

ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL

WEEKLY

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ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL WEEKLY

Hittkari House 284 Shahid Bhagatsingh Road
Bombay 400 038
Phones 2616072 2616073 Grams Econweekly
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Women and Their Bodies

Backpain among women is a symbol of the social insult inflicted upon women's bodies in a variety of ways throughout their lives. WS-2

Puberty marks the intensification of domestication, of the often bitter training in the multiple forms of renunciation which girls as future wives will have to prove themselves capable of. In these circumstances, what sort of dialogue do mother and daughter manage to establish between themselves? Is a new model of behaviour coming into being? How does it differ from and how is it linked to the old? WS-7

Fear of pregnancy, though the greatest burden of a woman's emotional life, is not treated as a social question. Instead pregnancy and abortion have become just a 'little affair of the women', worth little more than a joke. A study in China. WS-15

Any attempt to understand the role and status of women in socio-history must take primary cognisance of women's relationship with their bodies. Nowhere is the myth of women's biological inferiority so forcefully demonstrable as in sports. And nowhere can it be as effectively demolished. WS-19

Women have dealt with the limiting and confining spaces available to them, physically or ideologically, either by enduring them or by trying to break out of them or, occasionally, by extending them through creative encounters. *Thumri* is the limited space of women in the world of Indian classical music which they have enriched in this manner. WS-31

'Visibility' can be as problematic as 'invisibility' from the point of view of women. Representations of women often reflect the 'commodification' of women and the 'troping' of the feminine, within an overall cultural context that is both homogenising and hegemonising. A study of the feminine identity in Indian 'calendar art'. WS-41

Courting Foreign Capital

The right-ward drift of economic policies is continuing. Following closely on the 1990-91 budget has come the industry minister's promise of a new industrial policy which will, among other things, dilute the existing regulations on foreign direct investment. 921

The trends in the overall flow of credit to the LDCs make it clear that India will find it increasingly difficult to secure the rising levels of external finance required to meet its current account deficits. 924

Hunting Dalits

The common feature of recent cases of massacre of Dalits in Bihar is the collusion of the Congress(I) and the local administration. 927

Environmentalists' Case

Environmental movements in India have tended to have a mainly negative image—or, at best, a romantic image of simple-living Gandhians and heroic defenders of the tribal victims of industrialisation. A review of an important attempt to get beyond this impasse. 939

Green politics of various shades significantly influenced voters' choice in the recent federal elections in Australia. 937

Home-Made Crisis

The frightening developments in Kashmir are mostly our own doing. The government of Pakistan would have been a divine entity were it not to try to take some advantage of the situation. It is not, however, a major determining factor in all that is happening. 917

The prime minister has assured parliament that the National Front government does not propose to repeal Article 370. But this is not merely a matter of goodwill. The Constitution of India does not allow the government in New Delhi to unilaterally abrogate Article 370. 932

Education and Inequality

The number of private colleges has increased rapidly in Kerala. A study of the changes in the pattern and trend of financing of private colleges and of the relationship between the manner of financing and academic standards. 943

How much does income vary among persons of comparable educational qualifications? To what extent does inequality of per capita family income differ from that of income earned by earners individually? How do differences in level of living relate to differences in per capita family income? 955

Shades of Green in Australian Politics

Ariel Salleh

Green is the buzz word in Australia right now. And green politics of various shades has influenced voters' choice in the recently held federal elections.

THE *New York Times*' headline for March 25, 'Deadheat in Australia as Conservatives Grow' could not have been further off mark. With all eyes on eastern Europe, its early promise now backsliding fast, the Australian political scene has just undergone a quiet revolution. The 1990 Federal Election has confirmed the demise of the monolithic two party system of Liberal (conservatives) and Australian Labour Party (middle of the road). The reason is the rise of green politics Down Under—and this has an interesting configuration. But first, the elections: a cliff-hanger while the preferential system runs its course. Meanwhile, Labour prime minister Bob Hawke heads up a 'caretaker' government, and Liberal Opposition Leader Andrew Peacock, anxiously treads air.

As pundits predicted a slim victory for the ALP, Hawke's nightmare was a hung parliament, with Labour holding 73 seats and Liberals 73, giving two new independents the balance of power. And who were the independents threatening to break into the Lower House? None other than anti-nuclear campaigner Helen Caldicott, and Ted Mack, former mayor of Australia's most educated electorate, North Sydney. Both are committed greens. There was sweet irony in this eventuality. Caldicott back from the US, had thrown herself into building a green ginger group inside the ALP. She even got as far as party pre-selection for the seat of North Sydney. A choice which set her to run against Mack. Then Labour's backroom boys managed to ditch the outspoken Caldicott altogether. So she retired to the north coast NSW drop-out belt where she was persuaded to run independent. As preferences come home, Caldicott is not as safe as first seemed. Labour's number-crunchers are smiling again; but Mack is in. The idea of greens holding power is not new in Australia. Last year, five Green Independents led by the charismatic wilderness fighter Bob Brown, formed a coalition government with the ALP in the island state of Tasmania. For sure, they were helped along by the state's unique Hare-Clark proportional representation system, but it was not only that. Seen as bearded-vegofreaks in the 70s, the Greens' credibility score now jumped to an astounding 20 per cent of the vote. The other historically significant thing here, is that this tiny island also spawned the world's first green party—the United Tasmania Group—in

March 1972, one month before New Zealand's Values Party emerged.

