the first time since 1971 that the Left had held a ballot for Assistant Secretary.

Having held the ballot, the atmosphere in the Left did not become any less tense. Faulkner's term had been due to end in June 1989, and Albanese had to then contest the position at State Conference, where he was opposed by an unofficial Soft Left candidate (and former state MP) Peter Crawford. Although Albanese won the ballot, Crawford succeeded in attracting over 10% of the total Left vote, which gives some indication of the degree of discontent in the faction at this time.

Events over the subsequent months did little to ease the bitterness. Debate over constitutional reform dominated the agenda of the Left. At the faction's monthly meeting in November 1989, the fractions were largely agreed on almost all issues yet this belied the underlying rancour. Two votes were taken. One was over a comparatively minor issue—whether members of electorate councils should be required to caucus with one another. The other was whether to change the name of the faction from the Steering Committee to the Socialist Left.[53] The Soft Left lost both votes, and some of their members walked out of the meeting.

Relations between the fractions had hit rock bottom. The two Left officers of the NSW ALP—Assistant Secretary Anthony Albanese and Junior Vice-President Martin Ferguson—were not on speaking terms. The two fractions began to caucus separately. The Hard Left sent a four-page letter to all members of the Left. The Soft Left produced a special issue of the factional journal *Challenge*, and a number of unsigned circulars, which levelled harsh personal criticisms at various members of the Hard Left. Only after eight months of negotiations, conducted through a specially formulated committee, were the Soft Left finally persuaded to return to the faction.

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[52] At one stage, senior faction members George Campbell, Arthur Gietzelt and Bruce Childs floated the idea that Ken Gabb be the consensus candidate.

[53] This was rather ironic, given that the 'Socialist Left' was the name given to the 1971 splinter group. Some members of the Soft Left also questioned the wisdom of adopting such a name in the same month that the East German government decided to open the Berlin Wall.

Though personal animosities clearly played a part in the 1989 Split, three substantial ideological differences lay at its heart. First, the Hard Left was more closely attuned to the union movement than the Soft Left, and hence much more wary of proposals to reduce the role of unions in the ALP. Secondly, the Hard Left tended to have closer links with the broad left outside of the ALP—peace groups, environment groups and even some Marxian groups. Thirdly, the Soft Left had a more consensual philosophy towards dealing with the Right faction on policy issues. As one of the leaders of the Soft Left, Rodney Cavalier, told a faction meeting, 'I am in the Left because I'm in the Labor Party. Others in this room are in the Labor Party because they're in the Left' (Burchell 1990, 13).

A decade on, the split remains important to understanding the NSW Left. The personality conflicts which underlay the dispute were as bitter as those that featured in the 1955 split and, at times, the protagonists almost came to blows (Norington 1994). Moreover, some of the issues that separated the fractions—such as union representation at State Conference and the relationship between Left and Right—remain pertinent today.

None the less, a healing process did take place in the early 1990s, assisted by certain key individuals leaving the fray. Martin Ferguson shifted to Melbourne in 1990 to become ACTU President. Frank Walker lost his State seat in 1988, transferred into federal politics in 1990, and in 1993 lost any leadership role in the faction when he bucked the Left to secure a ministerial position. Rodney Cavalier lost his State seat in 1988 and bowed out of active involvement in the Left shortly afterwards. Michael Knight staged a dramatic defection to the Right in 1991.

1990–99: A Faction Transformed?

A Fourth Assistant Secretary

In 1994, Anthony Albanese announced that he planned to retire as Assistant Secretary, in anticipation of succeeding Jeannette McHugh in the Federal parliamentary seat of Grayndler. The two immediate candidates for the position were Luke Foley, an adviser to then Senator Bruce Childs, and Damian O'Connor, an organiser with the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union and Secretary of the union's Energy Division. Both were from the Hard Left, reflecting that fraction's dominance.

To some extent, the campaigns of both men centred on their abilities to succeed in one of the toughest jobs in Australian machine politics. Foley had been active for some years in Young Labor and the ALP. O'Connor, whilst less involved in these forums, had a superior understanding of the union movement. Although Albanese was not to resign until October 1995, and the Left did not have to pick a successor until mid-1995, the jockeying had begun in earnest by the latter part of 1994.

