

Melbourne's Maoists:

The Rise of the Monash University Labor Club 1965-1967

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*A gift from
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1950 - 2014
Trade Unionist, Community Activist, Historian*

Disclaimer

This thesis is the product of my own original research and has not been previously submitted for academic accreditation.

To the best of my knowledge and belief, the above statements are true.

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Abstract

The rise of the Monash University Labor Club to the most prominent radical student group in Australia by 1967 was the result of those radicalising events and ideologies that had been emerging internationally, nationally and locally during 1965-67. Events such as the escalation of the Vietnam War and the emergence of the Cultural Revolution in China were particularly influential upon the student movement in Australia during this period. Arguably the most influential ideological force upon the Monash Labor Club during this period was the idea of Marxism-Leninism, or Maoism, articulated by the Chairman of the Chinese Communist Party, Mao Tse-Tung. It is this radicalising role of Maoism upon the 1960's student movement in Melbourne that will be the core concern of this thesis. Past studies concerned with the Monash Labor Club in 1965-67 have tended to downplay the role of Maoist ideas at Monash during this period. However, this thesis will attempt to show that it was the Maoist ideas of Labor Club leaders like Albert Langer that allowed the club to rise to such prominence in 1967. Furthermore this thesis will show how the connections achieved by Langer with the Communist Party of Australia (Marxist-Leninist), and certain Maoist-led Unions in Melbourne, played a significant role in the successful aims, actions and campaigns carried out by the Labor Club in 1967.

Introduction

Classical Marxist-Leninist theory provided student radicals with the clarity of thought and political incisiveness to wage significant campaigns and struggles on the university campuses such as Monash.¹

Fergus Robinson, La Trobe University,
Member of the Communist Party of Australia (Marxist-Leninist)

The people in the Liberal-Country Party Government seemed pretty incompetent cretins. The ALP was similar, but I thought the left wing held some hope. My theoretical position then was that things could be changed by a socialist ALP and I worked for several years in the ALP. Then, as the movement developed outside the ALP, I came to see that society could be changed, and that revolution was not only possible but inevitable.²

Albert Langer, Vice President of the Monash University Labor Club 1967
Central Committee member of the Communist Party of Australia (Marxist-Leninist)

The role of Maoist thought that came to dominate the ideological drive of the Monash Labor Club by 1967 had been an important factor behind many of the main aims, actions and campaigns of the club during 1966-67. By closely tracing the radicalisation of the Monash Labor Club from pro-ALP moderates, in 1965, to a pro-Maoist perspective, in 1967, it is clear that the Maoist influence at Monash allowed the Labor Club to carry out successful campaigns on-campus, and forge alliances with powerful organisations off-campus.

To better understand the events at Monash University during 1965-67 it is important to place them in the historical context of the 1960's student movement throughout the world, within Australia and more specifically in Melbourne. This will be attempted in

¹ Robinson, F. (1984) *Marxism-Leninism: Another View*, Arena 68, 1984 p. 147.

² *The Australian*, 14 May 1969, p. 11.

Chapter One through an analysis of the relevant literature concerning the role of Maoism in the 1960's student movements. This chapter will also discuss the subsequent worker-student alliances that were often sought by Maoist-led student movements during this period.

Chapter Two will attempt to trace the origins of student activism at Monash University within a number of historical and political contexts. This analysis will take into account the role of significant radicalising events that occurred throughout the world, within Melbourne and at Monash during 1965-67 that led to a rise of student activism in Melbourne.

Chapter Three will attempt to trace the rise of Maoist or Marxist-Leninist thought that was introduced to the Monash Labor Club by a young Albert Langer as early as 1966. The extent of Langer's influence upon the Labor Club's changing aims, tactics and off-campus alliances will be further understood through an analysis of the main actions and campaigns at Monash during 1967.

Chapter Four will assess the aims, influences and achievements of the Monash Labor Club's Aid to the NLF Campaign that began in July 1967. This Chapter will attempt to show that this campaign was able to successfully counter the widespread opposition to this campaign felt both on and off-campus by applying the more radical aims, ideas and tactics of those students who began to embrace Maoist thought. Furthermore this Chapter will attempt to trace the concrete connections made between the Labor Club, the CPA (M-L) and certain Maoist-led Unions in 1967 that also allowed the Monash radicals to successfully carry out this campaign.

Chapter 1.

Literature Review

*It is only when Socialist students realise that they are merely a small facet in a battle that is essentially a working class battle, that they are fighting battles that the working class has fought before, only when they can approach the workers with a true humility, that they have a hope of having any influence over political events.*³

Dave Nadel (Monash Labor Club)
Monash University, Melbourne, Australia April 1968

*The government we want must spring from the strike committees and action committees of the workers and the students. We must take advantage of the relationship of forces that we have established. Students, workers, we have a unique opportunity. We must not let it escape!*⁴

Exert from the Declaration of the Revolutionary Communist Youth
Paris, France May 21 1968

There is a wide range of analytical literature available on the late 1960s international student movement most of which is centred on the American experience. However, there are far fewer studies concerning the role and impact of Maoist student organisations on the student movement internationally, within Australia and more particularly in Melbourne. This chapter will attempt to assess the relevant literature available to provide a conceptual framework for the core themes of this thesis.

The abundance of analytical literature concerning the student movements of the 1960s generally pinpoint the American Students for a Democratic Society's (SDS) Free Speech Movement (FSM) at Berkeley University in 1964 as the precursor and blueprint for the research of international student revolts that followed.⁵ Many of the

³ Perry, P. F. (1973) *The Rise and Fall of Practically Everybody: An Account of Student Political Activity at Monash University, 1965-72*, Balaclava, Self Published. p. 21.

⁴ Evans, L. (1968) *Revolt in France May-June 1968: A Contemporary Record*, New York, Evans Publishing. pp. 33-34.

⁵ Searle, J. (1972) *The Campus War: A Sympathetic Look at the University in Agony*, Middlesex, Penguin Books. p. 33.

Lipset, S. (1972) *Rebellion in the University: A History of Student Activism in America*, London, Routledge & Kegan Paul Publishers.

prominent researchers that have contributed to this analytical literature of the American New Left were direct participants during the uprising at Berkeley either as faculty members, such as John Searle (1972) and Seymour Lipset (1972), or students such as Richard Flacks (1970). However, these texts are in danger of ignoring two important facets of the student unrest: firstly the student relations with off-campus political and social groups and secondly the changing nature of these relations throughout history.

Both Searle's *The Campus War: A Sympathetic Look at the University in Agony* and Lipset's *Rebellion in the University: A History of Student Activism in America* offer lengthy sections covering the relations between students and faculty during the main American campus revolts while failing to mention the alliances made between students and outside social forces. While Searle's text is generally considered to be an important sociological study of campus unrest across America, he admits "I have been mostly concerned with analysing the revolts of white middle-class students. Black militancy is not especially a campus phenomenon but rather an urban phenomenon that spilled over into the campuses."⁶ By ignoring the significance of "off campus" alliances Searle offers only a partial framework for the study of the American student movements. This also calls into question his comparisons with 'the student unrest in other advanced western democracies such as France and England' which Searle insists 'has a close family resemblance to that in the United States.'⁷ Searle contends

Flacks, R. (1973) 'Student Revolt in Reverse' in Becker, H. S. (ed.) (1973) *Campus Power Struggle*, New Jersey, Transaction Books.

⁶ Searle, J. (1972) Preface.

⁷ Searle, J (1972) p. 69.

that both the students of Berkeley, California and Paris' Sorbonne shared 'the loose organisation style of the New Left' and similarly loose ideals.⁸

By analysing the role of the radical student of the late 1960s as a disorganised and politically isolated entity, Searle effectively downplays the strength and seriousness of events such as Paris 1968 as mere imitation.⁹ By ignoring the ideological groupings and alliances of the French students, workers, trade unions and off campus political organisations Searle falls into the more simplistic generalisations concerning mass student upheavals.

This kind of quasi-hermeneutic approach, attempting to explain the complex phenomenon of student revolt with simplistic conclusions, that is epitomised by Searle works to isolate the student movement from its important political and historical groundings. Fortunately, one leading sociologist, Howard S. Becker (1973) acknowledges this problem in his text *Campus Power Struggle* in which he argues that the vast majority of literature concerning student revolts is hampered by its narrow focus on the origins and ideals of the students as the central cause of student unrest. Becker's contention that, 'we cannot understand a complex event involving many groups by analysing the origins and behaviour of just one of them',¹⁰ is closely linked to the core ideas of this thesis.

In addition to ignoring the roles and alliances of off-campus social groups as a radicalising factor on the student movement, a large section of the literature concerning the sixties student movements is also lacking in historical analysis. This

⁸ Searle, J. (1970) *The Anatomy of Student Revolt* in *The Spectator* March 7, 1970. p. 46

⁹ Searle, J. (1972) p. 166.

¹⁰ Becker, H. S. (ed.) (1973) *Campus Power Struggle*, Atlantic City, Transaction Books. pp. 8-9.

absence of historical research is pointed out effectively by Alexander DeConde in his timely text *Student Activism: Town and Gown in Historical Perspective*. Compared to other texts previously mentioned, he offers a refreshing historical look into the student movements both throughout the sixties and before. DeConde argues convincingly that the extensive psychological and sociological analyses on student activism have generally ignored the vital role that students have played throughout history.¹¹ One important component of DeConde's edited collection is the willingness of the researchers to step outside 1960's America to gain a wider view of the historical and international elements of student activism. This is something that the first wave of social and historical researchers such as Lipset failed to adequately address.

While DeConde's (1971) text pioneered a more historical and international perspective of the student movement in the wake of the more American-centric research to come out of this era there are two later studies that are of equal importance. Gerard J. Degroot's (1998) edited collection *Student Protest: The Sixties and After* and Mark Edelman Boren's (2001) *Student Resistance: A History of the Unruly Subject* share similar methodologies and research findings as DeConde's research almost three decades earlier. All three of these texts offer invaluable insights into the progressive and at times revolutionary role played out by students throughout history all across the globe. Similar to DeConde, Boren's text maps out the historical evolution of the student's role in society from the student-peasant animosity in the feudal structures of medieval Europe through to the later transformation into student-worker alliances formed throughout Europe during the last century. DeGroot's text, obviously an influence on Boren's own research, joins DeConde in his conclusions

¹¹ DeConde, A. (ed.) (1971) *Student Activism: Town and Gown in Historical Perspective*, New York, Charles Scribner's Sons. p. 4.

that the worker-student alliances formed during the 1968 student revolts in France, Italy and West Germany were important events in the history of the unruly student.

All three of these important publications range more broadly around the central social factors that led to the student uprisings of the 1960s. These texts also highlight the significant historical and political events of this era such as the American war in Vietnam 1965-75 and the Cultural Revolution in China 1966-67. DeConde, Boren and DeGroot all generally concur that these Third-world struggles that vowed to fight ‘the imperialist aggressors of the United States’ somehow seemed to resonate with, and eventually cause, a radicalising effect upon the student movements of the Western worlds. More specifically the Marxist-Leninist ideas of Chinese leader Mao Tse-Tung that were promulgated throughout Western campuses during the late 1960s seem to have played a significant radicalising role upon student movements not just in the industrialised nations of Europe but also in Japan and Australia.

