

A Man of Principle?

A Political Biography of Standish Michael Keon.



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Table of Contents

Abbreviations.....	1
Preface.....	2
Introduction.....	6
Chapter One.....	10
Keon- A Biographical Outline.....	10
1) Introduction.....	10
2) Family Origins And Early Life.....	13
a) The Keon Family.....	13
b) Self-Betterment For The Common Man.....	18
c) Catholicism.....	18
d) Pro-Labor Inclinations.....	20
3) Keon's Childhood.....	21
4) Keon's Adolescence.....	22
5) Keon's Irish Roots.....	24
a) Pro-Common Man Inclinations.....	26
b) Catholicism.....	31
c) Pro-Labor Inclinations.....	33
6) Keon's Catholic Roots.....	35
a) CYMS Origins.....	35
b) Catholic Activism.....	38
c) Keon's Support Of The Common Man/ Self-Betterment.....	42
7) The Emergence Of Three Overriding Principles In Keon's Life.....	44
8) Why Keon Did Not Marry.....	47
9) Keon's Public Life.....	51
a) Keon's Pro-Common Man Inclinations.....	51
b) Keon's Catholicism.....	62
c) Keon's Hostility Towards The Anti-Labor Parties.....	64
10) During The ALP Split.....	67
a) Keon's Continued Concern For The Common Man.....	72
b) Keon's Catholic Passions And Continued Hostility Toward The Anti-Labor Parties.....	73
11) Keon's Post-Split Existence.....	74
a) Keon's Concern For Pro-Common Man Inclinations.....	75
b) Keon's Clash With The DLP Hierarchy.....	77
c) Keon's Continued Devotion Towards Catholicism And Challenging The Anti- Labor Parties.....	81
12) In Later Life- After Retiring From Business.....	84

a) Keon's Pro-Common Man Inclinations.....	84
b) Keon's Catholicism	85
c) The Use of Pro-Irish Inclinations As An Expression of Principles.....	87
13) Keon's Return To Prominence Inside DLP Ranks.....	88
a) Keon's Pro-Common Man Inclinations.....	90
b) Keon's Pro-Catholic Inclinations	92
c) Keon's Continued Hostility Toward The Anti-Labor Parties.....	93
14) After Keon's Death.....	94
a) The Legacy of Keon's Principles After His Death	95
15) Conclusion.....	97
Chapter Two	99
The Published Assessment.....	99
1) Introduction.....	99
2) The First School Of Thought: Keon As A Rebellious Figure.....	101
a) Kate White.....	101
b) Robert Murray.....	106
c) Janet McCalman and Catherine Watson.....	109
3) The Second School Of Thought: Why Keon Acted In A "Rebellious" Manner.....	114
a) Kylie Tennant	114
b) Robin Gollan and Ross McMullin.....	115
c) Susan McKernan and Allan Ashbolt.....	116
d) Frank McManus	119
e) Leslie Haylen.....	120
f) Gil Duthie	120
4) The Third School Of Thought: To What Degree Anti-Communism and Religious Duty Dictated Keon's Actions.....	122
a) Robert Murray.....	123
b) Paul Reynolds.....	124
c) Gerard Henderson.....	126
5) Conclusion.....	129
Chapter Three	131
Keon The Populist.....	131
1) Introduction- The Construction Of A Populist Model	131
2) Recreating A Golden Age.....	137
a) Keon's Affinity With Rural Life	139
b) Keon's Dedication To Universal Home Ownership	140
3) Championing The Productive Classes.....	144

a) Keon's Desire To Address The Imbalances Between Rich And Poor.....	146
b) Keon's Dedication Towards Labour Reform.....	155
c) Keon And Arbitration.....	160
4) The Conspiracy Theory.....	162
a) Keon's View Of Communist Industrial Sabotage.....	165
b) Keon's View Of The Communist International Conspiracy.....	168
c) Keon's View Of Communist Infiltration Into Australian Education Circles.....	171
5) The Use Of Money For Prosperity Rather Than Scarcity.....	174
a) Keon's Hostility Toward Private Monopolies.....	177
b) Keon's Nationalist Opposition To Foreign Monopolies.....	178
c) Keon's Desire To Break Up Large Land Estates.....	179
6) Conclusion.....	180
Chapter Four	183
Keon, The Catholic.....	183
1) Introduction.....	183
2) Keon's Catholicism.....	185
3) Catholic Social Teachings.....	190
4) The Victorian ALP Executive.....	196
5) Wage Justice.....	203
6) Decentralisation.....	207
7) Anti-Communism and Anti-Asian Nationalism.....	211
8) Conclusion.....	214
Chapter Five.....	219
Keon, the Labor Man.....	219
1) Introduction.....	219
2) Populism's Relationship With The Labour Movement.....	220
3) ALP and Catholics	223
4) Process Used To Illustrate Keon's Incompatibility With The Ant-Labor Parties	226
5) Liberals On Decentralisation.....	227
6) Country Party On Decentralisation.....	229
7) Keon On Decentralisation.....	231
8) Liberals On The Productive Classes.....	233
9) Country Party On The Productive Classes.....	233
10) Keon's View On The Productive Classes.....	236
11) Liberals View of Monopolies	241

12) Keon's View On Monopolies	242
13) Conclusion	247
Conclusion.....	251
Bibliography	265

Abbreviations

ALP- Australian Labor Party

CPD- Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates

CSSM- Catholic Social Studies Movement

CYMS- Catholic Young Men's Society

DLP- Democratic Labor Party

PSJV- Public Service Journal of Victoria

UAP- United Australia Party

UCP- United Country Party

VPSA- Victorian Public Service Association

Preface

During my period as an undergraduate I developed a keen interest in the Australian two-party system. This fascination, however, was structured more around parties who had been at the periphery, rather than the centre, of our political system. It is hard to exactly pin-point how I developed this interest in minor parties. Certainly, I believe my ethnic origins have played some part in this process. As the son of Italian migrants, I have been exposed to news from 'home' since my earliest teenage recollections. Whether it was through some Italian radio broadcast, newspaper report, or family conversation, I always wondered why Italy had so many parties compared to Australia.

During Year 12 Politics this interest intensified when we briefly studied the significance of minor political parties. I became interested in the Democratic Labor Party (DLP). This party was an anomaly in Australian politics. While most minor parties had failed to secure parliamentary representation, the DLP had managed to gain seats in the Senate for the majority of a nineteen-year period from 1955 to 1974. My interest was fuelled further by my Year 12 teacher who-perhaps as a 'child' of the 1955 ALP Split-told me that the DLP was neither 'Democratic' or 'Labor'. Such comments made me think and coincided with the screening of an ABC series, *The True Believers*, which explored the same subject.

During my Honours year I decided to explore this interest in greater depth and consequently completed a thesis concerned with the DLP's formation. During my research, the name of Stan Keon appeared as

often as the more recognised one's of Arthur Calwell, H.V 'Bert' Evatt, and B.A 'Bob' Santamaria. From the moment I submitted my Honours thesis, I knew that my Master's topic would revolve around Keon. My 'appetite' to embark upon such a topic was heightened when I learned that no published work on Keon's public life existed.

The following topic does not pretend to be a definitive work on Keon. Rather, it is a study which deals with Keon's political beliefs between 1939 and 1955. Any reference to Keon's origins or later life is made with the intention of underlining his attachment to the same philosophies which governed his actions in public.

It is unfortunate that the Keon family could not make any of Stan's papers available. The following study is therefore based on sources which can be located on the public record. Indeed, this work would never have been completed without access to the *Public Service Journal of Victoria*, Victorian and Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates, and the *Richmond News*. My studies were also aided by the great number of people I interviewed. Many took me into their homes and shared private memories for the sake of scholarly pursuit. To such people I am particularly grateful. The study also benefits greatly from a host of secondary sources related to populism, Catholicism, and Australian politics.

For all the sources and interviews one may have at his disposal, no thesis can be completed without some form of support network. To this end, I must express thanks to a number of people.

On a financial level, I must pay tribute to my parents. Their dedication towards me during the last two years meant that at least in times of depression I did not find myself lacking access to food, clothing and

shelter. I would also like to deeply thank Victoria University for making me a beneficiary of a two-year research scholarship.

On a scholastic level, I would like to pay tribute to three academics. First, a special thank-you must be allotted to Professor Allan Patience who supervised the majority of this thesis before going on study leave. I will not forget his fraternal dedication to my cause and shall always remember the stimulating chats we had on issues that were not necessarily related to Stan Keon. Secondly, I must also reserve gratitude for Associate Professor Jim Davidson who helped me tremendously during the final stages of this study. Jim's editorial contribution was invaluable and his will to facilitate my scholastic needs was an extreme comfort. Thirdly, I have to mention my Honours supervisor, Dr. Phillip Deery, whose patience and perseverance during 1992 taught me many of the research skills I possess today.

My gratitude is also extended to a number of individuals who made my research easier. I pay particular tribute to Geoff Browne, a PhD student, who is working on a full-biography of Keon. He made available sources pertaining to the Keon family heritage, and also allowed me to read some of his work and private archival material. I would also like to thank the librarians and archivists at the State Library of Victoria, University of Melbourne, Catholic Historical Commission, and Victoria University of Technology. I would also like to thank my cousin, Umberto Abate, for helping me put this work together on computer.

There are also a number of friends I would like to thank. I refer specifically to those who listened (or pretended to listen) to my deafening complaints about physical and mental fatigue. I would also like to pay a particular tribute to a friend and colleague, Erik Lloga. He

has taught me that a negative attitude only creates further obstacles in one's life.

Lastly, and by no means least, I would like to thank my girlfriend, Elsa Uberti, who has endured my company for the last two years. Without her, this study would never have been completed. She has been a pillar of emotional support, and I love her dearly.

Introduction

In 1955 what was to become known as the Democratic Labor Party (hereafter referred to as the DLP) was born. Its formative name during this period, the Australian Labor Party (Anti-Communist), reflected the origins of virtually its entire membership and illustrated the cold-war political environment in which it was supposed to operate. Since 5 October 1954 the Australian Labor Party (hereafter referred to as the ALP) had been riven by conflict after its leader, H.V "Bert" Evatt had cited "the attitude of a small minority group of members [...who had...] become increasingly disloyal to the Labour Movement and Labor Leadership".¹ The ALP (Anti-Communist) was the product of those inside the Labour Movement who, for a number of reasons, could not agree with Evatt and his supporters.

The ALP (Anti-Communist) first assembled along the cross-benches of the House of Representatives on 19 April 1955.² Their leader was Robert Joshua. His deputy was Standish Michael Keon. The party possessed only seven members, and this fractional representation was obliterated in the ensuing Federal Election which was held on 11 December 1955.³ During the eight month period which led to the election, the Federal Parliament became a cauldron of incessant debate between the Evatt

¹ Text of H.V Evatt's 5 October 1955 Statement in R.Murray, *The Split-Australian Labor In The Fifties*, p.180.

² CPD, 19 April 1955, p.1.

³ Murray, *Op.cit.*, pp.273, 278, and 279.

and Joshua-Keon Labor parties. Both sets of individuals raised allegations and counter-allegations, accusing the other side of defaming Labor's name in issues related to foreign policy and industrial affairs.⁴ Indeed, the issue of righteousness was especially important to individuals in the Joshua-Keon Party like J.L "Jack" Cremean, who articulated his views most succinctly during one parliamentary debate:

The members of this party have long and honourable records in the Australian Labor party. They have done what they have done because of a principle that is dearer to them than place or preferment.⁵

In retrospect, Cremean's words are poignantly relevant. While this study makes no suggestion that Cremean's words were insincere, the fact remains that most members of the ALP (Anti-Communist) grouping could afford to place 'principle' over 'place or preferment' because they possessed skills or family links which would ensure adequate employment in the event of an interrupted or ruined parliamentary career. Cremean, himself, came from a family which had strong local networks, including influential businessman John Wren.⁶ The Party's leader, Joshua, was an accountant.⁷ The Party also had a lawyer amongst its ranks in W.M "Bill" Bourke.⁸ Other members like Tom Andrews and J.M "Jack" Mullens were both qualified educators.⁹ The only two individuals in the Party who had very little formal education to rely upon were W."Bill" Bryson and Standish Michael Keon. Both had

⁴ *Ibid*, pp.257-277.

⁵ Adjournment, CPD, Vol. H of R 6, 5 May 1955, p.524.

⁶ Murray, *Op.cit.*, p.67.

⁷ R.McMullin, *The Light On The Hill- The Australian Labor Party 1891-1991*, p.256.

⁸ *Ibid*.

⁹ J.Lack, *A History of Footscray*, p.264, and A.J Bailey, Interview, 15 September 1994.

achieved notoriety through trade union involvement- Bryson in the Postal Workers Union¹⁰ and Keon in the Victorian Public Service Association (hereafter referred to as the VPSA).¹¹ Although both perhaps could have relied upon union contacts to find employment if their forthcoming electoral bids failed, for Keon the decision to place 'principle' above any other objective held greater risks. In the event of an electoral loss, Bryson nor any other member of the ALP (Anti-Communist) could claim that they had sacrificed a political career which matched Keon's potential.

In 1939, aged only twenty six, Keon became General Secretary of the VPSA.¹² Six years later he was a Victorian ALP Member of the Legislative Council. In 1949, Keon became the Labor member for Yarra in the House of Representatives.¹³ Such a meteoric rise up the political ladder had senior Party figures like Patrick Kennelly speculating that Keon could eventually become the ALP's Federal leader.¹⁴

Keon seemingly had very little regard for such compliments and continually placed principles at a higher premium than ambition during his career in public life. This fact has thus far been given little or no attention by writers who have published material related to Keon's political exploits. Henceforth the object of this study will be to fully explore the principles which governed Keon's public life. This will essentially involve research in material related to the time-frame

¹⁰ R.McMullin, *Op.cit.*, p.225, and B.Callinan, Interview, 2 May 1994.

¹¹ K.White, *John Cain and Victorian Labor 1917-1957*, pp.141-2.

¹² *PSJV*, 25 February 1939, p.150.

¹³ McMullin, *Op.cit.*, p.257.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

between 1939 and 1955. This period begins with Keon's acquired role in the VPSA and ends with his exit from Federal Parliament. At the same time, however, an overview of Keon's origins, young manhood, and latter life is also presented.

The following study will be broken into five sections. The first will give a general account of Keon's whole life and thus illustrate that he was motivated by three general principles- aiding individuals from modest socio-economic standing, Catholicism, and disdain for the major anti-Labor parties. The second aspect of the study will show that all published material on Keon, whilst partially recognising one stream of his Catholicism, fails to fully tap into his 'ideological baggage'. The other three areas of the study will concentrate expanding upon the principles which shaped Keon's public life. Chapter Three will demonstrate that Keon's readiness to champion the common man's cause can be aligned to populist thought. Chapter Four will highlight Keon's Catholic tendencies and sub-divide them into two categories- 'general' and 'specific'. Chapter Five will draw upon the evidence provided in the previous two sections of the study and illustrate how Labor was the only major political grouping which could accommodate Keon's principles.

Chapter One

Keon- A Biographical Outline

"[Mr. Keon] the ruling classes may have them [the working classes] down in the gutter with a foot on their necks, but the poor are never beaten until they accept that foot".

- Archbishop Daniel Mannix.

(T.Prior, "Keon Set The Record Straight", *The Sun*, 27/1/87, p.21.)

"Stan Keon fought the good fight, kept his faith and finished the course".

- Father Walker

(T.Prior, "1000 At Mass For Stan Keon", *The Sun*, 27/1/87, p.21)

1) Introduction

The Federal electorate of Yarra, before it was dissolved under a redistribution in 1969, was a part of the Australian Labor Party's heartland. As an area which epitomised the working-class nature of inner-city Melbourne, Yarra proved to be a rich recruiting ground for Labor movement leaders. Three of the most celebrated figures in ALP history, Frank Tudor, J.H Scullin and J.F Cairns, represented Yarra for a combination of sixty-two years. Tudor represented Yarra from 1901 to 1921 and spent the last two years of his parliamentary life as leader of the Labor Party, which was in Opposition at the time.¹⁵ In 1922 Scullin became Yarra's representative. He held the seat until the 1949 Federal Election, during which time he had occupied the Prime Ministership between 1929 and 1932.¹⁶ Dr.J.F.Cairns became Yarra's representative in 1955 and maintained this position until 1969.¹⁷ In 1974 he was

¹⁵ R.McMullin, *The Light On The Hill*, pp.45, 119-120.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp.69,147,152,184.

¹⁷ C.Watson, *Copping It Sweet*, p.237.

elected Deputy Prime Minister in the Whitlam Government.¹⁸ In between the reigns of Scullin and Cairns, Yarra possessed another representative- Standish Michael Keon.

Although Keon never emulated his predecessors by capturing any senior Federal Parliamentary position, commentators from all sides of the political spectrum were convinced that only fate prevented Keon from reaching similar political heights. F.R Scully, who was a close political ally, argues that Keon "had the ability to be Prime Minister".¹⁹ Even Cairns, who displaced Keon from Yarra after the ALP split in 1955, contends that "if he[Keon] had stayed in [Federal] Parliament he would have had a good chance of becoming Prime Minister".²⁰ John Cotter, who went on to join the Democratic Labor Party (hereafter referred to as the DLP), claims that throughout the 1950s he had been mesmerised by Keon's political ability. By the time of the ALP split in 1955, Cotter states that he "used to listen to the [Federal] parliamentary debates [on radio] just to hear Keon".²¹ In Cotter's own words:

[Keon] had the voice of a John McCormack, the flow of a statesman, and a street fighter streak- it was an extraordinary combination. He was the hero of my young manhood.²²

At the same time, while a number of contemporaries signal that Keon had the ability to obtain the highest office, they also concede that his unbending dedication to a certain set of beliefs prevented him from

¹⁸ McMullin, *Op.cit.*, p.355.

¹⁹ F.R Scully, Interview, 21 January 1993.

²⁰ J.F Cairns, Interview, 9 January 1993.

²¹ J.Cotter, Interview, 13 January 1993.

²² Ibid.

John McCormack was a famous Irish tenor.

being flexible or pragmatic. William "Bill" Burns, who knew Keon personally when the former was Victorian State President of the Young Liberal Movement, argues that although the Member for Yarra was politically ambitious, he placed his own principles at a higher premium. Indeed, in Burns' view, Keon:

believed in *certain* principles and was one of a very small number of politicians [in Australian political history] who sacrificed his parliamentary seat for principles.²³

This apparent dedication to a set of beliefs is also acknowledged by Cairns who notes that "Keon was always straight down the line in what he was standing for".²⁴ Bernie Callinan, a boyhood contemporary and life-long friend, argues that Keon could not have become Prime-Minister because he possessed an unpragmatic nature which would not allow him to compromise certain principles.²⁵ Sidney Tutton, a DLP activist of the 1950s and 1960s who supported Keon, gives further weight to the notion that the former Member for Yarra was governed by a set of rigid principles. Indeed, as Tutton points out, Keon "was never a diplomat".²⁶

Certainly, as one studies Keon's family origins and early life it becomes apparent that these beliefs were structured around three broad themes. The first was centred around a desire to champion the common man's cause. This essentially meant aiding and protecting the interests of people who came from modest financial backgrounds. The second belief

²³ W.Burns, Interview, 25 January 1993.

²⁴ Cairns, Interview, 9 January 1993.

²⁵ B.Callinan, Interview, 2 May 1994.

²⁶ S.Tutton, Interview, 30 April 1994.

revolved around Catholicism. The third area of interest was allied to a deep sense of hostility toward the anti-Labor parties.

2) Family Origins And Early Life

a) The Keon Family

Stan's paternal grandfather, Michael Tobyn Keon, was born in Drumshambo, Ireland in 1844. He arrived in Melbourne on March 1863 and two years later, whilst working as a draper, married Irish-born Bridget Helena McCormick, who was a housemaid. He died in 1923 of an asthma attack while living in the inner-Melbourne suburb of Fitzroy. By this time, five out of the six children born from his marriage had survived to witness their father's passing. Although one of three daughters, Beatrice, had died, Belinda (aged fifty-two), Maud (fifty), Standish (forty-eight), Philip (forty-two), and Frank (forty) were still alive. It seems that the family had changed their living quarters on at least two occasions.²⁷ Although Michael's last residential address was in Melbourne, the birth of his son and Stan's future father, Philip, had taken place in Mudgee, New South Wales during 1881.²⁸

Stan's maternal grandparents, Thomas Scott and Kate Childerhouse, were married at "The Parsonage" Methodist Church in Grey Street East Melbourne on 21 November 1876. Whilst both had been born in Ireland, Kate and Thomas hailed from different Melbourne suburbs. Kate came

²⁷ Deaths In The District Of South Fitzroy In The State Of Victoria, 1923, Number: 4520.

²⁸ Deaths In The State Of Victoria, Number:4005/64.

from the inner-working class area of Collingwood and Thomas had resided at Hotham Hill, the present North Melbourne. At twenty-four, Kate was three years Thomas' senior. Despite this difference in age, both ~~came from the same~~ ^{socio-economic background} ~~A~~ Thomas at the time of marriage was described as a "carrier" whilst his father, John, was a weaver. Kate's position was hardly more affluent. Her father, also named John, worked as a postman.²⁹ It was from this modest background that Stan's mother, Jane, was born as the fourth child of the Scott marriage.³⁰

Philip Tobyn Keon, aged thirty and working as a draper married twenty seven year-old "spinster", Jane Scott, at St. Ignatius Church Richmond on 27 October 1910. Interestingly, the Keons had been together since at least 1907, when the first of their three illegitimate children had been born. Indeed, all signs indicate that the Keons were not terribly moved by the social indignation related to de facto relationships at the time. Geoff Browne, in his own research, explains this point through the following comments:

The contemporary Keon certificates (for Horace and Frank) are unique (at least for the writer, who has seen many certificates) in the listing of both father and mother with the marriage details blank. Philip registered all the births and it is striking- most especially with the 1908 certificate of Horace- that Philip and Jane were prepared to declare openly that they were producing offspring out of wedlock at a time when such conduct would inevitably attract intense social disapproval.³¹

Certainly, all available documentation illustrates that the three children were born out of wedlock. The eldest son, Philip Tobyn (Junior), was delivered in 1907 at the Women's Hospital in Carlton. The birth,

²⁹ Marriages Solemnized In The District Of Bourke In The Colony Of Victoria, Number:4094.

³⁰ Births In The District Of Richmond In The Colony Of Victoria, Number: 24565.

³¹ G.Browne, Standish Michael Keon: An Outline For A Political Biography, p.3.

however, was not registered until 1922.³² With the birth of the next two children the Keons made no secret of their non-marital affair. When their second son, Horace Joseph, was born on September 1908 in "Grattan Street on [the] way to [the] Women's Hospital" the Keons promptly registered his name on the state birth registry and Philip openly conceded that he was the father.³³ The same procedure was used by Philip(Senior) and Jane when the third child, Frank, was born at their place of residence in 56 Neptune Street, Richmond.³⁴

This state of affairs may have at least troubled Jane's family. Certainly, Thomas Scott's probate papers did nothing to indicate that Jane enjoyed a good relationship with her parents. Although Scott's final documents indicate that he had left behind five surviving children, only four were personally nominated. Jane's name was visibly absent.³⁵

Despite such troubling conflict with her parents, Jane's greatest moment of turmoil occurred two years into her marriage in 1912. The family was living at 52 Wellington Street South Richmond during this period. Given the standard practices of the day, for many people warm water could only be obtained by boiling it on the stove. On one particular day Jane left Horace in the kitchen momentarily while a kettle of water was beginning to boil. Almost immediately she heard Horace scream. Upon returning to the kitchen she found that Horace had tipped the boiling water onto himself. Horace was immediately

³² Births In The District Of Richmond In The State Of Victoria, Number: 7534.

³³ Births In The District Of Carlton In The State Of Victoria, Number: 4832.

³⁴ Births In The District Of Richmond In The State Of Victoria, Number: 7942.

³⁵ Probate Papers Of Thomas Scott, Supreme Court Of Victoria, 1927.

covered in olive oil and wrapped in cotton wool by his mother. This proposed remedy only worsened the child's condition and, after a brief but futile recovery, he died of bronchial pneumonia and septic blood absorption. Although Jane's sense of self-guilt would have been immeasurable after this event, a closer examination of the available evidence indicates that medical malpractice played a bigger part in the young child's death than motherly incompetence. This point can be discerned by Jane's testimony at the magisterial inquiry on Horace's death:

I undressed the child [after the event] and put olive oil on the scolds, and wrapped him in cotton wool, I then sent for Doctor Bennett, he came about an hour and a half afterwards.³⁶

Whether Horace's death could have been averted is obviously difficult to ascertain. At the same time, however, if the child had survived it would not have been because of any prompt action performed by the doctor.³⁷

None-the-less, despite being legally exonerated by the inquiry, Jane still carried a deep sense of guilt when her fourth child was born under a year later on 2 July 1913. He was registered as Horace Stanley Keon. His name was subsequently changed to Standish Michael Keon.³⁸ In Browne's words, Keon "came into the world bearing the name of the dead child and the burden of his mother's guilt".³⁹ Browne argues that Keon's relationship with his mother was very strong. He asserts that Keon's devotion could be measured by his desire to fulfil her every

³⁶ Magisterial Inquiry, Victoria, Number: 1027, 31 August 1912.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ Births In The District Of Carlton In The State Of Victoria, Number: 19668.

³⁹ Browne, *Op.cit*, p.4.

wish.⁴⁰ Certainly, many of Keon's contemporaries indicate that there was a strong bond of affection between Jane and her youngest son. Callinan remembers that Jane "would do anything for him[Keon]".⁴¹ Another childhood friend, James "Jim" Bolger, brings forward a similar message. Bolger remembers that Keon rarely spoke of his father. Although Bolger recalls that Keon always acknowledged that his father was a "good, hard-working man".⁴² Conversely, Keon would often boast of his mother's influence during his youth:

She[Jane] looked after him and advised him, and made him the smart chap that he was. She always saw he had good clothes and told him to keep out of trouble.⁴³

There is every indication to suggest that this strong bond with his mother continued during adulthood. As a member of Keon's electoral staff, Vera McDonald remembers that Keon would often rush to a local grocery store whenever a supply of imported mericino cherries arrived. As McDonald recalls, such an item was always purchased by Keon because cherries were his mother's "favourite" delight. Indeed, she would always play a big part in his casual conversations. Although McDonald is adamant that Keon's mother did not "dominate him", she does admit that many of his non-political conversations contained the word "mum".⁴⁴

A range of contemporaries indicate that Keon's parents influence eventually resulted in him being exposed to three streams of belief. The

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Callinan, Interview, 2 May 1994.

⁴² J.Bolger, Interview, 3 May 1994.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ V.McDonald, Interview, 30 April 1994.

first centred on championing the common man. It was important for the Keons, as members of the working-class, that they tried to continually better their situation. The second element of influence was Catholicism, which Jane and Philip embraced after their marriage in 1910. An unbending dedication towards the pro-Labor forces acted as the third area in which the Keons possessed strong beliefs.

b) Self-Betterment For The Common Man

The idea that Keon's parents were dedicated towards maintaining an air of self-confidence and high esteem is underlined by his nephew, Philip. According to Philip Keon, his grandparents were "very elegant" individuals.⁴⁵ This point is supported by one of Keon's contemporaries, Vera McDonald. She remembers that although the Keons were not materially wealthy, they possessed a certain degree of dignity which elevated them above "Richmond strugglers". McDonald states that her own mother described the Keons as "nice people" who constantly went out of their way to conceal their modest financial status:

You would never see Mrs.Keon answer the door with her apron on- [my] mum was like that. She[Jane Keon] must have had a [financial] struggle but you wouldn't know about it [on the surface].⁴⁶

c) Catholicism

Despite giving birth to three children out of wedlock, the Keons embraced Catholicism quite readily in the years of their marriage. Indeed, it is quite possible that Jane's and Philip's decision not to marry

⁴⁵ P.Keon, Interview, 3 May 1994.

⁴⁶ V.McDonald, Interview, 30 April 1994.

at the beginning of their relationship could be attributed to sectarian pressures rather than any personal hostility toward the Catholic Church. After all, Jane came from a Methodist upbringing and Philip's origins were Catholic. Thomas Scott's decision not to name Jane in his probate papers suggests that he was probably hostile to any marriage between her and Philip Keon.

Despite this hostility, Jane became an ardent convert to the Catholic faith in the years that followed. Peg Wilson, who knew the Keons during her childhood and later served Stan loyally during his political career, remembers that Jane and Philip regularly attended church.⁴⁷ This practice continued in latter years when their son, Standish, would drive them to their local church, St. Ignatius.⁴⁸ Indeed, it seems the Keons were also intent on expressing their religious beliefs inside the family home. Rod Pead, who was one of Stan's friends in later life, tells of one particular story which underlines this point. According to Pead, Philip became upset when Keon arrived one day from a job interview and stated to his parents that he had lied to an employer about his faith in order to avoid any prejudice.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ P. Wilson, Interview, 29 April 1994.

⁴⁸ A. McDonald, Interview, 12 May 1994.

⁴⁹ R. Pead, Interview, 12 May 1994.

d) Pro-Labor Inclinations

In an interview during the mid-1980s Keon stated that his parents had urged him to support the ALP:

I was brought up to despise Liberal politicians who took money for things. The Labor Party was supposed to support the underdog.⁵⁰

For contemporaries like Vera McDonald and Wilson, the Keon's affinity with the ALP was hardly unique. According to McDonald, all working-class people who were interested in politics around Richmond joined the ALP. In this sense, she argues, Philip and Jane Keon were following a popular trend.⁵¹ Wilson agrees with this assessment. Wilson is convinced that it was a "natural act" for any politically minded individual residing in Richmond to join the ALP. She argues that there was no other political force available to allow working-class people to express their viewpoints.⁵²

Frank Farrell, in his own study of Labor politics, suggests that this "natural" affinity which the Keons enjoyed was intimately linked with their Irish and Catholic heritage. According to Farrell, Irish-Catholics numbered between a fifth and a quarter of the population in colonial Australia. Most of these individuals, explains Farrell, found "that their place in society was around the bottom rung of the social ladder".⁵³ This association was strengthened by the turn of the twentieth century when

⁵⁰ Watson, *Op.cit.*, p.237.

Interview with S.M Keon.

⁵¹ V.McDonald, Interview, 30 April 1994.

⁵² P.Wilson, Interview, 29 April 1994.

⁵³ F.Farrell, " J.H Scullin, The Irish Question And The Australian Labor Party" in C.Kiernan(Ed.), *Australia And Ireland 1788-1988- Bicentenary Essays*, p.156.

the Catholic Church placed its faith in the Labor Party. In Farrell's terms, during federation the ALP had become "in Catholic eyes, the only party not tainted with bigotry".⁵⁴ This attitude was highlighted in 1905 when Cardinal Moran and the Australian bishops argued that Labor's will to help the working classes represented a just and favourable cause. Such an association, outlines Farrell, would only have been strengthened when Protestant attempts to marginalise Catholic schools and introduce Bible readings into state institutions was vehemently opposed by the ALP.⁵⁵

3) Keon's Childhood

During childhood it became apparent that Keon had acquired one of his parents' traits by actively supporting the common man's cause. Keon started his schooling at St.Stanislaus Primary School in South Richmond before transferring to St.Ignatius.⁵⁶ Keon's academic aptitudes varied. According to Bolger, Keon thoroughly enjoyed English, mathematics and history. Bolger recalls that Keon was amongst the most intelligent students at St.Ignatius.⁵⁷ Certainly, Bolger's comments are not solely motivated by a desire to promote the memory of a dead comrade. Keon obtained a Citizen Scholarship to attend Xavier College in Melbourne. His family, however, could not afford the associated

⁵⁴ *Ibid*, p.157.

⁵⁵ *Ibid*.

⁵⁶ Watson, *Op.cit*, pp.2401; Bolger, *Op.cit.*; V.McDonald, *Op.cit.*; Tutton, *Op.cit*.

⁵⁷ Bolger, Interview, 5 May 1994.

expenses and the young Keon was made to join the workforce at the age of twelve.⁵⁸

Amidst this period of high scholastic achievement, Keon's tendency to champion the underdog also became apparent. Bolger remembers that Keon would often police any situation which saw a larger child physically or verbally attack a small contemporary. According to Bolger, Keon in such situations would always confront the perpetrator and instruct him to "cut it out". Bolger remembers one such instance in the following manner:

This big kid knocked this little kid. Stan went over and told him in a couple of sentences that he had to stop. The chap[who had instigated the violence] knew that Stan meant business and he stopped.⁵⁹

Indeed, the fact that Keon "meant business" indicates that he had often intervened on behalf of the underdog inside the parameters of the school playground.

4) Keon's Adolescence

This spirit of defending the "underdog" continued when Keon left St. Ignatius. At this point, Keon and his family were struggling financially and experiencing life at the lower end of the social scale. As Keon re-called in the mid-1980s, his father was a "door-to-door" salesman who sold "tea [and] crumpets".⁶⁰ In order to help his family

⁵⁸ "Stan Keon, Key Figure In ALP Split Dies", The Age, 24 January 1987.

⁵⁹ Bolger, Interview, 5 May 1994.

⁶⁰ Watson, *Op.cit*, pp.240-1.

