

TR 1859 Peter Gray Audiotapes

Interview with Jim Beatson Brisbane Radical

I just want to first make a few preliminary remarks about the development of the student militant movement in Brisbane, I think from the period from about mid 1966 to mid 1968 the movement in Brisbane was qualitatively from the Left that developed later in Brisbane from the New Left that was present in other Australian capital cities. I think the reason for this was that unlike Sydney and Melbourne there had been no traditional Left involving young people in Brisbane outside of the Communist Party, while Sydney and Melbourne had both had fairly long standing Trotskyist movements, this situation had never existed in Brisbane. The Communist Party had always been the dominant ideology and because of its close identification with the Soviet Union and polygenism for Stalinism at no time was there any great degree of young sympathy with truly Socialist or truly Communist politics. Consequently with the influence of people espousing the politics of participatory democracy, grass roots democracy probably typified best by the American SDS movement in the Port Huron Declaration there were a number of people in Brisbane from America who had a very big influence on the people who were to become the leading people involved in the student radical movement. They were Chuck Long an American student, Ralph Summy, a couple of other people whose names I can't remember, who were very attracted to the idea of a radical movement, which talked not about the necessity for Socialism to overcome Capitalism but talked of the need for young people to identify with the new causes of umm [pause] with issues, which attracted people from a humanist point of view rather than a socialist. Specifically one thinks of the identification of the students in America with both the black movement in the Southern states, the sit-in movement, the freedom rides as well as the anti-Vietnam movement, which was purely an anti-Vietnam movement. It wasn't an anti-imperialist movement at all it was a repugnance of people with the way the war in Vietnam was being waged rather than the political reasons for its existence. This was tied in with a concern with the problem of overpopulation, of world peace, of the growing build up of world arms that had largely been, gone uncriticised since the ban the bomb days of '59 to '61 and these, this strain of thinking was largely new to Australia. It wasn't a strain current in other cities. A very important aspect of this was that the whole participatory democracy concept was very much tied in with an evangelical humanist desire that recognised that world problems had to be dealt with and dealt with quickly and that people had to make a personal commitment as well as an ideological commitment to the cause of improving mankind's lot. I remember well Brian Laver and others speaking at Centenary Park, very much in the style of an evangelist, speaking of the need to people to personally commit themselves to the cause of humanism, such that a large number of people would actually make quite large contributions purely as a result of hearing either Brian or another speaker, Tony Bowen. I can remember on a couple of occasions people gave donations of between 50 pounds and 20 pounds. I think that also coupled in with this sort of evangelical zeal that was present in Brisbane then there was another aspect, which wasn't to be found in other states and that was an almost businessman like determination, drive that in many cases the movement that emerged in the end of 1966 and all the way through '67 was not so much a popular movement, a spontaneous uprising of students against things like the Traffic Act in Queensland, but to a large degree was achieved through the tremendous amount of hard work of one or two people. Particularly, one thinks of Mitch Thompson's tremendous organisational ability, which was a very useful backup to Brian Laver's organisational, I

should say Brian Laver's capacity as a speaker and as an imaginative, enthusiastic person who continually injected hope and enthusiasm in the movement when it was at its most despondent. That's probably, that's probably all I wanted to say about that.

We might go to another question now.

Yeah.

We are now in a comparatively easy position of being able to examine in retrospect the often dramatic political events which took place in Brisbane in the late 1960's and early 1970's i.e. the growth of the radical movement and large scale involvement by students, unionists and minority groups and activism (07.22) at broad and interrelated issues such as civil liberties, conscription to Vietnam, Imperialism, control and quality of education, racism, sexism, and environment. What would you now consider to be the failings and/or successes of these efforts at achieving social change?