As Bertram Gordon points out in his essay ‘The Eyes of the Marcher: Paris, May 1968 – Theory and its Consequences’ it was the radicalising influence of the Anarchist, Trotskyist and Maoist groups in Paris 1968, notably the UJCml (Union des Jeunesses Communistes Marxistes-Leninistes, or Union of Marxist-Leninist Communist Youth) that made the initial inroads among students opposed to the American war in Vietnam.¹² Similarly Federico Mancini’s account of the Italian student revolt *Italy: From Reform to Adventure* pointed out that the hardcore of this movement was made up of Maoists of various persuasions and members of the ‘Potere Operaio’ (Worker Power), a group with aspirations resembling those of the

¹² Gordon, B. (1998) ‘The Eyes of the Marcher: Paris, May 1968 – Theory and its Consequences’ in G. J. DeGroot (1998) *Student Protest: The Sixties and After*, London, Addison Wesley Longman. p. 40.

old revolutionary syndicalists.¹³ In Japan the Zengakuren movement (abbreviation for Zen Nihon Gakusei Jichikai Sorengo, or All-Japan Federation of Student Self-government Association) was labelled as 'Trotskyite', a residual term expressing the fact that the group was Marxist in thought and practice but still opposed the official Japanese Communist Party line.¹⁴

In Australia the most radical sections of the student movement, predominantly based in Melbourne, were made up of similar revolutionary groups with Maoist organisations at the forefront. The most influential and audacious student organisation during 1967-1970 according to Sparrow and Sparrow (2004) was the notorious Monash Labor Club (MLC) whose controversial Aid to the NLF (National Liberation Front of South Vietnam) Campaign in 1967 helped to push the thinking of the Australian student movement to the left.¹⁵ Contrary to this view is Paul Francis Perry's first hand account of student political activity at Monash University 1965-72 interestingly named *The Rise and Fall of Practically Everybody*. This critical- at times cynical- sociological analysis of Monash student movements through the eyes of an apparently non-aligned Monash student praises the aforementioned theories of leading sociologist John Searle which he concurs 'fit various episodes in the history of Monash perfectly'.¹⁶ Perry's attempts to deny the significance of the Monash Labor Club by labelling their actions as 'purely derivative' and 'insignificant' almost seems contradictory given he so successfully documents the achievements of the Labor

¹³ Mancini, F. (1971) 'Italy: From Reform to Adventure' in A. DeConde (ed.) (1971) *Student Activism: Town and Gown in Historical Perspective*, New York, Charles Scribner's Sons. p. 88.

¹⁴ Halliday, F. (1969) 'Students of the World Unite' in A. Cockburn & R. Blackburn's (1969) *Student Power: Problems, Diagnosis, Action*, Middlesex, Penguin Books. p. 296.

¹⁵ York, B. (1988) 'Power to the Young' in Burgmann, V. & J. Lee (eds.) (1988) *Staining the Wattle: A People's History of Australia Since 1788*, Victoria, McPhee Gribble Publishers. p. 231.

¹⁶ Perry (1973) p. 10. Perry mentions here that Searle's theories on student revolt were so appealing to the Monash University Administration that Vice Chancellor Dr. Louis Matheson had a few thousand off prints made of it and caused them to be distributed among students during the campus unrest in 1969.

Club's rise from 'the major political force on campus' into an influence upon the entire Melbourne student movement.¹⁷ Regardless of these points Perry still concludes his research in 1973 with the assertion that the rise of the Maoists as a radicalising force was purely by chance:

Had the Labor Club achieved anything? I believe not. Had there not been the Maoist phase, the gradually increasing awareness seen in 1967 would have spread through draft resistance and other non-artificial movements to the same degree.¹⁸

It is quite possible that this extremely critical analysis of the Monash Labor Club's actions and even existence was written in response to the release of the Labor Club's own historical account, *It is Right to Rebel* recalled by members directly involved in the conflict and edited by Michael Hyde (and others)¹⁹ in 1972. This text offers quite a different view on the NLF Aid Campaign:

(The Campaign) profoundly influenced the future development of the student movement in Australia and in fact much of what happened later at Monash can only be understood within the context of the NLF Aid Campaign.²⁰

These first hand accounts of the MLC campaigns and activities by both Hyde and Perry are invaluable in attempting to gain a number of perspectives on what occurred during 1967. Unfortunately neither of these can be viewed as factual accounts on which one can analyse the main campaigns of the Monash Maoists and contend whether they were successful or detrimental to their cause. In the case of Hyde's text

¹⁷ Perry (1973) p. 19.

¹⁸ Ibid. p 109.

¹⁹ While *It is Right to Rebel* contains Hyde's name as editor most of the editing was done by Albert Langer, Kerry Langer and Clive Bunn. Interview with Darce Cassidy, Parkville, 3 September 2005.

²⁰ Hyde, M. (1972) p. 37.

there is no mention of the off-campus political connections of the Labor Club as such, the only explicit reference to the group's specific political allegiance is found in the opening quotation by Chairman Mao himself, from which they borrowed the title of their book.

The works of Barry York, including his Ph.D thesis, *Sources of Student Unrest in Australia, with particular Reference to La Trobe University 1967-73* and *Student Revolt! La Trobe University 1967-73*, are arguably the most detailed studies concerning the Australian student movement. However, York's main focus is concerned with his own experiences at La Trobe University from 1970-73, rather than the significant radicalising and influential role of other student groups, notably, the Monash Labor Club. Both the Labor Club at La Trobe, which became a predominant political force from late 1970-73²¹ and that at Monash, which was politically notorious during 1967-1970, were both predominantly Maoist in their ideological drive, York gives the impression that these groups were united in name only.

One important ideological assumption that was common among all of these Maoist and Trotskyist student organisations internationally was the central Communist belief that any revolutionary social movement has to be first and foremost a working class struggle. This ideological stance is what separates these radical Maoist groups from the American New Left student-vanguard ideology that is often typified by Searle²², Becker²³ and Lipset²⁴ in their studies of student movements within 'Western

²¹ York, B. (1983) *Sources of Student Unrest in Australia, with particular Reference to La Trobe University 1967-73*, Sydney, University of Sydney. p. 193.

²² Searle (1972) pp. 56-59.

²³ Becker (1973) pp. 8-9.

²⁴ Lipset (1972) p. XV.

industrialised nations.’ These core sociological studies of the international student movement based on the politics of the American New Left tend to ignore the rôle played by Maoist-influenced organisations and the fundamental changes that they had on sixties student activism.

The literature concerning the role of student-worker alliances among the student movement of the 1960s is generally focused on West Germany, France, Italy and Japan while documentation of similar alliances within Australia are more scarce. Alexander Cockburn and Robin Blackburn’s (1969) edited collection *Student Power: Problems, Diagnosis, Action* offers a well documented overview of the main student movements worldwide from a theoretical Marxist perspective published in cooperation with the British *New Left Review*. In his introduction Cockburn puts forth a useful theory concerning the role of student-worker alliances- which he sees as essential in any real revolutionary situation.²⁵ In response to the worker-student alliances sought by student groups in France, West Germany and Japan among others Cockburn states:

These movements have reached out to all the potentially revolutionary forces in society as a whole and in the world as a whole- in particularly they have sought real forms of solidarity with the anti-imperialist struggles of the under-developed world and to make real connections with the anti-capitalist struggles of the working class of their own countries. The former type of solidarity has often provided the initial stimulus for student actions while the latter has usually become an overriding pre-occupation after the student revolutionaries have already achieved some success within their own milieu.²⁶

* Such as the dramatic escalation of student populations after World War II, (see Becker (1973) p. 9 & p. 20.) The spread of television in 1960s (see Searle (1972) p. 33 Becker (1973) p. 6.

²⁵ Cockburn, A. & Blackburn, R. (1969) *Student Power: Problems, Diagnosis, Action*, Middlesex, Penguin Books. p. 14.

²⁶ Ibid.

This two phase theory of the progression from campus revolt to off campus student-labour struggle can definitely be applied to the experiences of the Japanese Zengakuren who gained an alliance with Japan's General Council of Trade Unions (Sohyo) after its violent clashes with police during the anti- American and anti-Vietnam War protests in Tokyo during 1967.²⁷ The French student movement experienced a similar progression in Paris during May 1968, when the formation of student-worker solidarity occurred only after the campus revolt had already erupted within the Sorbonne and spilled into the streets, resulting in the memorable worker-student solidarity march that took place on May 13.²⁸

In West Germany and Italy student-worker alliances were sought beyond the campus walls with great fervour in the wake of nation-wide campus unrest, however the responses they received were much different. While the Sozialistischer Deutscher Studentenbund (SDS) in West Germany went out into the factories to try to mobilise workers in support, it was the more moderate union organisations who refused to go into any political coalition without the governments consent.²⁹ Italian students on the other hand had by June 1968 secured their control of the campuses and were ready to start their long planned "operation working class", a program that was, above all, in search of ways to form a student-worker alliance.³⁰ By 1969 the Student-Worker Movement in Italy had become a viable political force throughout the country.³¹ All these experiences of the student movements discussed above seem to resemble

²⁷ Halliday, F. (1969) p. 296.

²⁸ Gordon, B. (1998) p. 40.

²⁹ Fraser, R. (ed.) (1988) *1968: A Student Generation in Revolt: An International Oral History*, New York, Pantheon Books. p. 264.

³⁰ DeConde (1971) p. 92.

³¹ Boren, M. E. (2001) *Student Resistance: A History of the Unruly Subject*, New York, Routledge. p. 142.

Cockburn's theory that although radical student movements often sought solidarity with outside revolutionary forces, the stronger alliances were typically forged with off campus labour movements only after the students had gained some influence through mass campaigns on campus.

The literature concerning the Australian student movement's progression from campus power struggle to the formation of student-worker alliances is predominantly focused on the Labor Clubs at Monash and to a lesser extent Melbourne and La Trobe Universities during 1967-70. Arguably the most valuable historical text concerning these groups is Phillip Mendes (1993) *The New Left, The Jews and the Vietnam War 1965-72* that covers the significant involvement of Jewish students in Melbourne during the late sixties and early seventies. Although Mendes' main focus is the Jewish-left connections in Melbourne, he also touches upon the worker-student alliances formed by the Monash Labor Club and the Melbourne University New Left group Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), who went on to establish the Draft Resisters Union in 1968.

Mendes acknowledges the move from on campus struggles for 'student power' beginning in 1967 to the eventual moves into the off campus political activities such as the establishment of the Revolutionary Socialists (later to become the Worker/Student Alliance) in the following years.³² Interestingly, Mendes himself believes that the eventual decline of the Monash Labor Club was due precisely to its 'preoccupation with off-campus political activities in coalition with workers.'³³

Conversely, Jeff and Jill Sparrow's short but insightful history of the Monash Labor

³² Mendes, P. (1993) *The New Left, the Jews and the Vietnam War 1965- 1972*, Caulfield, Lazare Press. p. 27.

³³ *Ibid.* p. 28.

Club from a pro-Trotskyist perspective within *Radical Melbourne 2: The Enemy Within* argues that the connection between the Aid to the NLF Campaign and the subsequent build up of solidarity and student co-operation with the Waterside Workers Union was one of their greatest achievements.³⁴

It is these central debates concerning the radicalising role of Maoist thought within the 1960s student movement and the subsequent formation of student-worker alliances in Melbourne that will be the central themes of this thesis. While previous studies concerning the Monash Labor Club have acknowledged the rise of Maoist or Marxist-Leninist thought at Monash, they have failed to document the historical and political influences that led to such a rise. This thesis will not only document the on campus shift from democratic socialist politics to Marxist-Leninist thought, but will also contend that this ideological shift led to the eventual off campus alliance between radical student and labour organisations in Melbourne. Through examining the actions, alliances and campaigns of the Monash Labor Club, most importantly the Aid to the NLF Campaign in 1967, this thesis will show the Monash Labor Club's progression from anti-war activities to anti-capitalist allegiances during 1965-67.

³⁴ Sparrow, J. & J. Sparrow (2004) *Radical Melbourne 2: The Enemy Within*, Melbourne, Vulgar Press. p. 178.

Chapter 2: From Moderates to Maoists: Monash University Labor Club 1965 to 1967

Unlike other studies that have attempted to explain the influences behind the Monash Labor Club's Aid to the NLF Campaign in 1967 from very specific perspectives³⁵ this thesis will view this event within a number of historical contexts. Firstly it is important to place the actions of the Monash Labor Club in the historical context of the Australian student movement of the 1960s with specific emphasis on the Australian Student Labour Federation affiliated club's in Melbourne and Sydney. Secondly, this thesis will try to trace the significant divisions within the Left of the Victorian labour movement that began in 1963 and eventually spilled into the Victorian anti-war movement by 1965. Thirdly, in order to trace the origins of rising student activism on-campus and the early alliances with those groups off-campus it is important to view the Monash Labor Club in the historical context of the university itself. Evidence of both on-campus student activity and off-campus alliances at Monash can be cited from as early as the inaugural year of the university in 1961.