Interview with S.M Keon.

after leaving school, Keon worked at Sutton's music shop as an office boy until the economic depression of the 1930s.⁶¹

Callinan remembers that Keon's early working life was hard and his rates of remuneration were poor. At the same time, argues Callinan, this situation was sometimes due to the fact that Keon could not short-change his belief in the common individual for his own material advancement. This fact was underlined during his period as a door-to-door salesman for Radio Corporation. Part of his responsibilities in this firm entailed repossessing appliances from households who could no longer meet hire-purchase payments. As Callinan outlines, this aspect of the job severely disturbed Keon. Callinan recalls that Keon would often be visibly distraught about collecting radios from families who had very little else to entertain themselves.⁶² Keon later outlined his frustration to Callinan on the issue in the following way:

'It broke my heart to take their [poor people's] radios and so I'd go back to the [Radio Corporation] office and pay their bill off myself'.⁶³

When Keon decided that he could no longer live with this predicament, he resolved that he would leave Radio Corporation after finding another source of employment. After a brief search, Keon found another sales position in the newspaper classifieds. The advertisement did not contain the company's name. The only source of contact was a telephone-number. Keon duly dialled the number only to discover that Radio Corporation was the silent party who was advertising *his* position.⁶⁴

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p.241.

⁶² Callinan, Interview, 2 May 1994.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

In later years, Callinan remembers that this devotion to common individuals continued at sometimes embarrassing proportions:

Stan could never walk past a drunk. He would try and get him [a vagrant] on his feet [and if he was hurt] would wait until the police or ambulance turned up. He didn't mind [if helping the person meant] missing an appointment. ⁶⁵

5) Keon's Irish Roots

Keon's Irish roots only served to strengthen his devotion towards the common man. They also acted as a vehicle to promote the other traits which his parents had encouraged- Catholicism and pro-Labor inclinations.

Keon's fascination with Ireland began at a very early age. Bolger remembers that both he and Keon marched at the annual St.Patrick's Day procession during their school years.⁶⁶ Another contemporary, Allan McDonald, recalls the same experience and outlines that Keon would often attempt to march with politicians and senior public servants.⁶⁷ Callinan remembers that by the age of sixteen Keon had established contacts in Ireland who would send him news-clippings of contemporary events.⁶⁸

Margaret Pawsey attributes this devotion to the Irish cause above all to the sectarian legacy which had dominated Victoria in the second half of the nineteenth century. Irish-Catholic loyalty to the Pope was abhorred by extreme Protestant elements because it was seen to place "a mere

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Bolger, Interview, 5 May 1994.

⁶⁷ A.McDonald, Interview, 2 May 1994.

⁶⁸ Callinan, Interview, 2 May 1994.

Italian priest" above the British constitution and Queen Victoria. Politicians of Irish extraction like John O'Shanassy were seen by staunch loyalists as activists who supported such a doctrine.⁶⁹ The 1860s were characterised by a wave of anti-Irish sentiment in the Melbourne press. *The Age* and *The Argus*, notes Pawsey, were at the forefront of this bigoted campaign. This attack was complemented by Pro-British Protestant journals like David Blair's *Weekly Review* and *Christian Times*.⁷⁰ According to Pawsey, the Britons saw the Irish as a second-rate clan of ignorant people who lived on self-manufactured past glories to justify their disloyalty to the Empire:

For Britons in Victoria, Irish sins of ingratitude and disloyalty were compounded by the fact that a race both indolent and ignorant, incapable of managing its own affairs though adept at plucking the fruit from the coping of the alls of others, had dreamt up for itself a heroic past which made Ireland the cradle of European civilisation and the bog peasant the descendant of kings.⁷¹

This legacy seemed to have an active impact on Keon's mind. In an interview during the mid-1980s, Keon stated that after "battling round at odd jobs for a while" he joined Bessie Calwell's *Irish Review* (hereafter referred to as the *Review*) as manager and editor.⁷² Patrick O'Farrell asserts that a certain percentage of the Irish-orientated Australian population was suffering from a "fairytale" syndrome in the 1920s and 1930s. In his eyes, the *Review* seemed to personify this stream of thought. In O'Farrell's terms, the *Review* centred its attention upon reporting, sometimes to the point of exaggeration, positive news about Ireland, Catholicism, and all things Irish:

⁶⁹ M.Pawsey, "Aliens In A British And Protestant Land: Early Culture Clashes In Victoria", C.Kiernan(Ed), *Australia and Ireland 1788-1988- Bicentenary Essays*, p.75.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, pp.77-8.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p.77.

⁷² Watson, *Op.cit.*, p.241.

As carrier information on Ireland, the *Review's* news was all good, its stories all positive, its pictures picturesque- which was what was wanted in Irish Australia.⁷³

According to O'Farrell, "Irish Illusions" were paramount for some individuals who operated at the bottom echelons of an Anglophile-dominated society.⁷⁴ Certainly, it seems Keon was influenced by some of these pro-Irish illusions. This fascination and devotion with the "old country" was only encouraged by his mother. Indeed, Callinan recalls that Jane Keon would play a regular and integral part in helping her son with *Review* subscriptions and other newspaper-related chores.⁷⁵

Certainly, Keon found that he could use his Irish roots as an avenue to continue promoting the common-man and Catholicism. Such a scenario can be explained, in detail, when one explores the work which Stephen Alomes has performed in linking the actions of many Irish-Australian activists with an intrinsic desire to favour the common man's and Catholicism's cause. Keon undoubtedly fits within this model of analysis. Indeed, Alomes' theory equates with the type of articles which were produced inside the *Review* in the 1930s, under Keon's editorship.

a) Pro-Common Man Inclinations

Stephen Alomes notes that by the turn of the twentieth century, Australia was very much tied to Britain. The steamship and the telegraph ensured that Australia remained close to Britain in areas

⁷³ P.O'Farrell, *The Irish In Australia*, p.295.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ Callinan, Interview, 2 May 1994.

associated with investment, trade, immigration, and defence. This last point of association, as Alomes notes, meant that Australia's view of the world was shaped by British imperial concerns, the price of naval protection.⁷⁶ With the coming of World War One and the Russian Revolution, a desire to maintain and protect all things British was promoted by the pro-Empire element of Australian society. As this phobia entered the sphere of personal liberty and resulted in five thousand "obscene" and "seditious" books being banned by the 1930s, Alomes argues that "the Devil who threatened social order could be Catholic or Protestant, Communist or Profiteer, German or Jew".⁷⁷

This devotion towards the British cause, notes Alomes, inevitably made for a monocultural Australian society. This scenario was well-suited to a great number of middle and upper-middle class people who followed the news and events of "Home". A small percentage of these individuals enhanced their ties to the "old country" by having their children educated at Cambridge or Oxford. This "British" elite, as Alomes terms them, extended their affinity with the Empire via regular return visits.⁷⁸

Anti-British sentiment would have flourished in Keon's psyche given his modest Irish origins and the family's inability to sustain him economically, despite his scholarship success. Indeed, one can see how the young Keon, growing up in a "British-dominated" Australia, would have found shelter in his Irish roots and in the concomitant belief that agents of the Empire were responsible for the worsening plight of the

⁷⁶ S.Alomes, "Culture, Ethnicity, And Class In Australia's Dominion Period, 1900-39", in C.Kiernan(Ed.), *Australia And Ireland 1788-1988- Bicentenary Essays*, p.186.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p.187.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

common man. Alomes, in this sense, provides the scene which could quite easily have dominated young Keon's mind:

In this context, a simplistic picture can be offered of a divide between two polar worlds, an imperialist, loyalist, Protestant, self-consciously British and conservative middle-class society and a nationalist, Catholic, Labor and self-consciously Irish and radical working-class society.⁷⁹

The *Review*, under Keon's editorship, constantly mirrored this desire to simultaneously champion the common man's cause and chastise the British for their previous "economic sins" in Ireland. On 1 April 1934, the *Review* outlined its hostile stance toward the British by proclaiming that "England's game in Ireland is up".⁸⁰ According to the *Review*, after obtaining its independence Ireland was now free of the economic exploitation which had characterised its past. In the *Review's* eyes, Britain had retarded the Irish manufacturing sector to the point where it could not compete with imported products. The goods brought in to make up this shortfall in domestic output came from Britain. Seeing that the British had monopoly access to the Irish market, distributors used every opportunity to increase prices. This scenario, argued the *Review*, caused a period of prolonged economic downturn which fabricated two negative effects for Ireland. First, its youth was made to migrate in droves. Not only did this underline the economic deficiencies inside Ireland, argued the periodical, but also "lessened the risk of an armed uprising".⁸¹ Secondly, this exodus also contributed to a dwindling rural base. In the final analysis, underlined the *Review*, this situation allowed the British to turn:

⁷⁹ *Ibid*, p.189.

⁸⁰ *Irish Review*, Number 15, 1 April 1934, p.1.

⁸¹ *Ibid*.

the prosperous farms of Ireland into cattle ranches to provide England with food in years of peace and security in time of war.⁸²

It was very important to Keon that, unlike its previous British occupiers, the Irish Free State remained committed to the common man in its objectives. Keon wanted favourable economic conditions for individuals such as farmers and other individuals "on the land".⁸³ When the de Valera Government had sanctioned the erection of three new beet sugar mills, the *Review* under Keon's editorship could not conceal its overwhelming enthusiasm. The periodical argued that such a program would cut Ireland's balance of payments deficit since £750,000 had previously been spent annually to import sugar. More specifically, however, the *Review* argued that this would expand the rural sector and provide "useful employment in industry to thousands who would otherwise be without an income."⁸⁴

Keon's devotion to the common man's cause was underlined further in 1935 when he questioned some of the policies advocated by the Irish President, Eammon de Valera. In January of that year, Keon used the editorial space to argue that de Valera, while "full of good intentions", was falling prey to international money lenders who were more than ready to see Ireland fall under the "manacles of financial servitude".⁸⁵ According to Keon, de Valera's economic path could be equated with disaster. Keon described the Irish leader's use of taxes to pay for the poor's meat consumption costs as a process of "robbing Peter to pay

⁸² *Ibid.*

⁸³ "A Month of Progress", *Irish Review*, 1 February 1935, p.4.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁸⁵ "The Banker's Technique", *Irish Review*, No.24, 1 January 1935, p.4.

Paul".⁸⁶ The Irish Government in his view, could only create real wealth if it made tax revenue available for loans inside the community. Such a process, he indicated, would create real wealth since it would aid the expansion of domestic production and increase employment. This, in turn, would allow the Government to extract money from an expanded economic base to fulfil its social justice objectives. De Valera's attempts to redistribute wealth, while "admirable", were in Keon's mind quite "childish". Moreover, this situation Keon argued was not increasing Ireland's money supply and placed the government in a position where it had no choice but to borrow from foreign sources at exaggerated rates of interest. Indeed, Keon outlined both his sympathy and disappointment with deValera through the following comments:

poor Mr.de Valera is struggling along, full of good intentions, in a hopeless mix-up between real wealth and money, building homes for his people by means of new money lent to him by international bankers. Every home so built is a mortgage on Ireland's future, and a new generation, hailing the spectre of political liberty, will find itself shackled[...].⁸⁷

In the April 1935 edition of the *Review*, Keon once more attacked deValera on the grounds of economic mismanagement. Although Keon applauded the positive transformation of Irish industry over the last thirteen years and the material prosperity which was "available for every man, woman and child in the twenty-six [Irish Republican] Counties", he argued that a large underclass was developing. Indeed, Keon argued, as the number of destitute individuals had jumped from 128,034 in December 1934 to 141,024 in February 1935 it was obvious that not all were enjoying the fruits of economic prosperity. The fault, stressed Keon, lay in de Valera's continued persistence in limiting the money

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

supply. According to Keon, this policy was having a catastrophic effect on both the urban and rural sector of the economy:

Farmers in their tens of thousands are on the dole because they cannot dispose of their produce. Unemployed in the cities in their tens of thousands are on the dole because they cannot afford to buy the farmer's produce which they and their wives and children urgently need.⁸⁸

Certainly, Keon's disenchantment with de Valera's economic stance was stretched to a further degree when he attacked the Irish statesman's view on how to remedy the situation. In order to dissolve this "destitute" class, Keon argued contrary to de Valera's reasoning, employment growth would be of no benefit to Ireland if wages did not equate with standard of living costs. Indeed, argued Keon, it was simply absurd that a sizeable portion of the Irish population were being excluded from the nation's recent prosperity because of de Valera's money supply policy:

Mr. de Valera has built a fine and rapidly filling reservoir- but the people find the modest trickle coming out of their taps. And if he cannot or will not enlarge the pipes there is a grave fear lest he may find his reservoir suddenly undermined. The Irish people can understand, and the centuries have shown that they endure material scarcity in the noblest spirit. But the same logic which kept the spark of independence alive for seven hundred years will not permit them to brook overlong the spectacle of a mechanically produced plenty while the tender of the machine and the man displaced by the machine suffer an artificial and a needless scarcity.⁸⁹

b) Catholicism

Keon's Irish roots also allowed him to develop his pro-Catholic stance. Certainly, as Alomes outlines, these allegiances to Ireland and Catholicism were strengthened by the sectarian nature of Australian society as Keon entered school in the 1920s. According to Alomes, the conscription issue, which focused on whether or not military service should become mandatory during World War One, had served as a

⁸⁸ "Machines and Men", *Irish Review*, No.27, 1 April 1935, p.4.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

vehicle to underline the hostility between Australians of British-Protestant origin and those of Irish-Catholic descent. Irish-Catholics were seen as traitors to the British Empire for supporting the anti-conscription cause. Archbishop Daniel Mannix's open criticism of conscription only served to validate such suspicions. This conspiracy theory, claims Alomes, would have gained further currency in pro-British minds when Prime Minister W.M Hughes' pro-conscription faction split from the ruling ALP Government. Only three Catholics were to be found amongst Hughes' twenty-six member group.⁹⁰

This sectarian gulf which characterised the period between the two world wars and coincided with Keon's youth was in Alomes' terms, "institutionalised in school curricula". Whilst Protestant and state school pupils were made to study maps that outlined the greatness of the British Empire, Alomes points out that Catholic children would have had their education syllabus complemented by Australian nationalism and pro-Irish sentiment.⁹¹ Indeed, in no instance was the sectarian divide more evident than during St.Patrick's Day and Empire Day. The two occasions, notes Alomes, were known for their tendencies to promote either the Irish-Catholic or British-Protestant line. Empire Day as an event which celebrated Britain's stature on the world stage was sometimes ridiculed by Catholic priests and teachers. St.Patrick's Day once, in Alomes terms, a "relatively unimportant [religious] occasion", had been transformed into a pro-Irish festival. The tensions between the two factions reached boiling point in 1922 when the Irish-Catholic

⁹⁰ Alomes, *Op.cit.*, p.191.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

community in Melbourne openly defied a pro-Protestant City Council decree which banned the St.Patrick's Day march from taking place.⁹²

Keon was certainly influenced by this turn of events. As mentioned by contemporaries such as Bolger and Allan McDonald, Keon was an active and enthusiastic participant in St.Patrick's Day marches. Keon's Irish-Catholic roots were also underlined during his period in the *Review*. Indeed, when new sugar mills were opened in Ireland during the mid-1930s Keon ensured that the *Review* commemorated the event with a degree of religious fervour. According to the *Review*, the opening of the sugar mills was a symbol of good hope and an affirmation that economic progress was closely allied to spiritual happiness. Keon explained this view in the following words:

The opening of the [sugar] mills was in each case marked by a ceremony which forcibly brings before us the most hopeful note in Ireland's progress. This was the blessing of the mills and their dedication to the Sacred Heart. A country whose rulers and whose people are animated by this spirit can face its future with confidence.⁹³

Certainly, Keon's Irish-Catholic spirit would have been heartened by the support of Archbishop Mannix. As the *Review* was experiencing financial difficulties during 1936, Mannix proclaimed that "it would be a calamity if the *Irish Review* ceased publication".⁹⁴ He affirmed this support by donating £20 to the *Review* "Relief Fund".⁹⁵

c) Pro-Labor Inclinations

⁹² *Ibid*, p.192.

⁹³ "A Month Of Progress", *Irish Review*, No.25, 1 February 1935, p.4.

⁹⁴ *Irish Review*, No.42, 1 July 1936, p.2.

⁹⁵ *Ibid*.

According to Alomes such devotion to the common man and Catholicism ultimately translated in many Irish-Australians joining the ALP. Labor, with its spirit of measured religious tolerance and commitment to egalitarian ideals, was the only avenue available for an individual of Keon's standing. Indeed, Keon had no desire to short-change his Irish roots and conform to the standards of the Anglo-ruling elite. By the turn of the twentieth century, argues Alomes, there existed a political divide which the mainstream parties were more than happy to exploit. Whilst the Catholic working-class tended to join Labor and the Protestant middle-classes pinned their hopes to non-Labor political associations, Australian society became submerged in "cultural ghettos".⁹⁶ A number of Keon's contemporaries, like Vera McDonald and Wilson have already outlined that this scene applied to their own experiences. Indeed, they have stated, for those in inner-city Richmond who were often Catholic and working-class, Labor offered the only path into the political process.⁹⁷ Certainly, by the time Keon joined the ALP at the age of fourteen, Labor represented the "natural" party for Irish-Catholics to join.

According to comments by contemporaries like Tutton and Wilson, Keon's attraction to Labor was only strengthened by the fact that the Party did not inhibit his pro-Irish expression. Tutton states that he often heard many unconfirmed reports of Keon being able to speak Gaelic. Amongst such rumours, Tutton remembers listening to stories of Keon writing his notes in Gaelic whilst inside Federal Parliament. Certainly, as Tutton recalls Keon's affinity with his Irish roots was openly flaunted inside the Yarra electoral office, where there was a host

⁹⁶ Alomes, *Op.cit.*, p.192.

⁹⁷ V.McDonald, Interview, 30 April 1994 and Wilson, Interview, 1 May 1994.

of Gaelic literature on hand.⁹⁸ At the same time, however, there is no doubt that Keon's devotion to the Irish cause would sometimes reach exaggerated proportions. Wilson remembers that often, at the end of Richmond ALP meetings, Keon would compel his supporters to sing "God Save Ireland".⁹⁹

6) Keon's Catholic Roots

In his late teens and early twenties Keon further increased ties with the Church by joining the Catholic Young Man's Society (hereafter known as CYMS). Keon's association with the CYMS resulted in him continuing to promote his Catholic activism and allegiances to the common man.

a) CYMS Origins

The CYMS was the creation of a Father Sheridan in the 1850s. Feeling the need to establish a degree of solidarity amongst the faithful resident inside New South Wakes, Sheridan established the first CYMS at Sacred Heart, Darlinghurst, along a model that had earlier been instituted in Irish parishes by the Dean of Limerick. Chris McConville notes that CYMS meetings did not occur in Melbourne until at least the next decade. In 1860, he states, St. Francis Church Hall was being used for CYMS debates. Ten years later the same practice was being followed in Keon's future home base in Richmond at the Catholic Church Hall.¹⁰⁰ By 1873 the CYMS was looking to form an extended suburban branch

⁹⁸ Tutton, Interview, 30 April 1994.

⁹⁹ Wilson, Interview, 1 May 1994.

¹⁰⁰ C. McConville, *Croppies, Celts, and Catholics: The Irish In Australia*, pp.70-1.

base. Under the guidance of a Jesuit priest, Father O'Malley, eighty members attended meetings on the first Friday of every month with a desire to achieve this objective. By the end of the 1890s, McConville notes, the CYMS program of "social and intellectual welfare" was floundering in most suburbs. In some places, however, membership lists persisted to possess respectable figures because of sizeable Irish-Catholic bases. No-where was this scenario more illustrated than in Keon's future home of Richmond, where a membership of two-hundred-and-fifty was maintained.¹⁰¹

Although McConville is convinced that the CYMS was struggling in numerical terms at this time, there is no doubt that the faithful were still motivated by grand visions. The *Austral Light*, for example, as the CYMS' official publication of the time, was convinced that only a negative attitude would hinder the organisation from forming a Federal Union structured around promoting the Catholic faith. In the *Austral Light's* eyes, there were sixty-thousand Catholic men in Australia, who if trained correctly, could be used as "a regular tug of war against the devils of secularism and infidelity".¹⁰² The publication expressed this view fully through the following comments:

Mutual Improvements would be set going [through a Federal Union]- the young men would be trained- would train one another for the Battle of Life. There would be twenty holy communions amongst Catholic young men where there is now one, and a general increase of fervour and holiness would take place throughout the land. Good Catholic lives are bound to influence good Protestant lives, and there may be many more conversions than now. One thing would be quite certain. The young men would form a body of collectors for school and church purposes. Catholic scholarships would increase; Catholic schools would be built; and Catholic churches would be improved. The priests everywhere would find help and aid in their work, and an immense impetus must result to Catholicity.¹⁰³

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p.73.

¹⁰² P.O'Farrell(Ed.), *Documents In Australian Catholic History- Volume 2 1848-1968*, pp.46-7.

¹⁰³ *Ibid*, p.49.

Naomi Turner, in her own research, argues that by the 1930s, which corresponds with Keon's period of activity, the CYMS had not realised its hopes of being a grand and dynamic forum for intellectual discussion amongst the Catholic laity. Indeed, she argues, CYMS societies around Melbourne had become nothing more than avenues for sporting competition. This claim, argues Turner, can be sustained when one studies the activities of the Footscray CYMS in mid-1937. At this time, the Footscray branch boasted of its Australian-Rules football team and began preparing for the upcoming local inter-church sports carnival.¹⁰⁴ Certainly for at least one of Keon's contemporaries, Allan McDonald, the possibility of participating in a competitive football league played a major role in his decision to join the CYMS.¹⁰⁵ In such an environment, argues Turner, "there was little chance of such a club becoming involved in more serious matters such as politics and the spiritual development of its members".¹⁰⁶

C.H Jory, for his part, gives a different view of events. Jory admits that the 1920s were marked by a lack of "intellectual consciousness" inside the CYMS. The collapse of intellectually inspired groupings like the Ozanam Club, CYMS Business Institute, and CYMS Forum during this period certainly illustrates this point. At the same time, argues Jory, the economic depression of the 1930s changed this scenario. Indeed, the frightening trend of economic instability caused a sizeable portion of the Society's membership to confront "the intellectual and ideological challenges posed by the depression era". For many, like Michael F.Hynes of the Oakleigh CYMS branch who was to play a large role in

¹⁰⁴ N.Turner, *Catholics In Australia- A Social History Volume 1*, p.217.

¹⁰⁵ A.McDonald, Interview, 2 May 1994.

¹⁰⁶ Turner, *Op.cit.*, p.217.

the formation of the Society's periodical, the *Catholic Young Man* (hereafter referred to as the CYM), the desire to inject intellectual vigour into this organisation resulted in close links being forged with the University-based Campion Society. Indeed, this alliance between the associations became so strong that the early issues of the CYM catered for both CYMS and Campion interests.¹⁰⁷

b) Catholic Activism

Keon was among those who used the CYMS to gain an informal education. This experience played a further part in shaping him as a Catholic activist. Inside the Society, Keon was amongst those who were taught to link their religious teachings with public speaking, organisational skills, and intellectual stimulation.

In the mid-1980s Keon acknowledged that his fluency when speaking in the public arena could be attributed to his time in the CYMS. Indeed, in Keon's words, "the CYMS taught us how to debate and to stand up under pressure".¹⁰⁸ Keon's prestige inside CYMS debating circles reached its apex during July 1939. At the first open speech championship held by the Society during that year Keon acted as Chairman. His own CYMS branch, Cathedral, would have undoubtedly missed their star debater. In the opening rounds of the competition, Cathedral found itself cemented to a mid-table position on the "A" Grade ladder- eight points adrift from the leaders, East Kew and Kew.¹⁰⁹ Keon

¹⁰⁷ C.H Jory, *The Campion Society*, p.46.

¹⁰⁸ T.Prior, "Old Mate's Tribute To Frank Mac", *The Sun*, p.8.

¹⁰⁹ "The Debate", *CYM*, Vol.6, No.7, July 1939, p.20.

became permanent Chairman of the CYMS Debating Association during that year after succeeding F.Carrig. This meant that Keon's absence from the Cathedral debating team became permanent throughout the season. His loss was sorely felt- Cathedral failed in its bid to attain premiership or runners-up honours.¹¹⁰ Meanwhile, Keon's reputation as an able debater continued to soar. Keon, as Cathedral's only representative, was chosen in the CYMS' elite debating squad of eight to compete in the prestigious South Street competition, in Ballarat¹¹¹

At the same time, Keon was also participating at the highest echelons of the CYMS' organisational structure. In August 1937, he was elected to the Melbourne Board of Management.¹¹² By December of that year the membership showed full confidence in his ability by re-electing him to the Board.¹¹³ During this same period Keon had just finished spells on the *CYM* editorial staff and as liaison officer for the same periodical.¹¹⁴ In 1939, probably because of his appointment to the Victorian Public Service Association, Keon did not seek re-election to the Board.¹¹⁵ At the same time, argues Browne in his own independent study, Keon maintained a forcible influence inside the CYMS' organisational structure. For example, in the mid 1940s, he demonstrated support for his ex-colleagues by moving a motion inside the CYMS Council which

¹¹⁰ "Debating", *CYM*, Vol.6, No.12, December 1939, p.17.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹¹² *CYM*, Vol.4, No.9, 6 September 1937, p.3; and; G.Browne, *A Catholic Young Man*, p.7.

¹¹³ *CYM*, Vol.5, No.2, May 1938, p.3; *CYM*, Vol.5, No.6, June 1938, p.3; *CYM*, Vol.5, No.7, July 1938, p.3; and; G.Browne, *A Catholic Young Man*, p.7.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁵ *CYM*, Vol.6, No.5, May 1939; *CYM*, Vol.6, No.7, July 1939, p.3; *CYM*, Vol.6, No.10, October 1939, p.3; *CYM*, Vol.6, No.12, December 1939, p.3.

allowed the Board to obtain special war-time powers. His popularity and degree of seniority inside the CYMS reached its apex during December 1940 when he was elected senior vice-president for twelve months.¹¹⁶

The oratorical and organisational skills which Keon obtained inside the CYMS were complemented by a degree of intellectual education. Whilst delivering his eulogy in January 1987, L.F Mahony stated that Keon became fascinated in the 1930s with the papal encyclical, *Rerum Novarum*.. This document concerned itself with addressing the injustices that had been inflicted upon the working classes and preserving the dignity of all humanity. According to Mahony, it was inevitable that Keon would gravitate towards Catholic Social thought and oppose both capitalism and Communism.¹¹⁷ Scully agrees and argues that both capitalism and Communism were seen as "corrupt" political practices by Keon because they supposedly placed centralised institutions above the individual.¹¹⁸ Patrick O'Farrell, in his own research, extends the argument presented by Mahony and Scully by indicating that Keon was part of a growing Australian Catholic intellectual tradition, which before the 1930s had been non-existent. O'Farrell described this new movement of Catholicism amongst the laity as being "...dynamic...with a deep, indeed passionate, social commitment".¹¹⁹ The *Catholic Worker*, issued monthly from January 1936, was at the forefront of this Christian program to bring about a social order based on Catholic Social teachings. In order to impose this

¹¹⁶ Browne, Op.cit, p.11.

¹¹⁷ L.F Mahony, Eulogy of S.M Keon, 27 January 1987, p.2.

¹¹⁸ Scully, Interview, 21 January 1993.

¹¹⁹ P.O'Farrell, *The Catholic Church In Australia: A Short History 1788-1967*, p.268.

doctrine of thought it sought to challenge the concept of the servile state, as discussed by Hilaire Belloc. According to the *Catholic Worker*, modern society had induced the family's decline, depopulation, rural sector decay, and fostered the growth of two economic doctrines, capitalism and Communism, which although were incompatible to one another, oppressed the individual's right to a "free" existence.¹²⁰

There is evidence that Keon, himself, was an active participant in this new intellectual Catholic collective. In August 1937, the *CYM* reported that a sub-committee known as the "Legion" had been formed. The principal aim behind the "Legion" was to expand study groups which had already been established with the assistance of the Campion Society. The most immediate goal, argued the *CYM*, was the need for eight more study groups to be formed in the metropolitan area and for country branches to increase their involvement.¹²¹ C.H Jory, in his own research, notes that Keon was appointed inaugural Secretary of the "Legion". The success he enjoyed in this capacity is underlined by the increased number of "legionnaires" that had been indoctrinated inside the CYMS by March 1938. Amidst the one-hundred existing country and metropolitan CYMS branches Keon and his associates had managed to establish thirty "Legion" study groups.¹²²

Eighteen months later, Keon and his associates' desire for increased success in this field had gained further momentum. By December 1939 the "Legion" was convinced that it had an active role in promoting the

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*

¹²¹ "Editorial Notes And Notions- The Legion", *CYM*, Vol.4, No.8, 5 August 1937, p.8.

¹²² C.H Jory, *The Campion Society and Catholic Social Militancy In Australia 1929-39*, p.114.

program of Catholic Action- a Vatican sponsored initiative which encouraged the laity to play an active role in translating Church-approved policy into the public sphere. The *CYM* reported during the period that CYMS Catholic Study groups housed two-hundred-and-fifty "militants" amongst twenty-six metropolitan and eight country branches. At the same time, the publication suggested that current efforts needed to be re-doubled if the Society was to become a true agent of Catholic Action:

It is realised that if our Society is to become an approved Catholic Action Society, we must develop this movement fully, and in doing so, greater spirituality must be demanded of members.¹²³

Such expanded efforts included monthly and quarterly communions, increased attendance of mass, and participation in study classes.¹²⁴

c) Keon's Support Of The Common Man/ Self-Betterment

The CYMS also allowed Keon to further his belief in defending the common-man. This process was helped by the fact that the CYMS allowed Keon, himself of modest origins, to express his abilities and gain confidence at very little financial expense. Indeed, the CYMS used sport as a means of injecting self-confidence and camaraderie amongst its membership.

Contemporaries from the period indicate that Keon took running very seriously and was constantly competitive in the field. Callinan described Keon as "a very good sprinter".¹²⁵ Jim Bolger concurs on a more

¹²³ "CYMS Legion", *CYM*, Vol.6, No.12, December 1939, p.13.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*

¹²⁵ Callinan, Interview, 2 May 1994.

detailed basis. According to Bolger, Keon's desire for self-improvement was evident at a very early age. Bolger remembers that both he and Keon joined the CYMS "Harriers" Amateur Running Club after leaving school. According to Bolger, Keon showed great potential in the sport. Although blessed with ability, the young Keon found that he could not keep competing in a club guernsey which was plagued with holes. Rather than forego his chance to excel in the sporting discipline, Keon was able to stay in the club by negotiating a two-shilling fee for Bolger's guernsey.¹²⁶

There is no doubt that Keon, himself, took his running commitments very seriously. Keon is listed as the secretary of the CYMS Amateur Athletics Club for the 1932-3 and 1937 seasons.¹²⁷ At the end of 1935 he was such an integral part of the CYMS running squad that he was competing in the one-hundred, two-hundred-and-twenty, and four-hundred-and-forty yard races at C level.¹²⁸ The CYM noted Keon's zestful desire to succeed at any cost and was convinced that his maximum potential had not yet been realised:

He [Keon] will earn promotion to 'A' Grade during 1936. [Keon] is notable for his tenacity at the end of a race.¹²⁹

The camaraderie and spirit which Keon obtained from his involvement in a team environment ultimately translated into a desire to help those in need. The events leading up to the death of a fellow Cathedral CYMS member, Christopher Hogan, underline this point. On 18 March 1940

¹²⁶ Bolger, Interview, 5 May 1994.

¹²⁷ "Amateur Athletic Club, Season 1932-3", *CYM*, Vol.1, No.2, December 1933, p.14; and; *CYM*, 25 January 1937, p.21.

¹²⁸ "Athletic Club Entities", *CYM*, 28 March 1935, p.40.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*

Keon was called to the Austin Hospital where he was informed that Hogan's only chance of survival lay in a blood transfusion. The *CYM* states that Keon immediately volunteered, and upon finding out the unsuitability of his blood promptly began a campaign aimed towards finding a compatible donor:

Scouting for volunteers among local members Stan [Keon] found all contacted willing, but again all tests were negative. At the branch meetings that evening volunteers were called for from Cathedral and Heidelberg branches, the former proceeding to St.Vincent's, the latter to the Austin Hospital to offer their services. From Heidelberg's volunteers a satisfactory sample was obtained, and on Tuesday, Kevin Neylan unselfishly gave of his blood in a last desperate move to save his fellow member.¹³⁰

The efforts of Keon and his colleagues, however, were of no avail. Six operations in the last three months had taken their toll on Hogan and the transfusion could not restore his health.¹³¹

7) The Emergence Of Three Overriding Principles In Keon's Life.