Green is the buzz word in Australia right now. The global warming scare broke into the public imagination in 1988 with help from the government's showpiece think-tank—Commission for the Future. Typically bereft of theoretical analysis, the commission backed a series of travelling workshops called 'Greenhouse 88'. The emphasis being on profitable hi-tech solutions; even 'Greenhouse 88' itself was pushed like a glossy commodity. At the same time, the real struggle between conservation versus government and 'developmentalists' plodded on.

In recent days, the Wesley Vale community won out against a toxic Canadian inspired paper mill; but Harris-Daishawa's wood chips for Japan are steadily eating into native forests along Australia's east coast. Virgin beaches at Cape York are proposed for an international rocket pad. The entry of US nuclear ships to Australian ports is still a hot issue; and 35 secret US strategic communications bases dot 'the lucky country' as it is called. Uranium travels from Roxby Downs to a nuclear fuel cycle feeding French bomb tests in the South Pacific. Sewerage pollution has killed the famous Bondi Beach. And genetic engineering is a headache. During the campaign, the Japanese hi-tech enclave or Multi-Function-Polis idea, got everybody ruffled.

The ruling ALP certainly tried hard to win the green vote. In the run-up, slightly 'born-again' minister for environment Graham Richardson, found healthy grants for the conservation lobby. And this, say the Liberals, assured that green voter preferences would be directed at Labour. Prime minister Hawke even made a date to visit Antarctica with Jacques Cousteau, which fooled nobody after his shady compromise with BHP over gold mining in Kakadu National Park—Croc Dundee territory. 'Wets' in the Liberal Opposition, like environment shadow senator Chris Puplick, were openly riled by ALP successes. Meanwhile, the Liberal's 'new right' faction was beating up the issue of foreign debt as the 'real' crisis. Feather-light on policy, the Liberals were carried through the electoral campaign by leader Peacock's reputed sex-appeal.

The Hawke government initially came to power in 1983 with a smug, but cynical electoral strategy, stealing the middle-ground away from the private enterprise

Liberals, while dumping its traditional working-class base. With many Australians still reeling over what is now recognised as a CIA-authored disposal of the Whitlam Labour government in 1975, the ALP left constituency was deeply disaffected by Hawke's tack. Some gave themselves over to developing a green political force, others drifted into experimental coalitions with an already splintered socialist camp.

More cautious ALP defectors joined the Australian Democrats, a small centre party born in the mid-70s as a Liberal breakaway group with an anti-nuke, pro-ecology, human rights and small business complexion. The Democrats attracted talented and uncompromising individuals like John Coulter and their leader Senator Janine Haines. In a bid to move across to the Lower House, Haines has just lost out. But there have been massive swings to Democrats, doubling their vote around the country, especially in Labour's problem states of Victoria and Western Australia. With at least seven Senate seats and maybe nine by the close of count, this team who consider themselves Australia's first green party, will operate as a potent third force in Canberra, holding the balance of power in the Federal Upper House.

The crucial point to note though, is that it is Democrat and Green preferences which have been the determinate factor for all parties in the 1990 election. Peak council lobby organisations—the Australian Conservation Foundation (ACF) and Total Environment Centre (TEC) have always favoured the ideologically safe Democrats and Green Independents. This approach known as the Green Electoral Network (GEN), cost the New South Wales Liberal state government control of its Upper Chamber in 1988. In the run-up to the 1990 election, the lobby hit politicians with an in-depth environment questionnaire published the results, then advised their constituency: Vote Democrats first; with preferences to Greens and Independents next; then Labour; Liberals and their rural-based National Party bedfellows last. The Nationals are all but washed up; but corruption inquiries in the state of Queensland helped that bit of history along.

There were other shades of green running on March 24 too; and shades of red and green... one of the things holding back a unified national green party in Australia has been GEN's reluctance to collaborate with green organisations that contain socialist elements. A large part of the problem is the Trotskyite Socialist Workers' Party, renamed Democratic Socialist Party since glasnost. The opportunist entrist tactic of the old SWP had it infiltrate every activist group that appeared on the scene. It led to the dramatic fracture of the Nuclear

Disarmament Party in 1985 with resignation of WA peace senator Jo Valentine, a Quaker. Electoral asset, rock star Peter Garrett, also stormed out. Idol from the band Midnight Oil and author of a teenager's guide to the future, Garrett is currently waiting in the wings as ACF president. Valentine looks set to re-enter the senate in 1990 as a WA Green. Miscellaneous DSP and NDP candidates have picked up the odd hundred or so votes.

Again 1988 marked the noisy departure of NSW senator Irina Dunn from the NDP over her substitution for senator Robert Wood, who had been disqualified from parliament over an immigration technicality. The trouble was stirred up by a defeated 'moral majority' call to Australia Party candidate. This time Dunn stood as an Environment Independent, but appears not to have retained her seat. Wood also fades out. Plainly, the green vote is seriously split in the largest state NSW.