On 12 October 1961 the front page of *Chaos*, the student newspaper at Monash read in bold typeset letters 'Demonstration' explaining that on 27 September Monash University had 'experienced its first demonstration' when 'eight car-loads' of students joined in picketing the West End Private Hotel in North Melbourne. The article below gave one student's insights into this new phenomenon:

³⁵ See Ockenden, J. (1985) *Anti- War Movement and the Student Revolt at Monash: An Examination of Contending Ideologies 1967-70*, Bachelor of Arts Honours Thesis, History Department, Monash University. Mendes, P. (1993) Also P.F. Perry (1973)

The reason for this revolutionary act was that the land-lady had refused board to three Nauruan women simply on grounds of colour. Taking into account that the land lady's action could only stem from the insulting idea of white supremacy it is no wonder that students were roused out of their apathy to protest against this injustice.³⁶

For these Monash students this break from apparent apathy to political action was like the campus itself, according to the Vice Chancellor Dr. J. A. L. Matheson's article in *The Guardian* in April 1961: 'a new university, liberal in spirit and fresh in outlook, in which the defects of existing universities would be avoided as far as possible'.³⁷ Unfortunately for Dr. Matheson it was the radical 'defects' from Melbourne University who soon forged an alliance with the Monash students through the Student Action group established in 1961 to campaign against the White Australia Policy. This campaign was unique in that it aimed to inject into the 1961 election a serious opposition to a policy that was still supported by both the major political parties in Australia. However, the general tone of activism among these students was still very moderate, as described in the pages of *Chaos*:

The protesting itself made quite a pleasant scene as students from both Melbourne and Monash strolled around in the sun with placards reading "Ban the White Australia Policy" and "Racial Discrimination is Immoral."³⁸

The campaign against racial discrimination remained at the forefront of student activism in Australia until 1965. Made up of those clubs affiliated with the Australian

³⁶ *Chaos* (1961) Thursday 12 October, Vol.1, No.18. Front page.

³⁷ Matheson, Dr. J.A.L (1961) *The Guardian*, Monday, April 3 1961. p. 21.

³⁸ *Chaos* (1961) Thursday 12 October, Vol.1 No.18. Front page.

Student Labour Federation (ASLF) it was the Melbourne University ALP (Australian Labor Party) Club who led the small yet persistent campaign against the White Australia Policy, placing them at a pre-eminent position in Victorian student politics.³⁹

However it was the radical student groups at The University of Sydney that ultimately led the struggle against racial hatred in Australia by daring to take their cause deeper into the outside community. Inspired in part by the famous Freedom Rides that had taken place in the United States during 1964 a number of student radicals from Sydney University took off on their own 'freedom ride' throughout rural New South Wales in March 1965 to protest the discrimination and segregation of Aboriginal Australians within these communities. Again it was the ASLF-affiliated groups that played a significant role with the Trotskyist-influenced Sydney ALP Club, led by the audacious student activist and upcoming ABC (Australian Broadcasting Commission) reporter Darce 'Jon' Cassidy. Treasurer of the Sydney ALP Club from 1963-1965, Cassidy soon came to view the CPA (Communist Party of Australia) and their student supporters in the opposing Sydney Labor Club as a conservative and all-too respectable section of the NSW Left.⁴⁰

On campus at Monash by 1965, it was a similar progression for students such as Dave Nadel who were becoming frustrated with the conservatism of the Labor-Right supporters of Gough Whitlam who held the leadership of the Monash Labor Club. Although Nadel had admittedly joined the Labor Club in 1965 believing he was

³⁹ Hyde, M. (1972) p. 6.

⁴⁰ Cassidy, D. (2005) Interview with Darce Cassidy, Saturday, September 3, 2005, Parkville.

joining the campus branch of the Labor Party,⁴¹ he had decided very early on, during his time with Young Labor as a high school student in Melbourne that he was a ‘very left social democrat’⁴² now supporting the Labor Left candidate Jim Cairns. While both Nadel and Cassidy were already moving toward more radical political positions by early 1965 nothing could prepare them for the major radicalising event that was about to occur.

On 29 April 1965 the Menzies Liberal Government sent the first battalion of 1,000 Australian troops to Vietnam. This battalion included a number of those 20-year-old Australian men who had been conscripted by the ballot system. This system used to draw out the birthdates of 20-year-old men to serve in Vietnam was part of the National Service Act introduced on 11 November 1964.⁴³ For the relatively isolated student radicals such as Nadel and Cassidy among the ASLF these measures taken by Prime Minister Robert Menzies to protect Australia from the threat of communism would eventually stimulate their own political ideologies. As Dave Nadel recalls:

Conscription immediately affected our conscience. We had to ask ourselves is this a just war? Am I prepared to die just to stop the downward thrust of communism that doesn't even exist? No I'm not!⁴⁴

It was less than one month after this decisive political event that the ASLF held its Annual Conference in Canberra. However, it was outside the conference where most of the action took place with one of the first anti-Vietnam War demonstrations that the

⁴¹ Mendes, P. (1993) p. 78.

⁴² Interview with Dave Nadel, Wednesday, 31 August, 2005, Ascot Vale.

⁴³ Curthoys, A. (1992) ‘The Anti-War Movements’ in Grey, J. & J. Doyle *Vietnam: War, Myth and Memory*, Sydney, Allen and Unwin. pp. 90-91

⁴⁴ Interview with Dave Nadel.

nation had ever seen being staged by ASLF students on the steps of Parliament House. While student radicals from Melbourne, Canberra, Adelaide, Sydney and Brisbane participated in the protest, just sixteen students were arrested including three from Monash. It was Monash University students Mick Counihan, Charlie Smith and Dave Nadel who found themselves pictured on the front page of *The Australian* newspaper for the whole nation to see.⁴⁵ Although the media attention was primarily focused on the actions of students around and outside the conference, the most controversial student stand against the war in Vietnam was voted on behind closed doors. It was at this very ASLF conference that the first motion of conditional support for the National Liberation Front (NLF) of South Vietnam or the 'Viet Cong' as they were more widely known, was put before Australian students and voted upon favourably by three such students from Monash.⁴⁶

There is no doubt that the ASLF Conference in Canberra in May 1965 was a decisive moment for a large section of the Australian student movement which had now been confronted with the question of aid to the NLF. The after-effects of this conference were to become apparent via the actions of two ASLF affiliated groups: the Sydney ALP Club and Monash Labor Club. They subsequently began their own aid to the NLF campaigns on campus in 1966⁴⁷ and 1967 consecutively. However, the fact that this motion to aid the Vietnamese Communists was successfully quashed by the majority of ASLF students highlights the underlying allegiance that most of these students still held to Labor Party politics in 1965 and 1966. Although many ASLF

⁴⁵ Mendes, P. (1993) p. 25.

⁴⁶ Hyde, M. (1972) pp. 8-9.

⁴⁷ The Labour Club/Socialist Club and ALP Clubs at Sydney University resolved to send medical aid through the Red Cross and directly to the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam on March 14 1966. See Percy, J. (2005) *Resistance: A History of the Democratic Socialist Party and Resistance*, Newtown, Resistance Books. p. 190.

students quite obviously opposed conscription and the inclusion of Australian troops into the Vietnam War, so too did the leading ALP figures on the Left such as Arthur Calwell, Tom Uren and Jim Cairns, and on the Right such as Gough Whitlam. On the issue of aiding the enemy however, it was clear from the outset that the ALP could never support such a policy. This became evident as early as the evening after the aid to the NLF motion was passed when ALP leader Calwell cancelled his appointment to address the ASLF conference at very short notice and with little explanation.⁴⁸

The immediate reaction within the Monash Labor Club to the radical push seen at the ASLF conference in Canberra was minimal. The leadership positions of the Club were still in the hands of the 'Whitlamites' such as its President Peter Scherer, whose opposition to the Vietnam War was still being placed in a Cold War anti-communist context. In an article for the student newspaper, now entitled *Lot's Wife*, on July 13 1965 Scherer attempted to express his contempt for the Liberal Government's decision while holding the Monash Labor Club's strict anti-communist line. He cautiously stated, 'we believe the Vietnamese people's right to "self determination" includes the right to elect a Communist government- however foolish we feel such a decision to be.'⁴⁹

While the MLC leadership decided to remain loyal to the Labor-Right line, the main opposition to the war and conscription on campus came from *Lot's Wife* editor Pete Steedman. Described by the conservative Young Social Democrats as 'unparalleled in the amount of pornography, blasphemy and libel he placed in his paper'⁵⁰ Steedman's rationalist critiques of the war and conscription offered students a range of radical

⁴⁸ Hyde, M. (1972) p. 9.

⁴⁹ *Lot's Wife* Vol. 5, No. 7, 13 July 1965. p. 6.

⁵⁰ *Lot's Wife* Vol. 6, No. 1, 8 March 1966. p. 7.

perspectives on issues around Vietnam. In the very same *Lot's Wife* edition as Scherer's statements on Vietnam, Steedman openly encouraged students to oppose conscription under the heading 'The Monash View of Conscription: Registration, Deferment, The Ballot, Call Up, Conscientious Objection and Opposing the Draft.'⁵¹ Considering this was three years prior to the set up of any Draft Resistance Movement in Melbourne, it gives some indication of how uniquely radical Steedman's paper really was in 1965.

Furthermore, in Steedman's follow up to the conscription edition of *Lot's Wife*, he decided to offer students a wider political perspective by literally mapping out his own idea of 'The Australian Political Spectrum' that ventured far beyond parliamentary politics. The two page spread that listed over 50 Australian political identities ranging from the Far Right of Arthur Smith's Australian Nazi Party, to the Right wing National Civic Council led by B.A. Santamaria, to Prime Minister Sir Robert Menzies' Liberal Party at Centre Right, Deputy Opposition Leader Gough Whitlam at Centre Left, Dr. Jim Cairns of the Labor Party on the Left and finally on the far corner of the spread were the words 'Ted Hill: Communist Party (Peking) Far Left.'⁵²

While the name Ted Hill would become increasingly influential among the Monash Labor Club during 1966-67 the truth about how much influence he had over the club's ideological groundings and tactical alliances have been until now very unclear. The comments of one non-aligned Monash student who was there during 1965-68 express the uncertainty surrounding Hill's involvement:

⁵¹ *Lot's Wife* Vol. 5, No. 7, 13 July 1965. pp.4-5.

⁵² *Lot's Wife* Vol. 5, No. 8, 28 July 1965. p. 11.

The Marxist-Leninists certainly became influential within the Labor Club later on. But I don't know if I even knew they existed in 1966. They certainly had no public role. In fact they never had a public role at any time. Their leader Ted Hill did all his work in smoke filled rooms, outside the public eye.⁵³

The correct term for Ted Hill's group was the Communist Party of Australia (Marxist-Leninist) or CPA (M-L), which was established in March 1964. Edward Fowler Hill, former Victorian state secretary of the Communist Party of Australia (CPA) from 1940, and later member of their Political Committee had by 1960, moved against the CPA's pro-Soviet line and began to defend the thought of Chairman Mao Tse-Tung leader of the Chinese Communist Party. Hill strongly followed the Maoist belief that the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) led by Nikita Khrushchev had begun 'revising' Lenin's theories by promulgating a doctrine of 'peaceful co-existence' between the Soviet-Union and the West.⁵⁴

Unfortunately for Hill, by 1963 the Soviets had declared Mao and his followers irredeemably 'ultra-left' and the vast majority of CPA members who supported the Soviet line were now moving to isolate Hill within the party.⁵⁵ However, his supporters in the 'Hill Group' as it became known, included some of Australia's most prominent Trade Union leaders including, among others, Federal Secretary of the Builders' Labourer's Federation Norm Gallagher, Secretary of the Waterside Worker's Federation Ted Bull and Clarrie O'Shea the Secretary of the Tramways

⁵³ Interview with Bob Muntz, Ascot Vale, Tuesday, 30 August 2005.

⁵⁴ Sparrow, J & J. Sparrow (2004) p. 171.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

Union.⁵⁶ It would be this seemingly small yet relatively powerful section of the Victorian labour movement that would later show their solidarity and support for the radical Labor Club students in 1967. More importantly, it would be under this umbrella of Maoist support, led by Ted Hill, that a very real alliance between radical student and labour organisations would come to exist within Melbourne.