I suppose this is greatly affected by what one's own personal ideological position is and also it's hard to separate the, what has occurred in Brisbane and what has occurred not only in Australia but throughout the world. Clearly in terms of the immediate achievements of the radical movement in Brisbane itself, whilst we didn't achieve many legislative changes to say the Traffic Act we probably, through bringing a fair degree of attention to it, made the State Government and the Police more liberal in their application in things like the racist, the racism struggle revolving around the Springboks and the Vietnam struggle. We took part in a worldwide movement that I guess one can to some degree claim achieved a fairly significant social affect. I think that quite clearly the anti-Vietnam movement prevented the United States from using nuclear weapons in Vietnam as they had volunteered to the French to use in 1954. I think that quite clearly the fact that black Africans knew that hundreds of students in Brisbane, thousands of miles away were being bashed over the head by police in their name and similarly that the people of Vietnam knew that people all around the world were working for them with great determination and enthusiasm had a very important affect on their morale and confidence. I think more immediately in the Australian scene the growth of a fairly critical movement particularly around the issue of Vietnam had a very big impact on the intellectual climate within Australia, such that a more critical attitude towards social institutions within our society was created which filtered down and was absorbed by sections of the culture such that a thing that seemed fairly unachievable in the sixties, namely the coming to power of a reform Capitalist Party like the Labour Party could become a reality in the early seventies and quite clearly if you look at the voting figures it's clear that it has largely been the change of young people's votes that has enabled a reformist Capitalist Party to come to power.

Why do you think there this a depth of consciousness lying behind these efforts?

Well I think there's initially because the New Left in Brisbane started at such an extraordinarily naive level it wasn't even in any sense of the word a Socialist consciousness. There has been a small group of people whose consciousness has greatly advanced in that period of time and I think whilst many of these people might still be very cynical today they do have a fairly deep understanding of the sociological forces, economic forces that exist within society that have created the attitudes that dominate thinking in the Western world today. Quite clearly a large number of people on the periphery of the movement have never achieved much more than reformed Capitalist consciousness either then or today.

What do you think are the important lessons to be learnt from that era and that experience? If you don't think it would cover (12.06)?

I mean just quickly on that topic I tend to think that a lot of the cynicism that is so prevalent amongst people today is in a sense false cynicism whereas people quickly reach the stage where if they suspected evil in a large number of the doings of our society, nonetheless there was a failure of many of them to really understand the forces behind the actions of the State such that whereas once they were in a very flimsy sort of way critical of the system they're now in an equally flimsy way; cynics. In many cases the cynicism is not deserved. People for instance have said that the Vietnam War achieved nothing. I think as I said earlier that in that Vietnam War, the racism struggles did achieve very positive things, probably no one thing was caused by any one demonstration but certainly demonstrations and actions in the late sixties created a climate of opinion within which politicians, corporations and others acted. Mmm so it's not really answering the question but it's related to it.

Has the radical movement disintegrated and if so will it revive again? Personally I'm very optimistic I think it will revive again. I think that one of the reasons for the upsurge in the radical movement in the middle and late sixties was the contradiction between the lifestyles lived by students and others parents and themselves and yet they and the actions of their state and their values with which society nominally subscribed to. I think that people did very clearly see the contradiction between the facts that in Australia we were living a life of relative affluence while at the same time we were napalming people who were trying to achieve in many cases the material benefits that we enjoyed ourselves.

Have the old issues lost their significance and the new ones...

Yeah well I wanted to yeah. It seems to me that what happened was almost a cycle between people having expectations that they could change society from a fairly naive understanding of how of the nature of our society, that that crudely in a crude sort of way led to cynicism. It seems to me however that there are a new group, there are ever sort of more groups of younger people who still have a fairly critical attitude and who the subjective factors and it would be wrong to assume that subjective factors in a movement that is in many cases very, very small don't play a significant effect. I mean once can think of for instance if a group of people who are interested in protesting about a particular issue go to a meeting and there was a group of people that have been around of years sitting at the top table and every time some person makes some suggestion as to an action, one of the old people says, "No, we tried that 3 years ago and it didn't achieve anything." This is a very disheartening process for new people becoming involved in the movement and I think it's fairly; it will be useful when some of the older people who are a dampening spirit and that's and whose only function is as a dampening spirit, disappear. But also I think that in, in the next few years we are going to see massive cases of famine much larger than even the ones we're experiencing today and the contradiction, which is starting to be felt now particularly in religious circles between the unbelievably affluent society in which we live in and the chronic deprivation within which the other two thirds of the world live will make itself felt in an even more determined young radical movement in a few years.