In tracing Keon's family origins, youthful experiences, Irish roots, and involvement in Catholic social circles, it is clear that his early thinking was structured around promotion of the common man, religious faith, and disdain for the anti-Labor parties. Certainly, Keon's desire to champion the common man was symptomatic of his own modest origins and his parents will to maintain an air of confidence despite their humble existence. Contemporaries such as Philip Keon, Vera McDonald and Peg Wilson testify to Philip and Jane's determination to manufacture an air of confidence in their home. School friends such as Bolger and Vera McDonald explain that the young Stan acquired his

¹³⁰ "Prominent Cathedral Member Passes", *CYM*, Vol.7, No.4, April 1940, p.11.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*

parents belief in self-betterment by taking a very keen interest in a cross-section of school subjects. Their account is most accurate when one considers that Keon won a scholarship which, if not for more pressing economic concerns at home, would have seen him attend Xavier College. It also became obvious during the same period that Keon was interested in seeing fellow underdogs also improve their condition in life. Bolger has already testified that, during their school days, Keon often went out of his way to defend smaller children from more sizeable opponents. As Keon matured and ventured beyond the realms of the school playground, such a description could be used as a metaphor to describe his sympathy for the underdog. Callinan's description of Keon's attitude during his time at Radio Corporation certainly provides ample evidence to sustain this contention. Later in life, as a senior member of the editorial staff at the *Irish Review*, Keon continued to promote the common man's cause. Meanwhile, at the CYMS Keon chose athletics as an outlet to express his ideas of self-betterment on the sporting track. He also persisted in showing, as with the case of Christopher Hogan, his affection for the underdog.

Catholicism also influenced Keon during his formative years. Although Keon's parents conceived his three brothers out of wedlock, he was born three years after their marriage. Views presented by Wilson, Pead, and Allan McDonald suggest that Keon's parents took their religion most seriously in latter life. Certainly, Keon's parents would not have been disappointed with their son's attitude towards religion during adolescence and his young manhood. The *Irish Review*, under Keon's guidance, was firmly aligned with the Church. Furthermore, Keon chose the CYMS to further his Catholic ties, as well as to develop invaluable public speaking, organisational, and intellectual skills.

The third theme of Keon's early life is related to an intense dislike of the anti-Labor parties. Although this element of thought was not as profound in Keon's mind as his devotion to the common man and Catholicism, it played a sufficient role in governing many of his future actions. By his own admission in the mid-1980s, Keon stated that he followed his parents into the ALP in the belief that the major anti-Labor parties had no interest in helping people, such as himself, who came from the lower end of the socio-economic scale. Alomes provides the theory to highlight this point, and Vera McDonald and Wilson demonstrate that they joined the ALP on the same grounds as Keon.

As Keon entered the public arena in 1939 it soon became evident that pro-common man inclinations, Catholicism, and hostility towards the anti-Labor parties would play the overriding role in dictating his actions throughout life. Keon's devotion to such themes can be seen in six different stages which for the purpose of this study will be subdivided into the following broad headings: "public life", "the split", "post-split", "later life", "involvement with the reformed DLP", and "death". Before we turn to the first section which will support the above contention, it must be made clear that although Keon possessed an obvious affection for the common individual's cause, his appeal to ordinary people operated within the confines of a restricted boundary. Whilst Keon possessed political charisma that would often mesmerise individuals, he left very little impression with most people on a social level. His limitations in this respect, argue Keon's contemporaries, was connected to his inability to build intimate relationships with women.

8) Why Keon Did Not Marry

During the height of Keon's political career in the early 1950s a journalist named Allan Reid wrote that "he[Keon] has the intensity and zeal to work unceasingly and without sparing himself for the achievement of his objectives".¹³² When discussing Keon's non-marital status contemporaries such as Wilson, Philip Keon, and Monica Murnane indicate that they sympathise with Reid's assessment. Indeed, the three are adamant that Keon did not seriously consider marriage because of political and familial obligations. Wilson, for her part, whilst arguing that "women did not play a part in his life", simultaneously dismisses any suggestion that Keon's visible disinterest in members of the opposite sex was based on homosexuality. Rather, argues Wilson, Keon's bachelor status was aligned to a belief that politics was "a full time job that required no distraction".¹³³ Philip Keon states that he never questioned his uncle personally about his non-marital status. On reflection he agrees with those who contend that his uncle could not dedicate himself to any particular girl because of more pressing commitments. According to Philip Keon, his uncle spent most of his adult life looking after the family and people of Richmond. Indeed, he argues, Keon was a "great provider" for the family and unceasingly cared for both his parents up to the time of their death.¹³⁴ Monica Murnane, another of Keon's political disciples in the 1940s, agrees with such comments but maintains that although her former mentor was never able to forge an intimate relationship with any woman, he still

¹³² A.Reid, "Labor Party May Be Divided By Referendum Result", *The Sunday Sun And Guardian*, p.28.

¹³³ Wilson, Interview, 1 May 1994.

¹³⁴ P.Keon, Interview, 3 May 1994.

treated members of the opposite sex with the highest degree of respect. Murnane remembers that he would often drive her home in his motor vehicle. When she became engaged to be married, however, he would only accompany her home if she travelled in the backseat.¹³⁵

On the other side of this assessment, there are those who are convinced that Keon's non-marital status was related more to an inability to understand and communicate with women, rather than any other factor. Callinan expresses such sentiments on the issue. While he agrees that Keon had an unending zest for political activity, he also stresses Keon possessed no real understanding of females or marital commitment. Callinan states that his late wife in particular did not like Keon's conduct. Callinan expressed this view through the following comments:

She objected to his dominant control over me. We still lived in Richmond for a few years after we were married. He'd [often] come knocking on the door at ten o'clock [in the evening] and say 'we're going to put some [political] posters up'. I'd [often] be with him until midnight [completing the task]. If he[Keon] wanted something done he'd call on me- no matter how it would affect [the mood at my] home.¹³⁶

Vera McDonald adds to this portrait of a man who found it impossible to find emotional bonding with females. Although McDonald argues that Keon "admired" women for the tasks they performed in his electoral office, she cannot remember seeing him "going [out] with anyone".¹³⁷

McDonald remembers that Keon had a "tremendous" respect for elderly citizens and other common people. Yet despite his hard work in this field, McDonald laments that Keon could not translate his political

¹³⁵ M.Murnane, Interview, 1 May 1994.

¹³⁶ Callinan, Interview, 2 May 1994.

¹³⁷ V.McDonald, Interview, 30 April 1994.

ability into the social sphere. Indeed, she argues, Keon "didn't have the charm of manner to be appreciated" by many of the individuals he aided. McDonald argues that this fact was often highlighted when Keon as the Federal Member for Yarra and Frank Scully, his political ally and Richmond's Legislative Assembly representative, worked on social initiatives together. McDonald argues that Keon would often be the instigator of most projects, yet he rarely obtained full praise from his electors. Keon, she argues, for all his political brilliance could not charm people:

It used to hurt me. They [people] loved Frank because he would take old ladies hands and smile. [Although] Stan would [also] do it all, he didn't have the same charisma [towards women].¹³⁸

Keon's apparent timidity towards women is underlined to a further degree when Bolger brings forward one instance during the 1930s. Bolger remembers that his sister Blanche attracted Keon during the period. At the same time, Keon did not have the confidence to confront Bolger's sister with his strong sentiments:

They got on well- I would have loved [to see] them [get] married. Stan loved my sister but he couldn't push himself to say 'Blanche I'd like you to be my wife'.¹³⁹

This inability to leave a positive mark in the minds of the opposite sex continued to plague Keon's conduct in latter life. Keon dined with the Lugar family on some occasions during the latter stages of his life. Shirley Lugar admits that she was aware of Keon's "reputation" as a public speaker and his history as a "rising star" of the ALP during the 1940s and 1950s. Yet, despite this knowledge she remained unimpressed with his demeanour:

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ Bolger, Interview, 5 May 1994.

[Keon] wasn't a great dresser [or] conversationalist. [He was] fairly quiet in manner- probably a loner. [I] never thought of him as a leader. He never commanded [respect] like [Frank] McManus.¹⁴⁰

Indeed, there is sufficient evidence to suggest that by his latter life Keon found intimate relationships impossible with all people who were not closely tied to his political interests. Indeed, there is every indication that he enjoyed only a tepid relationship with his brother, Frank. Although both brothers lived together until Frank's death in 1986, Browne asserts that "they were totally different personalities and neither had much time for the other".¹⁴¹ Certainly, if Browne's words are measured against Frank Keon's will they seem to be justified. Despite leaving \$48,598.33 in liquid assets, Frank did not make Stan a benefactor of his estate.¹⁴² Apart from leaving one-thousand dollar sums to two females, Marie Ryan and Edna Hansan, Frank left all remaining wealth into a "Trust Property". No mention of Stan's name is made throughout the will.¹⁴³

Certainly, there is further evidence to suggest that Keon endured a life of emotional solitude beyond his political and social commitments. The fact that he left ten-thousand dollars in his testament for the maintenance of his dog "Ruffy", carries a message which goes beyond human compassion towards animals. Despite enjoying lunch engagements, political activity and religious devotion, Keon spent his final years as an individual whose emotional limitations amongst humans found full expression through a dog. During one of Pead's

¹⁴⁰ S.Lugar, Interview, 5 May 1994.

¹⁴¹ G.Browne, Standish Michael Keon: An Outline For A Political Biography, p.4.

¹⁴² Will of Francis Tasman Keon, 10 September 1986, No.969/733, p.8.

¹⁴³ Ibid., p.8.

visits, Keon was struck by illness in the late hours of the night. Despite suffering enormously from his diabetes condition, Pead remembers Keon would not accompany the paramedics to hospital without any assurance that his dog was safe. Pead recalls the event through the following words:

One night they [the paramedics] took him in [to hospital]- it was one of those occasions where he may not have come out [alive]. He grabbed my hand and said 'Where's Ruffy?[...] Can you go and find him?' Ruffy was in the front yard and I ran back to Stan and said 'he[Ruffy] is in the front yard'. He[Keon] grabbed my hand and said 'Oh Good'. He was so relieved.¹⁴⁴

Given that the limitations governing Keon's charisma have been underlined, we can now move on towards the first of six periods which highlight his commitment to the common man and Catholicism, and willingness to oppose the anti-Labor political forces.

9) Keon's Public Life

Keon's public life spanned the period between 1939 and 1955. In 1939 he was appointed to the VPSA as General Secretary. In 1945 this position was complemented by his role as Richmond's representative in the Victorian Legislative Assembly. In 1949 Keon resigned from both positions to become the Federal Member for Yarra.

a) Keon's Pro-Common Man Inclinations

Anecdotal evidence suggests that any communication difficulties Keon possessed in his private life were not at all evident during his period in the public eye, between 1939 and 1955. Indeed, Keon used his oratorical skills unsparingly in a bid to motivate ordinary people to rally

¹⁴⁴ Pead, Interview, 12 May 1994.

around his cause. As some of Keon's supporters recall, he would often state that all members of his political contingent had a "social responsibility" to look after the common individual's interests.

Wilson remembers that Keon inspired confidence amongst his supporters by alerting them all to a goal which went beyond gaining office. According to Wilson, Keon underlined to his followers that their participation in local politics was connected to social duty. Wilson's "higher calling" came in the early 1950s when Keon asked her to nominate for a vacancy on the Richmond City Council. After showing initial signs of hesitation, Wilson was lured into the position by Keon's insistence:

He[Keon] told me to 'have a go and try. There are people supporting you. You can do it and you *have* to do it'.¹⁴⁵

Indeed, Keon's ability to attract support for his pro-common man policies went beyond the ranks of those who were motivated by political action. Even a more politically ambivalent character like Allan McDonald was impressed by Keon's conduct. McDonald remembers that Keon would always tell his supporters they were compelled by "social obligation" to help those who came from the lower strata of society. For all his disinterest in political discourse, McDonald states that this attitude impressed him to the point where he "would knock on a few doors" at election time to aid Keon's cause.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁵ Wilson, Interview, 1 May 1994.

¹⁴⁶ A.McDonald, Interview, 12 May 1994.

Certainly, Keon's dedication to the common man's cause could be seen by his actions in the Victorian Public Service Association (hereafter known as the VPSA).

Keon was appointed to the General Secretaryship of the VPSA on 1 January 1939. His predecessor, J. McKellar, had resigned from his position after fourteen years on the job. Despite this long association, however, McKellar's split with the VPSA did not occur on the most amicable of grounds. According to the organisation's monthly publication, the *Public Service Journal of Victoria* (hereafter referred to as the *PSJV*), McKellar's departure was due to the fact that he had performed his job unsatisfactorily. Indeed, argued the *PSJV*, this sentiment had been expressed through a plebiscite in the clerical division of the union. The VPSA wanted a Secretary who would go out of his way to fulfil Service objectives related to improved working conditions. Keon was appointed to the position.¹⁴⁷

Although in comparative terms the General Secretary position was lowly paid- only its Tasmanian equivalent received lower wages in Australia- it was still a position of some note. In any case, for Keon, it offered more than any individual who had left school at the age of twelve could expect.¹⁴⁸ Browne, in his own research, is convinced that a letter of recommendation from Arthur Calwell, a former VPSA President, would have almost certainly accompanied Keon's application.¹⁴⁹ Whatever the advantage Keon possessed, his desire to succeed could not be faulted. After impressing a sub-committee which considered an "array of

¹⁴⁷ *PSJV*, 25 February 1939, p.150.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁹ Browne, Standish Michael Keon: An Outline For A Political Biography, p.13.

candidates", Keon qualified as one of three individuals who would be considered for the post. Keon's eventual success in obtaining the position indicates that at the young age of twenty-six he had no insecurities about contesting employment positions that would have attracted people with much more impressive qualifications. Keon's spirit of self-improvement continued to endure throughout this period and such a fact would have impressed senior members of the VPSA. Indeed, the *PSJV* articulated such collective sentiment through the following words:

Mr.Keon bears the good wishes of members. He is young, ambitious and eager to further the objective of the Association.¹⁵⁰

Immediately Keon justified these words with his actions. The *PSJV* , which according to Association rules fell under the General Secretary's control, was soon used by Keon as an effective weapon for articulating his objectives inside the VPSA. If he was going to help the ordinary worker inside his union, Keon was convinced that he needed to install a sense of confidence and righteousness in the membership's psyche. In the first editorial of the new year on 1 January 1940, Keon indicated to his VPSA comrades that they should not be disheartened by the fact that many of its unions demands were not being met by the Victorian State Government. This set of circumstances, he argued, were not related to any incorrect notion that the public servant was an unnecessary component of the state's economy who deserved to be treated with contempt. On the contrary, argued Keon, the state public service had been amongst the main participants in ensuring Victoria's prosperous growth during the last one-hundred years. Certainly, he

¹⁵⁰ *PSJV*, 25 February 1939, p.150.

contended, "the peace, security and progress of [the Victorian] community depends upon [the public service]".¹⁵¹

Keon underlined his devotion to the common man by unceasingly championing the idea of an independent wages board. Keon's prime aim in this instance was to secure more equitable remuneration for his colleagues. His principal foe in this matter was the United Country Party (hereafter referred to as UCP) Premier, Albert Dunstan. The Premier was not at ease with any policy that would see the regulation of service salaries fall beyond the jurisdiction of the Governor-in-Council. Keon, himself, showed contempt for this practice when he criticised the reappointment of James Harnetty as Government representative and chairman of the Public Service Board. According to Keon, Harnetty acted as nothing more than a "device" which the Dunstan administration had used to rubber stamp decisions associated with extending working hours. In Keon's eyes, Harnetty was no friend of the Association, and a fight for reform was now of paramount importance:

His [Harnetty's] appointment is the final disaster, for, as far as the Service is concerned [...]. For the first time, the hollow pretence of a judicial Board is shown quite nakedly as the sham it always was. The Association can now gird its loins and fight without compromise for real reform.¹⁵²

This "fight" continued to rage until the 1945 Victorian State Election campaign. Keon pleaded with his colleagues to disregard Dunstan's claims that an independent Service board, free from Government influence, would indulge in irresponsible wage increases. Indeed, argued Keon, Dunstan's sentiments pertained to a quasi-autocratic ruler who showed no interest in manufacturing a sense of justice that

¹⁵¹ "Editorial", *PSJV*, No.18, 1 January 1940, p.1.

¹⁵² "Well Done, Thou Good And Faithful Servant", *PSJV*, 1 May 1942, p.1.

would equally benefit "the taxpayer, the Parliament and the Service".¹⁵³ Keon added to this assessment of Dunstan in the *PSJV* by using the following note of sarcasm: "Who will rid us of this turbulent Premier?"¹⁵⁴

With the Victorian State Elections two months away, Keon accelerated this attack in the September 1945 edition of the *PSJV*. Dunstan had, during the campaign, outlined his support for any program that would see the VPSA not represented on the Classification Board. For Keon, as both VPSA Secretary and Labor candidate, the choice for any sensible public servant was simple:

We need waste no further time on the Country Party's policy with regard to the Public Service. Public Servants who vote for that policy are obviously beyond advice from any quarter. [By contrast under Labor a] provision would be made in [...] legislation for the establishment of a Public Service Board consisting of an independent chairman, a Government representative and a representative of the Service with power to finally determine salaries and conditions of employment free of the Governor-in-Council.¹⁵⁵

For Keon, his opposition to Dunstan on the classification board issue was vindicated in 1946 when his own Labor Party, after obtaining office, established a wage setting body for the public service which was free of government interference. Indeed, Keon's sense of satisfaction was underlined in the April 1946 edition of the *PSJV* when he proclaimed to his colleagues that "the avenues of justice have been opened to us by this legislation".¹⁵⁶

¹⁵³ "How Long, O Lord, How Long?", *PSJV*, August 1945, p.1.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

This remark of course echoes King Henry II's expressions about Thomas àBeckett, who was eventually executed by royal order.

¹⁵⁵ "November 10th", *PSJV*, September 1943, p.1.

¹⁵⁶ "Eureka", *PSJV*, April 1946, p.1.

Keon's campaign against Dunstan and his active role in supporting the formation of an independent board won him many admirers inside the Association. Indeed, there was a general belief inside the VPSA hierarchy that Keon was destined for greater things. His rise to the ranks of the Victorian State Parliament prompted no surprise amongst the delegates of the 1946 VPSA Annual Conference. One delegate, McDonald, initiated a motion which stipulated that the Association owed its General Secretary a "great debt" for his efforts since 1939. This contention was supported by another delegate, Tehan, who argued that Keon had played an effective lobbying role in getting favourable legislation passed for teachers, the police, and railway workers. The VPSA President, S.T Jennings, went one step further by suggesting that Keon should have been employed four years prior to 1939:

He[Keon] is a great worker. He does not stop when he thinks he has done a fair thing, but he does something more; and that is what has made him so successful.¹⁵⁷

For all the praise Keon received from his VPSA brethren, his rise to Victorian Parliamentary ranks would not have occurred had he not been able to enlist many ordinary Richmond citizens for campaign support. Keon remarked in the early 1980s that he "got into State Parliament in 1945 by a combination of hard work and luck".¹⁵⁸ In precise terms, it was more "hard work" than "luck" which established Keon as Richmond's primary politician of the day. For Keon, it was apparent that his presence inside the State legislature could only be secured and maintained through an efficient organisation of available resources. This process essentially involved two aims. First, an extensive effort was made by Keon to fill the local ALP membership with people who

¹⁵⁷ "Annual Conference Commends General Secretary", *PSJV*, July 1946, p.1.

¹⁵⁸ Watson, *Op.cit.*, p.241.

supported his crusader-type philosophy- which, of course, promoted the common man and Catholic Social teachings, while simultaneously being vehemently opposed to the anti-Labor parties. During the early 1980s, Keon recalled these efforts by stipulating that he "knocked on hundreds of doors to get people to join the ALP and boost the genuine membership".¹⁵⁹ From all indications, this was not in vain. Between 1949 and 1955, Keon had assembled a team of individuals who had come to dominate the Richmond Council. In line with the Keon spirit of promoting the common individual's cause, public works expenditure was accelerated and totalled £13,948.¹⁶⁰ The second measure Keon employed to expand and consolidate his support-base was media-driven. The *Richmond News* was established by Keon in 1946 to articulate and spread his political message throughout the electorate.¹⁶¹ Keon stated in the early 1980s that the publication "was the only way I could get my views across".¹⁶² This would have been invaluable in 1949 when Keon won ALP pre-selection for the federal seat of Yarra.¹⁶³

When Keon finally entered the State chambers he did not disappoint his followers and continually debated issues that were related to championing the common man's cause. During his term, Keon concentrated particular attention on issues related to worker reform in the public service and in attacking businessmen like John Wren who were seen to be exploiting ordinary citizens.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid*

¹⁶⁰ J.McCalman, *Struggletown*, p.239.

¹⁶¹ Watson, *Op.cit.*, p.241.

¹⁶² *Ibid*.

¹⁶³ McCalman, *Op.cit.*, p.232.

Keon's consideration for the ordinary public servant was underlined in a debate on the Public Service Bill. Keon's opinion on this issue came to light during another heated dispute with Dunstan.¹⁶⁴ According to Dunstan, Victoria could only afford to outlay limited funds to its public servants now that it had temporarily lost its income taxing powers. Indeed, he argued, there was no real need, at the present time, to grant state employees wage increases since they were "...the best paid public servants in Australia".¹⁶⁵ According to Keon, Dunstan's remarks were "...typical of the Country Party's outlook on the Public Service".¹⁶⁶ In Keon's mind, Dunstan failed to see that an individual selling his/her labour deserved as much remuneration for his/her efforts as a farmer who sold produce from the land.¹⁶⁷

By the end of 1947, Keon would have felt that his argument had triumphed over Dunstan's views. Keon hailed the decision which sanctioned the introduction of a five-day week into the public service. The Victorian Public Service had traditionally lagged behind any program associated with workplace reform. Indeed, when industrial workers succeeded in curtailing their fifty-six hour week by eight hours, public servants continued to operate under the old conditions. By the time the Service managed to obtain this concession, it soon found itself once more at the bottom end of work-place reform- the forty-eight hour week for many others had been reduced to forty-four. By contrast on 1 January 1948 the Service found itself at the forefront of labour reform- the five day week had not been granted to any sector of the workforce

¹⁶⁴ Public Service Bill, VPD, Session 1945-6, No.220, 19 March 1946, p.801.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid*, p.802.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid*, p.815.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid*.

before that date. Keon, for his own part, went out of his way to inform the VPSA rank and file that this achievement was connected to many years of hard determination. No doubt, as Keon explained at the time, he believed that his contribution had been sizeable:

Because improvements in conditions now come without the desperate struggle characteristic of previous attempts to improve hours, many of those who now enjoy the 40-hour week, either in the form of increased leisure or added overtime payments, do not fully appreciate that these improvements did not just happen automatically. The apparent ease with which they seem to come is only the result of endless negotiations, conferences, etc, operating on foundations laid during the past few years.¹⁶⁸

Keon's defence of the common man in the State chamber also involved attacking businessmen like John Wren. People such as Wren were seen by Keon as individuals who exploited ordinary citizens most readily for their own benefit. Keon launched his attack against Wren during the July 1948 reading of the Police Offences (Race-Meetings) Bill. Under this proposed statute, the Hollway Liberal-Country State Government proposed to merge the Williamstown Racing Club with the Victorian Trotting and Racing Association, which was under the direct influence of John Wren. Furthermore, this newly amalgamated club would have the option of using any of the three available metropolitan race courses.¹⁶⁹

Such a scenario, argued Keon, went against the State Government's previous promise that it would annul proprietary racing. In Keon's eyes, this act not only represented Government retractment of policy, but also indicated the power Wren possessed inside the Country Party. Indeed, argued Keon, this piece of proposed legislation illustrated Wren's role in the fall of the Cain administration during 1947. Certainly, stipulated

¹⁶⁸ "40 Hour Week- Service Hours Reduced From 1st January", *PSJV*, December, January, February, 1947-8.

¹⁶⁹ Police Offences (Race Meetings) Bill, *VPD*, Session 1947-8, Vol.227, pp.1861-88.

Keon, Wren had plotted with Country Party leader of the day, Dunstan, to bring about the fall of a government that had severely regulated racing through the introduction of night-trotting legislation.¹⁷⁰ Indeed, Keon spelled out his theory in no uncertain terms just before the state legislature was suspended for a dinner break:

I withdraw not one iota of my statement that the destruction of the Cain Administration was due largely to the efforts of that gentleman [Wren] because it had introduced night-trotting legislation in this Parliament.¹⁷¹

Wren's response was swift, but Keon remained undaunted. One day after Keon's initial outburst, on 28 July 1948, the leader of the Country Party, John McDonald, read out a letter which had been written by Wren. The businessman challenged Keon to prove his allegations concerning collusive practices with the Country Party. The note was accompanied by a £1000 cheque addressed to the Melbourne Hospital. Wren promised to honour such a payment if any evidence of impropriety could be located. By the same token, concluded the letter, if Keon failed to prove his case he would be bound to donate £200 to the same cause.¹⁷² Typically, Keon dismissed this challenge as a "demeaning and belittling" act which treated parliamentary democracy with contempt. Indeed, argued Keon, the issue was not about bets but the notion of propriety. In this regard Keon implored, without success, the Country-Liberal Government to establish a Royal Commission into Wren's affairs. More specifically, however, as Keon's attack continued during that parliamentary sitting, his reasons for attacking Wren became clear.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p.1870.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p.1871.

¹⁷² Personal Explanations, VPD, Session 1947-8, Vol.227, 28 July 1948, p.1937.

Through the following comments, Keon explained that during his youth Wren had dominated Richmond by using tactics that only benefited himself and inflicted harm on the common individual:

I can well remember going to the Richmond cricket ground and seeing a gang of thugs being handed £1 notes for blocking up the turnstiles. Ever since I saw people I knew standing there with handfuls of money handing out £1 notes to force the Richmond Football Club to Olympic Park because Mr.Wren had an interest in that concern, I have viewed with suspicion and distrust any of that gentlemen's activities, and have refuted any suggestion of having anything to do with them.¹⁷³

For Keon, the fact that Wren was prepared to hire individuals to stop ordinary citizens from watching a football match made him an enemy of the people. Indeed, it visibly appalled Keon that Wren would mastermind a scene where people could get injured at the turnstiles in order to pursue his business interests. It was obvious that for Keon the common people had to be assisted to the highest degree, whilst their perceived oppressors, whether public figures like Dunstan or businessmen such as Wren, were opposed at every available opportunity.

b) Keon's Catholicism

During his period in the public eye, Keon continued to exhibit pro-Catholic inclinations. His support for non-secular education and anti-Communism certainly underline this point.

By the time of his death, Keon was convinced that he had made a sizeable contribution to Catholic education. He left his nephew, Anthony Tobyn Keon, all "...the books, tapes, sketches, artefacts, documents, papers, memorabilia, film and all the material which make up the

¹⁷³ *Ibid*

historical record of the Keon family".¹⁷⁴ He stipulated that his actions were governed by a desire to see

that due recognition is given to the work of the Keon family and its contribution to Australian history, especially in respect of the contribution to Catholic Education made by me and my associates.¹⁷⁵

One of the contributions Keon made to Catholic education occurred during his period in the Victorian State Parliament. He argued during a budget debate in 1949 that there existed inequality in Victorian education. It cost taxpayers £4 12s 3d per-head to educate a child in Victoria. This same figure was unfairly being paid in full by people who made their children attend non-secular schools. This scenario, argued Keon, was laced with injustice especially when one considered that parents who sent their children to state education institutions payed little or no fees. This inequality between both systems was compounded further, he added, when individuals attending state schools had the luxury of possessing libraries that were totally funded by the Victorian Government.¹⁷⁶ Indeed, stated Keon in summarising his argument:

all parents are taxed to meet the cost of the [education] service, and for that reason it should be available to pupils of denominational as well as State Schools.¹⁷⁷

Keon's devotion to the Catholic cause could also be measured by a visible anti-Communist streak. When Prime Minister R.G Menzies scheduled the anti-Communist referendum for 22 September 1951, Keon made no secret of his opinions. Allan Reid, writing a month earlier, noted that the proposed constitutional amendment underlined

¹⁷⁴ Will of Standish Michael Keon, No.977/598, 28 July 1986,p.2.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

¹⁷⁶ Budget Debate, VPD, Session 1949, Number 230, 31 August 1949, p.1681.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

the "precarious truce" which existed in the ALP over the Communist issue. According to Reid, Keon and John "Jack" Mullens represented the principal leaders of a faction inside the ALP which wanted to see Communist activities banned. Both had demonstrated their devotion to the cause by not attending the launch of H.V "Bert" Evatt's intended challenge to the referendum proposal. Both had argued that they were "suffering" from "diplomatic laryngitis".¹⁷⁸ Certainly, Reid's description of events can be supported by the fact that Keon was visibly absent from parliamentary debates which dealt with this issue. Indeed, as Federal Parliament divided to vote on the Constitution Alteration (Powers to Deal with Communists and Communism) Bill on 11 July 1951, Keon was not there to support his party's stance.¹⁷⁹ Today, at least one contemporary, Jim Bolger, admits that Keon was secretly in favour of a Menzies victory.¹⁸⁰

c) Keon's Hostility Towards The Anti-Labor Parties

During his period in public life, Keon showed a great degree of hostility towards the major anti-Labor parties. According to Bolger, Keon opposed the non-Labor political groupings because they offered "no hope" for Richmond's working-class constituents. Bolger admits that Keon believed the Liberals and the Country Party "offered no understanding or answers" for the common-individual.¹⁸¹

¹⁷⁸ A.Reid, "Labor Party May Be Divided By Referendum Result", *The Sunday Sun And Guardian*, p.28.

¹⁷⁹ Constitution Alteration (Powers To Deal With Communism) Bill 1951, *CPD*, Session 1951, Vol.213, p.405.

¹⁸⁰ J.Bolger, Interview, 5 May 1994.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid*.

Keon certainly proved to be a "thorn in the side" of many anti-Labor parliamentarians during his public life. By the final stages of his State Parliamentary career it was obvious that Keon's ferocity during debates had severely bruised the egos of many anti-Labor parliamentarians. Their desire to embarrass Keon on the parliamentary floor was fully illustrated during the reading of the Wheat Stabilization Bill on 17 November 1948. Ironically, a conflict arose whilst Keon was congratulating the Liberal-Country Government on its decision to regulate the building industry. Keon's discussion of the bill had also included his own theories of general primary production techniques. The speaker of the Legislative Assembly, T.K Maltby, himself a Liberal, was not impressed by the direction of Keon's argument.¹⁸² The two subsequently clashed over the topic then in debate. Sensing his chance to discredit Keon, another Liberal parliamentarian, John Don, suggested " that the honourable member for Richmond be not further heard".¹⁸³ Maltby agreed that such a motion was constitutional and asked members to record their votes. The chamber split on party lines and, given the Country-Liberal Government's sizeable majority, the motion was carried by thirty-nine votes to twelve. ¹⁸⁴ The Government, led by acting Premier McDonald, then attempted to discredit Keon to a further degree by asking him to retract his earlier comments. Keon, for his own part, showed no sign of capitulating to Government pressure:

I have no intention of withdrawing one iota from anything I have already said.
He[Maltby] is the most biased Speaker that has ever been in the House.¹⁸⁵

¹⁸² Wheat Industry Stabilization Bill, *VPD*, Session 1947-8, Vol.228, 17 November 1948, p.3575.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*, p.3576.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

Given this statement, McDonald moved that Keon "be suspended from the service of the House".¹⁸⁶ The motion was passed, despite pleadings from the acting Labor leader W.Galvin.¹⁸⁷ Keon left the chamber and, despite Government success in ensuring his suspension until the end of the year, secured the final say in the incident by giving Maltby a Nazi salute. In Keon's eyes, Maltby's actions were an infringement of free speech and democracy.¹⁸⁸

It is important to understand the central issue behind this incident. First, the conduct of Maltby, Don, and McDonald is not of primary relevance. Nor does any argument which suggests that this attack was premeditated. Keon had been a thorn in the side of the anti-Labor parties throughout his period in the state legislature, and the surrounding circumstances suggest that the Government seized an opportunity to embarrass him. After-all, just before his disagreement with Maltby, Keon had praised the Government for its efforts in producing the Wheat Stabilization Bill. Even in tactical terms, Keon's enforced absence from the chamber would have made no difference to the government's numerical ascendancy over Labor- it possessed a majority of thirty-three members. The clearest advantage for the Government was obvious. Keon's absence, in its eyes, would severely diminish the parliamentary effectiveness of the ALP.

Certainly, when Keon moved to Federal Parliament he showed no signs of wavering from his hostile position against the anti-Labor parties. During an Adjournment Debate on 6 August 1952, Keon attacked the

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁸ "Suspension of Honourable Member For Richmond", *VPD*, Session 1947-8, Vol.228, 23 November 1948, p.3645.

coalition for its perceived anti-Australian behaviour. According to Keon, the Minister of the Interior, W.S Kent-Hughes, had committed a most unpatriotic act by protesting against the playing of "Advance Australia Fair" at the 1952 Helsinki Olympic Games. Kent-Hughes' attitude in wanting to promote "God Save the Queen", argued Keon, perfectly illustrated the views of both coalition parties who believed "...Australia...[was] still a colony, tied like a tin can to the tail of the British bulldog".¹⁸⁹

10) During The ALP Split

On 5 October 1954, ALP leader H.V Evatt released a statement condemning the actions of certain "Victorian" elements within the Party who were undermining Labor's ability to win back federal office. Evatt also mentioned that the ALP had made electoral gains in every state except Victoria during the 1954 Federal Election. Evatt expressed this attitude on the following terms:

...one factor told heavily against us- the attitude of a small minority of members, located particularly in the State of Victoria which has, since 1949, become increasingly disloyal to the Labor Movement and the Labor leadership.¹⁹⁰

In response, Dinny Lovegrove, as Victorian Branch Secretary, attacked Evatt, by stating that the ALP leader's controversial attendance at the Petrov Commission into alleged Soviet espionage activity in Australia had backfired. Evatt's attack on Victorian parliamentarians, continued Lovegrove, was simply a lame attempt by the ALP leader to exonerate himself from any blame connected to the Party's 1954 electoral

¹⁸⁹ Adjournment Debate, CPD., Vol.218, p.107.