In April 1963 Hill's long struggle against 'the main danger in the working class movement- the revisionism of Marxism-Leninism'⁵⁷ came to an end. At the Victorian State Conference of the CPA Hill and his hardened supporters were defeated by a ten to one majority in the secret ballot for the new State Committee.⁵⁸ Interestingly before the vote was passed, Hill offered some final advice before he would leave the party he'd known for twenty-seven years, to create the notorious CPA (M-L):

No matter what is done, Marxism-Leninism will prevail, because it is true. I appeal to all of you comrades to study, study and study again-to make known the great truths of Marxism-Leninism -to defend its purity- to defend the unity of the international Communist movement.⁵⁹

It was with this kind of approach, an emphasis on truth and education, and a certain disregard for the idea of majority rule that would lead the Hill group to be labelled as 'dogmatists', 'left sectarians,' and 'adventurists'⁶⁰ by their opponents, especially in the CPA. By 1964 the ideological differences taken up by the CPA and CPA (M-L) had according to media reports in Sydney become 'more than theoretical differences':

⁵⁶ Hill, E.F. (1963) *Defend Marxism Leninism! Documents of Struggle in the Australian Communist Movement*, Coburg, Challenge Press. p. 2.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ Gibson, R. (1981) *My years in the Communist Party*, Sydney, Penguin Publishing. p. 268.

⁵⁹ Hill, E. F. (1963) p. 56.

⁶⁰ Hill, E.F. (1963) p.1.

The CPA (M-L) for example will be far more hostile to the ALP, regarding it as a purely “bourgeois party” and “agent of imperialism”, whereas the CPA will seek to ally itself with the left wing of the ALP in order to further “progressive” policies. The CPA sees in the “Peace Movement” means for a genuine reduction in international tension and a contribution to “peaceful coexistence”, whereas the CPA (M-L) regards it as a weapon with which to hit the “imperialist warmongers”.⁶¹

This split within the Left of the Australian labour movement that began in 1963 was to have a radicalising influence upon those Australian students and workers who were now becoming increasingly frustrated with the politics of the ALP and their allies in the CPA throughout 1965-67.

One radical student who was instantly attracted to the thought of Ted Hill and Mao Tse-Tung during his first year at Monash was 17 year-old Albert Langer. Langer had been politically active in Melbourne since the age of fourteen within the Young Labor Association (YLA), the Youth Against Apartheid campaign and finally the Youth Campaign Against Conscription (YCAC) alongside Monash Labor Club member and soon to be President Dave Nadel. This made Langer’s decision to join the Labor Club in 1966 a comfortable transition from youth to university politics. Outside Monash, however, Langer was preoccupied with the recent Cultural Revolution that was taking place throughout China. Subscribing to the Australia-China Society’s monthly *News Bulletin*, Langer became increasingly interested in this new revolutionary movement that was appealing to ‘Marx-Leninists all around the world to rejoice at this success

⁶¹ Current Affairs Bulletin, Sydney, Vol.34, No.3, 22 June 1964 in McKinlay, B. (1979) *Documentary History of the Australian Labor Movement 1850-1975*, Victoria, Drummond Press. p. 724.

the (Cultural Revolution) for each victory of the Chinese people is their victory also.’⁶² In the same edition of *News Bulletin* from August 1966 it was constantly reiterated that the central ideas of the Cultural Revolution could be used to ‘unify the struggles of all peoples’:

...workers who devise new machines, and students who struggle with their lessons, all gain new energy and inspiration when they study the works of Mao Tse-Tung together in the light of their own particular problem.⁶³

It was clearly stated by the Victorian branch of the Australia-China Society in 1966 that this new revolution in China could offer not only inspiration but potentially viable and humane alternatives to those peoples who opposed the ongoing violence in Vietnam.

The USA escalates the war in Vietnam by bringing in new and ever more bestial weapons. China replies by a movement that ever more closely knits her people together believing that man is stronger than the weapon and that in the end it will be the peoples who will win.⁶⁴

By mid 1966, Langer had become increasingly supportive of these ideas espoused by the Chinese Communist Party who had themselves possessed nuclear weapons since 1949 and were now openly opposed to any kind of ‘peaceful-coexistence’ with the ‘US imperialists’. Langer’s commitment to these ideas became clearer in May of 1966 when he joined a contingent of Labor Club members to his first ASLF conference

⁶² *News Bulletin* August 1966. p. 1. Noel Butlin Archives, Australian National University, Z457/26, Australia-China Society 1966-1980.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ *Ibid.* p. 3.

held in Adelaide. As the conference got underway one of the political debates that came to the floor was that of the Worker's Bomb issue which debated whether or not nuclear weapons could truly benefit the people. While the majority of students supported the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) position, Langer refused.⁶⁵ In fact he was the only student from the entire Monash contingent who took a pro-nuclear position. Unfamiliar with the Maoist ideas that Langer was developing the Monash students were understandably confused by Langer's stance. This occurrence was significant in that although Langer was still a member of Young Labor in mid-1966, he was also committed to a more Maoist perspective.

Not long after the ASLF conference it became clear that Dave Nadel would now lead the Monash Labor Club under a new policy of activism that was based on more direct support for Jim Cairns' efforts to end Australia's involvement in Vietnam.

Immediately the Labor Club became more active in off campus bodies such as the Vietnam Day Committee, The Vietnam Solidarity Committee and the Youth Campaign Against Conscription, which were all closely associated with the ALP and the CPA.⁶⁶ For Nadel and company this was not only to be the beginning of a real alliance with off-campus political forces in the peace movement, but it was also to become an important lesson about the restrictions of mass movements. As Langer and Nadel soon found, it was impossible for them to voice more radical ideas within a peace movement that was essentially dominated by the ALP and the CPA. One of the most significant events that forced the Labor Club to question the politics of the peace movement was the mass protest surrounding the visit to Melbourne by American President Lyndon Johnson in October 1966. As Nadel recalls:

⁶⁵ Interview with Dave Nadel.

⁶⁶ Monash Labor Club Presidents Report 1966-67, Langer Collection (Z457) Monash University Labor Club 1961-67 (Box 34), Noel Butlin Archives Centre, Australian National University.

This was a big deal. There were meetings held at Cairns' place with all of the leaders from the main Trade Unions, the Vietnam Day Committee, Melbourne and Monash Labor Clubs present. Cairns wanted a mass peaceful protest and he got it.⁶⁷

While Jim Cairns and his allies in the CPA such as Bernie Taft had successfully convinced all the groups that a peaceful protest outside government house was the most appropriate action, it ended in tragedy:

We were having this peaceful protest and by the time Johnson got down St.Kilda Road the cops allowed the cars into government house then, they attacked the crowd. There were about fifty people arrested, there were people beaten up; it was really quite awful. I think that shook a lot of people's faith in peaceful protest.⁶⁸

The effects of this event at Monash were felt immediately with the publishing of Albert Langer's pamphlet documenting the extent to which the police had terrorised himself and other students in prison cells simply because they openly opposed the war.⁶⁹ It now seemed to the Labor Club leadership that the final approach to stopping this war was at the polls. With the Federal election coming up in November the Labor Club encouraged its members to work tirelessly with the Anti-Conscription Campaign in its efforts to secure a Labor victory. Alongside influential individuals such as Queensland student activist turned Melbourne school teacher Humphrey McQueen

⁶⁷ Interview with Dave Nadel.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Mendes, P. (1993) pp. 65-66.

and important organisations like ‘Save Our Sons’,⁷⁰ Nadel and Langer worked incredibly hard at their ‘Vote No’ campaign.⁷¹ For many this was reminiscent of the peace movement’s former struggle against a similar campaign of anti-communist rhetoric during Menzies efforts to ban the CPA in 1951.⁷²

When Election Day arrived on 26 November 1966 the Labor Party was crushed as Australians gave Liberal leader Harold Holt a mandate to continue with the war in Vietnam. For the first time since World War II, the Labor Party’s share of the vote slumped below 40 percent. As Paul Strangio describes in his telling biography of Jim Cairns, *Keeper of the Faith*, this loss drastically radicalised Melbourne’s student anti-war activists:

...the election loss radicalised younger sections of the peace movement. They increasingly derided established forms of protest and the notion of working for social change through existing political and social institutions. Instead they were drawn to a new militant strategy to confront the authority of the liberal capitalist state head on.⁷³

As is expressed here by Stangio (2002) it was clear that the Monash Labor Club had become somewhat ‘radicalised’ firstly by the Johnson visit in October and secondly by the Labor defeat in November 1966. Similarly Mendes (1993) argues that these two events, along with the visit by South Vietnamese President Air Marshal Ky in

⁷⁰ ‘Save Our Sons’ was an important women’s peace group established in Melbourne in May 1965 that soon spread nationwide. The movement later gained wider support by addressing union groups and various workers’ clubs throughout Victoria and New South Wales. See York, B. (1988) Power to the Young in V.Burgmann & J. Lee (eds.) *Staining the Wattle: A People’s History of Australia Since 1788*, Melbourne, McPhee Gribble Publishers. p. 234.

⁷¹ McQueen, H. (1968) A Single Spark in *Arena*, No. 16, 1968. p. 51.

⁷² York, B. (1988) p. 237.

⁷³ Strangio, P. (2002) *Keeper of the Faith: A Biography of Jim Cairns*, Sydney, Penguin Books. p. 169.

January of the next year, were the central factors in the Labor Club's moves toward a more 'revolutionary position'. Unfortunately, neither Stangio nor Mendes make it clear about where this 'new militant strategy' came from or why a more 'Far Left position' was able to take hold of the Labor Club leadership by late 1967.

Unlike the authors mentioned above, this chapter has attempted to describe the radicalisation of the Monash Labor Club from 1965-67 not just through the radical developments that occurred within Melbourne, but also the significant events in China and Vietnam which directly influenced the ideas of the Labor Club members and leadership throughout 1966. The internal radicalising influences of Albert Langer which helped him rise to Vice President of the club in December 1966 would come to dominate the aims, actions and alliances of the club by late 1967. This rising influence of Langer and the Marxist-Leninist ideals of Mao Tse-Tung and Ted Hill that he began to espouse will be analysed in the following chapter alongside the significant actions and campaigns carried out by the Monash Labor Club in 1967.

Chapter 3: Confrontation, Class struggle and Off-Campus Connections:

The Campaigns of 1967 and the Origins of the Aid to the NLF.

*It was radical, it was in your face, it was tilting at windmills, it was making outrageous criticisms of the University Vice Chancellor, the National Government and the Prime Minister. That sort of activism; outrageous, confrontational activism was what attracted me rather than a close analytical study of the politics of the time.*⁷⁴

Bob Muntz, Monash University student 1965-1968.

*The new brand of radical politics at Monash involved the realisation that such things as Vietnam and conscription were not simple policy mistakes, but policies predetermined by deeply ingrained value systems (racism, nationalism, chauvinism, fear of those from the north etc.) which results in an inhuman set of social and economic priorities at home; hence, only a movement aiming at combating these social and ideological structures could prevent wars of aggression against the liberation movements of the third world. And such a movement eventually would require the effective structural alliance of workers and students.*⁷⁵

Warren Osmond, Chair of the NLF Aid Committee 1967.

The new form of confrontational activism adopted by the Monash Labor Club in 1967 was in part inspired by the Maoist beliefs of Albert Langer, as well as the natural progression of the club's leadership away from ALP after 1966 toward something more radical. By analysing the main campaigns, tactics and aims of the Monash Labor Club during 1967 it is much easier to understand the political influences and ideological framework that allowed the club to rise to such an influential position in the Australian student movement and form important alliances with the labour movement in Melbourne. While the decision to begin the Aid to the NLF Campaign in July was the decisive event for the Monash Labor Club, there were a number of

⁷⁴ Interview with Bob Muntz.

⁷⁵ Gordon, R. & W. Osmond (1970) 'An Overview of the Australian New Left' in Gordon, R. (ed.) *The Australian New Left: Critical Essays and Strategy*, Melbourne, Heinemann. p. 30.

other significant events and campaigns earlier in 1967 that also highlighted the club's 'new brand of radical politics'.