Do you feel that the most active groups now are different in form or political basis than those of the era of the massive movement of 67 to (17.22)?

Well I think there's probably two types. I think some of them are very much different, I think some of them are very much the same. For instance there is not a large difference between the freeway protest movement of the middle seventies and some of the specific issue orientated campaigns of the middle sixties however movements like the Women Movement, Gay Liberation have opened up new hitherto unnoticed avenues of gross human exploitation and suffering and that this has had quite a significant effect on the self confidence and personal liberation of young people and I think, I suppose to some degree this is interacted with the oh [pause] I probably, that's a bullshit point that I don't need to continue making anyway.

Does the outward appearance of relative inactivity in a mass sense by the community, students, workers in the political sphere necessarily mean that this significant political activity is not occurring? Ah yes and no. In many ways let's face it the mass protest movements of the late sixties early seventies really, in a meaningful sense involved only a small number of people. I mean one looks at civil liberties where I suppose 90% of the work was done by about 10 people, when you look at the moratoriums I suppose the figure would only have gone up to about 30 people. Probably people, there are quite a significant number of those small numbers that were active in the past that would be these days channelling themselves into other activities but not ones that are designed to get mass participation in a particular demonstration, although quite clearly there has been a lessening of even groups interested in or active in ideological questions.

What is the exact nature of the current level of consciousness within the movement? I think I dealt with that before.

Has there been any significant change in the general or public level of social awareness and if so in what respect? As I said earlier I think in fact the young movement did to some degree change in a rather fundamental way and that once again you can't sort of look at this in isolation. There's an obvious interaction between the so-called intelligencia, the media, opinion makers, the cultural values as espoused by even Capitalism. One can look, I suppose with disapproval at the fact that a product that the Left to some degree popularised, jeans, have in a sense been taken over by Capitalism and they are attempting to co-opt it by having fashion jeans with ever changing style and styles etcetera. However, nonetheless the basic egalitarian concept of mmm well I don't know if I should push that line too heavily. But I mean I think there's a grain of truth in it that there's that even though capitalism to some degree has tried to co-opt what is, what was called the counter culture, they haven't been totally successful. The fact that they are trying to build their ratshit culture on top of a slightly more liberated culture has meant that nonetheless there are some roots of that culture which are based on something. On a more humanly liberated spirit.

Why do you feel that the post 1972 situation involved so much apathy and outright cynicism and can this be prevented in the future?

Well the line that's always pushed of course is that never really expected a revolution to occur. We didn't really expect that we were going to change things. But in many ways a large proportion of the movement did expect and did want to see very tangible changes and I suppose these sorts of feelings were encouraged by the seeming successes of the Left in that unbelievable year 1968 where students almost toppled a Government in Western Europe, played a significant part in trying to liberalise a Government in Eastern Europe, that all around the world there were massive demonstrations that seemed to mark what was going to be a fundamental change in or a hoped for fundamental change in society and when this didn't occur that led to some degree of cynicism. Also I think it's fairly true to say that in a place like Brisbane, cynicism in itself has become something, a fairly popular thing to do. I should say it shows this sophistication of somebody who realises all of the various forms of exploitation that exist within our society such that one can be incredibly smart arsed and be able to sort of see something cynical in almost any event no matter how essentially useful it might be.

What about prevention in the future?