Ultimately, the outcome was to be decided by another contest entirely. George Campbell, National Secretary of the Australian Manufacturing Workers Union (the largest Left-affiliated union) had been seeking to enter Federal Parliament for some time. His focus was on the Senate position held by Bruce Childs, who had then been in Parliament for 15 years and was seeking to be re-endorsed at the October 1995 State Conference. Unfortunately for Foley, the Left would have to select its candidates for Assistant Secretary and Senator at around the same time. Campbell

offered Foley AMWU support in return for reciprocity, but Foley—for whom Childs was his employer and mentor—refused. Campbell therefore made clear that the AMWU would back O'Connor for the Assistant Secretary's position. Such was the size of the union's vote in the Left that Foley had no choice but to withdraw, honouring an earlier agreement with O'Connor not to force a ballot if the outcome was certain. O'Connor was elected unopposed by the Left, and took over as Assistant Secretary in October 1995.[54]

NSW Parliament

If the effects of the 1989 split persisted anywhere, it was in the upper house—the Legislative Council—of the NSW Parliament. In early 1996, Soft Left MLC Paul O'Grady announced that he planned to retire. The Soft Left called for 'proportional representation' to be respected (Humphries 1996). The Soft Left argued that, just as the Right faction recognised that the position should go to a member of the Left, the Hard Left should recognise that the Soft Left was entitled to appoint one of its own. The Hard Left countered by saying that proportional representation did not apply between fractions, only between factions. Their candidate, Peter Primrose, had lost his lower house seat in 1991 due to a redistribution. At the time, the Right had promised to find him another position in parliament, but had since failed to do so. The Hard Left argued that Primrose therefore had a better entitlement to this Legislative Council vacancy than anyone else in the faction.[55] Over protests from the Soft Left, a ballot in March 1996 saw Primrose easily defeat the Soft Left's candidate, Ian West, thus tipping the balance in the NSW Parliament towards the Hard Left.

From 1991 onwards, the heart of the antipathy between the fractions lay in the relationship between MLCs Meredith Burgmann and Ian Macdonald (Hard Left) and Jan Burnswoods (Soft Left). The friction between them was legendary, to the extent that it became obvious to even journalists and members of the Coalition.[56]

The conflict culminated in a preselection battle in July 1998. The representation of the Left in the NSW Branch was such that it was entitled to three winnable Legislative Council positions on the ALP ticket for the 1999 State election.

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[54] Incidentally, the ballot between Campbell and Childs never took place either. After much negotiating, it was agreed in June 1995 that Childs would step down in August 1997 and that Campbell would take his place (Milne 1995). It is also interesting to note that during the Campbell–Childs contest, a letter in support of Childs, signed by women of both fractions, was circulated among members of the faction. Their main concern was that Campbell, with a background in a male-dominated union, would not be as committed to feminist issues as Childs has been. They were also motivated by the hope that Childs' successor would be a woman, such as Wendy Caird or Jennie George. The unanimity expressed by Left women in this instance contrasted with the divisions of the early 1980s.

[55] This mirrored the argument used in 1998 when Ann Symonds resigned from the Legislative Council. The leading candidate was Carmel Tebbutt, from the Hard Left. The Hard Left attempted to dissuade others from standing against her on the basis that, when the Left had lost a member of their 1995 upper house ticket due to the Right's employment of quota voting at State Conference, Tebbutt had been forced to sacrifice her claims on the seat of Ashfield in favour of Right candidate Paul Whelan, notwithstanding that she had the numbers to win in a rank-and-file preselection. The next vacancy, the Hard Left claimed, belonged to Tebbutt as a matter of right.

[56] The friction reached the extent that Burnswoods' personal newsletter, *House and About*, would often contain some criticism of Burgmann—once even suggesting that Burgmann's failure to attend a vote on a piece of abortion legislation might have been deliberate, rather t han resulting from her being paired.

However, four members of the Left were standing for re-election—two from the Soft Left (Burnswoods and Jeff Shaw, the Attorney-General and Minister for Industrial Relations) plus two from the Hard Left (Burgmann and Macdonald).