One of the most significant moves by the Monash Labor Club in 1967 that contributed to the club's ongoing radicalisation and later efforts to form off-campus alliances was the set up of a Labor Club headquarters at 7 Jasmine Street, South Caulfield. The Jasmine Street headquarters was initially set up during the summer of 1966-67 by Labor Club President Dave Nadel and ex- Sydney University ALP Club activist Darce Cassidy who had recently relocated to Melbourne as a research officer for the ABC (Australian Broadcasting Commission). Having met at the Adelaide ASLF Conference in May 1966,⁷⁶ Nadel was instantly drawn to the confrontational style of student journalism mastered by Cassidy within his Sydney ALP Club broadsheet *The Wednesday Commentary*(WC).⁷⁷ Cassidy's subsequent decision to move to Melbourne in late 1966 and enrol at Monash University influenced the more agitational style of journalism adopted by the Labor Club in 1967 through its new student broadsheet *Print* (formerly *Left Hook*) and similar activities organised at Jasmine Street. Joining Nadel and Cassidy at the 'Jasmine Street Commune' or 'Caulfield Cong' as it became known was Labor Club Secretary Keith Jepson, Treasurer Jill Scannell and close friend of Dave Nadel's, Andy McInnes. As Nadel recalls, the creation of Jasmine Street was to have long lasting effects upon the consciousness of the Labor Club:

⁷⁶ Interview with Dave Nadel.

⁷⁷ Once condemned by Liberal NSW Premier Robin Askin in state parliament as 'the filthiest thing I have ever seen on paper' it was this agitational value of the WC that first influenced Nadel to put out the Monash Labor Club broadsheet *Left Hook* on 7 July 1966.

The only conscious idea of Jasmine Street was we wanted to have a headquarters. Then we decided to hold regular Friday night parties at Jasmine Street that had positive and negative features. The early parties were mostly students but then as the word got out we found more workers turning up. Some of the basis for the later Worker-Student Alliance were people who'd come along to those parties.⁷⁸

As Nadel acknowledges, these activities at Jasmine Street were the first real connections between the Monash students and radical workers in Melbourne. Although the Worker-Student Alliance (WSA), a group later formed 'in sympathy with the Communist Party of Australia (Marxist-Leninist)',⁷⁹ was not established until January 1970 the origins of that alliance began at Jasmine Street in 1967. As 1967 progressed so too did the actions, ideas and aims of the Labor Club leadership, becoming increasingly autonomous from the university.

The involvement of prominent Labor Club members in the organisation of a demonstration opposing the visit by South Vietnamese President, Air Marshall Nguyen Ky, to Melbourne in January 1967, marked a significant turning point in the Labor Club's future actions and ideologies. As noted by then Labor Club Secretary Keith Jepson, the Melbourne anti-Ky demonstration 'was almost entirely organised by Labor Club members'⁸⁰ with Dave Nadel, Jill Scannell, Albert Langer and several others filling the ranks of the Anti-Ky Action Committee. While Phillip Mendes in his book *The New Left, The Jews and the Vietnam War 1965-1972* quite correctly claims

⁷⁸ Nadel interview.

⁷⁹ Percy, J. (2005) p. 199.

⁸⁰ Monash Labor Club Secretaries Report 1966-67, Langer Collection (Z457) Monash University Labor Club 1961-67 (Box #34), Noel Butlin Archives Centre, Australian National University.

that this event 'influenced Monash's Cairnsites to adopt a more Far Left position',⁸¹ he fails to state any reasons why. On closer analysis it is clear that the significance of this event was due to two factors. Firstly, it was at this very point in the history of the Monash Labor Club that a clear Marxist-Leninist position was introduced to both the club and its outside supporters through the ideas of Albert Langer. As Dave Nadel stated:

There was a group of us; mostly students but some young workers as well, meeting constantly to plan the campaign against Ky to stick up posters, to leaflet and so forth. That was around the stage that Albert came out with the Maoist position.⁸²

While the core of the Labor Club leadership continued to maintain their confidence in Jim Cairns and the Left of the Australian Labor Party (ALP) in early 1967 the ideas of Chairman Mao and the Cultural Revolution were becoming increasingly attractive:

Apart from Albert we weren't Maoists but we found the Cultural Revolution very interesting...I mean the Cultural Revolution in 1967 looked like Mao had gone to the masses. Young people were revolutionists, as if the same thing happening in China was happening in the West.⁸³

For those young workers and other activists becoming increasingly involved with the Labor Club-led Anti-Ky Action Committee in early 1967, the revolutionary ideas being proselytised by Langer were taken much more seriously. One such student

⁸¹ Mendes (1993) p. 26.

⁸² Interview with Dave Nadel.

⁸³ Interview with Dave Nadel.

activist who was instantly attracted to these ideas was 20-year-old Michael Hyde. Having spent 1964-1966 living in the United States during the famous student revolt at Berkeley, California, Hyde had been trained in student activism through his involvement with the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) and various other civil rights groups at Pasadena City College. Admittedly 'hell bent on going for the most radical position, the most radical organisation that was', Hyde was drawn to the Labor Club and the ideas of Albert Langer in early 1967. As he recalls:

I went to the anti-Ky demo just after the massive Labor defeat of 1966 and became more and more involved with the Labor Club people. Of course then I came across Albert and I was fascinated by him and I was fascinated by his arguments. It was very clear he was promoting the ideas of Chairman Mao, the Chinese Communist Party and also the Communist Party of Australia (Marxist-Leninist), the Maoist party, Ted Hill's party.⁸⁴

Apart from the increasing influence of Langer's Marxist-Leninist ideas upon the Labor Club during the anti-Ky demonstration, the second significant factor of this action was the Labor Club member's clear expressions of solidarity with the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam (NLF). Before the anti-Ky action it was clear that the Communist Party of Australia (CPA) was calling for a ban on the carrying of NLF flags at the demonstration because they felt that the flags 'might alienate the masses'.⁸⁵ The decision of certain Labor Club members to defy this ban symbolised

⁸⁴ Interview with Michael Hyde.

⁸⁵ Hyde, M. (1972) p. 21.

the new willingness to move to the left of the ALP and the CPA who were working together to direct the anti-war movement in Melbourne.⁸⁶

The establishment of the off-campus Monash Labor Club broadsheet *Print* on March 8 1967 not only changed the nature of student journalism at Monash but also introduced a more revolutionary perspective on campus. Past student broadsheets at Monash had been limited to the pro-Democratic Labor Party (DLP) pamphlets such as *Free Speech* brought out by John Bailey, a supporter of Melbourne's leading anti-communist B.A.Santamaria. While Nadel's *Left Hook* had tried to counter this lack of Socialist ideas, *Print* offered something closer to what Hyde called a 'revolutionary Socialist activist perspective' that would allow 'some of these activists to later move to a Maoist position'.⁸⁷ For Darce Cassidy, the new editor of *Print*, this Maoist position being put forward by Langer had already taken hold. As Cassidy recalls:

By late 1966 early 1967 I grew to see ALP politics as futile and the Maoist stance offered a clear anti-Parliamentary line. Other than this fact it was the sheer rebelliousness of the Maoist ideas like 'It is right to rebel' that became attractive to a lot us around that time.⁸⁸

Furthermore this broadsheet, produced at the clubs off-campus headquarters on Cassidy's own home Gestetner (duplicating machine), allowed the Labor Club radicals to put forward ideas that were still taboo in the student newspaper *Lot's Wife*. One example of this was the decision by Cassidy and others to publish the official

⁸⁶ Taft, B. (1994) *Crossing the Party Line: Memoirs of Bernie Taft*, Melbourne, Scribe Publications. p. 246.

⁸⁷ Hyde (1972) p. 11.

⁸⁸ Interview with Darce Cassidy.

programme of the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam within the first month of *Print's* publication.⁸⁹ While Mendes and others⁹⁰ argue that the Aid to the NLF Campaign was 'triggered off' by *Lot's wife* co-editor and Labor Club member Peter Price in May 1967,⁹¹ these analyses ignore the fact that it was the more radical forces in the Labor Club such as Langer, Cassidy and Nadel who initially made support for the NLF an issue on campus.

One of the more influential ideas to take hold among the Monash Labor Club in 1967 was the central Marxist belief that revolutionary change in Australia would only be possible through the mass mobilisation of the 'working class'. This belief among Labor Club radicals was heightened by the fact that certain Rebel Unions⁹², as they would become known in Melbourne, including the Seaman's Union of Australia (SUA) and the Waterside Workers' Federation (WWF), had long been actively opposing the war in Vietnam.⁹³ It was ultimately the decisions of the Seaman's Union in May 1966 and the Waterside Workers' in February 1967⁹⁴ to refuse to board the *Boonaroo* and *Jeparit*, carrying materials for use by Australian troops in South Vietnam, that altered the consciousness of the Labor Club radicals. As Hyde has stated:

⁸⁹ *Print*, No. 6, 30 March 1967.

⁹⁰ See Murphy, J. (1993) *Harvest of Fear: A History of Australia's Vietnam War*, Sydney, Allen and Unwin. p. 220. Also based on Interview with Alan Roberts, North Fitzroy, 7 September, 2005.

⁹¹ Mendes (1993) p. 26.

⁹² Duras, T. (1998) *Peace is Trade Union Business: Trade Union Opposition to Australia's involvement in the Vietnam war, 1965-72*, Honours Thesis, Canberra, Australian National University Press. p. 14.

⁹³ In Melbourne as early as 4 May 1965 approximately two and a half thousand Waterside Workers walked off the wharves to protest against Menzies' decision to send troops to Vietnam. Later that month, Melbourne branch members of the SUA employed on tugboats boycotted an American warship and submarine, effectively halting their docking processes. See Duras, T. (1998) p. 48-50.

⁹⁴ Saunders, M (1982) The Trade Unions in Australia and opposition to Vietnam and Conscription 1965-1973 in *Labour History* No. 43. pp. 64-83.

We realised that if the workers went on strike, or if the workers got involved in actions, that's when the State trembled and shook. I know the unions aren't necessarily the working class but they do have working class members. It was the guys down beside the wharves in the Seaman's and wharfie's unions who refused to load the goods for Vietnam. During this time we saw the mobilisation of the working class not only as a possibility but as absolutely essential.⁹⁵

This realisation of the Labor Club radicals in 1967 that it was essential to link up their own struggle against war and conscription with the similar struggles of Melbourne's rebel unions came to dominate Labor Club activities. While reports of the Seaman's Union actions were covered in the earliest pages of *Print*⁹⁶ within weeks guest speakers from some of Melbourne's rebel unions were addressing the club.⁹⁷ It was during this time in April 1967 that the Labor Club held its first China Week which hosted a number of guest speakers including E.F. Hill, the Chairman of the Communist Party of Australia (M-L), whose influence over Melbourne's most radical unions was still growing. Hill's ideas that Marxism-Leninism was 'the science of the liberation of mankind', and only 'class struggle' could lead to 'the victory of Communism' in Australia resonated with the new radicals including Mike Hyde, who admits that these ideas gave him 'the *modus operandi*', 'the analytical framework that made all the things he hated in society somehow make sense'.⁹⁸ For Hyde, Langer and a growing number of Labor Club members the idea of class struggle was no longer a theoretical phenomenon but an ideological tool to be utilised on campus.

⁹⁵ Interview with Michael Hyde.

⁹⁶ *Print* No. 3, 10 March 1967, p. 1.

⁹⁷ See *Print* No. 9, 14 April 1967, p. 1. In April 1967 two guest speakers on contemporary unionism including Mick Jordan, Secretary of Trades Hall Council (THC) and Laurie Carmichael, Secretary of the Amalgamated Engineering Union (AEU) who were then on suspension from the THC. Carmichael was later supported by the Monash Labor Club students after his arrest in September 1969 even though the AEU was predominantly CPA influenced rather than aligned with the Maoist CPA (M-L).

⁹⁸ Interview with Hyde.

The on campus struggle stirred up by the Monash Labor Club during its campaign against 'The Bolte Degree' in early 1967 was largely influenced by the growing belief among the Labor Club members that on-campus struggle could act as an extension of the class struggle outside. The Anti-Bolte Campaign was initially set off by the controversial rumour published in the second edition of *Print* on 9 March that Victorian Premier Sir Henry Bolte had 'blackmailed' Monash University into awarding him an honorary degree by threatening to cut future funding.⁹⁹ Still widely unpopular for his pro-capital punishment policies that had led to the hanging of Ronald Ryan in February, the Bolte rumours led to significant opposition on campus.¹⁰⁰

As the weeks passed new developments in the rumours transpired and again found their way into the pages of *Print*. This time Cassidy, Nadel and company alleged that two senior University staff had unintentionally offered the honorary degree to Bolte while inebriated at a social function. Immediately the Monash administration reacted, threatening the two main culprits with disciplinary action and possible legal action for libel.¹⁰¹ Rather than backing down the Labor Club radicals went on the offensive with a campaign of demonstrations, propaganda and an unforgettable mock award ceremony that aimed to expose the true 'relationship of the University to the State.'¹⁰²

According to Mendes this action of the 'Labor Club (increasingly influenced by Maoism)' had also aimed to 'represent an extension of the class struggle' while the

⁹⁹ *Print* No. 2, 9 March 1967, p.1.