Umm I don't know, I mean it's very difficult to say. I mean I'm certainly frequently the reality of the situation doesn't match the attitudes of the New Left for instance. The very, in this, in our present era probably in a sense the Left has never been in a better position. Liberation groups in Third World countries are stronger, more active more militant today than they've

ever been. There are a greater number of people critical of the capitalist state and the; and bourgeois politics. One can look for instance at America and see that the gross corruption that's always been present in that system is now read of, read in the papers of that country and believed by the people of that country and yet there is no optimistic Left wing movement that's capitalising on it. In many ways the issues of Watergate and associated corruptions have been wasted and I suppose it's impossible for a movement in a single city like Brisbane, which is overwhelmingly influenced by outside forces that it in itself can achieve the prevention of cynicism forming amongst people whose political sophistication is such that they were probably preconditioned to be cynical all along, that's a circular argument I guess. Umm there's [pause] can you just turn it off there was something I wanted to say and I just forgot what [recording paused].

[Recording resumed.] Umm I think there are no shortcut or easy ways of defeating cynicism. One remembers back a few years ago that the Self Management Group itself in many ways a carryon of the sort of ideological beliefs I suppose fundamentally originating in the huge influence that, ideological influence that Brian Laver has had on the Left in Brisbane in the Self Management Group itself in many ways wanting to define itself out of the classic capital versus labour contradiction. However the Self Management Group argued some time ago that the reason why cynicism had prevailed in Brisbane was that people had been led into mass movements putting forward demands that were unachievable and when those demands weren't achieved this led to cynicism and frustration and eventually demoralisation and collapse of that movement. Whilst the Self Management Group's analysis in many ways is correct their attempt to get around it I don't think in fact has achieved the success that they were hoping for. One can see probably large degrees of cynicism and drop outs from their movement, which tried to involve themselves in essentially demoralising campaigns, and this did not succeed.

Do you believe that Western Society and/or the Communist countries and/or the Third World countries are facing a crisis of a serious magnitude, if so, what do you see as the nature of that crisis? Can it be avoided or overcome? Whilst I'm sounding incredibly optimistic if all the way through umm ah, essentially I think I am fairly cynical. I think the assumption that people make that all problems that exist within society are confronted rationally by, that rational solutions to those problems can be produced, this is not necessarily so and of course it could be that the human species is eventually fated with a decline or inability to solve various problems. Speaking specifically on the Left I think one of the faults of both the Left in Brisbane and internationally is that it hasn't tried to confront realistic, I should say confront serious problems that exist and have existed within societies for many thousands of years. One can quite specifically think of the tremendous problem that exists within our and most other societies of trying to form some kind of social structure whereby people can participate in mass decision making but yet that decision making be able to be made despite the problems of technical competence, know how, etcetera of the people working in it. For instance one, one remembers back to things like the strike, the racism strike organised at Queensland University. Whilst this was supposedly an exercise in participatory democracy in fact it largely did not work. Decisions were taken, the only efficient method of taking decisions was for a small number of people to largely make the decisions and then put these forward to a crowd of say around about 1000 people and even then were confronted with massive problems. Now when this is done on a national basis the problems will be immensely greater. Secondly, I don't think that Socialism has in any way come to grips with the problem of organising some kind of a distribution scheme as an alternative to the Capitalist market system. Anyway I suppose I shouldn't wander on but frankly I think that while there's a large number of immediate problems can be solved I'm in no way optimistic over mankind's ability to solve fundamental problems.

Looking ahead to the future what developments do you feel will occur politically and socially in our society and what will be the key issues and approach to them? I think that within 3

years people will become much more concerned with the international obligations that human beings feel towards each other much more so than today. If one remembers between the First and the Second World Wars the Socialist movement, as it was then dominated by the Communist Party, was essentially an international movement. Unfortunately the effect of this was that the Soviet Union which dominated this international movement then in turn dominated the National Communist Parties of each State as a result of which in the post-war era Socialists around the world became more interested and more convinced in the necessity for national social, I shouldn't say socialist bodies in a particular national state making an analysis of them and then concerning themselves with those problems. I think the global nature of current world problems particularly that of the gross disparity between income and levels and living standards between the world's population will make a new internationalism occur.