With both Soft and Hard Left agreeing that Shaw, as a Minister, should be preselected, a debate arose over whether the Soft Left should use its numbers (approximately one-third of the caucus) to support him. The Soft Left argued that since the faction as a whole had an interest in Shaw being preselected, both fractions had an obligation to support him. In particular, they contended that as he was Minister for Industrial Relations, all Left unions should ensure that he was returned. The Hard Left responded that, regardless of his status, he remained a Soft Left candidate. Finally, the Soft Left opted to support Burnswoods over Shaw. The result of the internal Left ballot was (1) Burnswoods, (2) Macdonald, (3) Burgmann and (4) Shaw, effectively relegating the only Minister in the contest to an unwinnable position on the ticket.[57] Amidst the general outcry that followed, pressure was placed on the Hard Left, which refused to drop either of its candidates to make room for Shaw (Sutherland 1998, 10). Finally in November 1998, a compromise was reached, whereby the Right agreed to allow the Left an extra place on the Legislative Council ticket, in exchange for the Left agreeing not to contest a number of lower house preselections (Humphries 1998).

The 1998 ballot is probably the last major tussle to follow the battle lines of 1989. The next internal ballot to select MLCs will present a similar problem for the Left, as four incumbents fight for three places. But three of the contestants will be from the Hard Left (Janelle Saffin, Peter Primrose and Carmel Tebbutt), and only one from the Soft Left (Andrew Manson), so the contest will most likely be within the Hard Left. Another factor contributing to the breakdown of the two fractions is the collapse of some longstanding friendships within each. Additionally, in 1999, the ALP ran candidates in rural NSW under the banner of 'Country Labor'. Those elected have maintained their affiliation to one another and, whilst they have not often met together, they have co-operated across factional lines on particular issues of concern to rural voters (such as opposition to compulsory competitive tendering). Country Labor's emergence as a competing power bloc is clearly affecting the existing factional system, as well as the divide between Hard and Soft Left. At a federal level, the name has recently been registered (Wright and Hannan 2000, 1). If Country Labor candidates are elected at the next federal poll, there is a possibility that they will end up altering the factional dynamics at a national level.

Federal Parliament

The period 1989–90 saw a dramatic change in the NSW Left's representation in Federal Parliament. As one member of the Soft Left put it, 'it was a plus-five situation for us'. The Soft Left gained John Faulkner in the Senate, and Laurie Ferguson and Daryl Melham in the House of Representatives. The Hard Left lost Arthur Gietzelt from the Senate and Tom Uren[58] from the House.

The repercussions were swift. In 1990, the internal Left ballot for the ministry

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[57] The number of votes received was Burnswoods 91, Macdonald 86, Burgmann 83 and Shaw 57.
[58] Uren objects to being categorised as a member of the Hard Left. As he rightly points out, he was much less 'hardline' on a range of issues than many in the Soft Left, and he formed strong alliances with some who I have identified as Soft Left (see Uren 1994). To my mind, this demonstrates the difficulty of settling

saw several changes, among them the replacement of Stewart West (Hard Left) with Peter Baldwin (Soft Left). The numbers to defeat West came from an alliance of the Soft Left and the pragmatic Victorian Left (led by Brian Howe and Gerry Hand). This coalition had been developing since the late 1980s.[59]

This shift in the faction's ministerial representation was also reflected in its attitude to key policy issues in the early 1990s. One was privatisation—historically the Left's *bête noir*. When in 1990 Treasurer Keating proposed the partial privatisation of the Commonwealth Bank, in order to finance the acquisition of the State Bank of Victoria, sections of the Left's leadership set about convincing the faction to support the policy, to the considerable ire of many. Admittedly, the Left's Cabinet Ministers were bound by the principle of Cabinet solidarity, but it was also clear that some of them personally supported privatisation in these circumstances. Although opposition to privatisation came from both Hard and Soft Left, the greatest ire emanated from the Hard Left. A similar pattern was to recur two years later, when the sell-off of Australian Airlines and 49% of Qantas was debated (Gruen and Grattan 1993, 10–11).

The final year of Hawke's Prime Ministership, 1991, witnessed several particularly bitter policy debates in the Federal parliamentary Left. In January, the Left found itself deliberating over whether or not to support Hawke's decision to send three ships to the Persian Gulf in order to assist the United States-led force against Iraq. The debate within the Left came down to support for the United Nations versus anti-militarism, with more Soft Left than Hard Left parliamentarians supporting the decision to send ships. Ultimately, by a margin of only two votes, the parliamentary Left faction passed a motion urging its members to support sending ships to the Gulf.[60] Strong condemnation came from the ALP National Left—an umbrella body for Left factions in all State and Territory branches of the Party—which passed a motion calling for 'an immediate ceasefire' and arguing that '[t]he Australian government is not serving Australian interests by pursuing a war policy' (*Challenge* 1991, 5). Uren, who had just retired after 32 years in parliament, delivered a stinging attack upon the parliamentary leadership of the Left, claiming that they were 'taking a subservient approach to the Hawke leadership' and that '[t]heir position in the Left and history will be insignificant' (Uren 1990). The issue culminated in January 1991, when Parliament was recalled to debate a motion supporting Australia's decision to deploy ships. When the issue was dealt with in Parliament, nine members of the Left either deliberately left the Chamber or failed to vote with the Government.[61]

Around March 1991, a bitter dispute arose in the Left caucus over the issue of

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Footnote continued

upon suitable labels for the two fractions. None the less, I would not resile from the contention that Uren was principally identified, both ideologically and organisationally, with those in the Hard Left.