¹⁰⁰ Percy (2005) p. 199.

¹⁰¹ Hyde (1972) pp. 16-17.

¹⁰² Hyde (1972) p. 18.

‘confrontation with the administration was the key to the radicalisation of new groups of students’.¹⁰³

While this statement concerning the beliefs and tactics of the Monash Labor Club does shed light on the Maoist theory of class struggle and the more confrontational tactics employed by the Monash radicals, the underlying aims of the Labor Club during 1967 must be further understood.

An analysis of the changing aims of the Monash Labor Club from 1966-67 can help to develop a better understanding of those changes in the club’s ideological and tactical influences that have been discussed above. In his 1966-67 President’s Report submitted on 26 June 1967 Dave Nadel stated that, while the club’s ideas had been ‘moving steadily to the left in the last twelve months,’ the central aims of the club remained orientated around the traditional pro-ALP programme. As the report read:

The aims of the Labour Club, as I said in my election speech when I first stood for office twelve months ago can be summed up, in the Labour Party motto: agitate, educate and organise.¹⁰⁴

Here Nadel’s comments seem to assert that the Australian Labor Party was still the main political influence upon the Monash University Labor Club, apparent even in his choice of spelling of the club’s title. However he later points out that certain campaigns in 1967, ‘the Bolte Degree Controversy especially’, had enabled the club to ‘get students talking about student democracy’ which was ‘a substantial change

¹⁰³ Mendes (1993) p. 27.

¹⁰⁴ Monash Labor Club President’s Report 1966-67

from the club's traditional on-campus activity.'¹⁰⁵ This comment shows us that while some of the Labor Club radicals, such as Nadel, still espoused Labor Party ideals, the true aims and ideas behind their more confrontational campaigns such as the Bolte Degree were being influenced by a much more radical brand of politics. Unlike Nadel, Keith Jepson's, 1966-67 Secretaries Report, openly expresses the other political influences and aims within the club:

The past year has seen the re-emergence of the Labor Club bookstall which is currently selling literature as widely diffuse as "Dissent" and "Peking Review", thus catering for every flavour to be found in the club. The stall is operative every Thursday, and as well as disseminating propaganda, it is a good money making concern and a forum for argument and discussion.¹⁰⁶

The tactic of 'disseminating propaganda' rather than the intention to 'educate' the student body and the addition of more ultra-left ideas such as those published by the Chinese Communist Party, represents the move to a more revolutionary perspective within the Labor Club in 1967. This new revolutionary perspective, influenced largely by Marxist-Leninist or Maoist ideas and promulgated by Albert Langer, played an important role in the Aid to the NLF Campaign that was officially made public in July 1967.

The Aid to the NLF Campaign that was initiated by the Monash Labor Club in July 1967 was not just an isolated decision by 'non-Maoist members' within the Labor Club as other studies have suggested. This general downplaying of the true role of the

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Monash Labor Club Secretaries Report 1966-67

Maoists in the Aid to the NLF campaign has been epitomised by the views of John Murphy (1993) in his historical text *Harvest of Fear: A History of Australia's Vietnam War*:

Although there was a branch of the CPA (M-L) at the core of the Labor Club, it was only in 1969 that Maoism became the dominant force. The club was propelled to the vanguard of student activism by the heavy handed response to its campaign, launched in July 1967 by non-Maoist members, to raise money for the NLF.¹⁰⁷

While this statement may have seemed valid to other researchers at the time including Mendes (1993) there are a number of problems within it. First of all there was never an official branch of the CPA (M-L) at Monash. The only Monash group resembling such a branch was the establishment of the Young Communist League (YCL) set up by Hyde and Langer in 1969, which still allowed non-Maoist students to join.¹⁰⁸ Secondly, while Maoist members may not have dominated the Monash Labor Club numerically in 1967, with Albert Langer as the only real Maoist among the 115 club members, the Marxist-Leninist ideals he espoused had become a dominant ideological influence within the club. As Peter Price, one of the non-Maoist members considered by Murphy and Mendes to have 'triggered off the Aid to the NLF Campaign', has stated:

At that time, in 1967, Albert was the strongest person ideologically within the Labor Club. He was really into tactics and he may well have come up with the

¹⁰⁷ Murphy, J. (1993) p. 220.

¹⁰⁸ Interview with Michael Hyde. It is worth noting that neither Langer nor Hyde ever became open members of the party due to the CPA (M-L) policy that 'you did not expose yourself organisationally in any way what so ever.' Thus, the idea of a 'branch' of the CPA (M-L) at Monash seems unrealistic.

idea of sending unspecified aid. You see, Langer's main tactic was that we take a really extreme Left position on the war, such as aiding the enemy, then anything to the Right of that action such as publicly supporting the enemy, would become moderate and acceptable.¹⁰⁹

Although it is true that Price, who had been a member of the Labor Club since 1965, was 'certainly never a Maoist, but more of a conscientious character'¹¹⁰ he was certainly not isolated in his moves to support the NLF. While it was Martha Campbell, who became Labor Club President in June 1967, and Price who passed some of the initial motions to actively support the NLF, there was a substantial number of younger more militant Labor Club activists who had already arrived at a position of support for the NLF by mid 1967.¹¹¹ As Price admits, Campbell and himself became 'the front people for the Aid Campaign' while it seems the aims and tactics behind the campaign were more so influenced by the Maoist students such as Langer and Hyde. These aims were clearly laid out by Hyde in Langley (1992), where he said:

The aim of the action was to make people think...For example, when we sent money to the NLF it was reported in the press and the people who otherwise may not have cared about the war were driven to think about it.¹¹²

¹⁰⁹ Interview with Peter Price, 28 October 2005.

¹¹⁰ Interview with Alan Roberts. Roberts was a head Physics Lecturer at Monash from 1965-1988. He became a member of the Labor Club in 1965. Noted by Peter Price as a member and mentor of the Monash Labor Club radicals during the Aid to the NLF Campaign he publicly supported the campaign on a number of occasions during 1967-68.

¹¹¹ Hyde (1972) p. 21.

¹¹² Langley, G. (1993) *A Decade of Dissent: Vietnam and the Conflict on the Australian Home Front*, Sydney, Allen & Unwin. p. 117.

This comment by Hyde effectively shows that the Aid to the NLF Campaign was based on the similar tactics of confrontation and consciousness raising that had been promulgated by Albert Langer and practiced by the Labor Club throughout 1967. In fact it was the apparent 'spellbinding oratory of Langer'¹¹³ at the Labor Club general meeting on Friday 21 July 1967 that led to the final decision to send unspecified aid to the NLF. After a total of seven hours of discussion, the meeting decided to agree on the establishment of two funds: one for medical aid to civilians in the NLF controlled areas and one for direct financial aid to the NLF- the 'unspecified' fund.¹¹⁴

This chapter has attempted to show, through an analysis of some of the main campaigns and actions of the Monash Labor Club in 1967, that the central aims, ideologies and tactics adopted by the Labor Club throughout that year were strongly influenced by the ideas of Albert Langer. While Langer's attraction to the ideology of both Mao Tse-Tung and the CPA (M-L) had become much more vocal by early 1967 the Maoist theories of rebellion, confrontation and class struggle came to dominate the activities of the Labor Club by late 1967. While it is true that non-Maoist members within the Labor Club also contributed to the increasingly confrontational style of activism at Monash, it was these Maoist ideas promulgated by Langer that provided the ideological framework for the main campaigns on campus. Furthermore, this adoption of a Marxist-Leninist framework that allowed the Monash Labor Club to pursue these campaigns on-campus also assisted in the creation of alliances with those radical labour unions that were fighting similar campaigns off-campus. The links between radical students and workers that arose in the wake of the Monash Aid

¹¹³ *Print* No. 21, 20 June 1967, p.1.

¹¹⁴ Hyde (1972) p. 22.

Campaign, and the politics of the people making those links, will be further analysed in chapter four.

Chapter 4: The Aftermath of the Monash Labor Club Aid Campaign:

On-Campus Responses, Off-Campus Reactions and Student-Worker Alliances

The successes of the Monash University Labor Club's Aid to the NLF Campaign were in many ways the result of the immediate support from a number of radical unions in Melbourne, combined with the tactical and ideological support from the Communist Party of Australia (Marxist-Leninist) during a time of mounting opposition and isolation. The decision made by the Labor Club to set up an Aid Committee in support of the intensified enemy in Hanoi caused an extreme and sometimes violent wave of opposition directed at the Monash Labor Club students, on-campus and even more so off-campus. The true extent of this opposition unleashed upon the Monash radicals by conservative students on campus, members of the Australian Press, the Democratic Labor Party (DLP) of Victoria, the Holt Liberal Government, the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation (ASIO), and the State and Federal branches of the Australian Labor Party (ALP) will be analysed below in order to understand the tactical and political alliances formed by the Labor Club during this time.

In the wake of the Labor Club decision to set up an Aid Committee to the NLF on 21 July 1967, the immediate isolation and opposition experienced on campus saw a build-up of support from certain militant-unions off-campus. For some of the Monash radicals the initial on-campus isolation was viewed as a result of the media attacks against them that began on Monday 24 July with public outcries of treason from the representatives of the Returned Services League (RSL) and the Victorian branch of

the DLP.¹¹⁵ According to Albert Langer, Michael Hyde and Clive Bunn, this media barrage ‘openly incited a hysterical atmosphere’ on campus that pressured fellow students to disassociate themselves from the Aid Campaign.¹¹⁶ By the next day it was being reported in the *Herald* that an unnamed group of ‘25 Monash students’ had threatened to throw members of the Labor Club into an ornamental pool to express their outright opposition to the new campaign. Their reasons for opposition were reported:

We think their action is treason and should be treated as such...Australians have supported the Government’s commitment to the war and we want it known that it is only a ratbag minority going against it.¹¹⁷

This initial on campus reaction only escalated as increasing threats and violent attacks upon the Labor Club leadership began to occur. On Wednesday 26 July it was reported that Dave Nadel was ‘lifted from the floor, pushed and threatened’ by angry students demanding an end to the Aid campaign.¹¹⁸ On Thursday 27 July the same newspaper told how Peter Price was pelted with flour bombs by students shouting ‘You coward Price, you’re just a bloody commie’.¹¹⁹ According to some Labor Club members such as Humphrey McQueen, a significant feature of the Labor Club radicals at this time was ‘an increasing tendency towards isolation, of going it alone.’¹²⁰ While McQueen is correct in pointing out the increasing state of isolation during the initial media and on-campus attacks, his assertion that this isolation was caused by student ‘inexperience and elitism’ are not as well supported. In fact

¹¹⁵ *The Herald*, Monday, 24 July 1967, p.1.

¹¹⁶ Hyde (1973) p. 23.

¹¹⁷ *The Herald*, Tuesday, 25 July 1967, p. 1.

¹¹⁸ *The Age*, Wednesday, 26 July 1967, p. 1.

¹¹⁹ *The Age*, Wednesday, 27 July 1967, p. 3.

¹²⁰ McQueen, H. (1968) p. 52.

McQueen, for reasons unsaid, completely ignores the fact that there was immediate support and cooperation from a number of unions at this time. As Michael Hyde has stated:

When the attacks started to come down on the radical students we found support coming from specific people in the Builders' Labourers', the Wharfies' Union, some people in the Seamen's, some people in the Plumbers' and some people in the Electrical Trades Union.¹²¹

This support and solidarity from these labour organisations during 1967 does not seem surprising considering the strong anti-war stand taken by all of these unions alongside 41 others in Melbourne during July 1966.¹²² Among these unions it was the Waterside Workers, led by then Deputy Chair of the CPA (M-L) Ted Bull,¹²³ that offered the most support for the NLF aiders during the attacks. As Sparrow and Sparrow have recorded:

Such was the hysteria that sympathetic Maoist wharfies lifted a security system from the wharf so that the students could screen their visitors – and Jasmine Street became probably the first student household with an intercom system.¹²⁴

This kind of material support and protection supplied by the Waterside Workers' to the Labor Club highlights two important facets of the NLF Aid Campaign. Firstly that

¹²¹ Interview with Michael Hyde.