Two more NSW lists, The Greens, and their own breakaway, The Greens, also tested the water on March 24. The Greens were initiated and remain controlled by Hall Greenland and a nucleus of Pablo-inspired Trotskyites, expelled from Labour in 1984. They act as a continual abrasion to what remains of the local Left ALP. Standing candidates in 1984 and 1987, and running with organisational assistance from SWP cadres, they got 5 per cent and 1 per cent of votes respectively. While internal matters like decision-making procedure and gender parity were still shaky, the Greens turned energies outward in 1989, offering use of their registered name to regions, along with entry to a Green Alliance. They were joined by the Redfern Aboriginal Land Council, parts of the northern NSW hippie community, and some interstate folk. Green Alliance's biggest electoral showing so far is 11 per cent in the seat of Sydney for the House of Representatives.

One red/green presence who did not contest is Jack Munday, ex Sydney Builders Federation founder of the famous Green Bans—a union strategy that brought rampant city development to a standstill in the early 70s. He has been reconstructing his power base with a freshly constituted Communist Party of Australia outfit known as the New Left Party. Munday sees his role as a bridge between ecological common sense and an increasingly consumerist trade union movement. Ideologically not too far away, stands the Rainbow Alliance—professionals with a technocratic, welfarist emphasis. Given their recent decision not to become a party, Rainbow offered research papers on economic reconstruction, etc, to help other greens with policy.

While theorists such as Galtung, Capra, and numerous eco-feminists see green politics as a reclamation of 'feminine

values', there is little consciousness of this social dimension in Australia. Under pressure from a growing body of women members, the powerful Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) Conference set up an Environment and Sustainable Development Sub-Committee in 1989. And every week, an enormous groundswell of women give labour, time and money to peace, wilderness and neighbourhood environmental campaigns. But the cultural logic that ties feminism and ecology together is poorly understood. Predictably, most 'alternative' green leaders are men, some re-cycling themselves from SDS days. Even in non-party organisations such as the Wilderness Society, two-thirds of workers are women, yet chair and spokesperson roles are taken by men.

As Sarah Parkin notes in her ready-reckoner compendium of international green developments, *Green Parties* (1989), Australia is a country where 'mateship' is the going ethos and 'tall poppies' quickly cut down to size. Female tall poppies get an especially hard time of it. The feminist movement at large has stayed away from the greens, tied up as it is with rear-guard struggles for affirmative action, housing and child care. Left out of the famous Labour Accord between government, business, and unions, women and children are Australia's new poor. Some are now wondering whether a women's party is not the next logical step.

Yet women are by-passing electoralism. The Adelaide direct action affinity collective Women's Environmental Action Network Group (WE NAG) is typical. They agitate on everything from dioxin in tampons to US military installations like Nurrungar. Others move to rural communities working at permaculture farming, natural healing and bio-regional networking through the Australian Association of Sustainable Communities. Here, politics via parliamentary representation is seen as an historically obsolete form. Symptomatically, no green electoral group has tussled with the key contradiction between global survival versus dependence on an industrial economy. All party political voices in the land of Oz remain reformist ones.

No doubt Australia's green election fever was whipped along by the spate of green consumer guides that stacked the bookstores last Christmas. But intellectuals have had their influence too. Ted Trainer's *Abandon Affluence!* (1987) and Bill Mollison's *Permaculture* (1989) are examples; while Drew Hutton's *Green Politics in Australia* (1987) put together essays on the Green Bans, eco-feminism, Aboriginal perspectives and ethical investment. Important questions—for nothing will be more destructive to the real 'green revolution', than thoughtless absorption by the electoral machine. For the immediate future, however, Australians have 'no worries mate!'

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Selections of articles from *Economic and Political Weekly*
General Editor: Ashok Mitra

The Retarded Economies

Foreign Domination and Class Relations in India
and Other Emerging Nations

by Nirmal Kumar Chandra

Why is it that while the former colonies and semi-colonies have emerged as a major force in world politics over the last four decades, their economies in most cases remain retarded? The first part of this volume focuses on the exchanges between the poor and the rich nations. Did western aid, private capital and technology really help India, or was it the other way round? Granting that both sides made some gains, did the USSR derive undue advantage through its bilateral trade and aid transactions with the third world? Can the theory of unequal exchange explain the growing economic hiatus between the north and the south? The second part of the book is concerned with the domestic scenario in India. The author tries to relate the overall stagnation in material production per capita to the balance of class forces that emerged after independence as a result of a strategy of industrialisation based on import substitution. Long-term trends in aggregate and sectoral outputs, the terms of trade between industry and agriculture, real wages and unemployment rates, savings and investment, private monopoly capital, etc, are analysed in this context. Further, the existing laws and regulations on private sector monopolies are also examined from the same perspective. The final essay is a critique of the recent tilt, inspired by the IMF and the World Bank, towards liberalism in India's economic policies.

Pp 388 + index Rs 240

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OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS

Bombay Delhi Calcutta Madras