[59] The coalition of the NSW Soft Left and the Victorian pragmatic Left has been referred to as 'Left Inc', and their opponents 'Left Out' (Gruen and Grattan 1993, 15).

[60] The motion did recognise that certain MPs would abstain from the vote. Ultimately, ten Left MPs decided to abstain.

[61] In the House, there was no division, but Peter Duncan, Carolyn Jaksobsen, Jeannette McHugh, John Scott, Frank Walker and Stewart West symbolically left the chamber when Prime Minister Hawke spoke. In the Senate, where a division occurred, Bruce Childs, John Coates and Margaret Reynolds abstained. A tenth Labor MP, Elaine Darling (who was not in the Left), also walked out while the Prime Minister was speaking.

resource security legislation designed to combat a loss of investor confidence in the forest industries by providing security for major investment projects. The debate in Cabinet had been one of the longest in history, lasting over three days. Finally, Cabinet voted to support the legislation by 11 votes to 7 (Gruen and Grattan 1993, 36). When the bill came to be considered by the Left, the faction-room discussion was long and acrimonious. Unsurprisingly, the Soft Left tended to support it whilst the Hard Left was mostly opposed. The final vote witnessed the closest margin possible: by just one vote, the Left caucus agreed to support the legislation. Eventually, however, the battle turned out to have been futile because the Democrats and the Coalition joined forces in the Senate to block the legislation.

The frustration of many in the parliamentary Left finally boiled over in late 1991, when Brian Howe, then Minister for Community Services and Health, attempted to persuade the faction to support a controversial Medicare co-payment scheme under which all patients were to pay a proportion of their medical bills. Even though Howe was Deputy Prime Minister and titular leader of the Left, the faction refused to back the scheme. From this point onwards, Howe is generally regarded as having lost what little influence he still had in the parliamentary Left. Like the dispute over resource security legislation, the debate over the co-payment scheme ultimately proved futile. After savage opposition from community groups and even sections of the Right, the scheme was scrapped in February 1992.

The most important issue in the Federal parliamentary party during 1991 was the leadership tussle between Hawke and Keating. The perception that the Left was taking a pro-Hawke position[62] rather than a progressive position on various issues angered sections of the Hard Left, some of whom suggested that the faction could hardly be worse off under Keating. For members of the Hard Left such as Stewart West and Frank Walker, the influx of Soft Left parliamentarians into the caucus in 1989–90 meant that their chances of gaining a ministerial position were limited without a dramatic change to the system. Keating becoming Prime Minister represented such a change.

Prior to the first Hawke–Keating leadership ballot, held on 3 June 1991, the parliamentary Left caucus passed a motion which supposedly *compelled* its members to vote for Hawke. Only two NSW Left MPs—Frank Walker and Stewart West (both from the Hard Left)—refused to follow this motion and voted for Keating. However, by the time of the second ballot, on 19 December 1991, the Left caucus only *recommended* that its members vote for Hawke. This time, two other members of the NSW Left—Peter Baldwin and Colin Hollis—switched from Hawke to Keating.[63]

In the period following Labor's 1996 national electoral defeat, the lines between the fractions in Federal Parliament have blurred somewhat. To the extent that the groupings still remain significant, there has been a gradual shift towards the Hard Left in recent years. Just as the Soft Left's control of the Federal parliamentary faction the early 1990s reflected their dominance of the NSW machine during

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[62] On the basis that Hawke's tendency towards consensus, and his dependence on the Left, benefited the faction.