¹²² *Seamen's Journal*, October 1966, p. 230. The Melbourne University Archives 87/125 Seamen's Journals 1916-1986. Early in July 1966, 246 trade union officials, representing 46 trade unions, signed a declaration of protest against the Vietnam War and forwarded it to Prime Minister Harold Holt. This declaration demanded an end to Australian participation in Vietnam, an end to conscription and recognition of the 1954 Geneva Accord which saw the NLF as a legitimate party in the negotiations to a peaceful settlement in Vietnam.

¹²³ Interview with Mike Hyde.

¹²⁴ Sparrow, J. & J. Sparrow (2004) p. 178.

the radical core of the Labor Club centred around Jasmine Street¹²⁵ were involved in close co-operation with Maoist-led unions in Melbourne, and secondly this support was openly accepted in the face of initial opposition on campus. As the on-campus attacks began to subside at Monash in late July, due to a build up of this support the angered response off-campus became significantly more widespread.

After the Labor Club successfully garnered more support for its aid campaign on-campus, a widespread off-campus campaign led by the DLP was unsuccessfully made to expose the Labor Club as part of an international Communist plot. On Thursday 27 July a meeting organised by the Monash Students Representatives Council (SRC) and the Monash DLP Club was reported in *The Sun* as expecting 'more than 1000 students' to finally disassociate themselves from the Labor Club and reinstate their full support in the Australian troops.¹²⁶ Unfortunately for the SRC, the DLP club and those at *The Sun* this resolution was defeated and furthermore a new resolution was written up by the students to support most strongly the Labor Club's right to any political views. If this was not enough, the meeting also declared that it opposed the war and recognised the NLF as a legitimate party to negotiations.¹²⁷ The next fortnight saw a nationwide political backlash directed at the Labor Club radicals and spearheaded by Victorian DLP Senator Frank McManus who was calling on the government to 'crush what he called a Communist organised plot.'¹²⁸ The Senator's accusations were reported in *The Age* on 12 August:

¹²⁵ By this time in July 1967 Michael Hyde, Dave Nadel, Bill Dowling, Chrissie Sanford (the daughter of a Waterside Worker who joined the Labor Club after working in the Monash Book Shop), and Keith Jepson now lived at the Jasmine Street headquarters while Albert Langer still lived on campus in the Halls of Residence, Monash University, Clayton.

¹²⁶ *The Sun*, Thursday, 27 July 1967. p. 1.

¹²⁷ *Print*, Monday, 31 July 1967. p. 1.

¹²⁸ *The Australian*, Saturday, 19 August 1967. p. 10.

Action is necessary because sponsors of the NLF Aid themselves have insisted their proposal is not just a student stunt but have reaffirmed it as a serious proposal supported by certain staff members, people outside universities and organisations abroad. Hanoi and Peking Radios have already publicised proposals with strong approval.¹²⁹

These comments were part of a wider public attack on the Monash Labor Club that began as early as Wednesday 2 August when *News-Weekly* began reporting that ‘there is more real, successful subversion going on, per head and per square foot on the Monash campus than anywhere in Australia.’¹³⁰ This effort by the DLP forces in Melbourne to discredit the Aid to the NLF campaign in mid 1967 as a Communist conspiracy failed for a number of reasons. Firstly, very similar campaigns had been attempted by *News-Weekly*, B.A. Santamaria and the pro-DLP forces in 1965-66 to expose what was dubbed the ‘Monash Soviet’ by denouncing liberal minded students such as *Lot’s Wife* editor Pete Steedman and staff members like senior politics lecturer Max Teichman as Communists. By 1967 Steedman had moved to Melbourne University and Teichman had moved to a position of publicly discrediting Labor Club activities.¹³¹ As Hyde (1973) argues ‘people remembered their (DLP) witch hunting against pale liberals in the middle sixties and would no longer rally to their cries against the Communists.’¹³² Secondly the main public faces of the Aid Campaign, Peter Price and Martha Campbell often argued in the media that their intentions were

¹²⁹ *The Age*, Saturday, 12 August 1967. p. 4.

Radio Peking was reported as broadcasting the news of Monash and Melbourne University’s condemnation of the war in a report on 26 July 1967. This was subsequently reported by DLP sources throughout August. See *The Tramways News* Tramway Industrial Group Newspaper, August 1967, C. O’Shea papers 88/101, Box 6, Folder 2/12/6, Melbourne University Archives.

¹³⁰ *News-Weekly*, Wednesday, 2 August 1967. p. 2.

¹³¹ Hyde (1972) p. 26. Monash Senior Politics Lecturer in 1967 Max Teichman argued during a public debate at Monash on 27 July that “If you are ready to arm people to kill your own conscripts, you should be prepared to kill them yourselves”.

¹³² Hyde (1972) p. 8.

not communist inclined. As Price stated 'Our support is for something not restricted to socialists or communists, it is for the independence movement in Vietnam.'¹³³ While this was essentially true Price will now admit that:

Even though I was never committed to the Maoist line I know the CPA (M-L) was influential. Albert had contacts there and that became clearer to me by late 1967.¹³⁴

Although it may have become increasingly clear to Price that the CPA (M-L) was an important support factor behind the Aid to the NLF Campaign this information always remained highly secretive. As Nadel notes:

Everyone knew there was a CPA (M-L) but we didn't know whether Albert was a member of it. The whole point about militant Socialist parties is their supposed to be conspiratorial so you don't know. The only public members were Ted Hill, Clarrie O'Shea and a few others.¹³⁵

It was this successful effort by Langer not to expose his contacts with the CPA (M-L) that played a major role in the failure of anti-communist forces in Melbourne to simply denounce the Monash Labor Club's NLF Aid Campaign as an organised communist plot. While the DLP never succeeded in exposing these alliances between certain Monash Labor Club members and the Communist Party of Australia (Marxist-Leninist), there was only one other organisation that came close.

¹³³ *The Australian*, Saturday, 19 August 1967. p. 10.

¹³⁴ Interview with Peter Price.

¹³⁵ Interview with Dave Nadel.

The undercover work of the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation (ASIO) directed upon the Monash Labor Club members both on campus and off during the Aid to the NLF Campaign often attempted to find evidence of ‘instructions from Peking via Ted Hill to Albert Langer.’¹³⁶ The earliest evidence of ASIO operatives penetrating the walls of Monash came in the form of a student letter printed in the comments page of *Lot's Wife* on 8 August 1967. The student claimed that he had ‘been approached by an ASIO agent’ and asked if he would consider becoming an ASIO operative to supply information on the recent Aid to the NLF campaign that had been established at Monash. After refusing this offer the student claimed he was asked not to tell anyone about the meeting to which he also boldly refused.¹³⁷ This event stirred the editors of *Lot's Wife* who condemned ASIO’s breach of academic freedom in a follow up article titled ‘Spies on Campus’ on 5 September.¹³⁸ By this stage the work of the Federal police and ASIO was already felt by the Chairman of the Aid Committee Peter Price who recalls:

I bore the brunt of a lot of hostility. I had death threats via the phone. Federal police were knocking on my door at all hours. I was living with my parents in Hampton before I was forced to find another place just so my parents could have some peace.¹³⁹

This kind of harassment, surveillance, interception of phone calls and collection of data concerning Labor Club members continued in 1967 as ASIO searched for links between the Labor Club members, the Victorian branch of the Australia-China

¹³⁶ Perry (1973) p. 95.

¹³⁷ *Lot's Wife*, Vol. 7, No. 9, 8 August 1967. p. 3.

¹³⁸ *Lot's Wife*, Vol. 7, No. 10, 5 September 1967. p. 3.

¹³⁹ Interview with Peter Price.

Society and the CPA (M-L).¹⁴⁰ While ASIO records of Michael Hyde from 1967-74 clearly show that there were direct links between these three organisations¹⁴¹ ASIO could never prove that any Labor Club members were also members of the CPA (M-L). The vast majority of ASIO files on Hyde titled 'Aid to National Liberation Front' are mainly concerned with the Student Tour organised in late 1967 by the Australia-China Society which paid for Michael Hyde and Peter Price¹⁴² among others to travel to China on 1 January 1968.¹⁴³ However no conclusive evidence was found that any of these students were indeed connected to the CPA (M-L) and in 1974 an ASIO official concluded:

Membership of the CPA (M-L) is difficult to prove, but I consider that we would be justified in saying that Hyde is "at least" a supporter of the CPA (M-L).¹⁴⁴

After almost 40 years of secrecy concerning these questions Hyde recalls that time:

It was at the end of '67', the beginning of '68' that I was asked if I wanted to go to China by Albert and others. There wasn't too many solid line Maoists then but I had certainly moved to that position by the end of '67'. And the Aid to the National Liberation Front had certainly cemented that position. I became a member of the party (CPA (M-L)) in 1968.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴⁰ ASIO File 000510, C Branch Security Assessment of Michael Hyde, H/56/56 Series A6119, Item 3574, National Archives of Australia.

¹⁴¹ The above file states that 'The Australia-China Society is a cultural society whose object is to foster better relations between the two countries. It's Victorian Committee is heavily influenced by CPA (ML) and it also organised the Student Tour to China on which Labor Club members Price and Hyde are travelling.'

¹⁴² Interview with Peter Price.

¹⁴³ ASIO File Michael Hyde, H/56/52, Series A6119, Item 3564, Vol. 2, National Archives of Australia.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ Interview with Michael Hyde.

These comments uncover a facet of the Aid to the NLF Campaign that until now has been left unclear in past studies of this topic. This includes the fact that although even ASIO could not prove it, there were indeed connections between the Labor Club radicals and the CPA (M-L) during 1967, with Michael Hyde (and possibly others) becoming a member of the party in 1968. Furthermore a greater number of Labor Club radicals seemed drawn to this Marxist-Leninist line after it became clear in 1967 that no other political party could completely support their ongoing Aid to the NLF Campaign.

The introduction of the Defence Forces Protection Act on August 30 1967 forced many Labor Club members to once and for all reject parliamentary politics, and move toward sympathising with Marxist-Leninist beliefs. The push by Senator McManus to have the government crack down on those supporters of the NLF Aid Campaign was heard in the Senate on Wednesday 16 August. Senator McManus' plea to have the students charged under Section 24 of the Crimes Act- and as the act lays down 'liable to the punishment of death'¹⁴⁶ was eventually thwarted by the government and new avenues were prescribed. In the House of Representatives that day the Prime Minister Harold Holt assured the House that his party would do 'everything in its power to prevent any material aid from being conveyed to the Communist Liberation Front for South Vietnam.'¹⁴⁷ The response from Labor Opposition Leader, Gough Whitlam to the proposals to ban the Labor Club's Aid Campaign, were almost defensive. He replied:

¹⁴⁶ *The Herald*, Saturday, 19 August 1967. p. 2.

¹⁴⁷ *Hansard*, House of Representatives, Wednesday, 16 August 1967. p 107.

...the Labor Clubs, so named, at the Monash, Melbourne and Australian National Universities are not connected with the Australian Labor Party and have never been connected with that Party, and further the executive disagrees with those decisions and attitudes of the clubs.¹⁴⁸

These comments that gained front page headlines the following day were a stark representation of how much the Labor Party was willing to disassociate itself from these club's which had loyally supported the ALP for so many years. Then on 30 August the new piece of legislation titled the 'Defence Force Protection Bill' was announced. This legislation passed on 8 September was clear:

It is now an offence punishable by up to two years imprisonment and/or a fine of up to \$2000 to send aid to the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam, the Government of North Vietnam or the Communist Party of North Vietnam.¹⁴⁹

The ALP had voted overwhelmingly for the Bill in Caucus and all Labor Parliamentarians, including Jim Cairns had voted for it in the House of Representatives.¹⁵⁰ This caused the final ideological shift within the Monash Labor Club for those members who still held onto Labor Party memberships. According to both Nadel¹⁵¹ and Hyde,¹⁵² the Labor Club members began rejecting the Labor Party and moving further to the left. This is not to say that there was an immediate exodus to the ranks of the CPA (M-L). There was not. However, both members and outside

¹⁴⁸ *Hansard*, p. 108.