¹⁹⁰ K.White, *John Cain And Victorian Labor- 1917 to 1957*, p.167.

shortcomings. On 8 October 1954, the majority of the Victorian ALP Executive, which included Keon, endorsed Lovegrove's statements. The industrial wing of the party then became a battleground as pro and anti Evatt forces assembled against one another. Twentyseven unions, many of them left-wing and opponents of the right-wing Industrial Groups and their Victorian Executive supporters, saw an opportunity in championing Evatt's cause. In a stinging attack they called on the Federal Executive to investigate the actions of its Victorian equivalent and associated branches to see if any breaches had been made against the party's constitution, platform or policy program.¹⁹¹

These unions' wish for a confrontation between the Federal Executive and the Victorian branch was fulfilled on 27 October 1954. At the meeting, Evatt further outlined the sense of "disloyalty" he felt amongst his own ranks by naming Keon, Mullens, and W.M "Bill" Bourke as the main offenders. All three gave speeches contesting these claims. Later, the twenty two pro-Evatt Victorian trade unions brought forward a submission through W.Divers asking the Federal Executive to punish such elements and their branch supporters for their "disloyal" conduct. R.Holt, a Victorian ALP parliamentarian, also aided the Evatt cause when he submitted a letter stating that certain individuals inside his state's executive were under the outside influence of the Catholic activist, B.A Santamaria. Such events helped to convince the Federal Executive that an investigation was needed into the Victorian branch of the Party.¹⁹²

¹⁹¹ *Ibid*, p.167-8.

¹⁹² *Ibid*, p.169.

The Federal Executive investigation began in earnest on 29 November 1954, although it had originally started on 10 November before being adjourned after only a few days. The topics of discussion at the investigation were wide ranging. Bourke, Keon, and Mullens brought forward charges against Evatt. The ALP leader struck back by stating that the Victorian Executive was under the strong influence of an "outside organisation" and *News Weekly*, the Catholic Social Studies Movement's (hereafter referred to as the CSSM) newspaper. Various accounts of the Victorian Land Settlement Bill were given by Holt, Scully, and M.Gladman. Victor Stout gave a statement outlining his beliefs that relations between the trade union movement and the ALP were deteriorating. After having listened to all parties, the Federal Executive concluded on 4 December 1954, via a seven to five vote, that a new Victorian Executive would be elected at a special conference of the Victorian Branch. The meeting was to be held on 26-27 February 1955. The Federal body also amended a ruling which had previously disallowed conference entry for delegates who did not possess at least a two year ALP membership.¹⁹³

This decision produced a huge uproar amongst wide sections of the Victorian Labor movement. Certainly, a high level of discontent was evident on 19 December 1954 when the Victorian executive asked the federal body to reconsider its decision at a meeting of ALP branches and unions. As the new year approached, a section of the Right Wing ALP began calling for a boycott of the Special Conference. T.W Brennan¹⁹⁴ was amongst the most vocal of activists at the Victorian Executive's first

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p.170.

Brennan was ALP Member of the Legislative Council(MLC) for Monash.

new year meeting on 14 January 1955. The passion Brennan felt on this issue was highlighted when he moved at the same meeting that all "...branches and affiliated unions be instructed to defer until further notice any arrangements now being made for the selection of delegates [to the Special Conference]".¹⁹⁵ While Cain and Lovegrove were amongst those who opposed this resolution, it was comfortably passed by fourteen votes to seven.¹⁹⁶

The Victorian Executive then became split between pro and anti-boycott groups of the Special Conference. On 10 February 1955, after failing to reverse Brennan's resolution, D.Lovegrove, P.J Clarey, J.Cain, W.Galvin, D.Cameron, R.Wilson, R.Broadby, and A.Kyle all resigned from the Victorian Executive. The Victorian branch, now dominated by the pro-grouper elements, proceeded to initiate a program of defence which included boycotting the Special Conference.¹⁹⁷

Two-hundred-and-forty-nine delegates assembled for the Special Conference. As expected by the pro-grouper forces, a new executive, dominated by the Left wing of the Party, was elected. V.Stout, a prominent Evatt supporter and Trades Hall head, highlighted the Left's new found dominance when he obtained the post of ALP President unopposed. The change of power in this instance is perhaps captured perfectly by Kate White when she notes:

[that the] left wing had been suddenly, and to its surprise, resurrected from a position of dire weakness, and was now determined to hold onto its power in the organised Labor Movement.¹⁹⁸

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

At this point, a ludicrous situation developed where both the "old" and "new" Victorian Executives lined up to join the Federal Conference in March 1955. The old Executive was refused admission. Although it asked for a vote of interstate delegates to decide who was the "true" Executive, its wish was denied. By the end of the Conference, not only had the old Executive been ostracised from proceedings, it was also apparent that the Industrial Groups, whose members had dominated the Victorian branch, no longer possessed official ALP support.¹⁹⁹

In a show of solidarity, twenty-five State and Federal parliamentarians demonstrated their support for the old Executive by attending a meeting on 25 March 1955. Keon, along with Mullens and Bourke, was amongst this grouping. Robert Murray notes that whilst all three were committed to the old Executive's cause, in reality they had no choice but to side with the outcast group. According to Murray, the three had been informed by a section of the pro-Evatt ranks that they would eventually be dismissed from the Party because of their conduct during the crisis. Indeed, on 7 April 1955, those words of warning were substantiated fully when the new Victorian executive set about expelling the figures who had supported the old state branch. Keon, along with the other "dissidents", was unanimously voted out of the Party by the new body. A similar fate was also bestowed upon many of his allies in the Richmond branches.²⁰⁰

It seemed Keon and the others now had no option but to form a party of their own. When Federal Parliament reconvened on 19 April 1955, a new political grouping known as the Australian Labor Party (Anti-

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid*, p.171.

²⁰⁰ R.Murray, *The Split-Australian Labor In The Fifties*, pp.236, 239-240.

Communist) assembled along the cross benches. Keon obtained the role of deputy leader, whilst R."Bob" Joshua, the only non-Catholic in the group, was awarded the leadership.²⁰¹

a) Keon's Continued Concern For The Common Man

Throughout this period of bitter acrimony, Keon continued to champion the common man's cause by confronting the coalition government over the price of various household commodities. For example, on 1 June 1955 Keon asked the Prime Minister, R.G Menzies, why the domestic price of tea had not fallen, given that the commodity's value had declined on international markets.²⁰² Vera McDonald remembers that during the 1955 Federal Election campaign Keon was still anxious to see that the ALP split did not come between working-class families, who needed each other for both economic and emotional support. McDonald recalls that one particular family which resided in Rowena Parade, Richmond, was bitterly divided between pro and anti Keon factions. The acrimony inside the household reached such endemic proportions that the father threatened to oust two sons who both sympathised and actively worked with Keon's campaign team. On hearing of this situation, McDonald states that Keon spoke to the father on three occasions in order to revive peace within the household. McDonald remembers the incident through the following comments:

He [Keon] did not go to get him [the father] to turn [his allegiances]. Stan just wanted to see the family stay together.²⁰³

²⁰¹ Anti-Communist Labour Party, *CPD*, Vol.H of R 6, 19 April 1955, p.3.

²⁰² Tea, *CPD*, Volume H of R 6, p.358.

²⁰³ V.McDonald, Interview, 30 April 1994.

This episode underlined Keon's dedication to the common man's cause. Certainly, Keon's approach in this instance can be viewed from a critical perspective. After-all, if Keon had not intervened he could have lost two valuable campaign workers. On closer examination of events, however, such an evaluation is too simplistic. Given the tumultuous events of the day and the unceasing schedule Keon endured, it is unlikely he would have personally consumed such a degree of energy simply to secure the services of two campaign workers. For Keon, his actions were sparked by more altruistic purposes. Indeed, one can concur with McDonald's belief that Keon's dedication to the common man superseded any desire for political gain.²⁰⁴

b) Keon's Catholic Passions And Continued Hostility Toward The Anti-Labor Parties

During the split, Keon continued to display an anti-Communist attitude which was in tune with Vatican policies of the day. In Keon's mind, the Evatt-led ALP was being sympathetic to views which corresponded to Communist Party of Australia (hereafter referred to as CPA) initiatives. For Keon, such a view could be justified if one explored Evatt's views on Malaya. As Malaya presented Communist China with an accessible path into Indonesia, Australia, and New Zealand, Keon argued that military aid should take first priority in that area of Asia.²⁰⁵ Indeed, argued Keon, Evatt's preferences for economic and social, rather than military

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁵ Foreign Affairs and Defence, *CPD*, Vol. H of R 6, p.358.

aid to the region, highlighted the ALP leader's tendency to mirror CPA policy as expressed by its mouthpiece, *The Tribune*.²⁰⁶

One month earlier, Keon had also reaffirmed his hostility toward the anti-Labor parties. The Liberal-Country coalition, argued Keon, was pandering to British interests. Keon was specifically referring to Australia's mintage operation. According to Keon although the Australian mint operated in Melbourne and Perth, it was accountable "to the British Treasury or some other section of the British Government".²⁰⁷ As far as Keon was concerned this state of affairs was far from satisfactory and he implored the Liberal-Country Government to change the situation:

I think it is time that this Government took steps to bring the minting of coinage in Australia, and the actual mint, under the control of the Australian Government, in the same way as the Commonwealth Note Issue Branch.[...] The mint should be responsible to the Australian Government, and to nobody else.²⁰⁸

11) Keon's Post-Split Existence

Keon's public career ended in the 1955 Federal Election when he lost the seat of Yarra to the ALP's Jim Cairns. Although much has been said about the closeness of this contest, electoral figures show that Cairns defeated Keon by almost eight-thousand votes.²⁰⁹ After this episode, Keon entered into business with Camillo Triaca. Keon had frequently dined at "Triacas Restaurant" during his VPSA, State Parliament, and

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p.360.

²⁰⁷ Crimes Bill, *CPD*, Vol H of R 6, p.784.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁹ "Details of How The People Voted on Saturday", *The Age*, 12 December 1955, p.6.

Commonwealth Parliament career.²¹⁰ His friendship with Triaca grew steadily during these years and reached its highest point when both purchased G.J Adams' wine merchants' business in the Melbourne-city area. This investment was complemented by the acquisition of license grocers stores in Queen Street and Little Bourke Street in Melbourne.²¹¹ It is unknown where Keon obtained the funds to finance such a venture. Even with the most careful prudence it is doubtful Keon would have possessed the funds to invest in such projects. The source, however, remains a mystery. Camillo Triaca's son, David, states that he never queried his father on such matters.²¹² Philip Keon also states that conversations related to this business affair were never discussed with his uncle.²¹³

a) Keon's Concern For Pro-Common Man Inclinations

Whilst Keon went out of his way to conceal his financial arrangements, he made no secret of wanting to champion the common man during this period. Documentation in DLP archives indicates that Keon kept in touch with the Party's "grass roots" base throughout at least 1956 and 1957. After nearly a year in the political wilderness away from the House of Representatives, Keon was still promoting the Party's cause in country outposts like Warrnambool. Indeed, on 15 November 1956 the Party Secretary, Frank McManus, wrote to Keon and P.Collins of the Clerks Union on behalf of the Warrnambool branch of the ALP(Anti-

²¹⁰ Callinan, Interview, 2 May 1994; F.Crean, Interview, 3 June 1993; Santamaria, Interview, 4 March 1994.

²¹¹ P.Keon, Interview, 3 May 1994.

²¹² D.Triarca, Interview, 4 May 1994.

²¹³ P.Keon, Interview, 3 May 1994.

Communist) to thank them "...for their most interesting and instructive addresses".²¹⁴ Keon's desire to promote his presence amongst the rank and file showed no signs of diminishing twelve months later. On 20 March 1957, the DLP's Acting Secretary F.M Dowling wrote to Keon confirming that he was to appear at the opening of the Democratic Labor Lilydale Branch.²¹⁵

During the 1958 Federal Election campaign, Keon re-affirmed his devotion to the common man. Two issues in particular which he targeted were education and pensioner welfare. Keon argued that the DLP supported Federal Government intervention at all levels of education in order to improve scholastic standards across the community. Indeed, he argued, whilst the Menzies Government was helping migrants with employment and general welfare, it was doing nothing to improve the education conditions of children.²¹⁶ Keon coupled this strong devotion to education with unwavering support for pensioners. Keon argued that under his policy, pensioners would not become "political footballs". If elected, stressed Keon, he would pursue a policy where-by pensioners received half the basic wage. This rate of

²¹⁴ F.McManus, Letter of Correspondence, DLP General Correspondence File, No.A7, 15 November 1956, p.1.

The resolution brought forward by the Warrnambool ALP (Anti-Communist) branch is outlined fully as follows: "That this Branch wishes to express a hearty vote of thanks to Comrades Stan Keon of the [Victorian ALP (Anti-Communist)] Central Executive, and P.Collins of the Clerks' Union, for their most interest and instructive addresses to a well attended rally and meeting in Warrnambool on October 31st, 1956".

²¹⁵ F.M Dowling, Letter of Correspondence, DLP General General Correspondence File, No.A8, 20 March 1957, p.1.

²¹⁶ "Federal Aid For Education?", *Richmond News*, No.18, 5 November 1958, p.1.

remuneration, he continued further, would be indexed to the cost of living.²¹⁷

b) Keon's Clash With The DLP Hierarchy

For all his continued desire to promote the common man's cause, Keon could not translate his efforts into electoral success. Keon was convincingly beaten at the 1958 Federal Election in the seat of Yarra. Cairns polled over fifty four per-cent of the vote. Even the Liberal candidate in the contest, C.M Lanyon, polled over three percentage points more than Keon with nearly eight-thousand votes.²¹⁸

In the midst of such disheartening electoral results, Keon was also involved in an acrimonious dispute with senior members of his own party. As a member of the "old" ALP Victorian Central Executive, Keon maintained an equivalent status inside the DLP throughout most of the 1950s. In 1958 he had climbed to occupy the Vice-Presidency of the Victorian Central Executive. In line with Party rules, this also meant that Keon was allotted a position, as a Victorian delegate, at the DLP's 1958 Federal Conference. This level of commitment to the Party at a senior level was complemented by his membership inside the Executive's organising, credentials, and propaganda and publications committees.²¹⁹

²¹⁷ "Keon Seeks Half Basic Wage For Pensioners And Tribunal", *Richmond News*, No.18, 5 November 1958, p.1.

²¹⁸ "Details of Voting For House of Representatives", *The Age*, 24 November 1958, p.6.

²¹⁹ Minutes of the Victorian DLP Executive, DLP General Correspondence File, No.A10, 11 April 1958, pp.1-2.

By September 1959, however, Keon's enthusiasm inside senior DLP ranks had cooled considerably. On 7 September the DLP's Assistant Secretary, J.D Brosnan, sent Keon a letter of acknowledgment after the latter had forwarded correspondence three days earlier outlining his desire to obtain a leave of absence from the Victorian Executive.²²⁰ During the early part of 1960 Keon continued to distance himself from his commitments on the Party's Executive. The DLP hierarchy showed its displeasure with his behaviour in the strongest possible way on 12 February 1960. Writing on 15 February, the Party's State Secretary, F.M Dowling, informed Keon that his continued non-attendance at Central Executive meetings had resulted in him losing membership to this body three days earlier. Dowling's notes at the bottom of this letter indicate that Keon had decided to completely distance himself from the senior section of the Party. Dowling wrote that he "phoned [Keon] on 4 February".²²¹ Keon was then supposed "to advise [of] his intentions but didn't".²²²

Certainly, Keon's desire to obtain a leave of absence was puzzling, given his good record of attendance during the years which included and followed the Labor split. Indeed, Keon attended seventy three out of ninety five Central Executive meetings between 1954 and 1959. For Keon simply to disassociate himself from the Executive one year later indicates that he was dissatisfied with certain aspects of the Party. This contention is certainly worth exploring considering that Keon's long-time political ally and friend, Scully, also left the Executive on 12

²²⁰ J.D Brosnan, Personal Letter, DLP General Correspondence File, No.A 13, 7 September 1959, p.1.

²²¹ F.M Dowling, Personal Letter, DLP General Correspondence File, No.A13, 15 February 1960, p.1.

²²² *Ibid.*

February 1960. The difference between Keon and Scully, however, lies in the fact that the latter chose to "retire" rather than have the Party forcibly "vacate" his seat after a long period of non-attendance.²²³

In Keon's opinion the DLP at this time was beginning to lose its "focus" on Labor principles. In tandem with W.M "Bill" Bourke²²⁴, Keon argued that the DLP rather than being seen as the true Labor Party in Australia, was perceived by the general electorate as a sectarian or Catholic grouping. Indeed, argued Keon, "the allusion that the DLP is a 'Church party', forms an impenetrable barrier to the party's candidates in municipal, State, and Federal elections".²²⁵ In an interview with the *Sydney Morning Herald* on 8 June 1959 Keon argued that the DLP had acquired the "church party" tag within the Australian electorate because of Santamaria's influence. In Keon's opinion, Santamaria had "no right to usurp the role of spokesmen for the DLP[...] and attempt to use his supporters to turn the DLP into a specifically Roman Catholic Party, for which there is no place in Australia".²²⁶

Keon's words were not at all welcomed by the majority of the Party's delegates at the 1959 DLP State Conference. His bid to become

²²³ Central Executive Report of Australian Democratic Labor Party (State of Victoria) June 1960, ALP-DLP Conference Minutes, DLP File No.B13, p.3.

²²⁴ "Bourke vs Santamaria", *The Observer*, 13 June 1959, p.365.

Bourke argued that the DLP had become dominated by Santamaria and his sympathisers. Indeed, Bourke argued, if this trend were to continue he would voluntarily terminate his association with Democratic Labor. Bourke expressed his views precisely through the following comments: "If Santamaria gets control of this party I am certainly going to get out of it. We[the DLP] should be completed independent and not operated from behind the scenes. I feel most strongly about this. I have done my share in the Party and will stick to the end, but only if this Santamaria element is wiped out".

²²⁵ "Santamaria Tag Hampers DLP Conference Outburst", *The Sun*, 6 June 1959, p.7.

²²⁶ "Keon Loses DLP Post: Church Party Criticism", *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 8 June 1959, p.3.

Victorian President of the Party was thwarted on 6 June 1959 as the incumbent candidate, J.F "Johnny" Meere, defeated him by one-hundred-and-fiftyone votes to fifty four. Keon's influence within the Party was diluted further, one day later, when he lost another poll. This loss meant that he would not be amongst the five individuals who would be representing the Victorian branch of the Party at the DLP's Federal Conference. Under Party regulations, this meant that Keon also lost the DLP's Federal Senior Vice-Presidency.²²⁷ At the same time, however, Keon did manage to salvage some pride when he retained his position on the Victorian Central Executive. It should be stressed, however, that Keon obtained the least number of votes out of all delegates that secured a position on the Executive.²²⁸

Keon's attack against elements of the DLP's senior hierarchy was ultimately based on frustration. Keon seems to have been against seeing the DLP's image equated too completely with Catholic principles, and this standpoint also enabled him to challenge his party foes. By the same token, it is important to note that Keon was not abandoning or

²²⁷ "Keon Fights Against Santamaria 'Tag'", *Farrago*, 16 June 1959, p.5.

This result is verified when one consults G.E White, Returning Officer's Report, Victorian DLP Conference, 15 June 1959, page 1. Keon was soundly defeated in the ballot. Keon came last and was ninetyeight votes behind his nearest rival, J.F Meere. The final results was outlined as follows: F.P McManus 204 votes, J.A Little 203, F.J Riley 192, F.M Dowling 182, J.F Meere 171, and S.M Keon 73.

²²⁸ Decisions of 1959 Annual Conference, Victorian Central Executive-Australian Democratic Labor Party, p.13.

This result is fully outlined when one explores G.E White, Returning Officer's Report, Victorian DLP Conference, 15 June 1959, page 3. Keon only retained his position by five votes. Keon's tally of eightyseven votes was the lowest obtained out of all the successful candidates. His nearest rival, O'Brien, only fell five votes short. Those who were successful in their bid to gain membership inside the Victorian DLP Executive are outlined as follows: F.P McManus 198 votes, J.A Little 197, T.W Brennan 191, K.Gregson 186, L.Lloyd 180, T.W Andrews 170, K.J Owens 167, J.L Waters 164, M.E McLaren 123, P.Ryan 102, A.J Jones 88, and S.M Keon 87.

criticising Catholicism in this instance. Rather, he was attacking those who he perceived were unnecessarily and falsely contributing to Democratic Labor's religious image. Contemporaries such as Hugh Slattery and Santamaria do not agree with this statement. Both charge that whilst Keon was originally in favour of a reconciliation between the ALP and DLP like themselves, by the 1960s his attitude had changed. Both argue that Keon was now in favour of turning the DLP into a centre party which would never again seek to realign itself with the ALP.²²⁹ Evidence from this period, however, suggests that Keon's attack was based more on personality differences with Santamaria rather than any ideological change of position. Indeed, Keon had told a Young DLP Meeting on 25 June 1958 that Democratic Labor would voluntarily give its second preferences to the ALP once the Evatt-led party stopped participating in unity tickets with the Communists during trade union elections. The ultimate aim for himself and the DLP, he told his young peers, was to form a "united Labor Party".²³⁰

c) Keon's Continued Devotion Towards Catholicism And Challenging The Anti-Labor Parties.

Despite suffering from the frustration of losing the Yarra seat twice and entering into verbal "combat" with elements of the DLP's senior hierarchy, Keon continued to promote his life-long principles and stayed loyal to Democratic Labor's cause.

²²⁹ H.Slattery, Interview, 9 May 1994 and Santamaria, Interview, 4 March 1994.

²³⁰ "Mr.Keon Discusses Preferences At Richmond YLA Meeting", *Richmond News*, No.46, 25 June 1958, p.2.

Certainly if Keon had elected to withdraw from political activity in the 1960s he would have been excused, given the string of personal tragedies he experienced. In 1961, Keon's eldest brother, Philip(Junior), was killed in a traffic accident.²³¹ Aged only fifty four, Philip(Junior) left behind his wife Edith and six children.²³² This event would hardly have helped the frail condition of Keon's mother, who had now outlived her second son. On 25 January 1962 the Keon family was again bereaved when Jane died ²³³; two years later Keon endured yet more emotional hardship when his father, Philip (Senior), passed away. Philip's death certificate indicates that he endured congestive cardiac failure for a number of weeks. This resulted in him having to combat bronchopneumonia during the last five days of life, before eventually succumbing to respiratory obstruction.²³⁴

Despite such sad and disheartening experiences, Keon continued to run as a DLP candidate in Yarra until 1966. Vera McDonald remembers that by the 1961 Federal Election Keon knew that his political career would never be rekindled. Yet McDonald argues that Keon continued to contest the Federal seat of Yarra because of his principles:

Stan [stood] to let people know that this [the DLP cause] is something you have to keep fighting for.²³⁵

In numerical terms, it seems Keon had no cause beyond the advancement of rigid principles to stand for re-election during the 1960s. Indeed, a

²³¹ *The Sun*, 23 December 1961, p.26.

²³² *The Sun*, 25 February 1964, p.37.

²³³ *The Sun*, 26 January 1962, p.26.

²³⁴ Deaths In The State of Victoria, Reference Number- 4003/64.

²³⁵ V.McDonald, Interview, 30 March 1994.

brief overview of election results during this period indicates that Keon's electoral status had receded to the point where he was being consistently beaten by the standing Liberal candidate, as well as Cairns. In the 1961, 1963, and 1966 Federal Elections Keon occupied third place. His percentage of the vote slumped continually throughout this period from twenty-one in 1961 to thirteen and twelve in 1963 and 1966 respectively.²³⁶

Despite these unfavourable electoral results, Keon refused to compromise on any point relating to his Catholicism or his hostility toward the anti-Labor parties. During the 1961 Federal campaign Keon expressed his continued allegiance to the Catholic faith by supporting a foreign relations program structured around anti-Communism. Keon supported the notion of a Pacific Federation which included non-Communist nations such as Australia, New Zealand, Japan, Malaya, Philippines, Thailand, South Vietnam, and Taiwan. In Keon's words, such an alliance of nations would offer "great opportunities for mutual defence and reciprocal trade".²³⁷ Furthermore, argued Keon, he would continue to oppose the recognition of Communist China and any plans to admit that country into the United Nations.²³⁸

In the period between the 1958 and 1961 Federal Elections Keon's hostility toward the major anti-Labor parties had also remained strong. Tutton argues that Keon's outburst against Santamaria at the 1959 DLP Conference was partly over the direction of preferences towards the

²³⁶ "Victorian And Senate Voting Results", *The Age*, 11 December 1961, p.6;
"Subdivisional Figures For Victorian Seats", *The Age*, 2 December 1963, p.6.;
"Latest Figures In Victorian Seats", *The Age*, 28 November 1966, p.8.

²³⁷ "DLP Survive And Thive Is Hour Of Decision Plan", *Richmond News*,
No.20, 15 November 1961, p.1.

²³⁸ *Ibid.*

Liberal Party in Federal and State Elections. According to Tutton, Keon was of the opinion that an electoral alliance with the anti-Labor parties would work against the DLP's interest. Keon favoured reconciliation with the ALP, but was adamant that peace between the two Labor parties could only be achieved if the Liberal-Country coalition lost power. In the event of an ALP victory, Keon was confident that the Party would not last in office for more than twelve months because of factional in-fighting amongst the various Left-wing elements. In such a scenario, argued Keon, the ALP's moderate elements would be more than happy to facilitate a reconciliation with DLP forces. More importantly for Keon such a result would have been achieved without Democratic Labor participating in an "unholy" electoral alliance with the Liberal and Country parties.²³⁹

12) In Later Life- After Retiring From Business

After retiring from his wine business interests in the 1970s, Keon continued to publicise his support for the common man and Catholicism. His hostility toward the anti-Labor parties was also reaffirmed.

a) Keon's Pro-Common Man Inclinations

Keon had shown during his life after the split that he was still committed to any program which would improve the economic condition of the common-man. Certainly, his desire to help Tutton in the 1960s highlights this point. After Tutton married, Keon helped his old campaign manager by giving him part-time employment at his wine

²³⁹ Tutton, Interview, 30 April 1994.

establishment. Tutton admits that Keon was simply being generous, as the tasks involved rarely exceeded, "the shifting of a few boxes".²⁴⁰

Keon's ability to aid and inject confidence in the ordinary people did not fade during the latter stages of his life. One year before his death, in 1986, Keon managed to kindle enthusiasm in a young Catholic activist called Rod Pead. During the release of Michael Gilchrist's publication, *Rome or the Bush*, Pead remembers that Keon inspired him to perform tasks which he previously had not thought were compatible with his abilities:

I got publicity all around Australia for Michael [Gilchrist] on talk-back radio by ringing-up during my work-time and doing things I had never done. Stan would thump the table and I was inspired to do things. He still had [the] 'gift' at that age. People like he and [B.A] Santamaria are born leaders.²⁴¹

b) Keon's Catholicism

Keon's devotion to the Catholic Church did not waver during the latter stages of his life. Vera McDonald remembers St.Dominic's Church in Camberwell holding a raffle during the late 1960s. The first prize being offered, was a motor vehicle. Keon, for his part, helped the parish's cause by purchasing a great volume of the available raffle-tickets. With the laws of probability in Keon's obvious favour, he won the vehicle. Yet Keon did not claim his prize, preferring instead to donate the car back to the Church.²⁴²

²⁴⁰ Tutton, Interview, 30 April 1994.

²⁴¹ Pead, Interview, 12 May 1994.

²⁴² V.McDonald, Interview, 30 April 1994.

Pead, who became acquainted with Keon whilst being involved in the John XXIII Co-Operative Bookshop, argues that Keon had dedicated his last years to "the future of the [Catholic] Church".²⁴³

Keon's devotion to the orthodox Catholic tradition was underlined by his association with the periodical, *Fidelity*. Pead remembers that Keon would often voluntarily help package the magazine during the last years of his life. This practice ended once Keon's diabetic condition made it difficult for him to enjoy full movement. Pead describes his attitude with the following words:

His general view was that things inside the Catholic Church were rotten and they were getting worse. Stan was very worried.²⁴⁴

It was this attitude that attracted Keon to Michael Gilchrist's work on the contemporary state of the Catholic Church. Gilchrist's work, explains Pead, could not have been published without Keon's decision to donate ten-thousand dollars for printing costs.²⁴⁵ The book criticised the liberalism which entered the Catholic Church during the 1960s and underlined Keon's devotion to the preservation of orthodox Catholicism. Keon would have agreed with Gilchrist's assertion that Catholicism needed "fine-tuning rather than radical reform" at the time Pope John XXIII initiated a program of review inside the Church, which later became known as Vatican II. ²⁴⁶ Indeed, Gilchrist argues, Vatican II was hi-jacked from Pope John XXIII and, his successor, Pope Paul VI by the mass media and "newchurch" theorists like Hans Kung and Edward

²⁴³ Pead, Interview, 12 May 1994.

²⁴⁴ Ibid.

²⁴⁵ Ibid.

²⁴⁶ M. Gilchrist, *Rome or the Bush*, pp.6-7.

Schillebeek who were intent, at all costs, to make the "Church more acceptable to the non-Catholic world".²⁴⁷

According to Gilchrist, such a "program of reform" tore at the very threads of the Church's established norms. Moreover, it placed the Church in a position where tradition was superseded by cultural trends of the day²⁴⁸:

It was stirring now [for some Catholics] to be witnesses of a new Pentecost, and appealing to anticipate such reforms as a simplified, vernacular liturgy, higher status for the laity, eased rules for fasting and closer relations with other churches.²⁴⁹

For Keon, who had been brought up in a regimented Church where accepted practices were treasured and the laity played a subsidiary role to the hierarchy, such a set of circumstances constituted an illegitimate form of Catholicism.

c) The Use of Pro-Irish Inclinations As An Expression of Principles.

In the 1980s Keon provided funds to allow the John XXIII Co-Operative Bookshop to republish W.J Lockington's *The Soul of Ireland*.²⁵⁰ The book was first published during Keon's early years in 1919 and another edition appeared only one year later. After surveying the contents of the publication it quickly becomes apparent why Keon would sponsor such a project. The book is marked by the themes dominant in Keon's life:

²⁴⁷ *Ibid*, p.8.

²⁴⁸ *Ibid*, pp.8-10.

²⁴⁹ *Ibid*, p.8.

²⁵⁰ Pead, Interview, 12 May 1994.

championing of the common man, Catholicism, and disdain for the anti-Labor parties.

Although the John XXIII Book Co-operative assured its readers that such a book was "not an exercise in nostalgia" or a "futile attempt at reviving a now distant ethnic tradition", Keon's own motives may have been exercised along those very lines.²⁵¹ As Keon had shown during his period as editor of the *Irish Review*, his ethnic origins played a big part in determining the ideological "baggage" which he eventually brought into public life. Keon's role in the re-publication of *The Soul of Ireland* indicates that he still felt a strong affinity with the same principles during his final years.²⁵² Certainly, chapter two of the book corresponds with Keon's championing of the common individual²⁵³, whilst the fifteenth chapter celebrated his devotion to Catholicism.²⁵⁴ G.K Chesterton's introduction would also have appealed to Keon's negative view of forces pertaining to an "establishment" class. Whilst Chesterton chastised the British ruling classes in Ireland, Keon had continually fought the anti-Labor parties on the grounds that they represented ruling elites, who had no genuine understanding of the common man's plight.²⁵⁵

13) Keon's Return To Prominence Inside DLP Ranks

²⁵¹ W.J Lockington, *The Soul of Ireland*, p.i.

²⁵² *Ibid*.

²⁵³ *Ibid*, pp.7-18.

²⁵⁴ *Ibid*, pp.153-168.

²⁵⁵ *Ibid*, p.i.

As explained above, although Keon entered into dispute with elements of the DLP's senior hierarchy in the late 1950s, he did not delete his name from the Party's membership list. Indeed, Keon kept contesting Yarra until the seats dissolution in 1969. In the ensuing period Keon maintained his status as a financial member until the Party elected to vote itself out of existence in 1978.

During the meeting which made this decision, Keon had joined Frank McManus in opposing the dissolution. According to a current member of the DLP Central Executive, Brian Lugar, both men had called people to re-form the Party at the end of the meeting. Lugar was amongst those who offered to "enlist" in the new DLP. Lugar maintains that, as elder statesmen in the Party, Keon and McManus' influence was "the motivating force behind the continuation [of the DLP]".²⁵⁶

There is every indication that Keon provided the re-formed DLP with a fair degree of financial support. Lugar recalls that there were times when "we[the DLP] could not have existed" without Keon's material support.²⁵⁷ Indeed, remembers Lugar, Keon provided the Party with all the necessary funds relating to printing and candidate deposits.²⁵⁸

Keon's contribution was not solely restricted to money. Throughout his tenure as DLP Secretary, Keon continually reminded the Party that Democratic Labor must remain as an alternative voice in Australian politics. As he explained to those that attended the first "new" DLP meeting, Democratic Labor had been born as a "flame" to ignite the "political forest" which was previously reserved for the ALP and Liberals.