[63] I am only considering the NSW Left-wingers who voted for Keating. In all, three Left MPs (Walker, West and Duncan) voted for Keating in the first ballot. In the second ballot, at least seven members of the Left (Walker, West, Baldwin, Hollis, Theophanous, Duncan and Devereux) voted for Keating.

the early 1980s,[64] so the ascendancy of the Hard Left within the machine during the late 1980s is now translating into stronger representation in Federal Parliament. The retirement of Jeannette McHugh saw one of the Hard Left's key players, Anthony Albanese, enter the Federal Left caucus, and the replacement of Peter Baldwin with Tanya Plibersek boosted the Hard Left's numbers. Despite these changes, the Soft Left still controls the Federal Left caucus. The three federal frontbenchers from the NSW Left are John Faulkner, Daryl Melham and Laurie Ferguson, all of whom are regarded as being aligned with the Soft Left.

More generally, there are also signs that the driving ideologies of the faction are changing. The overt class analysis of former NSW Left frontbenchers Stewart West, Arthur Gietzelt and Tom Uren is a far cry from the philosophy of the current representatives, be they Hard Left or Soft Left. The ideological crisis of social democracy in the Western world has wrought its effect on the Left too, creating 'a galaxy of inter-related groupings' (Tanner 1991, 16) across the Federal parliamentary caucus.

The NSW Left Today: From Anti-Catholicism to Accommodation?

The NSW Left faction has undergone a complete metamorphosis since 1971, from a body focused on fighting the DLP-influenced Industrial Groups to an ostensibly ideological organisation. As the ALP became a more secular party (Hogan 1987, 250), the NSW Left shifted away from its anti-Catholic roots. Whilst consolidating its power, the faction's internal processes became more open and democratic. Its representatives in State and Federal Parliament are now tightly bound to follow decisions made at factional meetings. Yet at the same time its ideology has shifted. The faction is now more comfortable with economic liberalism and more focused on the search for electoral success than it was a generation ago (Simms 2000, 107–8).

Those groups that have split off from the Left—the Socialist Left (1971), the Socialist Objective Committee (1972–75) and sections of the Soft Left (1989–90)—have caused some short-term damage. But these splits are as nothing compared to the rifts in other progressive movements. Most remarkable of all is the way in which the NSW Left has contained the deepest division within the faction, settling conflict between Hard and Soft Left in much the same way as disputes between Left and Right are dealt with. Perhaps the difference between the Left faction and broader left-wing movements lies in the fact that, whereas environmental, peace and socialist groups are principally concerned with ideas and issues, the Left is largely preoccupied with power. Since 1976, the people of NSW have always had either a Federal or State Labor government (and sometimes both). It is thus hardly surprising that the principal focus of the NSW Left has been on the

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[64] Most of the Soft Left activists were in their late twenties by the early 1980s, whilst the Hard Left included people thirty years older and ten years younger, as the following brief lists illustrate:
Soft Left: Jan Burnswoods (born 1943), Rodney Cavalier (1948), Peter Baldwin (1951), Laurie Ferguson (1952), Pam Allan (1953), Martin Ferguson (1953), John Faulkner (1954), Daryl Melham (1954), Andrew Ferguson (1955), Paul O'Grady (1960).
Hard Left: Arthur Gietzelt (1920), Tom Uren (1921), Bruce Childs (1934), Jeannette McHugh (1934), Ann Symonds (1939), Frank Walker (1942), George Campbell (1943), Meredith Burgmann (1947), Anthony Albanese (1963).

machinery of government, and that a great premium has been placed on maintaining the coherence of the faction.

Conclusion

Factionalism has not always been a hallmark of the ALP. In reality, the Party that was founded in 1891 has only been a truly factional organisation for the past one-fifth to one-quarter of its history. The key change came when proportional representation was entrenched throughout the ALP. Prior to that, power groupings existed. But only after the introduction of proportional representation did the support of a faction become almost indispensable for anyone seeking preselection or a position in the Party bureaucracy. The phenomenon of fractionalism was a corollary of the rise of factionalism.[65]

Yet both factionalism and fractionalism may have reached their zeniths. Many of the ideological differences which separated ALP factions stemmed from the Cold War era and now seem increasingly outmoded (see Carr 1999, 15; Costa 1999; Ramsey 1999, 45). Increasingly, issues such as globalisation, community-building, environmental protection and direct democracy cross-cut factional lines. No doubt, factions can survive for a time on tribal loyalties and their links to particular unions. But unless they can re-establish strong ideological bases, the decline of factions is inevitable.

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[65] Just as one facet of machine politics is an obsession with the Party organisation (Parkin 1983, 24–25), fractionalism is symptomatic of an obsession with the factional machine.

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