A medical aid committee for the NLF had been established by the Melbourne University Labor Club on 26 July 1967. Soon after this highly publicised event the ANU Labor Club joined Monash as the only other student group in Australia who were willing to send 'unspecified aid' to the NLF.

¹⁴⁹ Hyde (1972) p. 31.

¹⁵⁰ Hyde (1972) p. 37.

¹⁵¹ Interview with Dave Nadel.

¹⁵² Interview with Michael Hyde.

critics of the Labor Club will admit that this event was an important factor in the significant ideological shift that occurred on campus after this event. As Perry (1973) argues:

The Labor Club were particularly bitter about the way the Labor Party wholeheartedly supported 'The Bill.' It is certain that this accelerated the drift to the left in the Monash Labor Club. There was only one Maoist in 1967, but by 1970 Maoists were a major political force on campus.¹⁵³

While many agree that the events during the NLF Aid Campaign caused significant changes in the dominant ideological standing at Monash University, it is rarely pointed out that this had been among the aims of Langer and others throughout 1967.

Many of the aims set out by the radical core of the Monash Labor Club on campus were eventually achieved during the Aid to the NLF Campaign and this led directly to the formation of stronger political alliances off campus. In assessing the aims and successes of the Monash Labor Club radicals during their Aid to the NLF Campaign it is important to recall those aims sought by Albert Langer and others earlier in 1967. These aims mentioned above included raising people's political consciousness in order to mobilise opposition to the Vietnam War and linking this struggle with the similar struggles of radical workers in Melbourne. Not surprisingly these aims are very much in line with the aim of the CPA (M-L) as stated by Ted Hill in 1966:

¹⁵³ Perry (1973) p. 19.

The task of the CPA (M-L) is to strive to lead the Australian working class and its allies in the struggle for independence from imperialism. No other class than the Australian working class can solve this problem.¹⁵⁴

The central aim of the Labor Club radicals to raise the consciousness of others through confrontational tactics has been seen by many as one of their greatest achievements. As Warren Osmond stated this tactic had become highly successful on campus by late 1967:

Through confrontations, demonstrations, direct action, influence through student newspapers, broadsheets, etc., the radical core has 'detonated' what can guardedly be termed 'mass' student interest in social and political problems.¹⁵⁵

According to McQueen (1968) it was the on-campus confrontation caused by Langer, Hyde and Bill Dowling's decision to defy the Vice Chancellor's ban on collecting aid for the NLF on 5 September that 'detonated' the most student interest. While this defiant act led directly to the meeting of one and a half thousand people at Monash to condemn the disciplinary action brought against the three students it also led to a significant shift in student consciousness.¹⁵⁶ According to McQueen it meant that the Vietnam debate on campus suddenly shifted away from 'whether one should aid the NLF' to 'whether one had the right to aid the NLF.'¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁴ Hill, E. F. (1966) *Some Articles on Striving for Marxism-Leninism in Australia*, Coburg, Challenge Press. p. 1. Langer Collection Z457, Box 88, A64 CPA (M/L) Printed Material, Noel Butlin Archives, Australian National University, Canberra.

¹⁵⁵ Osmond, W. (1969) 'Student Revolutionary Left', *Arena* 19, 1969. p. 23.

¹⁵⁶ Hyde (1972) p. 39.

¹⁵⁷ McQueen (1968) p. 53.

Off campus the public defiance of the Defence Forces Protection Act by the Labor Club radicals seemed to be based on an identical policy of confrontation and consciousness-raising. As Langer and others sent statements to the press throughout October 1967¹⁵⁸ demanding to be tried under the new laws it soon became clear to people throughout the nation that the government was not going to act. As Barry York has noted this succeeded in radicalising certain groups in Melbourne:

The Monash Labor Club not only succeeded in flouting the Defence Forces Protection Act but also succeeded in altering the ideological perspective of the Vietnam protest movement, and the student movement in Melbourne.¹⁵⁹

However it was not the minds of the anti-war movement, nor of the student movement that Langer and company were attempting to capture. It was essentially the workers. As Langer was quoted as saying in a one off interview in 1969 'The students can't change the world – the only thing that can is the workers.'¹⁶⁰ According to Hyde this aim of the Labor Club to 'link up with the working class' in Melbourne was in many ways achieved in 1967-68:

There were links formed between the Monash Labor Club and the Waterside Workers through the Party (CPA (M-L)). I was reasonably close to a few Waterside Workers' and officials. I was reasonably close to a couple of blokes from the Plumbers Union and a couple of BL rank and filers, plus officials. It wasn't infrequent contact at all.¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁸ ASIO File Michael Hyde, H/56/52, Series A6119, Item 3564, Vol. 2, National Archives of Australia.

¹⁵⁹ York, B. (1983) p. 85.

¹⁶⁰ *The Australian*, Wednesday, 14 May 1969. p. 11.

¹⁶¹ Interview with Hyde.

The concrete links that were formed between the Monash Labor Club radicals and the militant Unions in Melbourne allowed the Labor Club to further pursue their goals toward a true worker-student alliance over the coming years. Furthermore the closer links formed between the Monash Labor Club, the Waterside Workers' Federation (WWF) and the Builders' Labourers' Federation (BLF) were made possible by the 'Marxist-Leninist Party's unconditional support'¹⁶² for the Monash students' during the course of their struggles in 1967.

This chapter has attempted to show that it was essentially through the Monash Labor Club's Aid to the NLF Campaign during late 1967 that most of the Monash radical's aims and alliances were achieved. While both Maoist and non-Maoist Labor Club members wished to raise the consciousness of those around them the ideological shift that occurred in Melbourne due to this campaign also affected their own political groundings. In the face of mounting opposition from the Democratic Labor Party, ASIO and then the Australian Labor Party in September, the Labor Club members were left isolated and increasingly in need of a new ideological perspective. It was through the support of the CPA (M-L) and those Maoist-led unions such as the WWF and the BLF that eventually delivered this much-needed material support and ideological reassurance. This student-worker alliance was made possible through the contacts forged by Albert Langer whose own Maoist ideals and tactics such as rebellion, confrontation and class struggle came to resonate with the wider student body by late 1967. Subsequently many of the outside attacks attempting to isolate the Monash Labor Club were successfully thwarted by the mass support achieved by

¹⁶² Hyde (1972) p. 39.

Langer, Hyde and others in their constant defiance of government and university efforts to stop their campaign in aid of the NLF. The successes of these Monash Maoists to effectively shift the ideological perspective of the student movement, the anti-war movement and link with the general struggle of the workers have now been documented. However as Langer noted in 1968 it was not so much the actions of the Labor Club that led to this ideological shift in Melbourne:

The struggle against American aggression in Vietnam has become merged with the general struggle for a change in the social system. In the course of this struggle police truncheons, "Defence Forces Protection Acts", University disciplinary measures and so on have taught the students more about the Marxist theory of the state than any amount of seminars ever could.¹⁶³

¹⁶³ Langer, A. (1968) Universities and Student Rebels, *Analysis*, July 1968. p. 3. Langer Collection Z457, Box 33 Monash University Subject Files, Noel Butlin Archives, Australian National University.

Conclusion

*The Communist Party of Australia (Marxist-Leninist) believes that the student movement is an important part of the people's struggles against US imperialism and Australian monopoly capitalism. Students will play a vital role in the revolution provided their struggle is allied with that of the working people...*¹⁶⁴

Communist Party of Australia (Marxist-Leninist) Pamphlet, Melbourne, June, 1968.

*The students are taking the road of 'mass struggles over a long period'. In the course of these struggles, students are gaining confidence and maturity. They are turning to Marxist ideas, Communist ideas for an explanation of the world and a guide to changing it. They are learning to integrate themselves with the mass of working people who are the chief agency of social change...*¹⁶⁵

Albert Langer, in the Monash Labor Club publication Analysis, July, 1968.

This thesis has attempted to show that the radical shift among the Monash Labor Club to a more revolutionary perspective by 1967 was led by the Maoist ideas espoused by Albert Langer and the Communist Party of Australia (Marxist-Leninist). Furthermore these ideas that were increasingly embraced by the Labor Club members especially after their Aid to the NLF Campaign in July 1967 allowed the club to forge important off-campus alliances with the CPA (M-L) and a number of radical Trade Unions in Melbourne. The documentation of these concrete connections between the Monash Labor Club and off-campus Maoist organisations in Melbourne is important for a number of reasons. Firstly it dispels the assumption that Maoism was not a dominant force at Monash until 1969. Secondly it proves that the Labor Club's Aid to the NLF Campaign was not completely led by non-Maoist students at Monash. Thirdly it

¹⁶⁴ Hill, E. F. *The Australian Revolutionary Student Movement*, Coburg, CPA (M-L). p. 2.

¹⁶⁵ Langer (1968) p. 4.

proves that the foundations for a student-worker alliance had been laid in Melbourne as early as 1967.

By documenting the extent to which Maoism influenced the tactics, campaigns and aims of the Monash Labor Club as early as 1966, this thesis has dispelled the popular belief that Maoism did not become a dominant ideological force at Monash until 1969. This belief supported by Mendes (1993) and Murphy (1993) will often point out that the Maoist position was only truly supported by one member of the Labor Club in 1966-67, Albert Langer. While this is essentially the case it ignores the fact that between 1966 and 1967 Langer had emerged as the strongest ideological influence within the Labor Club and effectively shifted the ideological standing of the entire club. As Hyde has argued:

I have no doubt that the movement to the left in the Labor Club was led by Maoist ideas and in particular those of Albert Langer. It's my belief that the Maoist line was leading the way even though there were plenty of leaders in the Labor Club who wouldn't have called themselves Maoists.¹⁶⁶

This point made by Hyde that the Labor Club was full of many different ideological points of view is important. However this thesis has shown that the Club became increasingly dominated by a core of Labor Club radicals during 1966-67 who had been moving further away from the ALP and toward a Maoist perspective.

This thesis has also attempted to show that the Labor Club's Aid to the NLF Campaign was in line with the confrontational tactics, campaigns and aims

¹⁶⁶ Interview with Michael Hyde.

promulgated by Albert Langer and practiced by the club throughout 1967. On closer analysis of the main campaigns in 1967 and the role of Langer in the Labor Club's decision to send unspecified aid to the NLF, it becomes clearer that the campaign was not a completely non-Maoist action. Rather, the NLF Aid Campaign was very much strengthened by the Maoist ideals of Langer on-campus and the support of Maoist organisations off-campus.

This thesis has suggested that the links formed between the Monash Labor Club and the Maoist-led Unions such as the Waterside Workers' and the Builders' Labourers' during the NLF Aid Campaign were made possible through the CPA (M-L). While these connections were quite clearly due to Langer's connections with the CPA (M-L) in 1967 even ASIO failed to make these links. While the ASIO files and personal accounts of Michael Hyde were helpful in proving these connections between Langer and Ted Hill's Party in 1967 only Langer himself can refute these assumptions. Unfortunately Langer was not able to be interviewed during the process of this thesis due to pending charges from the police in Melbourne. However, the connections between the Monash radicals and the Rebel Unions in Melbourne can no longer be denied. The Monash Labor Club's Aid to the NLF Campaign laid the foundations for an alliance between radical students and Labour Unions in Melbourne that is still in evidence today. Strikingly, almost forty years later a similar event has occurred at Monash. The Monash student union has decided to offer financial aid and political support to the Southern Oil Workers Union in Iraq. In a recent article in Melbourne's *Herald Sun* entitled 'Student Cash given to Iraqi Union', it was stated:

Money has been used by the Monash University student union to pay a member of the Southern Oil Workers Union in Iraq, a group hostile to foreign soldiers in the Middle East...One student abstained from the Monash union vote but eight supported the motion giving “political support” and \$1000 to the Union... The MSA council chairman Nick Richardson defended the decision to provide financial support to the Union which he described as a progressive organisation.¹⁶⁷

However, in a political climate very different to that of the 1960s, where laws are being debated to outlaw certain forms of protest as seditious, the success of the Monash Labor Club’s campaign to aid the NLF appears even more radical today than it may have done at the time.

¹⁶⁷ *Herald Sun*, Wednesday, 23 November 2005. p. 9.

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