²⁵⁶ B.Lugar, Interview, 5 May 1994.

²⁵⁷ Ibid.

²⁵⁸ Ibid.

According to John Mulholland, who joined the re-formed DLP in 1978 and is now Party Secretary, Keon kept urging the faithful to maintain this "flame" up to the time of his death.²⁵⁹

Lugar indicates that Keon's "flame" could be translated as an attachment to certain principles. Lugar admits that he was impressed with the way Keon would not compromise his ideological underpinnings. He remembers Keon would justify his attitude along the following lines:

If you are going to get interested in politics then you must stand for office- even if you get whopped. You must get your ideas across [to people].²⁶⁰

a) Keon's Pro-Common Man Inclinations

The first meeting of the reformed DLP Executive met at Keon's house at Erin Street, Richmond in 1978. Keon assumed control of the meeting and stressed, that the DLP needed to maintain its presence in the political field because the ALP was still not conducting itself in a "true" Labor manner. Lugar, as one of those present at the meeting, remembers concurring with Keon's sentiments:

He said we had to continue. Nothing had changed in the ALP [since 1955]. It [the ALP] wasn't the Labor Party we had grown up with- it had been hi-jacked by intellectuals and [other such] non-traditional members.²⁶¹

Keon instructed his "disciples" that the common man needed a party which could act as his political mouthpiece. Indeed, Keon's desire to accommodate the "working man's" cause was underlined by the fact

²⁵⁹ J.Mulholland, Interview, 25 May 1994.

²⁶⁰ B.Lugar, Interview, 5 May 1994.

²⁶¹ Ibid.

that he wanted the DLP to function at least as a debating society, if not as a potent political force. 262 Keon was particularly concerned about the fate of the unemployed and the tendency for governments to place economic imperatives above people. Keon expressed this attitude in the following words:

In the economy-versus-humanity battle you have to bend the economy to fulfil the requirements of humanity.²⁶³

Keon brought forward this support for the common man when he stood in the Kew electorate during the 1979 Victorian State election. Keon argued in defence of the ordinary family unit during the campaign by announcing that contemporary tax structures favoured single people. Indeed, argued Keon, it was necessary that men were paid a wage which allowed women to stay at home and provide physical and moral maintenance for their children. In Keon's eyes, the family unit was being destroyed by the fact that both parents needed to work and place economic imperatives above those related to familial growth.²⁶⁴ He outlined his disenchantment with modern family life by arguing that "the words Dad, Mum, Sister and Brother are becoming objects of derision".²⁶⁵ This state of affairs would be curbed, in his opinion, if mothers were given a home-makers allowance.²⁶⁶

²⁶² Ibid.

²⁶³ P.Ormonde, "An Old Warrior Looks For A Fight", *The Herald*, 15 August 1978.

²⁶⁴ "Justice For The Family-S.M Keon, DLP, Kew", *Progress Press*, 2 May 1979, p.1.

²⁶⁵ "Put The Money In Mum's Purse", *Eastern Standard*, 2 May 1979, p.16.

²⁶⁶ Ibid.

b) Keon's Pro-Catholic Inclinations

According to Mulholland, who was President during Keon's period as Secretary of the re-formed DLP, religion never played a part in Democratic Labor's objectives. Indeed, Mulholland cannot understand why Catholicism "has become an identifying mark of the DLP".²⁶⁷ Mulholland's amazement may be justified in regards to the DLP's contemporary membership, but he should show no surprise when discussing the brand of political activism Keon employed. Indeed, Keon used the re-formed DLP partly to promote his pro-Catholic agenda.²⁶⁸

Keon affirmed this stance by allying himself to the Right To Life Association of Victoria and standing for the state seat of Kew against the ruling Liberal Premier, Rupert "Dick" Hamer. Keon and his associates' attack on Hamer was inspired by the Liberal leader's support in defeating the "Lusher motion". If passed, such a motion would have denied medical benefits to all abortion cases except for those where the mother's life was threatened. In Keon's own mind, the Premier's stand was encouraging abortion on demand.²⁶⁹

Certainly, Keon would have been heartened by the fact that elements of the Catholic Church inside the Kew electorate were actively supporting his cause. Monsignor Twomey, a priest at St.Bede's Church in North Balwyn, told his congregation that abortion was the most important issue of the up-coming election. Any suggestion which argued

²⁶⁷ Mulholland, Interview, 25 May 1994.

²⁶⁸ Ibid.

²⁶⁹ "Right To Lifers Campaign In Kew", *Eastern Standard*, 11 April 1979, p.1.

otherwise, he stipulated, pertained "to the voice of Satan".²⁷⁰ Indeed, Keon would certainly have felt he was fulfilling his obligation as a Catholic, when Twomey instructed the faithful to vote along the following lines:

Next Saturday [on election day], Jesus Christ is saying to me: 'Find a candidate who will support MY law...or tear up your ballot paper in disgust!'²⁷¹

Keon himself answered this calling when he announced during his campaign speech "that life is sacred and must be protected from the womb to the tomb".²⁷² Keon attempted to give his anti-abortion stance further weight by presenting an economic dimension. Keon argued that abortion caused both unemployment and population decline. By recording only a modest birthrate, argued Keon, the economy would in future suffer a downturn in consumption inside the manufacturing and retail sectors.²⁷³

c) Keon's Continued Hostility Toward The Anti-Labor Parties

Keon's enmity towards the non-Labor parties continued in the final stages of his life. During the first meeting of the re-formed DLP in 1978, Keon underlined his agenda as the Party's new secretary by successfully carrying a motion which denied any merger plans with the National Party. After talks throughout the 1970s between the two parties, Keon

²⁷⁰ "Vote 'No' Abortion Says Priest", *Eastern Standard*, 2 May 1979, p.1.

²⁷¹ *Ibid.*

²⁷² "Justice For The Family", *Progress Press*, 2 May 1979, p.1.

²⁷³ "Abortion Creates Unemployment- Says DLP", *Progress Press*, 2 May 1979, p.1.

made sure that he used his new power of influence to quash any potential alliances with the anti-Labor parties.²⁷⁴

14) After Keon's Death

Keon died in January 1987 from a diabetes-induced sickness.²⁷⁵ Keon's life in business had brought him much financial fortune. His total assets amounted to \$720,560.74. Keon's house was valued at \$450,000. He possessed \$70,000 in bonds and over \$5,000 in shares.²⁷⁶ He also boasted an expensive art collection and many delicate household items. Keon's art collection was valued at \$151,270 in July 1986. The most valuable works were Eugen von Guérard's landscape, Frederick McCubbin's "Swanston Street", and Tom Roberts' "Lady Hopetoun", which were estimated to be worth forty-thousand, twentyfour-thousand, and twenty-thousand dollars respectively.²⁷⁷ Many of Keon's house contents reflected an expensive taste. Crystal, silverware, and a Chinese carved blanket chest were all amongst Keon's catalogue of personal effects. Keon's appreciation for the finer things in life was underlined through his most expensive item, a Victorian Walnut Credenza, which was valued at one-thousand-and-six-hundred dollars. Its splendour was captured in its "bow shaped side cupboards and a mirrored centre".²⁷⁸

²⁷⁴ "DLP Won't Change Its Name", *Progress Press*, 30 August 1978.

²⁷⁵ Mahony, Op.cit, p.1; T.Prior, "1000 At Mass For Keon", *The Sun*, p.1.

²⁷⁶ Will of Standish Michael Keon, No.977/598, 28 July 1986.

²⁷⁷ Market Valuation Paper, Leonard Joel Auctioneers and Valuers, 17 July 1986, pp.1-4.

²⁷⁸ Market Valuation Paper of Furniture and Effects, Leonard Joel Auctioneers and Valuers, 17 July 1986, pp.1-3.

a) The Legacy of Keon's Principles After His Death

Materially, Keon's legacy suggests that he was very successful in life. By the same token, however, the nature of his will and aspects of his household indicate that Keon used his wealth to promote his life-long principles.

After Keon's death, an *Age* journalist, Kevin Norbury, commented on how the house in 49 Erin Street did not leave any outside observer "wondering" about the character of its former occupant. In the context of the themes that governed Keon's life such a comment was most appropriate. If Keon's choice to live in a street named "Erin" only provided limited proof of his pro-Irish sentiment, then his insistence that the house should be painted green gave further weight to this argument. In other areas of the dwelling there was stronger evidence attesting to Keon's devotion to certain causes. He used a Victorian front room as a study where a desk was complemented with an array of books. Such a scene reminds one of Keon's life as editor of the *Irish Review*, involvement with the CYMS and VPSA, and his time inside the Victorian and Federal Parliaments. Throughout that period Keon continually championed the idea of improving the plight of the common individual. The presence of the books in the study indicates that Keon, himself, believed in the same program. Despite not possessing any form of higher education, Keon attempted to acquire a degree of self-improvement by gaining knowledge and analytical skills from books.²⁷⁹

²⁷⁹ K.Norbury, "Home Of A Former Political Figure", *The Age*, 4 April 1987.

Keon's devotion to the common individual was underlined for the last time in his will. Keon left fifty thousand dollars to a former employee, Angelo Cesaro, whose participation in his wine business did not exceed the boundaries of the shop floor. Cesaro received the greatest single portion of monetary wealth from the estate and this fact alone indicates that Keon did not forget the valuable input of his employee in the years after his fortune had been secured.²⁸⁰

Keon's Catholic sentiments were also evident around his house. Indeed, as soon as one entered the hallway, Keon's respect for the papacy could be gauged by a portrait drawn to commemorate the 1970 visit of Pope Pius XII. When entering the dining room this pro-Catholic feeling was crystallised in a portrait of Archbishop Mannix next to a gas heater. Mannix's position next to the heater probably had no conscious symbolic connection for Keon, but to any observer it underlined the "warmth" and "comfort" he would have obtained from the Church throughout his lifetime.²⁸¹ Keon expressed this devotion to the Church for the last time by naming various Catholic benevolent organisations as beneficiaries in his will. A portion of Keon's estate was subsequently allotted to Little Sisters of the Poor, the St.Vincent de Paul Society, Order of Friars Minor, and the Missionary Sisters of St.Peter Cleaver.²⁸²

The location of Keon's house at the time of his death also acted as a signpost which expressed another facet of his "ideological baggage". The fact that Keon's estate was valued at \$720,560.74 at the time of his death indicates that he had the financial ability to have moved to a

²⁸⁰ Will of Standish Michael Keon, No.977/598, 28 July 1986, p.4; Mahony, *Op.cit*, p.3.

²⁸¹ Norbury, *Op.cit*.

²⁸² Will of Standish Michael Keon, No.977/598, 28 July 1986, pp.2-3.

more affluent location. During the latter stages of his life, Richmond became a suburb which catered for inner-city professionals as well as migrants. However this was not the Richmond Keon had lived in during his youth. What did remain for Keon was the past. Richmond was the suburb where his pro-Labor inclinations had been born and the battlefield where many of his ideological victories and defeats had been staged.²⁸³

15) Conclusion

A survey of Keon's life clearly shows that he was motivated by three principles. The first centred around improving the common man's plight. The second was based on Catholicism. The third ensured that he was often hostile to the anti-Labor political forces. This fixation on such principles was formed through a variety of sources. Keon's family origins, childhood, early work experience, Irish roots, and young Catholic activism all played a part. Indeed, Keon continued to keep faith with such principles throughout the rest of his life. After studying his exploits under broad headings titled "Public Life", "During The Split", "Post-Split", "In Latter Life", "Return To Prominence In The DLP", and "After His Death", this contention can be justified.

Although this thesis is primarily concerned with Keon's exploits in public life, the above overview acts as an important springboard to highlight the deficiencies which are apparent in all published works that study his political career. The second chapter, which deals with such works, shows that Keon's public life has only been analysed to a

²⁸³ Norbury, *Op.cit.*

limited degree. Three interlocking schools of thought will be identified in this chapter. The first will label him as "rebellious" and define this term in various ways. The second will outline why he conducted himself in such a manner by almost unanimously pointing towards his sense of religious duty and Communism. The third will then explore to what degree these two factors played on Keon's mind during the ALP split and beyond.

Chapters Three, Four, and Five will show how such an assessment of Keon's public life, between 1939 and 1955, is limited by expanding on the three themes which were outlined in this chapter. Indeed, Chapter Three will emphasise Keon's devotion to the common individual by linking many of his public actions with a populist ideological model. Chapter Four will discuss Keon's religious underpinnings in the political sphere. Although much published literature has described Keon as a pro-Catholic politician, no attempt has been made to fully explore the dimensions governing this area of his political philosophy. Chapter Four will attempt to remedy this situation by outlining a difference between Keon's "general" Catholic tendencies and his devotion to "social justice" statements. Chapter Five will then explore the third facet of Keon's ideological armoury by analysing his hostile attitude toward the anti-Labor forces. It will be argued in this part of the document that Keon's attitude was born from a belief that the anti-Labor parties were totally insensitive towards his populist and Catholic social thoughts. Indeed, unlike the other views mentioned in the literature survey, these three chapters will contend that Keon's anti-Communism and sense of religious duty were part of a much bigger ideological picture.

Chapter Two

The Published Assessment

"[Keon as a federal parliamentarian saw himself as] the representative of Catholic working-class Melbourne".

- Susan McKernan in A.Curthoys and J.Merritt, *Australia's First Cold War- Volume 1 Society, Communism and Culture*. p.137.

" [Keon was amongst those who were] noted for their singlemindedness about Communism".

- R.McMullin, *The Light On The Hill: The Australian Labor Party 1891-1991*, p.256.

" [Keon was amongst those who believed they were] armed with the sword of Catholic Action".

- K.Tennant, *Evatt- Politics and Justice*, p.256.

1) Introduction

Interpretations of Keon's place in history fall into three schools of thought. The first views Keon as a 'rebellious' political individual. While none of the principal members of this group *directly* state that Keon was a 'rebel', the term can still be applied for two reasons. First, all of them indicate that Keon had an inclination to champion causes that were not necessarily popular in the Labour movement as a whole. Secondly, this is reinforced by Keon's acknowledged tendency to feverishly attack any individual or organisation who disagreed with his stance. However beyond this point of agreement writers diverge, offering varying portrayals of Keon's politics. Kate White signals that Keon's rebellious attitude could be aligned with a sense of contempt for sections of the ALP 'establishment' and sectarianism. Robert Murray aligns Keon's cause with a one-dimensional anti-Communist fanaticism.

Janet McCalman contends, along with Catherine Watson to a degree, that Keon's 'rebellious' political conduct was bound to a mode of civic duty that structured itself around championing the working class cause, attacking the local ALP bureaucracy, and challenging Communism. While this school of thought acts as a benchmark for discovering Keon's political legacy it does not concern itself with asking *why* he acted in this apparently maverick fashion.

The second school of thought surveying Keon's political career deals with this very question. There is a great deal of consensus amongst this grouping of writers. Historians such as Kylie Tennant, Robin Gollan, and Ross McMullin indicate that Keon's actions were motivated primarily by a sense of religious duty which was deeply hostile to Communism. Susan McKernan and Allan Ashbolt provide evidence which helps sustain this argument, though Gollan, unlike Tennant and McMullin, concentrates more on Keon's anti-Communist tendencies. Amongst Keon's political contemporaries there is division. Les Haylen and Gil Duthie are satisfied to follow the view portrayed by the historians in this group. Frank McManus, for his part, is alone in arguing that Keon's anti-Communist activities were governed by a dedication to following 'true' Labor ideals. Indeed, if historical research was based solely on consensus of opinion, it would be fair to state that any further debate on Keon's political life would end at this point. After all, the majority of participants in the second school of thought have dismissed Keon as a one-dimensional anti-Communist zealot who was fuelled by a sense of religious duty. In reality, this assessment could be dismissed in itself as an oversimplification.

The third school of thought has three participants. They are all concerned with finding out to what degree anti-Communism and

religious duty played on Keon's conduct during the ALP split and beyond. Murray, who also belongs to the first school, Paul Reynolds, and Gerard Henderson are the three individuals who address this question. All of them express different views, although Murray and Reynolds do seem to share some affinity. Murray signals, in accordance with his original argument, that anti-Communism more than any other factor influenced Keon's conduct during the split and the subsequent formation of the ALP(Anti-Communist). To a degree, Reynolds agrees with Murray. While he does not directly indicate that anti-Communism may have motivated Keon's actions, Reynolds is also quick to point out that Keon was not primarily motivated by 'Christian' duty. Henderson, at the other extreme, differs greatly from Murray and Reynolds. He argues that both religious duty and anti-Communism played interwoven roles in determining Keon's conduct during this period.

2) The First School Of Thought: Keon As A Rebellious Figure.

As noted, the first school of thought on Keon concentrates on labelling him a 'rebellious' individual. By the same token, none of the authors within this strand of thought *directly* label Keon as rebellious. However there are two reasons why it is appropriate to use such a term. First, as these writers continually point out, Keon had a tendency to challenge the mainstream line and champion causes that were not necessarily supported by the whole of the Labour Movement. Secondly, Keon was not afraid to openly attack any ALP figure who disagreed with his views.

a) Kate White

According to Kate White, Keon's rebellious attitude can be best observed during his time as a State and Federal parliamentarian. It was during this period, she suggests, that Keon's rebellious nature blossomed. This maverick stance, she indicates, can be divided into two parts: open contempt towards elements of the ALP Federal and State parliamentary establishment, and sectarianism.

In illustrating her thesis regarding Keon's contemptuous conduct in the state parliamentary sphere, she outlines the main events connected to the 1947 Victorian Parliamentary ALP ballot for the Deputy Leadership. Keon defied the Labor leader, John Cain, by standing against his preferred candidate, L.W "Bill" Galvin. Although Galvin eventually won a three-way ballot, White outlines that Keon, despite his junior standing inside the ALP's parliamentary ranks, had very little respect for Cain's wishes.²⁸⁴

White argues that this mode of rebellion, which was heavily laced with a fair degree of contempt towards sections of the ALP parliamentary establishment, reached its height while Keon was in the Federal Parliament. The events leading up to the split and Keon's simultaneous dislike for the federal Labor leader, H.V Evatt, are both used by White as prime examples to make her point. During the special meeting of the ALP Federal Executive in Victoria on 27 October 1954, Evatt charged that Keon's conduct inside the ALP could only be classed as 'disloyal'. Keon in displaying his maverick attitude, did not accept this charge and promptly attacked Evatt with the support of W.M Bourke and J.M Mullens. White explains that the Federal Executive's decision to elect a new Victorian Executive at a special conference on 26-27 February

²⁸⁴ K.White, *John Cain and Victorian Labor*, pp.141-142.

1955 set in motion a chain of events which illustrates Keon's despising of the pro-Evatt forces inside the Labor Party.²⁸⁵

Indeed, Keon was amongst those in the old Victorian Executive who boycotted the Special conference.²⁸⁶ Even after the old Executive was refused admission at the 1955 Federal Conference, Keon continued to pledge his support to the anti-Evatt forces. This act of rebellion reached its height when Keon was amongst those expelled from the ALP after refusing to meet a 7 April 1955 deadline that called on twenty five anti-Evatt parliamentarians to announce their support for the new executive.

287

This mood of 'rebellion', argues White, was not solely based on contempt for certain sections of the ALP parliamentary establishment. Keon's maverick political personality also possessed a sectarian dimension. Despite his elevation to Canberra, Keon maintained a strong presence in Victoria through his membership of the State Executive. It was from this position, she argues, that he was able to help increase the level of sectarian tension already evident inside the Cain Government. As Cain's biographer, White believes that the Premier was particularly concerned that the right-wing Catholic faction inside caucus would not hesitate to overthrow him if given the chance.²⁸⁸ As White points out, the extent of Cain's anti-Catholicism cannot be precisely measured. However if the episode of events related to the Land Settlement Bill are any indication,

²⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p.169.

²⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p.170.

²⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, pp.171-172.

²⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p.159.

it would be correct to assume that the Premier's concern over sectarian scuffles was not unjustified.²⁸⁹

On the surface, the Land Settlements Bill did not look like a controversial piece of legislation. However, by the time it became law, it exposed the tensions which existed within Victorian ALP ranks. The point of conflict was centred around two proposed amendments that were seen by critics inside the ALP as servicing the pro-Catholic elements inside the party.²⁹⁰ During the reading of this proposed statute the Labor Lands Minister, R.Holt, tore up the bill and stormed out of the parliamentary chamber in disgust.²⁹¹

White points out that to many Catholics inside the ALP, including Keon, Holt's actions were evident of sectarian contempt. Holt was viewed as a staunch Protestant and Freemason who could not tolerate the existence of any legislation which catered for Catholic interests. Keon, despite his distance from Victorian political affairs in Canberra, used his position on the State Executive to stand at the forefront against Holt's perceived sectarian behaviour.²⁹²

²⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p.160.

The first largely revolved around placing Soldier Settlement Commission employees under the Public Service Board. It was argued by many within Caucus that the Board was the only realistic regulator which could ensure that Commission appointments were not unfairly awarded to Masons, at Catholics expense. The second amendment concerned a plan to hand over a portion of poor country at Taradale, South Gippsland, to the National Catholic Rural Movement- such a project was largely inspired by B.A Santamaria's vision of building a rural Italian community in Victoria.

²⁹¹ *Ibid.*

²⁹² *Ibid.*

As one of those who label Keon a 'rebellious' figure, White uses two dimensions of his character to convey her argument. First, she contends that Keon had a contemptuous attitude towards many of the established members of the Labor Party. This contempt, she states, extended to both the state and federal political spheres. His contempt in State politics is exemplified through his deputy leadership challenge, while in the federal scene White outlines Keon's exploits during the ALP split. The second aspect of Keon's rebellious personality is a brand of pro-Catholic sectarianism. In her attempt to give substance to this point, White uses the events of the Land Settlement Bill controversy. Once again, it must be pointed out that White does not directly label Keon as rebellious. However, at the same time, it is also clear that White's descriptions highlight Keon's tendency to champion causes that were not necessarily supported by the majority of the Labour Movement. Furthermore, this manner transformed itself into open hostility against anybody who opposed these causes. White's portrayal of Keon's conduct against elements of the ALP establishment certainly highlights this point. First, Keon felt that the Victorian ALP was not heading in the right direction under Cain, so he challenged the state leader's authority by running against his preferred candidate for the Labor deputy leadership. Similarly, during the split, Keon felt that the ALP was not conducting itself in the "true" Labor spirit. As a consequence, Keon openly opposed Evatt and his allies. White's contention that Keon possessed a sectarian nature also falls within this 'rebellious' definition. Unlike the majority of his Labor colleagues he had a pro-Catholic outlook and confronted anyone who challenged this principle. The most obvious example in this instance, as White signals, was his opposition to Holt during the Land Settlements Bill affair.

b) Robert Murray

Robert Murray subscribes to the same school of thought. According to Murray, however, Keon's maverick attitude can simply be equated with anti-Communism. According to Murray, Keon possessed a reputation which displayed a marked intolerance towards Communism. This hatred towards Communism could be seen in his views of the Soviet Union, Maoist China, proposed anti-Communist directives, and members of his own party who were indifferent to the Communist doctrine.

In relation to the Soviet Union, Keon's views were spelled out clearly on 22 March 1950. He pointed out during this period that if the Soviet Union, as creators of the Communist world, did not lower the 'iron curtain' "...then it [would] stand convicted before the free nations of the world as the breaker of peace".²⁹³

Murray points out that Keon soon found that such one-dimensional anti-Communist rhetoric was not universally located inside the ALP. On the same day, J.B "Ben" Chifley, as party leader, expressed his opinion on the Communist issue. In Chifley's mind, the Catholic Church was partly to blame for Communism's growth in Eastern Europe because it had not played a more active part in denouncing conservative regimes which sanctioned worker exploitation before 1945. According to Murray, this was hardly an inflammatory statement. The views expressed by Chifley, himself a Catholic were merely a reflection, argues Murray, of mainstream Labor orthodoxy which at the time promoted social justice

²⁹³ R.Murray, *The Split- Australian Labor In The Fifties*, p.70.

and opposed colonialism and exploitation.²⁹⁴ Keon, Murray argues, saw such words not pertaining to the "Labor tradition". In response to Chifley's negative comments concerning the Catholic Church, Keon attacked his leader in Parliament during the same day and pointed out that the Catholic Church was at the forefront of the struggle against Communism in Eastern Europe. While Murray acknowledges that Keon had the highest admiration for Chifley, he also stresses that this disdain for the Communist doctrine was fuelled by much deeper emotions. Keon's rebellious attitude was laced so heavily with anti-Communist zeal that it would push him easily into a position where he would publicly disagree with his own leader.²⁹⁵

Murray indicates that Keon's one-dimensional attitude in rebelling against the 'Red' doctrine reached new heights during Menzies' referendum campaign to ban the Communist Party. Indeed, Keon was absent from Parliament when voting on the Bill for the referendum was taking place. This stance was replayed once more when he boycotted Evatt's first 'Vote No' referendum meeting.²⁹⁶

Keon's anti-Communist attitude was not solely confined to areas connected with the Soviet Union, anti-'Red' directives, and intra-party debates. As Murray explains, Keon was also very interested in opposing Maoist China. On 24 September 1952, Keon set out to attack any ideas the Menzies Government had of recognising Communist China. Such a scenario, he argued, would be unsatisfactory on three levels. First, it would be an insult to the Chinese nationalists stationed in Formosa

²⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p.71.

²⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p.87.

(Taiwan) who were planning to win back their homeland. Secondly, he stated, any official recognition would only speed up the 'domino effect' which threatened the whole Asia-Pacific rim. Thirdly, according to Murray, Keon believed that any moves towards recognition would seriously hinder relations with Australia's most powerful military ally, the United States.²⁹⁷

It is evident that both White and Murray belong to the school of thought which defines Keon as a 'rebellious' parliamentarian who did not always follow the mainstream Labor line. By the same token, while both can be grouped together in a general sense, both have *different* ways of defining Keon's rebellious attitude. White equates Keon's rebellious stance with disrespect for the Labor establishment, on both a state and federal level, and sectarianism. Murray, by contrast, focuses on anti-Communism when bringing about his own definitions of Keon's rebellious attitude. In arguing his point, Murray draws upon Keon's attitude toward the Soviet Union, China, members of his own party, and proposed anti-'Red' directives. Once more, it should be noted that Murray, very much like White, does not openly label Keon as a rebellious figure. However Murray's affinity with this school of thought can be traced by linking his view on Keon's anti-Communist stance with the definition of 'rebellious' which was outlined earlier. As stated, within the context of Keon's actions, this mode of rebellion frequently meant championing causes that were not necessarily supported by the majority of the Labour Movement, and a determination to oppose any individual who actively contradicted his stance. In Murray's case it is easy to see his affinity with this school of thought. Anti-Communism, in this instance, was Keon's cause whilst the Soviet Union, China, and

²⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p.146.

non-anti-Communist members of his own party, as tokens of resistance against this doctrine, were seen as opponents.

c) Janet McCalman and Catherine Watson

Janet McCalman and Catherine Watson can also be associated with White and Murray. However they seem to paint a different picture of Keon. According to McCalman especially, Keon's 'rebel' image was primarily connected with his unique status as a Richmond political identity. This style of civic duty, she argues, was firmly based on the following three aims: addressing the local population's needs; attacking the old Richmond ALP bureaucracy, which was alleged to be under the influence of John Wren; and opposing Communism at every opportunity.

McCalman's argument that Keon's rebellious attitude was associated in some way with a desire to look after the people of Richmond's needs is outlined to some extent by Catherine Watson. She claims that during the Second World War, housing conditions in Richmond deteriorated badly. Keon, as Richmond's Victorian Legislative Assembly representative, stood in the firing line in this debate on many occasions. Watson tells how in one address to the State Parliament Keon graphically described the squalid and unhygienic conditions that Richmond families endured.²⁹⁸ McCalman follows Watson's lead by noting that Keon publicly accused the Housing Commission of consciously discriminating against Richmond by building and

²⁹⁸ C.Watson, *Copping It Sweet- Shared Memories of Richmond*, p.53.

maintaining new estates in suburbs such as Highett and Reservoir.²⁹⁹ Keon's pro-community stance, argues McCalman, was also manifested during the 1948 referendum on price control. Although the proposal was firmly rejected by the electorate³⁰⁰, Keon's own dedication to the cause can be measured by the Federal Electorate of Yarra's recording the highest 'Yes' vote in the nation.³⁰¹

It is obvious that McCalman's understanding of Keon's rebellious personality contains a dimension which portrays him as a champion of the common, Richmond working-class people. This interpretation of Keon, can be seen in a number of examples associated with public housing and price control. However, this is not the only dimension of McCalman's pro-community perception of Keon. This rebellious attitude, she indicates, was also heavily associated with his assault on the local Richmond ALP bureaucracy and the Communist Party.

McCalman argues that Keon's rebellious attitude towards Wren and his political cohorts was primarily associated with a question of principle. The 'Wren machine', as she calls it, was at best seen by Keon as an alliance of pragmatic individuals whose prime aim was to consolidate local power at any cost.³⁰² Once again, McCalman's view in this instance accords with Watson. According to Watson, unlike many of his

²⁹⁹ J.McCalman, *Struggletown- Portrait of an Australian Working-Class Community*, p.230.

³⁰⁰ D.Jaensch and M.Teichmann, *Australian Politics and Foreign Policy*, p.41.

The rent and price control referendum was easily defeated in 1948 with a 'No' vote of 59%. The Australian electorate's general hostility towards the referendum is highlighted further when one notes that no state produced a majority vote on the issue.

³⁰¹ McCalman, *Op.cit.*, p.249.

³⁰² *Ibid.*, p.227.

political contemporaries in Richmond Keon was not interested in becoming one of John Wren's political agents. Keon, she stresses, possessed his own agenda and the Wren machine was simply seen as a barrier to the fulfilment of that political program.³⁰³

McCalman's demonstration of this anti-establishment streak in Keon's character is highlighted by the following two examples. Keon's attack on one of the principle actors in the old ALP bureaucracy, Cornelius "Con" Loughnan, and later Wren himself, certainly strengthen McCalman's argument about this point. According to McCalman, Loughnan was one of Keon's first political victims. After 1946, she states, Keon and his allies began moving into Loughnan's power base in the South Richmond ALP branch. The election of Monica Slattery and later F.R."Frank" Scully, both Keon supporters, to the branch presidency a short time afterwards soon saw Keon attack the old bureaucracy by influencing Loughnan's expulsion from the South Richmond ranks.³⁰⁴

Keon's attack on Wren himself, argues McCalman, perhaps underlines Keon's rebelliousness to a further degree. The attack on Wren, an unprecedented event in itself, occurred after the old Richmond political forces and P.J."Pat" Kennelly mounted an attack on Keon's branch supporters during the 1948 pre-selections.³⁰⁵ As if to vindicate his

³⁰³ Watson, *Op.cit*, p.166.

³⁰⁴ McCalman, *Op.cit*, pp.227-228.

³⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p.231.

The first instance of dispute arose when M.Sheehy, a Keonite, was defeated in the pre-selection for the Legislative Assembly seat of Melbourne Province. Despite complaints of misconduct, Kennelly argued that any proposed investigation could not be warranted given the huge winning margin. The Keonites' frustration was soon compounded further during the Richmond City Council pre-selection ballot. In May 1948 Kennelly, as a supporter of the old Richmond political machine, announced on behalf of the Victorian Executive, that all membership in the area would be frozen until further notice. McCalman argues that such a decision had a two-fold aim. For one thing, it

supporters in July 1948, Keon announced in State Parliament that Wren had played a major part in destroying the Labor Party during the 1947 State Election. Keon further claimed that Wren had financed the Country Party during the campaign because the Cain Government had imposed legislation which curtailed his activity in the horse gambling arena.³⁰⁶

McCalman's final point concerning Keon's rebellious attitude is intricately linked with anti-Communism. McCalman claims that his potent dislike for the Communist forces was highlighted in 1948 when the Keon-controlled South Richmond branch of the ALP proposed a motion to the Victorian State Executive calling for the Communist Party's abolition.³⁰⁷

McCalman is the third major member of the school of thought which views Keon as a rebellious individual. Her place in this group is heavily associated with the definition of 'rebellious', in the context of Keon's political life. McCalman, as White and Murray before her, outlines Keon's tendency to champion causes that were not necessarily supported by the rest of the Labor movement. Furthermore, he is also seen by the same authors to oppose any individual or organisation who actively argued against his stance. In McCalman's case, civic duty motivated Keon's rebellious inclinations, and promoting working class interests, attacking the local Richmond ALP machinery, and challenging

would prevent the Keonites from stacking local branches to their advantage during Council pre-selection. Secondly, and most importantly she emphasises, such a scenario would diminish Keon's own chances of obtaining ALP endorsement for the federal seat of Yarra in 1949. Kennelly's first aim, she notes, came to full fruition in June 1948 when the Cremean/Loughnan ticket captured ALP endorsement in every council ward.

³⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p.232.

³⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, pp.227-228.

Communism were the vehicles used to attack any opponents that were not on the same political wavelength.

The school of thought which interprets Keon as a rebellious individual has three principal members. By the same token, it is also clear that none of these individuals *directly* call Keon a 'rebel'. In such a situation it is necessary to interpret the message behind each writer's description. All three writers, despite their varying attitudes towards Keon, are united by two observations that are continually expressed in every illustration associated with his political conduct. First, they all indicate that Keon had a tendency to challenge the mainstream ALP line and champion causes that were not necessarily supported by the whole of the Labour movement. Secondly, they point out that Keon was more than likely to oppose any individual or organisation which actively countered his position on an issue. In this sense, they indicate, he was rebellious. On a similar parallel however, whilst all three are convinced that Keon was rebellious according to this definition, neither of them explain their stance in identical fashion. McCalman, for her part, suggests that Keon's maverick style was linked to a sense of civic duty that corresponded directly with championing the working class cause, attacking the incumbent local ALP bureaucracy, and challenging Communism. White, on the other extreme, equates his rebellious personality with a sense of contempt which bred disrespect during his time in State Parliament, and open defiance towards Evatt in Canberra. White's assessment of Keon is made complete when she argues that he could also be viewed as a passionate sectarian who sought to promote the Roman Catholic cause at every opportunity. Murray's interpretation of Keon is somewhat less systematic as he vigorously promotes, through

an array of examples, his contention that Keon's rebellious attitude was primarily linked with a one-dimensional anti-Communist attitude.

3) The Second School Of Thought: Why Keon Acted In A "Rebellious" Manner

Overall, by studying the above school of thought, we are left with three different but complementary interpretations of Keon's perceived rebelliousness. In the midst of these varying perceptions it also becomes obvious that these writers, while outlining Keon's exploits in a historical context, do not address any question which asks *why* Keon acted in a 'rebellious' manner. In such a scenario, it becomes necessary to introduce a second school of thought which addresses this issue. This group is primarily made up of two main groups: historians and Keon's political contemporaries.

a) Kylie Tennant

Amongst the historians inside this grouping there is unanimity when answering the question as to *why* Keon acted in a 'rebellious' fashion inside the political arena. All of them argue that Keon's actions were fostered by an unbridled will to Christianise the Labor Party and cleanse it of Communist influences. Kylie Tennant is perhaps the leading exponent of this opinion. She argues that Keon and those who opposed Evatt so vehemently inside parliament and caucus were actually protagonists of Catholic Action.³⁰⁸ In seeing this organisation

³⁰⁸ P.O'Farrell, *The Catholic Church In Australia: A Short History 1788-1967*, pp.262-263.

virtually as a Catholic conspiracy, Tennant argues that Keon, as a member of Catholic Action, fully supported a secretive plot to "christianize" Labor and the Trade Union Movement. Indeed, according to Tennant, Catholic Action was intent on overpowering the ALP and turning it into a church-orientated political party. After all, she contends, it had transformed the Industrial Groups into a collective of crusading clones who followed the rigid "Christian" doctrine of defeating Communism in the Trade Unions at any cost. In this respect, Catholic Action with its adjoining anti-Communist tendencies, proposed a program that prescribed "...that Catholics must hold all the important posts". The formation of the ALP (Anti-Communist) and its successor, the DLP, concludes Tennant, was simply an extension of this extremist attempt to launch a Catholic orientated party into the public sphere. Since Keon was an ardent supporter of the Industrial Groups and a foundation member of both the ALP (Anti-Communist) and DLP, one assumes that Tennant sees him as a perfect example of her extremist Catholic stereotype. Certainly, Tennant does not conceal her assessment of Keon when she argues that he was amongst those who believed they were "...armed with the sword of Catholic Action...".³⁰⁹

b) Robin Gollan and Ross McMullin

Patrick O'Farrell states that in 1937 the Fourth Plenary Council of the Archbishops and Bishops of Australia approved the formation of the National Secretariat of Catholic Action under the direction of F.K Maher and B.A Santamaria. Whilst the laity were supposed to be the prime movers behind the organisation, the committee of bishops was also formed to give members aid and advice. Catholic Action established a number of organisations in a bid to pursue its 'Christian' cause. As well as the Catholic Social Studies Movement, it also formed the Young Christian Workers, the Young Christian Students' Movement, the National Girls' Movement, and the National Catholic Rural Movement.

³⁰⁹ K.Tennant, *Evatt- Politics and Justice*, p.256.

Tennant's theory that Keon's rebellious actions were governed by anti-Communist and pro-Catholic tendencies is also supported by Robin Gollan and Ross McMullin. Gollan indicates that Keon was a zealous anti-Communist who made a range of unsubstantiated accusations in parliament. Keon's theory that the Australian National University had become "a nest of Communists organising to subvert the educational institutions of Australia" was, according to Gollan, totally false. Gollan also contends that Keon's belief that Commonwealth Literary Fund grants were exclusively exploited by Communists and their allies was equally untrue.³¹⁰ McMullin, for his part, argues that Keon seemed to possess a "...brash bravery which made him unafraid to take on anyone".³¹¹ However, by 1949, he argues Keon's political personality was earmarked by a fanatical hatred of Communism. Indeed, McMullin states that the group of seven Victorian Catholics, which included Keon, who entered federal parliament in 1949 were "...noted for their singlemindedness about Communism".³¹²

c) Susan McKernan and Allan Ashbolt

This 'singlemindedness' which Tennant, McMullin and Gollan argue was a prime feature of Keon's anti-Communist attitude is illustrated in great depth by Susan McKernan and Allan Ashbolt. McKernan uses Keon's attack on the Commonwealth Literary Fund (hereafter referred to as the CLF) to identify his parochial anti-Communist inclinations. On 28

³¹⁰ R.Gollan, *Revolutionaries and Reformists- Communism and the Australian Labour Movement 1920-1955*, p.277.

³¹¹ R.McMullin, *The Light On The Hill: The Australian Labor Party 1891-1991*, p.257.

³¹² *Ibid.*, p.256.

August 1952 Keon argued in Federal Parliament that the CLF was sponsoring literature which was largely deficient of 'ordinary decency and morality'. This comment was specifically aimed at those writers on CLF fellowships who were publishing pro-Communist literature. Indeed, Keon claimed that the CLF was consciously giving a sizeable proportion of its aid to pro-Communist writers.³¹³ For McKernan this attack by Keon, which had been aided on the other side of the House by the Liberal W.C Wentworth, illustrates two things. First, Keon's assertion concerning a pro-Communist bias on the part of the CLF was totally false. According to McKernan, between 1940 and 1954 only six individuals with past or present Communist affiliations had been awarded CLF fellowships. The fund had been used overwhelmingly to facilitate the works of authors who possessed other views.³¹⁴ Secondly, and most importantly in McKernan's mind, Keon's disdain for Communism had reached such exaggerated proportions that he seemed to view politics and literature as almost indistinguishable. McKernan indicates that Keon could not grasp the fact that Australian nationalists and Communists in the literary world had a great deal more in common than similar individuals in the political sphere.³¹⁵ Certainly, states McKernan, as "...the representative of Catholic working-class

³¹³ A.Curthoys and J.Merritt(Ed), *Australia's First Cold War- Volume 1 Society, Communism and Culture*, p.137.

³¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p.138.

In order to illustrate her point more precisely McKernan lists the authors with past or present Communist association as Katharine Susannah Prichard, Jean Devanny, Betty Roland, John Morrison, Eric Lambert and Judah Waten. Writers such as Frank Dalby Davison, Marjorie Barnard, Mary Gilmore, Dymphna Cusack, Gavin Casey and Alan Marshall are seen by McKernan as 'radical politically'. She also identifies right-wing writers such as Frederick Macartney, Rex Ingamells, and Kenneth MacKenzie in a bid to further strengthen her argument.

³¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p.142.

Melbourne"³¹⁶ Keon possessed a great degree of affinity with writers who saw themselves as social-realists. Such a form of literature, argues McKernan, was structured around championing the 'common man' and expressing a desire to see the working-class prosper. Both Communists and their ideological opposites promoted this argument on a literary level. *The Tracks We Travel*, which was published in 1953 as a collection of short stories is seen by McKernan as a prime example of Communist and non-Communist collaboration on a literary level.³¹⁷ Keon for his part, argues McKernan, simply failed to grasp this point and consequently "...found it difficult to distinguish between nationalist writers and communist ones".³¹⁸

Ashbolt follows a similar line when describing Keon's conduct during the CLF affair. According to Ashbolt, Keon's anti-Communist fervour had reached such extreme proportions during his attack on the CLF that he displayed the attitude of an individual who possessed a "...crippled mental and moral reach".³¹⁹ The absurd nature of Keon's attack, argues Ashbolt, reached its climax when he attempted to assess the intelligence of Communist writers. Keon argued during a debate on the CLF that Communists chose to apply for grants connected with novel writing, rather than those associated with history, biography or social commentary because they had "...neither the intelligence nor the

³¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p.137.

³¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p.142.

The Tracks We Travel was edited by Stephen Murray-Smith and contained contributions from non-Communists such as Alan Marshall, Gavin Casey, and Frank Dalby Davison. Communist representation came from writers such as Frank Hardy, David Forrest, Judah Waten, Walter Kaufmann, David Martin, Len Fox, Katharine Susannah Prichard, John Manifold, Joan Clarke, and John Morrison.

³¹⁸ *Ibid.*

³¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p.162.

ability [to research and write] serious and worthwhile books". In Ashbolt's mind such a statement can only be interpreted as "...one of the most peculiar and primitive pronouncements to ~~debauch~~, from the demonology of the Cold War". Certainly, argues Ashbolt, after bringing forward such a sweeping statement Keon had paid no consideration for the talent which Communist writers like Judah Waten possessed.³²⁰

Whilst consensus reigns supreme amongst the historians in this school of thought, the same cannot be said about the political contemporaries who ask *why* Keon acted in a rebellious manner. Frank McManus, Gilbert Duthie and Leslie Haylen give contrasting accounts when trying to deal with this question.

d) Frank McManus

McManus agrees with the popular view that Keon was a fervent anti-Communist. However, at the same time, he is quick to point out that Keon's actions were in no way exaggerated. According to McManus, Keon was among the "visionaries" who could see that the Communists, by the early 1940s, were intent on overpowering the ALP through the trade unions. McManus proposes that Keon was correct in arguing that many ALP parliamentarians remained deliberately ambivalent towards this situation. Keon, he argues, was very much opposed to those who prostituted their Labor heritage and tolerated Communism's progress in the Trade Union Movement for the sake of not jeopardising their own

³²⁰ *Ibid.*

Ashbolt was referring specifically to Waten's publication, *Alien Son* which was heralded on 30 August 1952 as a "...real contribution to Australian literature".

parliamentary seats. In this sense Keon acted rebelliously because he believed in preserving the Labor tradition which was fundamentally opposed to Marxist rhetoric.³²¹

e) Leslie Haylen

Leslie Haylen, another contemporary of Keon, is more inclined to follow the lead established by historians when discussing *why* Keon acted in a rebellious manner. Haylen, as a pro-Evatt supporter during the split, is predicably hostile toward Keon. Indeed, according to Haylen, Keon was simply a member of the "Santamarian" brigade who had set out to systematically destroy Labor. In the end however, he argues, Keon's 'revolution' as a Santamarian would be "...outward, not inward...".³²² The election results of 1955, he adds, certainly illustrate this point. Haylen argues that people like Keon were not the real victims of the split. They were simply the cause. It was those who stayed inside the ALP, like himself, concludes Haylen, who fought valiantly to preserve the status of the nation's most prominent anti-Conservative political party.³²³ Hence it seems Haylen is siding with the historians in this school of thought who claim that Keon's rebellious actions were fostered by an unwavering pro-Christian, anti-Communist sentiment.

f) Gil Duthie

³²¹ F.P.V McManus, *The Tumult And The Shouting*, p.29.

³²² L.Haylen, *Twenty Years Hard Labor*, pp.86-87.

³²³ *Ibid.*, p.86.

Haylen's line of argument is also supported by Duthie. The strong anti-Communist passions residing in Keon's sub-conscious, argues Duthie, had become fully exposed during the 1951 Referendum campaign. It was during this period that the Grouper element inside Caucus, of which Keon was a part, secretly supported Menzies' desire to ban the CPA.³²⁴ In Duthie's eyes, this attitude had manifested itself because of an "...inbred hatred of Communism that dominated their thinking and actions".³²⁵ By the 1954 Federal Elections such attitudes on the part of Keon and his allies had riddled the ALP with factions and overwhelmed it with a sense of disunity. Indeed, argues Duthie, such anti-Communist zealotry meant that Keon and his cohorts were not true Laborites who believed in the Socialist ideal.³²⁶ Rather they were "...Liberals masquerading under the name of Labor...".³²⁷

It is obvious that the first two schools of thought which survey Keon's place in history are interrelated. The first argues that he was a 'rebellious' individual. White, Murray, and McCalman all adopt this line of thinking. At the same time, it also becomes obvious that whilst these three historical commentators see Keon in a 'rebellious' light, they all interpret this term in different ways. The second school of thought which discusses Keon's political life explores *why* he acted in such a 'rebellious' way. Historians and political contemporaries are the most active participants in this group. Amongst the historians, Tennant, Gollan, and McMullin are convinced that Keon's exploits were primarily

³²⁴ G.Duthie, *I Had 50,000 Bosses*, p.126.

³²⁵ *Ibid.*

³²⁶ *Ibid.*, p.128.

³²⁷ *Ibid.*

fuelled by a desire to Christianise the Labor Party and oppose the Communist Party at every opportunity. To this end, McKernan and Ashbolt provide evidence which corresponds with these writers' views. Such consensus is not evident when one compares the arguments brought forward by the political contemporaries inside this grouping. Haylen and Duthie, for their part, are largely content to follow the lead provided by the historians on this issue. McManus, on the contrary, argues that Keon's perceived rebellious behaviour was an extension of his commitment to defending 'true' Labor ideals in the face of adversity.

4) The Third School Of Thought: To What Degree Anti-Communism and Religious Duty Dictated Keon's Actions.

Some writers' analysis of Keon does not stop here. In fact, the historical commentators who make up the third school of thought, are intent on exploring the possible reasons *why* Keon performed actions which eventually saw him expelled from the ALP and amongst those who founded the ALP (Anti-Communist). More specifically, this faction of thought is particularly interested in discussing the degree to which anti-Communism and pro-Christian principles played in dictating Keon's conduct during the period of the split and beyond.

The third school of thought is essentially divided into two parts as it explores what role Keon's anti-Communist and pro-Christian tendencies played during the ALP schism and the founding of the ALP (Anti-Communist). Murray, who is also a participator in the first faction of thought, is convinced that Keon's actions before and subsequent to the split were fuelled primarily by a sense of anti-Communism, which was not overshadowed by religious overtones. On this point he is supported

by P.L.Reynolds to a degree. G.Henderson, as the third member of this group, indicates that both anti-Communism and a degree of Christian duty played integral roles in governing Keon's conduct during the split and beyond.

a) Robert Murray

In extending his argument that anti-Communist sentiments played *the* central role in determining Keon's actions during and after the split, Murray argues that the ALP (Anti-Communist) provided Keon with the perfect outlet for his anti-Marxist fury. Such a scenario, he argues, also allowed Keon to attack Evatt openly, who was perceived by those inside the ALP (Anti-Communist) as a champion of the Marxist cause. As Murray points out, according to those inside the newly-formed ALP (Anti-Communist) including Keon, a true Labor party did not, in any way, support pro-Communist policies. Keon and his colleagues showed that the ALP under Evatt was following what they argued constituted an 'un-Labor' like path. The ALP (Anti-Communist), indicates Murray, henceforth became a sanctuary for Keon to promote his idea of a Labor Party that was totally hostile to Communist aims.³²⁸

This argument of Murray's, which shows that Keon relished this new found freedom to oppose Labor 'traitors' from the cross-benches of Federal Parliament, is highlighted by two examples. The first instance concerned the Malayan conflict. Menzies' decision on 20 April 1955 to increase Australia's military presence in the region to combat pro-

³²⁸ Murray, *Op.cit.*, p.259.

Communist forces aroused predictable opposition from Evatt, who echoed the ALP's anti-colonial stance. Nine days later, Keon attacked Evatt on the issue. He accused the ALP leader of promoting a Communist foreign policy.³²⁹

The second example which Murray uses to validate his viewpoint, is associated with Keon's concern over growing ALP-sanctioned Communist influence inside the trade union movement. Keon attacked the Evatt-ALP's decision to form allegiances with the Communists during trade union elections within the Australian Railways Union and Ironworkers Association.³³⁰ Certainly, Keon's accusations that the ALP was beginning to resemble a Communist front were strengthened further on 7 October 1955 when a 1937 Labor Federal Conference decision to oppose Communist Party unity tickets was overturned in respect of union elections.³³¹

b) Paul Reynolds

Murray's argument that anti-Communist tendencies rather than pro-Christian fanaticism played the pivotal role in governing Keon's political actions during and after the split is given some noteworthy support by Reynolds. He indicates through his outline of events during the late

³²⁹ *Ibid.*, pp.263-268.

The Malayan conflict arose during the mid 1950s when British led forces were engaged in battling pro-Communist guerillas.

³³⁰ *Ibid.*, pp.266 and 269.

³³¹ *Ibid.*, p.265.

According to Murray there is no doubt that the Victorian ALP's decision to introduce unity tickets with the Communist Party was a move designed to weaken Industrial group influence inside the trade union movement.

1950s that Keon was amongst those who argued that the Democratic Labor Party (DLP), as successor to the ALP (Anti-Communist), had lost sight of its objectives and was turning into a 'church party'. Reynolds states that Keon had made this precise point during the 1959 Victorian DLP State Conference. Indeed, Keon's unwillingness to comply with this apparent church image brought about his downfall as a prominent member of the DLP. The pro-Santamaria forces inside the party were intent on ensuring that Democratic Labor maintained a strong Catholic image, and during the same 1959 DLP State Conference they conspired to ensure Keon's bid for the party state presidency was defeated- by onehundred-and-fiftyone votes to fifty-four. Soon after, he states, Keon's ever-accelerating drive to political obscurity reached a new level when the party no longer saw a need for him as federal senior vice president or as a delegate to the federal conference.³³²

Reynolds, like Murray, believes that Keon's actions during the split and beyond were not motivated by a sense of pro-Christian fanaticism. However, this is not to say that Murray's and Reynolds' views are identical. Murray argues quite openly that Keon's actions were motivated by his desire to serve within a 'true' Labor Party that did not support or sympathise with pro-Communist policies. Murray takes this point further by outlining Keon's anti-Communist fervour during the Malaysian conflict and the ALP's decision to re-introduce Trade Union unity tickets. Reynolds' contention that Keon's actions were not directly

³³² P.L Reynolds, *The Democratic Labor Party*, p.25.

Reynolds notes that a similar fate also seemed to await Keon's followers. The Melbourne University DLP Society, Keon's most noted ally at this point, had its two delegates expelled from the party at the 1960 state conference, whilst the tertiary grouping itself was no longer seen by the DLP as an affiliated student body. Interestingly enough, states Reynolds, the Society had made its intention clear before the meeting when it proposed to move a motion which called on the DLP to break its direct links with the Santamaria-controlled National Civic Council.

linked with pro-Christian tendencies coincides with Murray's view almost by default. While Reynolds states that Keon's actions during and after the split were not inspired by a sense of Christian duty, he does not go out of his way to suggest that Keon's conduct was a product of unwavering anti-Communist zeal. Reynolds it must be noted only informed his readers that Keon was not interested in allying himself to a political party which saw itself as an extension of the Catholic Church.

c) Gerard Henderson

G.Henderson, as the third participant in this school of thought, holds a rather different opinion. In his view, both anti-Communism and Christian religious duty played intertwining roles in determining Keon's behaviour during and after the split. By the same token, it should also be appreciated that unlike the other writers mentioned, Henderson does not go out of his way to associate Keon directly with this theory. Henderson is more concerned with those who as a group believed that their anti-Communist cause had religious support. In this sense it becomes obvious that his interpretation is also applicable to Keon's political life, especially since Keon was an integral part of the apparatus that formed the ALP (Anti-Communist). Henderson indicates that although it is difficult to quantify to what degree religion played a part in Keon's decision, there is no doubt that it was quite important, especially since the Catholic Church was totally committed to opposing Communism. By the same token, Henderson indicates, it is important to note that this sense of conviction, in time, did grow stale. To illustrate this point Henderson presents two contrasting periods: the 1955 Joint Pastoral Letter, which heightened Keon's sense of righteousness; and the 1956 Catholic Hierarchy Annual Meeting that ended any previous

belief that Church backing would be bestowed upon those who had preached a stringent anti-Communist line inside the political arena.

Henderson argues that the 1955 Joint Pastoral Letter entitled "The Menace of Communism" gave those who formed the ALP (Anti-Communist) their greatest sense of religious conviction. *Inter alia*, the document traced the Catholic church's hostility towards Communism throughout the last one-hundred years. Moreover it reasoned that Communism should be opposed "...because of its atheism, materialism and denial of basic human rights".³³³ This rationale, argued the document, was the prime motivation behind the church's contemporary support for anti-Communist forces.³³⁴ Certainly, indicates Henderson, if Keon was motivated in any degree by a sense of Catholic duty he would have taken great satisfaction in the fact that the Catholic Hierarchy had expressed 'regret' towards some "...highly placed public men, including Catholics, [who had]...closed their eyes..." to the Communist threat. As Keon would have undoubtedly appreciated, Henderson signals, the Hierarchy believed that these same people were actually "...forwarding the interests of Communism".³³⁵

At the Catholic Hierarchy Annual Meeting in 1956, such episcopal support was no longer apparent. Although Keon and his allies could still

³³³ G.Henderson, *Mr.Santamaria and the Bishops*, p.109.

Within the same document, Henderson illustrates via the following quotation how the Catholic Hierarchy went out of its way to praise all those Catholics who had assisted in curbing the perceived Communist menace in Australian society: "We recognise that this courageous campaign saved our civil and religious freedoms at a period when they were in grave peril, and we take this opportunity of paying a warm public tribute to all who have engaged in the struggle. This great work of fighting and stemming Communist aggression wherever it shows itself has our full support and approval.

³³⁴ *Ibid.*

³³⁵ *Ibid.*

command support from Archbishop Daniel Mannix's small hierarchical faction, a new report outlining the Church's majority position provided little encouragement on three fronts.³³⁶ First, the ALP (Anti-Communist) was dismissed as a sectarian church party whose existence represented a "...useless squandering of the position and prestige of Catholics" inside the ALP. Secondly, the sub-committee also supported the decisions undertaken at the 1955 ALP Hobart Conference, which included the call for the anti-Communist Industrial Groups disbandment.³³⁷ Thirdly, the New South Wales Labor Party's decision 'to stay in and fight' and not follow the precedent created by the old Victorian Executive was fully applauded.³³⁸ Henderson's claim that Keon and his allies were disturbed by this turn of events is underlined by a letter they sent to Archbishop Justin Simonds in 1958. The note informed Simonds that the Joint Pastoral Letter had legitimised the ALP(Anti-Communist)/DLP's position as a party which stood for Christian ideals and the destruction of Communism.³³⁹

Certainly Henderson's insights, while not directly dealing with Keon, do give the third school of thought a new dimension. Henderson essentially argues that both anti-Communism and a sense of religious duty motivated those, including Keon, who gave birth to the ALP (Anti-Communist). In other words, this unforgiving hatred of Marxism was both politically and morally correct because it fell within the strict boundaries of Catholic doctrine. This sense of conviction reached its

³³⁶ *Ibid.*, pp.111-112.

³³⁷ *Ibid.*, p.112.

³³⁸ *Ibid.*, p.115.

³³⁹ *Ibid.*, p.193.

apex, argues Henderson, when the 1955 Pastoral Letter was released. This situation changed in 1956. Hence in the final analysis, Henderson is keen to develop an argument which is structured around regret. The release of the Pastoral Letter twenty days after the split, he indicates, gave anti-Communists like Keon great encouragement. The Australian hierarchy's reversal of opinion only one year later soured the anti-Communist cause, especially as the majority of the clergy denounced the new Labor party as an irrelevant political grouping. This interpretation, of course, differs greatly from the view expressed by Murray which cites anti-Communism as the main cause behind Keon's motives during the split and beyond. Henderson's view also collides with Reynolds' account which describes Keon's disenchantment with the DLP developing into a church-orientated party.*

5) Conclusion

Standish Michael Keon is hardly the most celebrated politician Australia has ever produced. Perhaps the fact that no known biography of his political life exists is a testament to this claim. By the same token, it is also apparent that history should not forget or disregard his exploits altogether. After all, Keon did enjoy sixteen years of public life activity. In this sense, the unsystematic documentation of Keon's political career in a host of books dealing with Australia during the 1940s and 1950s was inevitable. While these books do not directly explore Keon's political life during this period, they do act as building blocks for further study. The views and theories which historians and political contemporaries

* Henderson also cites Keon's disenchantment with the DLP over the same issue on pages 155 and 183 of his book. However, unlike Reynolds, this information is not central to Henderson's argument regarding Keon's behaviour during and after the split.

propound through these publications can be evaluated by dividing them into three interrelated schools of thought.

The first labels him 'rebellious' and defines this term in various ways. The second highlights why he acted in such a way by almost unanimously pointing towards a sense of religious duty and anti-Communism. The third is not entirely satisfied with this claim, believing it is important to investigate to what degree these two factors played on Keon's mind during the ALP split and beyond.

At the same time, it also becomes obvious that such an assessment of Keon's political life between 1940 and 1955 is hardly complete. As we saw in Chapter One, Keon's political life was marked consistently by a desire to champion the common man, Catholicism, and hostility towards the anti-Labor parties. These three central elements of Keon's character are only given marginal attention in the published material. In order to highlight these traits, and consequently underline the shortcomings of the above surveyed works, the following chapters will be subdivided into three sections. Chapter Three will explore Keon's pro-common man tendencies by equating many of his actions with populist theory. Chapter Four will underline that Keon's Catholicism contained an array of dimensions. Chapter Five will highlight Keon's hostility towards the anti-Labor parties. It will be shown that Keon could not align himself with the Liberal or Country Parties because they postulated policies that were alien to his populist views and Catholic social theory.

Chapter Three

Keon The Populist

"Virtue resides in the simple people, who are the overwhelming majority, and in their collective traditions".

-Peter Wiles in Ionescu and Gellner (Ed), *Populism- Its Meanings and National Characteristics*, p.166.

"Unless something is done soon [about the housing shortage], I shall not counsel further patience on the part of the people who are suffering. I shall tell them that the only way in which they can achieve anything is by forcing the issue themselves".

- Stan Keon, *VPD*, No.220, 13 April 1946, p.727.

"I do not believe that the people are getting value for the cost of transporting members[of parliament] from all parts of Australia and maintaining them while they are in Canberra".

- Stan Keon, *CPD*, Vol. H of R.4, 19 August 1954, p.512.

1) Introduction- The Construction Of A Populist Model

Standish Micheal Keon has been labelled both an anti-Communist and a religious zealot. Not once has he been described as a populist. Indeed, all of the writers who have studied Keon's exploits at one level or another are convinced that his political persona did not extend beyond the boundaries of anti-Communism and/or some rigid affinity with the Catholic Church. A more careful analysis shows that such characteristics, whilst playing a sizeable role in shaping Keon's conduct, did not represent the sum total of his political constitution. Anti-communism and religious affinity should be seen as springboards to bringing forward a much more broader and detailed picture into light. In an attempt to realise this aim, the following chapter will centre its

efforts into arguing that Keon possessed a populist dimension in his political character.

Before one can begin any task associated with demonstrating that Keon was a populist, however, an attempt must be made to define the term. Since the word 'populist' has been used to describe a host of different individuals and movements one can perhaps assume that any definition could constitute a study in its own right. At the same time, one must remember that Keon represents the main crux of this discussion. In an attempt to produce a balance between giving a proper overview of 'populism' and keeping such a discussion relevant to Keon, a theoretical model is therefore necessary to link these previously mutually exclusive topics. This process involves two essential steps. First, an array of different theorists must give their views on populism. Secondly, and most importantly, an attempt is then made to categorise these writers views and establish some formula of consensus. It is through this mode of discussion that one can discern the principal elements behind populism, and discover to what degree Keon was influenced by this particular strand of political thought.

In an attempt to fulfil the first aim outlined above, writings by Peter Worsley, Angus Stewart, Allan Patience, and Peter Wiles will all be used to discuss the various opinions associated with 'populism' around the contemporary academic sphere.

According to Worsley, there is no such thing as monolithic or unitary populism. Whilst the Marxists at least attempted to bridge any cultural anomalies through the existence of a Communist International³⁴⁰,

³⁴⁰ Ionescu and Gellner(Ed), *Populism- Its Meanings and National Characteristics*, pp.213-4.

Worsley explains that various populist movements like the U.S People's Party and Russian Narodnichestvo possessed no such bond.³⁴¹ Given this contention, Worsley indicates that it would be an illusion to portray Keon as a product of a specific populist movement since "...ideology has as much to do with its social context as it has to the 'pure' appeal of a set of ideals".³⁴²

Stewart agrees with Worsley's contention, but at the same time he is adamant that populism is most applicable to a certain type of *situation*, associated with "...modernization and its consequences".³⁴³ This same scenario, he contends, creates a 'tension' between forces that embrace modernity and those who feel threatened by the same process.³⁴⁴

While Worsley believes that populism cannot be specifically defined, and Stewart concentrates on equating the term with economics, Patience hints at a different argument. According to Patience, although one can decipher what populism stands *for*, it is much easier to interpret the concept by looking at what it stands against. In Patience's eyes, populism contains five negative components. First, it is anti-urban. Secondly, it is opposed to the intellectual tradition.³⁴⁵ Thirdly, populism

³⁴¹ *Ibid*, p.218.

³⁴² *Ibid*, pp.216-7.

³⁴³ *Ibid*, p.180.

³⁴⁴ *Ibid*, p.181.

Such animosity can exist between third world and developed nations or backward and advanced regions within the same country. Indeed, argues Stewart, populism eventually translates itself into a theory which seeks to address the economic inequalities caused by modern development.

³⁴⁵ A.Patience, *Australian Studies- Number 17*, p.32.

Populists, indicates Patience, are extremely hostile towards the intellectual classes because they are dedicated towards promoting a program of 'abstract learning' and 'pure research' which encourages challenging and criticising any populist doctrine.

is bitterly opposed to internationalism, preferring a very introverted stance to foreign relations. Fourthly, it is against any form of centralism that involves private banks, bureaucracies, and multinational corporations. Fifthly, it is xenophobic and racist.³⁴⁶

Wiles also locates moralistic, anti-intellectual, and anti-establishment overtones in his description of populism. At the same time, however, Wiles focuses most of his attention into suggesting that populism is deeply embedded with the notion of championing the rights of the common individual. Indeed, Wiles explains this stance by describing populism in the following manner: "...virtue resides in the simple people, who are the overwhelming majority, and in their collective traditions".³⁴⁷

Worsley, Stewart, Patience, and Wiles bring forward a smorgasbord of opinions when discussing populism. For the purpose of this study, however, these arguments are of little value if they cannot be threaded into a framework of consensus. Richard Hofstadter, who has analysed the U.S Populist movement which was active during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, can be used to unite the above theorists. According to Hofstadter, the American populists were determined to promote theories pertaining to a 'golden age' and 'natural harmony'. They were also staunch believers of conspiracy theories and determined to ensure that money inside any given society was used to promote prosperity rather than scarcity. As Peter Love will discuss in Chapter Five, American populism was amongst a variety of ideologies which had made an impression on ALP activists. The following account will

³⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁴⁷ Ionescu and Gellner, *Op.cit.*, p.166.

demonstrate that Keon was a Labor parliamentarian who possessed many of the traits that could be located within the U.S populist movement.

The role Hofstadter plays in making sense of the above theorists can be seen quite clearly on four levels. First, when referring to the populist vision of the 'golden age', Hofstadter argues that political activists who subscribed to this brand of thought and action were intent on championing the farm, and private home ownership-preferably in rural areas.³⁴⁸ This theme very much coincides with Patience's assertion that populism contains an anti-urban dimension. Secondly, Hofstadter's theory concerning the productive classes is very much entwined with championing the cause of all those who rely solely on their labour to maintain their livelihood.³⁴⁹ This interpretation coincides with Stewart's assertion that populists are dedicated to any program which seeks to address the economic imbalances inside any given society. Thirdly, Hofstadter points out that the American populists were extremely suspicious of outside influences, and as a consequence often subscribed to conspiracy theories to justify their fears.³⁵⁰ In this sense, Patience once more can be used to build a bridge of consensus, since he argues all populists are xenophobic. Finally, Hofstadter completes his model of assessment on the American Populists, by arguing that they favoured a system which would see money used for prosperity rather than scarcity. According to Hofstadter's interpretation, the American Populists believed scarcity was most prevalent in a society where private monopolies were allowed to flourish. Such a scenario, since it

³⁴⁸ T.Saloutos(Ed), *Populism:Reaction or Reform?*, p.59

³⁴⁹ *Ibid*, p.60.