Do you want to have a go at this question that (32.40)?

Umm what detrimental affects has the radical, has radical political activity had on the people themselves and on the recipients of their political ideologies? Umm in many ways people have criticised the Left in Brisbane as having produced a group of people who are very cynical, totally uninvolved in politics, in people who live a fairly ocker lifestyle, I think it's fairly true to say that some years ago the idea of continually mocking the established norms within our society, namely the ocker mentality became a fashion, however the satire of yesterday has in many cases become the reality today of the lifestyles of those people. But in probably, in many ways the people who today are totally immersed in beer drinking, footy watching, TV watching and dope smoking were people who already largely enjoyed that sort of behaviour before they joined the radical movement and to some degree suppressed it whilst they were there. Probably this is another problem for the Left and that is for it to come to terms with the needs of different lifestyles to exist within a community and not to sort of continually assume that there is only one correct line lifestyle and that all people should live it. In many ways I don't think that the Left has had a detrimental effect on the people that have been involved in it. In many ways it has opened their and others eyes to the nature of human exploitation and particularly one thinks of feminism here. Even if making women, if women weren't, making women more aware of their own suffering has to some degree caused them to be more cynical, well at least they are more aware of their human conditioning and are more capable of facing up to it. Similarly males who have been confronted with their own sexism might find the contradiction of their own lifestyles and their ideological determination to overcome it fairly difficult and would cause some degree of suffering. But I guess the slave owner always has to be given a massive boot in the bum before the slaves overthrow the slave oppressor. Okay (35.56). [Recording paused].

[Recording resumed.] Just to give a [echoed feedback] [chuckles] well just to give, just to give, just to give, just to give a few more details of the historical situation that occurred say between the beginning of '66 and mid '68 which is quite peculiar to Brisbane I feel, there was a young Left movement the first for many, many years around an organisation called Youth Campaign against Conscription which was largely a carryover from CND type activity. It was composed of largely University opponents of the Vietnam War and members of the Eureka Youth League who came together to hold demonstrations etcetera against the Vietnam War. Had very little ideological content, the Communist Party and the Eureka Youth League to some degree used it as a small recruiting base for their own organisations? However a similar, it was a similar organisation at the University called University Students for Peace or something like that. However throughout 1966 Mitch Thomas, I should say Brian Laver had been talking, I'll say that again. Throughout 1966 Brian Laver had been talking to a number of Americans, particularly Ralph Summy who was a lecturer in American History and Government, Chuck Long, an American student who had been active in SDS in America and also Phil Richardson, an English academic with a very strongly anti-Communist anarchist background and that these people were very much influenced by the dominant ideology of

American SDS at that time which is best explained in the Port Huron Declaration, the concept of participatory democracy of each person committing themselves in a humanist sense to the ending of oppression through the arms race, through world peace, through coming to terms with the problem of world hunger, black oppression and opposition to the Vietnam War. Brian recognised that the young people that were involved in the Left in Brisbane at that time involved in the two organisations that I mentioned earlier, whilst their hearts were in the right place they were ideologically very naive despite the fact that many of them would have considered themselves Socialists. Brian and others that I mentioned ideological values, though they later repudiated them and would now consider them naïve were nonetheless fairly sophisticated in their exposition of the basic SDS line at that time and that as a result of an anti-Vietnam demonstration that took place at the end of 1966 when something like 25 out of the 30 to 40 people that took part in the march were arrested within half a mile, a new organisation was formed, Society for Democratic Action. It largely worked on and succeeded on the almost fanatical drive and enthusiasm of a very small number of people, undoubtedly the two key people were Brian Laver and Mitch Thompson. Mitch Thompson is an extremely capable organiser who worked in a tremendous number of hours talking to and organising amongst a vast cross section of university population from Catholics in colleges to academics. [Pause] Can you just stop it a moment? [Recording paused].