³⁵⁰ *Ibid*, pp.48-9.

concentrated power in only a few individuals hands, inhibited most people's freedom.³⁵¹ Once more, this theory can be equated with the work of Patience and Wiles. Patience argues that populists are vehemently opposed to private multinationals and banks. This opposition, as already explained by Wiles, is fostered principally by a belief that such institutions exploit the common individual.

At this point, it may also be worth noting that Hofstadter has woven a thread of consensus between Patience, Stewart, and Wiles. No such correspondence can be, however, associated with Worsley who claims that unitary or monolithic populism does not exist. While this argument does nothing to enhance the Hofstadter inspired populist model constructed above, it does remind us of the aim, stated at the beginning of this chapter, that our key purpose is to understand Keon's public personality. Certainly, Worsley's comments act as a warning to any student that *no absolute* doctrine of populism exists.

By the same token, however, his comments, on their own, do not devalue the worth of a populist model structured around theoretical consensus. Indeed such a model, by distilling the views of various writers into four different categories, allows this study to match some of Keon's political ideas with features of populism. This analysis will draw upon the theory provided by Hofstadter in conjunction with corresponding material from political theorists who share a similar opinion. The various political platforms issued by the U.S People's Party³⁵² during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries will

³⁵¹ *Ibid*, pp.61,63 and 66.

³⁵² K.H Porter and D.B.Johnson, *National Party Platforms 1840-1964*, p.86.

It is quite worthy to note that the People's Party "...is quite generally known as the Populist Party".

also be used where necessary to give this theoretical construct material substance. This theory will then be compared with Keon's actions and opinions during the period of his public life, between 1939 and 1955. The ultimate aim is to show that Keon embraced populist ideas, a view supported by the opinions of various contemporaries. This pattern of exposition will show that Keon believed in recreating a golden age, championing the productive classes, fostering conspiracy theories and fighting money power interests.

2) Recreating A Golden Age

First, an effort will be made to suggest Keon subscribed to the notion of recreating a 'golden age'. In the United States, during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Hofstadter argues that the Populist Movement was firmly committed towards promoting the agrarian lifestyle. Indeed, he contends, as "the Populists looked backward with longing to the lost agrarian Eden..." they viewed industrialisation as the main reason for the United States' general decline in the late nineteenth century. In American Populist terms, nature could theoretically provide for all people. This process, notes Hofstadter, was only being disturbed "...because of a harsh and arbitrary intrusion of human greed and error".³⁵³ This argument is supported by Kenneth Minogue. In his view, the populist logic is centred around an inevitable confrontation between urban and rural forces. According to Minogue, it has always been easy to portray farmers inside their own community as oppressed individuals. Farmers are seen by themselves and their own supporters as 'creatures' of sustenance who

³⁵³ Saloutos(Ed), *Op.cit.*, p.59.

provide society's lifeblood through their food crops. At the same time, argues Minogue, farmers and those inside the rural community can be so preoccupied with this fact, that they often neglect the two way relationship between the countryside and city. Whilst the farming community, contends Minogue, provides food, it is the city with its legislative and financial arms which gives the rural sector "...protection, and organisation...". Populists, he concludes, are guilty of fostering and exaggerating this confrontationist belief.³⁵⁴

The U.S People's Party certainly argued that the rural sphere was naturally superior to its urban counterpart. This sense of devotion ultimately translated itself into a celebration of the farming unit and the homestead. In its final U.S election campaign during 1908, the People's Party highlighted its pro-farm attitude with the following comments: "We urge the importance of maintaining these [agricultural] organisations and extending their power and influence".³⁵⁵ The party's support for the homestead was proclaimed during both the 1896 and 1900 U.S election campaigns. In 1896 it argued that a truly prosperous society, with strong rural overtones, would possess a system which allowed "...bona-fide settlers on all public lands [to] be granted free homes".³⁵⁶ This idea was reiterated in 1900 when the People's Party called on the government "...to secure homes for the people and prevent land monopoly".³⁵⁷

³⁵⁴ Ionescu and Gellner, *Op.cit.*, pp.201-2.

³⁵⁵ Porter and Johnson, *Op.cit.*, p.156.

³⁵⁶ *Ibid*, p.105.

³⁵⁷ *Ibid*, p.116.

The main theme connected to the 'golden age' theory seems to be the countryside. In more specific terms, as Hofstadter and Minogue have explained, and as the People's Party quite openly stated in its platforms, the sub-themes of this topic are the farm and its adjoining homestead. Keon, while not being a mirror-like impersonator of the People's Platforms, did dedicate quite a portion of his efforts towards supporting such causes.

a) Keon's Affinity With Rural Life

Keon's own support for farmers and other rural dwellers was most evident during debate on the Rural Finance Corporation Bill on 3 August 1949. According to Keon, the Hollway Government's action in bringing forward the establishment of a Rural Finance Corporation underlined the fact that private banks simply did not meet the needs of rural dwellers. In his eyes, private banks were motivated primarily by the notion of profit. In accordance with this belief, he stressed, it was simply economically unfeasible for these banks to operate within rural parameters. Only a government entity, whose sole motive was not centred on profit, could provide service for people on the land.³⁵⁸

During another debate on the same bill on 13 September 1949, Keon reiterated his support for the farmer by supporting F.Crean's call to

³⁵⁸ VPD, Number 229, 3 August 1949, p.1396.

Keon's views on private banks and their apparent obsession solely with profit is underlined through the following comments: "This [Rural Finance Corporation] Bill is an admission by the State Government of the deficiencies of the existing private banking system, and of any banking system which operates solely as a business concern, to make profits for its shareholders. [Therefore]...the Government...[must]...recognize that because of the profit factor there are serious deficiencies in the services provided to the community, particularly to the rural section, by the private banks".

increase the Rural Finance Corporations powers. According to Crean's proposals, the Corporation, if it was to be an effective banking institution, needed to possess powers which would allow it to accept deposited money and open accounts for its client base. In Keon's mind, such an amendment was necessary if the Corporation was going to offer rural dwellers competitive loan rates.³⁵⁹

b) Keon's Dedication To Universal Home Ownership

Keon's promotion of the home unit went beyond the rural sector. In this sense, he wanted *all* people to own a private dwelling. Society, according to his mode of conduct, would never achieve a 'golden age' if equally both rural and urban dwellers did not possess the ability to purchase a house. Keon's consistency of thought in this area of policy is highlighted by his attitude in both State and Federal Parliaments.

There is evidence to suggest that Keon was not alone in his belief that housing constituted an universal right. During 13 March 1946, the ALP Minister for Housing, W.Barry, asked State Parliament to grant him emergency powers so that he could deal with the present shortfall in dwellings.³⁶⁰ Keon's passion on the issue, however, far exceeded the position advocated by Barry. Keon, himself, during the same debate could not see the point of discussing the housing issue when countless individuals were living in unsanitized and crowded dwellings. Indeed,

³⁵⁹ VPD, No.230, 13 September 1949, p.1923.

Under the original bill, the Corporation would always be struggling to produce competitive rates of interest since it could only obtain its funds from Treasury or bank loans.

³⁶⁰ VPD, No.220, 13 April 1946, p.727.

Keon argued, it would be hard for him not to condone acts of violent protest in his electorate if parliament continued to needlessly debate the issue.³⁶¹ Certainly, in Keon's mind, discussion on the issue needed to be superseded by a "...National Security Act to give the [Housing] Minister authority to proceed without delay".³⁶²

Keon continued to promote universal housing rights up until 1949 in State Parliament. As a member of the ALP Opposition backbench, he consistently attacked the anti-Labor parties for their perceived insensitivity on the issue. This stance is clearly illustrated by his conduct during debates on the Materials Control (Amendment) Bill in December 1947 and Housing Bill in the latter months of 1948. In the first instance, he stipulated that all available building materials and labour should be channelled towards constructing new housing. It was obvious, Keon argued, after precious building resources had been outlayed for restoring the Regent Theatre, that the Hollway Government did not place such an objective as a high priority.³⁶³ Indeed, Keon argued, it was obvious from this instance that the Liberal Party were the representatives of big business, not the common individual. In order to validate this claim Keon produced a letter which had been written to W.Barry, Minister for Housing during Labor's tenure in Government, by M.McCausland, the secretary of Hoyts Theatre Limited which owned the Regent. The letter claimed that as representatives of the Liberal Party neither T.T Hollway, as parliamentary leader, nor T.D Oldham, as his

³⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p.745.

³⁶² *Ibid.*, p.746.

³⁶³ *VPD*, No.226, 19 December 1947, p.577.

deputy, had any objections to granting a building permit for Hoyts to renovate the Regent.³⁶⁴

During the Housing Bill Debate on 19 October 1948, Keon once more attacked the non-Labor parties over their conduct on this issue. While he agreed with the Hollway Government's stance in selling Housing Commission homes to its occupants, he vehemently opposed any suggestion which would allow the State to make a profit from such sales.³⁶⁵

In Federal Parliament, Keon's pro-home campaign centred firmly around the Menzies Government's perceived inability to keep interest rates down. This attitude was evident throughout debate in the Loan (Housing) Bill and Government Loans and Finance Bill during 1950 and 1952 respectively. In the first instance, Keon used co-operative societies statistics to show that the price of both fibro and brick built homes had increased by over one-hundred per-cent. In this scenario, he informed the chamber, people were borrowing more funds, at higher rates of interest, in order to finance their home loans. In many cases, he continued, home ownership was an unrealistic proposition for many low wage earners who could not afford high-interest loan repayments. In Keon's eyes, this situation could be remedied if the Menzies Government utilised the publicly-owned Commonwealth Bank to provide affordable loans.³⁶⁶

³⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p.578.

The following portion of McCausland's letter certainly supports Keon's argument: "we[Hoyts] were advised that Messrs. Hollway and Oldham would see the Premier[Cain] and inform him that...they had no objection to a...[building]...permit being generated".

³⁶⁵ *VPD*, No.227, 19 October 1948, p.2993.

³⁶⁶ *CPD*, No.210, 1 November 1950, p.1758.

Keon continued his assault on interest rates during a debate associated with the Government Loans and Finance Bill in 1952. In this discussion, he attacked the Menzies Government for sanctioning a general interest rate increase of 0.5%. Indeed in Victoria, he contended, the Federal Government was sponsoring the creation of a new homeless class who simply could not afford to maintain a mortgage which asked for an extra 0.5 per-cent in interest each month.³⁶⁷ According to Keon, under that state's co-operative housing legislation, individuals could previously have borrowed £2000 for a house provided they earnt above £12 5s per week. Under the interest rate increase that sum could only apply to people earning in excess of £13 10s.³⁶⁸

While describing the American populist experience, Hofstadter alludes to a 'Golden Age' theory. As we saw above, he claimed this theory was heavily interwoven with a celebration of the rural sphere and an intense level of suspicion towards the industrial revolution which had threatened the agrarian economy's prestige. Minogue extends this interpretation by stating that populism was centred around confrontation between urban and rural forces. The U.S People's Party seemed to embrace this facet of the populist psyche by championing the farm and its adjoining homestead. In this respect Keon, displayed

Keon's belief that the Commonwealth Bank was needed to provide cheap loans for perspective home buyers is underlined via the following comments:

"According to statistics prepared by co-operative housing societies, a fibro house which could be built in 1939 for £650, now costs £2000. In 1939, the average weekly repayment of the money borrowed to build such a house was 16s 3d. The rate of repayment has now increased to £2 6s 11d which [after being multiplied by the fiftytwo weeks in a year] represents approximately £120 annually, of which £67 is applied to repayment of interest. Similarly, the cost of building a brick house has increased from £1 2s 3d to from £2 15s to £3. In other words, the repayment rate is now approximately £150 per annum, of which £75 is absorbed in interest rate chargers".

³⁶⁷ CPD, No.219, 7 October 1952, p.2554.

³⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p.2555.

himself to be a subscriber of the 'golden age' theory on a number of occasions during his public life. At the same time, however, it should be noted that while pro-rural, he was not necessarily anti-urban. Very much like the People's Party, Keon saw himself as an ally of the rural classes. This attitude was certainly prevalent during Victorian State Parliament debate on the Rural Finance Bill throughout various periods in 1949. Whilst Keon's idea of a 'golden age' included home ownership, he was convinced that such a concept should apply to *both* rural and urban dwellers. This belief, as highlighted above, was displayed consistently during his tenure in State and Federal Parliaments. His passion for these ideals certainly came to the fore in State Parliament during discussion of the Material Control (Amendment) Bill and Housing Bill in 1947 and 1948 respectively. In Federal Parliament, Keon argued during the Loan (Housing) Bill and Government Loans and Finance Bill in 1950 and 1952 respectively, that home ownership could only become a universal concept if interest rates were kept to a low premium.

3) Championing The Productive Classes

The second area of Keon's populist views falls under the theory of 'natural harmony'. Before, however, one can detail how such a concept played a part in Keon's public life, an effort must be made to explain the term. To this end, Hofstadter and Wiles provide useful guides. In describing the American populist experience, Hofstadter notes that there was a great desire to unite the 'productive classes' of the nation. Since farmers, unskilled workers and small businessmen created 'real' wealth through their own toil and labour, it was simply ludicrous in populist eyes for these groups to oppose each other. Indeed from

Hofstadter's own perception of events, populists saw society divided between two totally incompatible socio-economic groups. One comprised the 'productive classes'. The other housed the monopolistic business interests whose parasitic desires centred firmly around accruing profit at any moral or physical cost to the general population. This latter class of people, explains Hofstadter, were seen to possess an unshakeable grip on social necessities, like banks and railways. In this sense, he concludes, the populists saw an economic mission to complete. In their eyes, only when the economic imbalances were addressed could the productive classes be rescued from their depressing plight.³⁶⁹

Wiles explains this economic dimension to the populist psyche as neither socialist or capitalist- but a combination of both systems. This contention, in his opinion, can be sustained when one explores the co-operative model that is central to populist economic thought. Such a system exhibits its socialist overtones by fostering a structure which demands that all agents in the production process- namely consumers, farmers, and manufacturers- have their interests guarded via the existence of individual co-operatives. Such an arrangement also pre-supposes that individuals should only possess a certain degree of property so as to prevent land monopoly. These socialistic tendencies are, however, countered by a capitalist belief that property must remain private and the state should keep its distance from interfering in an individual's everyday existence.³⁷⁰

Keon devoted himself to this 'middle way' by consistently contributing to any debate over the imbalances between rich and poor, labour

³⁶⁹ Saloutos, *Op.cit.*, p.60.

³⁷⁰ Ionescu and Gellner, *Op.cit.*, p.168.

reform, and arbitration. It becomes evident from all three instances that Keon was devoted to championing the 'productive classes' cause.

a) Keon's Desire To Address The Imbalances Between Rich And Poor

When exploring Keon's affinity with the populist notion of addressing the imbalances between rich and poor, a connection can once more be made with the People's Party platform. The party claimed during its first U.S election campaign in 1892 that the United States was creating a huge financial gulf between its richer and poorer citizens. Indeed, the Party argued that it would centre its political program around bridging the gap between "tramps and millionaires".³⁷¹

Various individuals who were associated with Keon, many within the 1939 to 1955 time-frame, are convinced Keon was also motivated by a desire to help the productive classes. F.R Scully affirmed this consensus when he stated that Keon was "a human fellow who had respect for the underdog".³⁷² L.Ledwhich, who was Keon's next door neighbour in the 1950s, seems to echo Scully's response when he states the following: "He[Keon] would never rub shoulders with the bosses or the Establishment [classes]. That is why he would have made a good Prime Minister. The whole nation would have benefited if he had been able to

³⁷¹ Porter and Johnson, *Op.cit.*, p.90.

³⁷² F.R.Scully, Interview, 21 January 1993.

Francis Raymond Scully was the Victorian State member for Richmond between 1950 and 1958. Scully took over the seat after Keon crossed to the Federal sphere at the end of 1949. Scully holds the distinction of being the only Democratic Labor Party candidate to ever win a lower house seat. This aim was achieved during the Victorian State Elections in 1955 when the party was known as the ALP(Anti-Communist).

put his ideas into practice".³⁷³ J.Cotter, who associated with Keon after the ALP split, argues that this sense of solidarity with the productive classes was born from a 'tribal' instinct that "saw the need for the community to be served well".³⁷⁴ More specifically, argues Cotter, Keon acted in this way because helping the productive classes coincided with his sense of "natural religion".³⁷⁵ T.Bolger, who served on the Richmond Council in the early 1950s, brings forward evidence which seems to vindicate the views of Scully, Ledwich, and Cotter. According to Bolger, Keon was part of a relief committee which assisted families in the Richmond area who were unable to meet housing and food expenses. Despite Keon's huge sphere of influence inside Richmond during the early 1950s, Bolger argues that the Council did not suffer any interference from its federal member. This arrangement, he contends, stayed intact so long as the local body made sure there was "plenty of firewood and food vouchers" available for those who were combating unfavourable economic circumstances.³⁷⁶

³⁷³ L.Ledwich, Interview, 1 February 1993.

L.Ledwich was Keon's next door neighbour from 1951 to the mid 1960s. According to Ledwich, whilst Keon unsuccessfully attempted to recruit him for the ALP and later DLP, both maintained a very cordial relationship.

³⁷⁴ J.Cotter, Interview, 13 January 1993.

Cotter was a member of the Catholic Social Studies Movement, Industrial Groups, and DLP at various stages. He continued his affiliation with B.A Santamaria when the Catholic Social Studies Movement renamed itself as the National Civic Council. This association ended in 1976. Cotter is now a member of the Australian Labor Party.

³⁷⁵ *ibid.*

³⁷⁶ T.Bolger, Interview, 27 January 1993.

Bolger was mayor of Richmond from 1950 to 1951. As a member of the Movement, he later went on to join the Democratic Labor Party after the split. He also holds the distinction of being Australia's oldest living olympian.

There is enough evidence to suggest that the views brought forward by Scully, Ledwich, Cotter, and Bolger were quite accurate. Indeed Keon's attitude inside the VPSA, State Parliament, and Federal Parliament, before and after the split, indicates that, very much like the U.S People's Party before him, he was devoted towards addressing the imbalances between rich and poor.

As the General Secretary of the VPSA, Keon constantly used the union's monthly publication, the *PSJV*, to attack the United Country Party Government's treatment of public servants. His main concern, in this respect, involved the cost of living. In 1940, within a year of his appointment inside the white collar union, Keon outlined his prime aim to his fellow members. In the December 1940 edition of the *PSJV*, Keon argued that public servants were increasingly being assigned to the lower confines of the social scale as their wages lagged behind cost of living increases. This fact, argued Keon, was difficult to refute when one considered that Commonwealth public servants were due to receive a £6 increase to cope with rising living expenses. Such a rise, he argued further, would complement the £6 Commonwealth employees had already obtained since the war had commenced. It was therefore obvious in Keon's mind that Victorian public servants were receiving £12 below the minimum amount needed to sustain a comfortable standard of living. Such a process, he argued, could not be allowed to continue. The goal, he stipulated, would now be to obtain wage increases that matched present and future rises in living standards.³⁷⁷

By 1941 Keon was showing his members that he had every intention of fulfilling this goal. With the Dunstan Country Party ministry approving

³⁷⁷ "Urgent", *PSJV*, No.40, 2 December 1940, p.1.

a VPSA led initiative to increase public service wages for cost of living purposes, Keon claimed in the August edition of the *PSJV* that the Association had achieved its primary goal of the year.³⁷⁸ According to Keon, A.A Dunstan's decision as Premier, to outlay £230,000 towards state public service wages represented a major victory for the VPSA, especially since fifteen years had lapsed since the previous remuneration adjustment had been installed.³⁷⁹

At the same time, it must be noted that this victory did not quell Keon's desire to address further imbalances during the years to come. For example, in the October 1943 edition of the *PSJV* Keon argued that the Dunstan Government was "...making ample provision to meet depreciation, renovation, and renewal of mechanical machines". According to Keon's calculations, the State Government had spent over three million pounds servicing its industrial networks.³⁸⁰ It was now

³⁷⁸ "The Cost of Living Increase", *PSJV*, No.58, 1 August 1941, p.529.

In order to illustrate this point, Keon brought forward a motion which had been passed at the Association's 17 February 1941 annual meeting. The resolution sponsored by S.T.Jennings and supported by J.Caldwell read as follows: "...this meeting of the members of the [Victorian Public Service] Association directs the incoming Council and Executive to make the securing of an all-round cost of living increase the [Victorian Public Service] Association's major objective for 1941".

³⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, pp.529-530

On 31 July 1941, A.A Dunstan, as Premier and Treasurer, announced that the State Government would provide £230,000 to cater for cost of living increases. Dunstan's justification to boost public service salaries was highlighted through the following statement he presented in State Parliament on the above date: "In view of the considerable increase in the cost of living since the outbreak of [the Second World] war, wages in industries covered by Arbitration Court awards and Wages Board determinations have risen substantially. The Government has given consideration to the cases of State employees who are not subject to such awards and determinations, and has decided to increase the salaries in these cases by an amount of approximately £250,000 per annum from 1 August 1941, the amount involved this financial year being £230,000". This amount, outlined Dunstan further during the same speech, would be divided amongst state employees in the following fashion: "...Public Service (including Mental Hygiene employees), £107,000; Teaching Service, £103,000; and Police, £40,000".

³⁸⁰ "Depreciation", *PSJV*, Number 116, October 1943, p.1.

time, he argued, for the State Government to also address issues associated with human capital- such as long service leave. Those with twenty years service, he stated, deserved leaves of absence to recover their physical and mental strength. Indeed, in his own eyes, if concessions were not made on this issue, the State Government would be seen as an administration which placed machines above human welfare.³⁸¹

Keon's tendency to address economic imbalances was magnified to a greater degree during his stay in the Victorian State Parliament. Whilst Keon had been primarily concerned with cost of living increases and long service leave issues inside the VPSA, in State Parliament he openly championed the cause of the aged, families, tenants and price-regulation.

Keon's open concern for the economic well-being of senior-citizens and ordinary families is illustrated when one refers to the firewood debate conducted in State Parliament during 27 July 1948. Keon argued that the Liberal Government had failed miserably to honour its pledge of providing 170,000 tons of firewood for Melbourne's metropolitan needs. This shortage, he contended, was directly related to Liberal/Country Party mismanagement after rail authorities had informed the government that such a volume of wood could only be delivered if more transport carriages were made available. This shortage, continued Keon, was ripping into the very fabric of Australian domestic existence as frail

Keon was referring to the £1,500,000 placed in the Railways Renewal and Replacement Fund during the 1941-2 financial year. This amount in depreciation expenses was complemented by a further £1,800,000 provided for other state-controlled enterprises.

³⁸¹ *Ibid.*

pensioners could not keep warm and housewives were unable to properly cook meals for their families.³⁸²

Keon's concern for those who could only afford rented housing was evident during debate on the Landlord and Tenant (Amendment) Bill in 1948. Keon expressed reservations over a provision that would allow either of the parties at a fair rent tribunal to be represented by a lawyer. Such a clause, argued Keon, would work towards the advantage of landlords. On most occasions, he contended, tenants would be unable to secure legal representation. Hence, in the spirit of equity, Keon urged the Liberals to ensure that lawyers could only attend fair rent tribunals if both parties were represented.³⁸³ In the area of price regulation Keon was especially vocal during August 1948. On 10 August Keon argued that the Price Regulation Bill would create imbalances between rich and poor citizens in the community. According to part one of the proposed bill, there were to be no "undue increases" to the price of goods and services during the period of "post-war readjustment". At the same time the bill also stipulated that the control of prices would be removed "...at the earliest possible date consistent with the welfare of the community".³⁸⁴ It was this last phrase of the bill's introduction that concerned Keon. In his eyes, the Liberals had no intention of safeguarding the community's "welfare". Whilst using the Liberal publication, *Hard Comment*, Keon argued that the Hollway Government was actually in favour of a policy which would abolish the subsidies

³⁸² VPD, No. 227, 27 July 1948, p.1858.

³⁸³ VPD, No.227, 4 August 1948, p.2140.

³⁸⁴ Victorian Acts of Parliament, Index 1929 to 1948, p.270.

The Price Regulation Bill became law just under a month later on 7 September 1948.

that maintained price controls. The article, according to Keon's interpretation, stressed that whilst such a policy could induce "some outstanding rises" the greater community would prosper because it would be absolved from paying the taxes that had previously been necessary to maintain price control.³⁸⁵ Such a directive, argued Keon would only aid the wealthy sectors of society and cause the prices of basic commodities to increase beyond the budget of most working-class families.³⁸⁶

During the Supplementary Estimates debate for 1947-8 on 18 August 1948, Keon once again channelled his energies into highlighting an area of the economy that discriminated against the poorer members of the community. This time he found himself opposed to the Metropolitan Gas Company's application for a 2d increase on the price of gas per one thousand cubic feet. Such a rise, he argued, was most unjustified since the company had already increased its commodity by 1s 3d per one thousand cubic feet over the last twelve months. Furthermore, contended Keon, it was impossible to justify such a rise when Metropolitan had announced an annual profit of £134,000- "an increase of £29,000 over the previous year".³⁸⁷

By the time Keon became the Federal member for Yarra at the end of 1949 he had shown that the first ten years of his public life had been

³⁸⁵ *VPD*, No.227, pp.2272.

The portion of the Hard Comment article relevant to Keon's argument is outlined as follows: "Ofcourse, immediate elimination of subsidies may result in some outstanding individual price rises. But these would be limited to a rather small number of commodities... and against the increase[s] [there] would be...greater income available to the individual because of lower taxes".

³⁸⁶ *Ibid*.

³⁸⁷ *VPD*, No.227, 18 August 1948, p.2588.

partly dedicated towards addressing the imbalances between rich and poor. In his days at the VPSA his main concern had been structured around cost of living and long service leave issues for public servants. Whilst a member of the Victorian State Parliament Keon also attempted to address issues related to the aged, low income families, housing tenants, and price regulation. In Federal Parliament Keon continued to fulfil an informal role as a consumer affairs spokesmen for the lower classes. He retained this practice inside the Federal sphere after he joined the ALP(Anti-Communist).

It is possible to illustrate Keon's devotion to this cause in the Federal sphere by describing his conduct in debates that occurred between 1950 and 1952. In a debate on marketing which occurred during 16 May 1950, Keon urged the Menzies Coalition Government to impose a system that would force wool-graziers to sell their produce at a cheaper rate than it was being exported overseas. According to Keon, such a measure was essential if "prices of clothing in Australia [were] to be kept within reasonable bounds".³⁸⁸

On 17 October 1951, Keon told Federal Parliament that the Pharmaceutical Benefits scheme discriminated against lower class people who required dental care. According to Keon, it was simply unfair that certain drugs listed as 'free' when prescribed by doctors for their patients did not enjoy a similar status when ordered by dentists. This scenario, he concluded, meant that patients, especially in his own working class constituency, would *have* to buy the relevant drugs in question.³⁸⁹

³⁸⁸ CPD, Vol.207, 16 May 1950, p.2627.

³⁸⁹ CPD, Vol.214, 17 October 1951, p.781.

Keon once more displayed his belief that the imbalances between rich and poor should be addressed during a debate on dairying on 19 August 1952. In echoing the stance of the Richmond Labour Women's Guild, Keon argued that the dairy products on the domestic market were overpriced. The onus, he contended, lay with the Menzies Government to establish a tribunal which would investigate this situation.³⁹⁰

This desire to bridge the gap between rich and poor was not dampened to any degree when Keon joined the ALP (Anti-Communist) after the 1955 Labor split. On 13 September 1955, Keon instructed the Minister of Supply, H.Beale, that he should launch an enquiry which would investigate whether oil companies were exploiting the buying public. Indeed, argued Keon, the central question involved the new release of "super" petrol, which was more expensive than other fuel varieties because of oil company claims that it possessed a higher degree of quality.³⁹¹

Keon's personal concern for the imbalances between rich and poor has been highlighted through an array of examples during various periods in his public life. In the VPSA his main priorities were the cost of living and long service leave issues which affected public servants. During his time in the Victorian State Parliament Keon also went out of his way to champion the aged, families, housing tenants, and price regulation. He continued to fulfil this consumer watchdog role in Federal Parliament before and after the split. At the same time, however, it must not be forgotten that Keon's active role in attempting to bridge the economic

³⁹⁰ *CPD*, Vol.218, 19 August 1952, p.389.

³⁹¹ *CPD*, H of R 7, 13 September 1955,p.570.

gulf between rich and poor only represented one dimension of his populist tendency to promote the productive classes. The second area, on which we will now focus our attention, was concerned with labour reform.

b) Keon's Dedication Towards Labour Reform

Keon's determination to bring about labour reform was centred around a simple industrial program not dissimilar to the one promoted by the U.S People's Party at the turn of the nineteenth century. During the 1892 U.S election campaign the People's Party stipulated that any employer in the rural or civic sphere who did not aptly remunerate his/her employees was performing a crime. The Party underlined this belief with the following statement: "Wealth belongs to him who creates it, and every dollar taken from industry without an equivalent is robbery".³⁹² In the 1904 U.S election campaign the Party argued "that eight hours should constitute a day's labor in factories, workshops and mines".³⁹³ By the 1908 campaign the Party had extended its commitment to this cause by advocating that workplace safety legislation should be enacted to guard workers well being.³⁹⁴

Such a mode of labour reform was firmly entrenched in Keon's psyche during his period in the VPSA. In the 1 September 1942 edition of the PSJV Keon informed his fellow members that he was determined to

³⁹² Porter and Johnson, *Op.cit.*, p.91.

³⁹³ *Ibid.*, p.135.

³⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p.156.

build on the adult minimum wage reforms which had been awarded twelve months earlier.³⁹⁵

Keon believed, as did others in the VPSA's senior hierarchy, that the best way to achieve labour reform inside the public service was through the establishment of an independent board whose powers would include the ability to fix minimum and maximum salaries. More specifically, such a board would have to possess a truly 'independent' status. In Keon's view this would mean that such an entity could not be influenced by any government of the day. Given these circumstances, one can perhaps understand why he gave a luke-warm response to the Public Service Board Act in 1940. Whilst the Dunstan Victorian Government had finally sanctioned the establishment of a public service board, Keon expressed his doubts over the entity's composition. The board, under the provisions of the bill, contained a chairman, parliamentary agent- both of whom were appointed by the government- and public service representative. Under such a scenario, argued Keon, any State Government could still impose its will since it controlled two out of the three positions on the board.³⁹⁶ Keon expanded on this theory to a further degree in July 1942. In his *PSJV* editorial, Keon explained that while the Government directly appointed two out of the board's three members every concession would be viewed as a 'privilege' rather than a 'right'. In this respect the public service would have no ground beyond 'goodwill' to trust the State Government of the day with its grievances. Such a situation was totally unsatisfactory, concluded

³⁹⁵ Untitled, *PSJV*, No.92, September 1942, p.1.

³⁹⁶ "The Public Service Board", *PSJV*, No.36, 1 October 1940, p.321.

Keon, especially since the government's past record in the area of trust had been "most precarious and fickle".³⁹⁷

Keon's deep desire to secure this mode of labour reform became obvious during a High Court case involving the VPSA and Dunstan Government in 1942. It became further evident during the 1943 Victorian State Election campaign.

In its quest to align itself with an independent remuneration regulating entity, the VPSA attempted to have its demands aired in the Arbitration Court. The Dunstan Government was, however, not so eager to see its power over public service salaries diluted, and consequently referred the matter to the High Court. The judgement that followed was not one which corresponded with VPSA desires. According to the High Court, the Arbitration Court's jurisdiction only extended to *industrial* areas. The Victorian State Public Service, argued the Court, was *not* an institution associated with industrial matters. Hence, the Arbitration Court would have no legal right to hear cases involving the VPSA.³⁹⁸ According to his editorial in the November 1942 issue of the *PSJV*, Keon was most disturbed by this ruling. Since it was now impossible for the Arbitration Court to rule over public service grievances, Keon argued that the onus was strictly on Premier Dunstan to ensure that a new independent Board, free from government intervention, was formed. This demand, he argued, was more than just after "the Premier [had] secured [the High Court] order prohibiting the [Public] Service from approaching the Arbitration Court".³⁹⁹

³⁹⁷ "Independence", *PSJV*, No.86, 1 July 1942, p.1.

³⁹⁸ "The High Court Judgment", *PSJV*, No.98, 2 November 1942, p.1.

³⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p.2.

Keon continued his own and the VPSA's desire to establish labour reform via an independent Public Service Board during the 1943 Victorian State Election Campaign. Once again, this episode involved Dunstan, as the Victorian Premier. In his policy speech concerning the State Public Service, Dunstan outlined his party's intention to form a 'truly' *independent* board. This entity, he contended, would be sovereign because it would contain three members who could not belong to any government or public service. Furthermore, such a regulatory body would have total jurisdiction over setting public service salaries and conditions.⁴⁰⁰ According to Keon, the stance adopted by Dunstan was simply ludicrous, and in essence contained the United Country Party's "declaration of war on the [Public] Service". In his attempt to validate this claim, Keon argued that Dunstan's call to appoint three 'independent' board members was nothing more than a smokescreen to facilitate a position for retiring government ministers who would be sympathetic to Country Party policy. After all, indicated Keon, the Governor-in-Council, which was supposed to appoint these independent representatives, would be acting on the advice of the ruling Country Party. Furthermore, contended Keon, this new found admiration for 'independence' on Dunstan's part, also coincided with deleting the VPSA's presence on the board. In Keon's mind, if the VPSA was ostracised from the new board, public servants would find

⁴⁰⁰ "The Premier's Policy Speech", *PSJV*, No.105, 1 April 1943, p.81.