[Recording resumed]. Brian has always had somewhat of an evangelical streak to his character and lest I be accused of spending a lot of time talking about odd individuals, it must be remembered that in a very small town like Brisbane with a very small Left the individual personalities of one or two key people have played a very large role in the development of the Left. Brian's overwhelming enthusiasm and one can remember time and time again when as a result of a demonstration where we'd receive no publicity in the press, where one or two people had been arrested and large fines had been imposed and everybody would be feeling very despondent about it, Brian would come into a meeting bubbling over with enthusiasm for some new idea he'd just thought of and in many ways Brian's tremendous enthusiasm combined with the intellectual capacity of a few others and also with their speaking ability of people like Dan O'Neill, Tony Bowen, Peter Wertheim created a situation I suppose whereby both from the University Campus to Centenary Park, SDA was a very intellectual, very capable, very authoritative group of people who combined this with a tremendous sense of determination and optimism that these human problems had to be solved. I remember on two occasions that Brian spoke at Centenary Park when people came up afterwards and made donations of in one case \$50, I don't know 50 pounds I should say and in the other case 20 pounds. At Centenary Park, we never used to collect less than 20 pounds, this when at a time when not really large numbers of people went to Centenary Park and where such a collection really at that time was quite outstanding. Umm [pause] hmm. [Recording paused].

[Recording resumed]. Consequently, when you look at things like the Civil Liberties March, which coming from a University which was traditionally the most conservative University in Australia which had had no political demonstrations of any consequence in over 20 years the Civil Liberties demonstration where somewhere around about three to 3,500 students took part in a march from the University to the City of whom over 1000 sat down in the one of the main city streets, linked arms and remained there whilst the police waded in with clubs, bashing people and dragging them off the road. It would be easy to believe that in fact this was the result of a mass spontaneous movement of students around the fundamentally unjust issue of the Traffic Act whereby police refused to grant permits to people so's that they could hold demonstrations on almost any issue at all and yet in many ways although that is what it appeared, underneath it was the combined talents of two or three but mainly one, Brian Laver's, outstanding ability as a speaker and drive and enthusiasm, which he inspired and which was also present in small number of other people I would think no more than four or five, one of whom Mitch Thompson was an extremely industrious and hard working and imaginative organiser and that it was the hard work of a tiny group of people that literally

dragged several thousand University students temporarily out of their conservatism of 5 years. In fact one can, one looks back at the tremendous work inputs of people of that small number of people in those days in 1974 when students consider one offset printed leaflet a fortnight and maybe two or three political roneoed leaflets a week is quite a significant degree of political activism at the University. In 1967 it was usual for there to be five offset printed leaflets a week, sometimes as many as three or four offset printed leaflets in one day. When Brian Laver stood for the Presidency of the Student Union students wore Brian Laver for President badges, they manned for the very first time ballot booths giving out how to vote Brian Laver cards, the industry and enthusiasm and optimism that the movement had then had a huge impact on the fundamentally conservative values of the University population and of course one shouldn't forget that whereas today many of the Left wing groups are talking about the necessity for people to recognise the oppressive nature of bourgeois economic system and using language like that, the style and character of the radical movement in those early days was very, very mild by today's standards. We were talking about very liberal issues of which there was no serious academic debate. Whereas today there are a large number of academics and others that will justify the Capitalist economic system, the positivist philosophy. It was very, very hard for any academic or any student to oppose the concept that people had a right to free speech, which is of course what we were trying to gain in 1967. Yeah that'll do. [Recording paused].

[Recording resumed]. And quite clearly at the towards the end of 1967 and through the beginning of 1968 not only was the international student movement making a qualitative change, transition from opposition to things like the Vietnam war, opposition to racism but was making the transition to a recognition that in fact the Vietnam War wasn't a mistake, it was a conscious aspect of American Imperialism, that exploitation of blacks wasn't a mistake, it was a conscious effect of the American corporate elite exploiting a useful, I should say maintaining a fuck this is dragging on isn't it? Trying to think of the right fucking umm platitude requiring an excess in the workforce such that the demand for labour would always be excessive. Around about that time not only myself but a number of other people that had been very active in 67 went to England where probably the, this qualitative change occurred first, where the Vietnam Solidarity Campaign almost overnight went from being an unknown organisation to the biggest political organisation in Britain whose sole slogan was Victory to the NLF. These people, these people in England were sending propaganda and information to their comrades back in Australia and whilst this influence was probably significant, more significant was undoubtedly Brian Laver's trip to Europe which coincided with the Czechoslovak uprising and them was immediately followed by the Workers and Students revolt in France. Brian met and talked to some of the then leading revolutionaries of Europe. He very quickly made the transition and had the imagination to see, to make the transition from reformist politics to a complete communist critique of society. Upon return to Australia Brian explained his new political position which was rejected by some, particularly Dan O'Neill, however there was a short period of struggle however the dominant international sentiment, which Brian was exposing, espousing in Brisbane triumphed fairly quickly and one saw the demise of Society for Democratic Action and the emergence of the Revolutionary Socialist Alliance and the Revolutionary Socialist Student Alliance. [Recording paused].

[Recording resumed]. While this would be disputed by many in many ways I would see that the key person throughout this period was in fact Mitch Thompson. The organisational capabilities of Mitch were such that a charismatic, to use that loathsome term, and capable speaker like Brian could emerge as a genuine popular leader on the University, however for the movement to be, to have been as successful as it was required a tremendously capable organiser with the drive and enthusiasm for it to occur and I think it's wrong to assume that perhaps and hadn't Mitch not been there Brian would have, Brian's enthusiasm would have created other people to have filled Mitch's place. As I said earlier I think subjective factors do play a very important role and Mitch had had quite a deal of experience in other more

dubious organisations prior to the, his political involvement such that he was an experienced organiser before he even became involved in politics. [Recording paused].

[Recording resumed]. A large number of people when thinking back to those days think of civil liberties the obvious major issue that we were involved in and then think about conscription in Vietnam but one mustn't forget in fact probably the most important issue initially for most people at that time was in fact the question of world peace. SDA overwhelmingly concerned itself with the issue of peace. Now this is something that wasn't occurring at a similar time in the southern states in the south the existing Trotskyist movement based around people like Bob Gould were purely concerned with using the Vietnam War as a method of raising people's consciousness to a liberal dissatisfaction with the war to support for some kind of a socialist alternative. That when people joined the Left movement in Sydney and Melbourne they largely did so to join not a new optimistic non-ideological, one could even say anti-ideological movement that SDA was but that they joined a single issue campaign. SDA was at no time a single issue campaign. It was an ideology but it was almost an anti-ideology. I can remember even Brian Laver saying that the battle between Socialism and Capitalism was nonsense that if anything he supported Capitalism because that, because that gave people greater freedom and just probably reduced the degree of the Stalinist threat but that both were irrelevant and that one had to create a new human awareness of participatory democracy. In retrospect one can add that other movements tried to base themselves on the Brisbane experience down south. Mike Jones in Sydney, a man with the, probably the ambition of Brian but not the intellectual ability formed an organisation at Sydney University called the Society, Students for a Democratic Society, SDS, which was loosely based on the ideological position that SDS in America and ourselves took, however he lacked the political sophistication to be able to out argue the dominant ideologies present there namely Trotskyism, Socialism and Communism. Similar organisations sprang up in England. In fact when I first arrived in England I was very enthusiastic about searching out this SDS type organisation in London so's that I could join but in fact this organisation like the one in Sydney just found itself incapable of intellectually competing with the dominant, dominant ideological groups that then existed and of course which eventually overtook Brisbane a year and a half later.

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