Dunstan's policy speech is quoted directly in the *PSJV* on 1 April 1943. The following part of Dunstan's policy speech is directly related to the proposed formation of an independent Public Service Board: "The [State] Government favours the appointment of a Public Service Board, consisting of three independent members appointed by the Governor-in-Council. It believes that on such a tribunal there should be no member specifically representing the Government or the [Public] Service, but all should be absolutely independent. This body would exercise all the duties of the present Public Service Board, and, in addition, would be vested with powers to enable it to determine salaries and conditions of the Service, including teachers".

themselves without an active voice inside an administrative body which fixed both their working and salary conditions.⁴⁰¹

Thus far we have touched upon two of the three elements that illustrate Keon's populist belief in the primacy of the productive classes. On both occasions it has been plausible to establish a link between Keon's actions and the political platform issued by the U.S People's Party. First, we explored his efforts to settle the economic imbalances between the rich and poor members of the community. This attitude translated into a commitment to address cost of living and long service leave issues which affected public servants. During his tenure in the Victorian State Parliament Keon extended his energies into championing the aged, families, housing tenants, and price controls. By the time Keon's six-year spell in Federal Parliament had ended in 1955, he had demonstrated a desire to promote the productive classes' consumer rights- both before and after the ALP split. The second dimension of Keon's pro-productive classes stance concerned the notion of labour reform. As the VPSA General Secretary, Keon's idea of labour reform for his own sector of the workforce revolved around the establishment of an independent Public Service Board. Keon and others within the VPSA brought forward their resolve on this issue by refusing to fully support a board which was controlled by the Victorian State Government. Indeed Keon's own role in the VPSA's attempt to by-pass the State Government's board and affiliate itself with the arbitration system spoke volumes about his attitude on this issue. Keon's commitment to this cause was re-echoed during the 1943 Victorian State election campaign, when he opposed the Dunstan Government's program of establishing a Public Service Board that would not possess VPSA representation.

⁴⁰¹ *Ibid.*

c) Keon And Arbitration

The third, and final, area which illustrates Keon's populist inspired dedication to the productive classes is the notion of arbitration. In this instance a connection can once again be drawn between the political program of the U.S People's Party and Keon's actions within the public sphere. In its 1904 U.S Election platform the People's Party stipulated that it was committed to a policy of 'industrial peace'. Such a scenario, argued the Party, could only be effectively constructed if employers understood that labour and machinery are both necessary in the industrial sphere. If employers, stated the Party, promoted a system of 'justice' which addressed employees needs, the process of arbitration would always triumph over any desire to activate militant strike action.⁴⁰²

Keon, himself, saw strike action as a fundamental human right. During a Supplementary Estimates debate in the Victorian State Parliament he stipulated that any state which hoped to call itself a democracy had to accept that a worker could voluntarily withdraw his labour. Any alternative, stated Keon, by means of gaoling or punishing people who performed such an act, would result in 'repression' and consequently never "secure industrial peace in Australia".⁴⁰³

At the same time, Keon indicated that the productive classes could only achieve real industrial results via arbitration, rather than through strikes. The ALP Industrial Groups, as disciples of the arbitration

⁴⁰² Porter and Johnson, *Op.cit.*, p.135.

⁴⁰³ VPD, No.222, 9 October 1946, p.2340.

process, were seen to have the best interests of the productive classes at heart. During an Estimates Debate on 5 December 1950 in Federal Parliament, Keon explained this argument. As he outlined his support for the Industrial Groups, Keon portrayed the Australian Communists as a band of individuals who used strikes to damage Western economies in the contemporary Cold War atmosphere. In an attempt to validate this view, Keon brought forward a number of statistics which illustrated that between 1946 and 1950 Communist controlled unions inside the mining, railways, and engineering industries had produced wage increases for their members that were below the national average of seventy-four per-cent.⁴⁰⁴ On the other side of the equation, Keon presented the case of the Australian Workers Union which, under its Industrial Group leadership, helped broker a wage increase of seventy-eight per-cent. According to Keon, such a wage hike had been achieved because the AWU had chosen arbitration and conciliation over strike action.⁴⁰⁵

In exploring Keon's tendency to promote the productive classes we have touched upon the second dimension of his populist persona. As Hofstadter pointed out earlier, populists believe that the productive classes constitute those individuals who exert their own labour to create real wealth. Wiles then argues that in populist eyes these individuals can only be protected if there exists a middle way between socialism and capitalism. In other words, an effort must be made to create a

⁴⁰⁴ CPD, Vol.211, 5 December 1950, p.3660.

Keon attempted to highlight this point by stating, in accordance with Commonwealth figures, that Communist controlled unions had produced wage increases inside the mining, engineering, and railway industries amounting to sixtytwo, seventy, and seventyone per-cent respectively.

⁴⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

society where an individual can control his/her own destiny without infringing upon the same rights of others. In an attempt to bring forward such a spirit of equity in Australian society, Keon promoted the productive classes interests by actively seeking to address the economic imbalances between rich and poor, initiating labour reform, and consistently championing the process of arbitration. Keon's three aims in this area are given further 'populist currency' when it is noted that they all correspond with the platforms of the U.S People's Party, issued at the end of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The comments of contemporaries such as Scully, Ledwith, Cotter, and Bolger are also of particular value when exploring Keon's desire to address the economic imbalances between rich and poor.

4) The Conspiracy Theory

Thus far we have touched upon two facets of Keon's populist beliefs. The first was interwoven with the re-establishment of a 'Golden Age'. The second dimension concerned establishing a sense of 'natural harmony' amongst the productive classes. The third element of his populism, which we will now focus our attention upon, is known as the conspiracy theory. Again, before one can even attempt to connect this concept with Keon's pattern of behaviour, it is important to turn back to Hofstadter and Wiles so as to establish a theoretical background.

Hofstadter notes that "there was something about the Populist imagination that loved the secret plot and the conspirational meeting". Indeed, Hofstadter suggests, American Populists were convinced that their whole movement was not entirely structured around promoting new policies or initiatives. At the same time, neither were they a party

totally hypnotised with recreating the past. Rather, their main intention was to implement a program of 'correctness'. The fact that such a notion could, in their eyes, be located in the past was somehow incidental. The aim of the Populists around the turn of the twentieth century was to impose this doctrine of 'correctness' and defeat those who had conspired against such a program up until this time. ⁴⁰⁶

In Keon's mind, the Communists represented a very real and dangerous threat to his version of a 'correct' society. This antagonism itself towards the Communists, indicates Wiles, also pertains to the populist vision of society. Populists, argue Wiles, are opposed to the Marxist doctrine because it calls for a class war. Though Wiles concedes that populism is 'class-conscious', at the same time he contends "it is basically conciliatory and hopes to convert the Establishment". Hence, populists seek to reform, rather than overthrow, the capitalist system.

The majority of contemporaries interviewed on this issue like John Cain(Junior), W.Burns, F.Crean, and Scully are convinced Keon fought the Communists because he believed they had a very real chance of overwhelming Australian society. J.Cairns, for his own part, offers a different opinion.

According to Cairns, although Keon did appear to be an anti-Communist on the surface, he is not convinced that such a stance represented part of the central thrust behind his political program.⁴⁰⁷

⁴⁰⁶ Saloutos, *Op.cit.*, p.61.

Hofstadter outlines this theory to some degree in the following statement: "The pervasiveness of this way of looking at things may be attributed to the common feelings that farmers and workers were not simply oppressed but oppressed deliberately, consciously, continuously, and with wanton malice by 'the interests'".

⁴⁰⁷ J.Cairns, Interview, 9 January 1993.

The other people interviewed on this issue, who represent a cross section of Australian politics, seem to offer a contrasting view.

John Cain(Junior) argues that his father, John Cain(Senior) who led the Victorian ALP during Keon's period in public life, was aware of a 'fanatical' section within the Labor Party who saw it as their duty to fight the Communists at every available opportunity. In Cain's own words the anti-Marxist fight became an end in itself- "they[the anti-Communists] were saying Communism is so bad that we have to fight it wherever it appears".⁴⁰⁸ Keon, argues Cain from his own recollection of events, was a part of this ideological clique.

Crean, Burns and Scully all agree with Cain's assertion that Keon was a determined anti-Communist. The three, however, can be divided when exploring any question associated with the validity of Keon's belief that he was fighting a real Communist conspiracy. F.Crean argues that Keon's actions in this respect were heavily laced with a sense of paranoia. Indeed, as Crean explains, "he[Keon] was obsessed by the idea that he was *really* fighting Communism- it was a bad political action".⁴⁰⁹ Both Burns and Scully seem to disagree with this view. According to Burns, the Communist menace was very real. In this

J.Cairns won the seat of Yarra from Keon in 1955 as an ALP endorsed candidate. Despite Keon's repeated attempts to regain Yarra, Cairns defeated his opponent consistently. Cairns was a member of the Whitlam ALP Government, and was Deputy Prime Minister in 1974-5.

⁴⁰⁸ J.Cain, Interview, 3 March 1993.

J.Cain led the Victorian ALP to victory for the first time in twentyseven years during 1982. He was Premier until 1990.

⁴⁰⁹ F.Crean, Interview, 3 June 1993.

F.Crean was an acquaintance of Keon throughout the 1940s and 1950s. Both men had been members of the VPSA, Victorian State Parliament, and Federal Parliament by the time the 1955 ALP split had taken place. Crean became Deputy Prime Minister for the last few months of the Whitlam Government's lifespan.

sense, he explains, Keon "...did not want to see Australia fall into the wrong hands- Communism was a real danger in the trade unions".⁴¹⁰ In order to combat this Communist insurgency inside the trade unions, Scully contends that Keon had "a desire to bring forward good Labor candidates".⁴¹¹ According to Scully, in one instance Keon achieved this goal by personally contributing to Anti-Communist electoral funds inside the Australian Railways Union (hereafter referred to as ARU).⁴¹²

Whether or not Keon was actually fighting a Communist conspiracy in Australia is of course another topic on its own. The majority of the contemporaries noted above are arguing that Keon *himself believed* he was combating a Communist insurgency. This theory can indeed be sustained when one brings forward evidence from Keon's period in the Victorian and Federal Parliaments. Certainly, Keon believed that Australia was in danger of being severely undermined by Communists in the industrial, international, and education spheres.

a) Keon's View Of Communist Industrial Sabotage

First, we shall focus our attention upon Keon's views on the Australian industrial environment in relation to Communists. During debate on the Royal Commission (Communist) Bill on 11 May 1949, Keon argued that the trade unions were the pivotal arteries behind the Communist Party

⁴¹⁰ W.Burns, Interview, 25 January 1993.

As Victorian President of the Young Liberal Movement, Burns served on the Liberal State Executive during the mid 1950s- which coincided with the ALP Split. His first meeting with Keon occurred during the early 1960s.

⁴¹¹ Scully, Interview, 21 January 1993.

⁴¹² *Ibid.*

of Australia's* influence in society. Hence, he contended, if the Victorian Liberal/Country Party Government was serious about attacking the Communists power base it would change the laws which governed union elections. The only reason why the Communists held power in these institutions, stressed Keon, was because they unfairly manipulated election results. If union ballots, argued Keon, were administered under the supervision of the electoral office the Communists would be unable to maintain their illegitimate grip on power.⁴¹³

Keon had tried to highlight the ability of Communist controlled unions to undermine Australian society during debate on the Public Works Loans and Application Bill. On 7 May 1946 he told the Victorian State Parliament that the contemporary housing shortage could, in some way, be attributed to the industrial disputes that had been orchestrated by the Communists who dominated the Ironworkers Federation. In a bid to support this point, Keon identified the 'real' purpose behind the "go-slow" which had been imposed at a Deer Park explosives factory. According to the member for Richmond, this dispute had been organised by the Communists so that they could directly retard the Australian 'manufacturing chain'. After all, explosives were necessary for the mining of minerals, which would eventually be used for iron production.⁴¹⁴ Such an operation, Keon argued, fell perfectly into place with the two principal aims of the Communist Party inside the trade union sphere. According to Keon, the first aim resident inside Australian Communist Party philosophy was to destroy the Labor Party.

* To be known as the CPA from this point onwards.

⁴¹³ VPD, No.229, 11 May 1949, p.953.

⁴¹⁴ VPD, No.221, 7 May 1946, p.1837.

In this way, argued Keon, the Communists would be free to falsely preach to Australian workers that they represented the best interests of the proletariat. The second aim, argued Keon, had national and international consequences as Communists around the world attempted to weaken Western democracies defence capacities by infiltrating their trade unions and eventually disrupting manufacturing and industrial production.⁴¹⁵

Keon had also attempted to emphasise his belief that any statute dealing with the Communists in the trade unions should be handed down with a specific aim of not infringing upon the rights of 'anti-red' workers. During debate on the Essential Services Bill on 15 January 1948, Keon stressed this point. Whilst he agreed that such a bill would aid the government in its fight against Communist dominated unions, Keon also believed the proposed statute would discriminate against 'real' unionists who had legitimate claims and wanted to exercise their right to strike.⁴¹⁶

It is at this point that one can summarise Keon's Communist conspiracy theory in regard to the Australian industrial sphere. In Keon's mind, the Communists threatened Australian society through their tight grip of various trade unions. He attempted to underline this belief during debate on the Public Works Loans and Application Bill.

⁴¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p.1839.

⁴¹⁶ *VPD*, No.226, 15 January 1948, p.653.

In order to understand this piece of proposed legislation in its entire context it is worthy to consult *Victoria Acts of Parliament, Index 1929 to 1948*- pages 1 to 3. The Essential Services Bill became a statute in 1948. Under this act the State Government was charged with the responsibility of maintaining the following services during a period of 'emergency': transport, fuel, light, power, water, sewerage, and "any service specified from time to time by Order of the Governor in Council published in the Government Gazette...".

This irregularity, in his eyes, could be addressed if union elections were supervised by the electoral office. At the same time he stated during the Essential Services Bill reading on 15 January 1948 that any measure designed to deal with the Communists should not infringe upon the rights of 'real' union men. Indeed, from all indications, Keon was going out of his way to promote a message which stipulated that Communists, rather than trade unions in general, were responsible for Australia's industrial disharmony.

b) Keon's View Of The Communist International Conspiracy

The second dimension of Keon's belief in a Communist conspiracy centred on the international sphere. His faith in the idea of countless "red" soldiers invading Australia's shores had become more than evident during his tenure inside the Victorian State Parliament. In the midst of an adjournment debate on 13 July 1948, Keon argued that a Soviet attack on Australian soil was highly possible. In the light of the USSR's push throughout Europe to establish satellite states, Keon argued that the Victorian Government should take precautionary measures to ensure that vital public utilities like water and electricity did not fall in the wrong hands during a Soviet invasion.⁴¹⁷ By the time China had fallen to Mao Tse Tung's forces, Keon's apocalyptic views had escalated further. Indeed, during the Royal Commission (Communist) Bill debate on 11 May 1949, Keon urged the State Government to take steps that would enhance Australia's defensive position on the Eastern Coast.⁴¹⁸

⁴¹⁷ VPD, No.226, 13 July 1948, p.1628.

⁴¹⁸ VPD, No.229, 11 May 1949, p.958.

By the time Keon reached Federal Parliament, however, his apocalyptic vision of an international Communist invasion had been overtaken somewhat by a desire to openly confront local Marxist forces. Such hostilities, it seems, were to be conducted on both a physical and psychological level. During a Supply Bill debate on 26 June 1951, Keon argued that Communism not only had to be fought on battlegrounds, but also in people's 'hearts and minds'. If the West was going to triumph over the Soviet Union, he believed, it would have to convince people that Communism represented the antithesis of freedom and prosperity. Given such a belief, it was therefore paramount in his mind that Australia contributed greatly, whether in the international or domestic sphere, to discrediting the public image of Communism.⁴¹⁹

On the non-military front Keon argued that Australia could only hope to repel the 'Red' menace by initiating media and economic policies that would diminish the Soviets' spirit. Indeed, Keon argued during an International Affairs debate on 22 March 1950 that Radio Australia should be broadcast to Asian countries under Communist rule. According to Keon, it was important in the context of the Cold War struggle that Australia used such an outlet to promote Western democracy.⁴²⁰

According to Keon, even on the economic front it was important that Australia maintained some form of psychological ascendancy over the Soviets. In a Federal Parliamentary debate on 2 May 1950 Keon informed the House of Representatives that the Soviets had consciously brought large volumes of wool from Australia in order to drive-up the

⁴¹⁹ CPD, Vol.213, 26 June 1951, p.403.

⁴²⁰ CPD, Vol.206, 22 March 1950, p.1067.

price in the domestic market. Such a move, he indicated, fell in line with the Soviet policy of inducing inflation in Western economies. After all, reasoned Keon, inflation produced economic turmoil, which in turn gave people a motive to participate in violent revolution. In order to prevent this theory becoming reality, Keon argued that Australia should follow the United States and impose export quotas on 'strategic materials' being sold to the Soviet Union.⁴²¹

In a physical sense, Keon believed that Australia could only confront the Communist conspiracy if it became more militarily active. Given that the French had retreated from Indo-China after the Communist victory in the region, Keon feared that France might also end its colonial ties with New Caledonia and the New Hebrides. Since these two colonies were in close proximity to Australia's shores, Keon believed that any power vacuum created by a French withdrawal would result in the Communists assuming government. In such a situation, he told Federal Parliament on 10 August 1954, it was necessary for Australia to take control of both French dominions.⁴²²

At this point, one can condense Keon's beliefs in regard to an international Communist conspiracy. In his period as a State Parliamentarian Keon argued that a Soviet-led invasion on Australian shores was imminent. This theory, in Keon's mind, gained further currency when China fell to Mao Tse Tung's forces. By the time Keon

⁴²¹ CPD, Vol.207, 2 May 1950, p.2060.

⁴²² CPD, H of R 4, 10 August 1954, p.94.

During the same speech, the Minister for External Affairs, Lord R.G Casey, told Keon it was unlikely that France would abandon New Caledonia and the New Hebrides. According to Casey, the French had been literally pushed out of Indo China by militant nationalistic forces. Such a situation, he stated in conclusion, did not seem to exist in the islands.

reached Federal Parliament, however, he was bringing forward a program which aimed to repel the Communist threat on the international stage. Such a program, he argued, should contain both a psychological and physical dimension. In a psychological sense, Keon maintained that Australia should construct media and economic policies that would damage Soviet confidence. From a physical perspective, he urged the Menzies Government to employ directives that would increase Australia's military presence in the Asia-Pacific region.

c) Keon's View Of Communist Infiltration Into Australian Education Circles

The third, and final, dimension of Keon's Communist-inspired conspiracy theory was bound up with education policies. Keon was convinced that the Communists were using a two-tier program to undermine the Australian education system. The 'Reds' supposedly were achieving this goal by subverting Christian ethics taught in schools and infiltrating tertiary academic ranks with Communist sympathisers.

Keon told the Victorian State Parliament on 11 May 1949 that the Communists had already succeeded in subverting Australian education. One of the prime objectives of the Communist Party, argued Keon, was to ensure that Christian principles were not taught in schools. The Education Act, he added, by not making Christianity a compulsory subject in secular schools, was aiding the Communist objective. Indeed, argued Keon, with Christian studies being non-existent inside the state school system the path was open for Communists to 'subvert' young minds. The Soviets, argued Keon, had already imposed such a program

in East Germany.⁴²³ During an Estimates debate on 28 August 1952 in Federal Parliament Keon attempted to illustrate this theory by asserting that the Communists had hi-jacked the Commonwealth Literary Fund. Keon argued that it was criminal to see Communist individuals such as Judah Waten who wrote poems like 'Jesus Christ in an Ashtray', which defamed Christianity, being funded by the taxpayer.⁴²⁴

During the same Estimates debate Keon also attempted to promote his belief that the Communists had control of many tertiary institutions. One such campus which had fallen prey according to his calculations was the Australian National University. This set of circumstances, he argued, presented serious repercussions since academics played a sizeable role in advising Government policy. Indeed, stressed Keon, if the Menzies administration did not rectify this situation Australia would find its public service ranks over-flowed with individuals dedicated to fostering policies that benefited the Soviet Union and Communism.⁴²⁵ Certainly, during his maiden speech inside Federal Parliament, Keon had told the Menzies administration that any proposed anti-Communist statute should not be solely concerned with trade unions. As he explained, "Communism is a disease which is not only peculiar to the industrial workers and trade unions[...], it has a more extensive range".⁴²⁶ In his mind, an effective attack needed to be launched

⁴²³ *VPD*, No.229, 11 May 1949, p.958.

⁴²⁴ *CPD*, V.218, 28 August 1952, pp.717-718.

Indeed, argued Keon, Waten was not the sole Communist using the fund. According to Keon, Vance Palmer, John Morrison, and Eric Lambert, all noted Communists, were also recipients who were utilising public funds to promote the 'Red' doctrine.

⁴²⁵ *Ibid.*, p.719.

⁴²⁶ *CPD*, V.206, 14 March 1950, p.689.

against the 'Red' intelligentsia that was resident inside universities and the media:

Indeed, if I were asked who among the subversive elements in our midst I should consider the most dangerous [...] it is the intellectuals and the university professors who subscribe to the doctrine of communism. They are far more dangerous than any trade union official could ever hope to be.⁴²⁷

In order to fully understand this facet of Keon's populist political character it is important to review the thread created by Hofstadter, Wiles, Cairns, Cain, Burns, Crean, Scully and the subject himself. In his study of the U.S populist movement Hofstadter identified a desire to maintain a sense of 'correctness'. Furthermore, any force which threatened this perfect environment would be treated with extreme hostility. According to Wiles, the Communists are seen to pose such a threat in populist eyes. This is because they have no desire to reform the capitalist superstructure, but rather destroy it through class war. In this sense, Keon can be seen as a populist who was haunted by the threat of the Communist conspiracy theory in his mind becoming reality. Whilst Cairns appears sceptical on this issue, Cain, Burns, Crean, and Scully are convinced to varying degrees that Keon believed in a Communist conspiracy. In fact, Burns and Scully argue Keon's beliefs were based on good grounds.

Keon's actions in the State and Federal Parliaments certainly seem to vindicate the response of the four contemporaries. Keon argued that the Communist conspiracy could be located in the world of industrial relations, foreign affairs and education. The industrial sphere, as an obvious area pertaining to Australia's economic well-being, was in Keon's mind dominated by Communists who had obtained senior trade-

⁴²⁷ *Ibid.*

union positions via dubious electoral practices. The number one aim of these individuals was supposedly to retard Australian industry by inducing strike action through their trade union membership. According to Keon, this situation could be changed if the federal government directed the electoral commission to scrutinise union ballots. In any case, stated Keon, any policy in this area would have to remain sensitive to the aspirations of 'true' unionists who did not subscribe to Communism. In the foreign relations area, Keon contended that Australia could only avoid an armed Communist invasion by imposing policies that would repel the Marxist aggressors on both a physical and psychological level. If Australia was going to defeat the 'Reds' in people's 'hearts and minds', argued Keon, strategic media and economic policies would have to be launched internationally. In a physical sense, Keon urged Australia to take a more active military role in the Asia-Pacific region. From an education perspective, Keon stated that the Communists aimed to 'deface' Christian ethics within schools. Furthermore, he stressed that many Australian tertiary institutions had become dominated by academics who favoured the Communist doctrine.

5) The Use Of Money For Prosperity Rather Than Scarcity

Thus far we have explored three out of the four facets of Keon's populist persona. First, he has been placed in relation to the 'golden age' theory. Secondly, he was identified as an individual who believed in a sense of 'natural harmony' existing between the productive classes. Thirdly, Keon was seen as an exponent of the conspiracy theory. We shall now turn to the fourth, and final, dimension of Keon's populism. This area is very much concerned with the populist notion that money should be

used to create prosperity rather than scarcity. Again, it is worth exploring Hofstadter's work regarding U.S populism and the corresponding sections of the People's Party platform. Keon's actions in this area seem to be tied with the above theory.

According to Hofstadter, the U.S populist movement asserted that financial institutions played a central role in governing the direction of any particular society. At the turn of the twentieth century, the Populists were openly stating that U.S society was faltering because its economy was being held to ransom by interests that were pinning the nation's currency to the gold standard. With gold being a scarce commodity, argued the Populists, interest rates were unnecessarily high. Such a scenario meant that an increasing number of working class individuals and farmers were repaying inflated interest sums for their loans. Such funds, they argued, were travelling into the coffers of merciless banks and finance brokers who did not recognise the pain and misery they were inflicting on ordinary working-class laymen trying to sustain ownership rights on their houses or small businesses.⁴²⁸

According to the People's Party, this resulted in an unjust distribution of wealth and a consequential concentration of ownership. In the Party's view the main influence behind this process, were private monopolies and banking institutions. Indeed, the Party believed that private monopolies especially should be disbanded because they worked

⁴²⁸ Saloutos, *Op.cit.*, pp.61,63-66.

The populists argued that banks and other financial institutions would not command a great degree of influence in American society if money was guaranteed against silver rather than gold. Such a metal, because it could be obtained at greater volumes, would significantly bring down the price of money.

against the public's interests.⁴²⁹ During the 1892 U.S Election campaign the People's Party stated that certain enterprises must be monopolised by the state in order to maximise the public's good. Certainly, argued the Party in its platform, if the state did not intervene and nationalise various industries the greater population would be exploited by a select minority whose policy of profit conflicted with the notion of public good.⁴³⁰ The Party reiterated this stance during the 1896 U.S Election Campaign. The telegraph system, the Party stated in its platform, because of its importance in transferring news around the nation "...should be owned and operated by the Government in the interest of the people".⁴³¹

This anti-monopoly attitude also seemed to reside in Keon's political psyche. Keon's attachment to this belief was three-fold. First, he argued against private monopolies. Secondly, he exercised a nationalistic streak in this area which was opposed to foreign monopolies benefiting from the Australian domestic market. Thirdly, Keon wanted to break up large land estates.

⁴²⁹ Porter and Johnson, *Op.cit.*, p.136.

The People Party's aggressive opposition to private monopolies is highlighted by the following statement: "As to...trusts and monopolies which are not public utilities or natural monopolies, we demand that those special privileges which they now enjoy, and which alone enables them to exist, should be immediately withdrawn".

⁴³⁰ *Ibid.*, p.91.

In the context of its own agenda the People's Party argued that the railways had to be nationalised for the public's benefit. Indeed, in its own terms, the Party stated the following on the issue: "We[the People's Party] believe that the time has come when the railroad corporations will either own the people or the people must own the railroads...".

⁴³¹ *Ibid.*, p.105.

a) Keon's Hostility Toward Private Monopolies

Very much like the People's Party before him, Keon was convinced that privately owned monopolies worked against the public's interests. Indeed, in his eyes, if monopoly ownership was inevitable in a particular industry then it should be dominated by the state. On 10 October 1950 Keon informed the House of Representatives that insurance should become the sole responsibility of the Federal Government. There was no doubt, in his eyes, that under present arrangements private insurance companies were exploiting the electorate. In a bid to highlight this argument, Keon announced that the publicly funded War Service Homes Insurance fund had made a "handsome profit" during 1950, despite under-cutting its private competition by fifty per-cent.⁴³²

Keon again outlined his hostility toward private monopolies two years later in the lower house. This time Keon devoted his energies toward opposing the sale of the state-owned Commonwealth Oil Refineries to private interests. Using the Royal Commission report on *Mineral Oil and Petrol and other Products of Mineral Oils*, Keon attempted to vindicate his stance by arguing that nations, in a macro-sense, could only benefit from exports if the companies responsible were domestically owned. Given that petroleum and associated products were classed as inelastic goods on the world market and hence necessary for every functioning economy in the developed world, Keon believed Australia would be forfeiting countless sums of potential export earnings by selling off its state owned refineries.⁴³³ Furthermore, argued Keon, apart from the supplies produced by Commonwealth Oil Refineries, Australia was

⁴³² CPD, Vol.209, 10 October 1950, p.481.

⁴³³ CPD, Vol.219, p.1696.

completely dependent on merciless "...monopoly groups operating without nationality and morality" for its fuel.⁴³⁴

b) Keon's Nationalist Opposition To Foreign Monopolies

The second facet of Keon's anti-monopoly stance was intertwined with nationalism. Indeed, so passionate was Keon on this subject that not even his affections for the United States could interfere. On 26 April 1950, Keon argued that the United States film sector was launching a campaign on Australian soil that would completely destroy the local equivalent as a viable commodity. The U.S film chains, he argued, would realise such an aim by purchasing the majority of Australian cinemas and then compel them to show American motion pictures.⁴³⁵ Using an *Argus* newspaper report titled "Theatre Chain By MGM", Keon argued that this process had already commenced with the Embassy Theatre in Malvern having fallen prey to American interests. The same fate, he stressed, was now also awaiting other cinema centres in Moonee Ponds and Carlton. To emphasise this point from an employment perspective, Keon stated that "the implications of this matter are serious for those who are hoping to make a living in Australia through literature, music, or drama".⁴³⁶

⁴³⁴ *Ibid.*, pp.1696-7.

The Coalition argued that the Commonwealth Oil Refineries should not have been established in the first place because the federal government had no constitutional jurisdiction in this area. In Keon's mind, this comment was laced with a fair degree of irony since the refineries had first been established by the Bruce United Australia Party Government in the 1930s.

⁴³⁵ *CPD*, Vol.207, 26 April 1950, pp.1908-9.

⁴³⁶ *Ibid.*, p.1909.

c) Keon's Desire To Break Up Large Land Estates

The third, and final, area of Keon's anti-monopoly stance involved the desired dissolution of large land estates. In Keon's mind, a concentration of property also constituted a form of monopoly ownership. Keon certainly expressed such sentiments during the reading of the Land Tax Assessment Bill on 6 November 1951 when he stated that the Coalition Government was not using the property levy according to its original purpose. By Keon's reckoning only 1.1% of government revenue was obtained through land taxation- a figure which had remained static since 1945. Such a low percentage, he argued, was contradicting the true spirit of land tax which he outlined "...should be imposed with the object of breaking up large estates".⁴³⁷ Indeed, in Keon's mind, this rate of tax should have been increased if land was being used to manufacture goods and services. Such a rule, he concluded, would certainly apply to woolgrowers who were profiting from their land by selling their produce to overseas interests.⁴³⁸

We have seen that the ~~fourth~~ dimension of Keon's populist ideology was bound up with the notion of money being used to promote prosperity, rather than scarcity. Hofstadter's study of the U.S populist movement provides the foundation for such an assertion. According to Hofstadter, the American populists were convinced that a concentration of ownership in any given society would create misery. Hofstadter's conclusion can be extended when one studies the electoral platforms of the populist-inspired People's Party. During both the 1892 and 1896

⁴³⁷ CPD, Vol.215, 6 November 1951, p.1556.

⁴³⁸ *Ibid.*

U.S Election campaigns the Party advocated that the principal sites of wealth concentration were privately-owned monopolies. As a consequence, the Party argued that it would disband such entities if elected. Keon certainly seemed to uphold this legacy during his period in public life. Indeed, Keon's anti-monopolistic fervour was structured around three main premises. First, Keon believed that all private monopolies should be dissolved. In areas where monopolies were inevitable, Keon argued that the state as an agent of the people should assume the mantle. Keon illustrated this view during federal parliamentary debates concerning insurance and oil in 1950 and 1952 respectively. Secondly, Keon's anti-monopoly stance was intertwined with nationalistic fervour. He did not like the idea of foreign companies dominating any particular area of the Australian economy. Keon certainly outlined this belief in 1950 when he argued that American firms were in the process of dominating the local film industry. Thirdly, Keon indicated that any wholesale assault on monopolies would have to be accompanied by policies which sought to break up large land estates. His views on this topic emerged when he called on the Menzies Government to increase land taxes in 1951.

6) Conclusion

Despite the evident complexities which seemed to reside in Keon's political character it is perhaps easy to understand why past commentators-only writing about him as a secondary subject at best-failed to acknowledge his populism. After all, it would be impossible to simply state that Keon was a populist without first establishing some form of adjoining framework.

Any process involved with defining populism can perhaps constitute a study in its own right. By the same token, however, it should be noted that this study was concerned with constructing a populist model that could be linked with Keon's actions *rather* than an absolute populist definition. In order to achieve this aim two steps were followed. First, a range of academic theorists were consulted for their views on populism. To this end, Worsley, Stewart, Patience and Wiles proved useful. Secondly, an effort was then made to fit these theorists views into some form of coherent framework. Hofstadter's work on the U.S Populist movement proved to be the appropriate vehicle for integrating all these writers, with the exception of Worsley. At the same time, Worsley's differences with Hofstadter were useful because they reaffirmed the objective of this exercise- in that a broad populist framework was being pursued rather than a precise definition of populism. This mode of consensus, which allowed one or more of the surveyed theorists to find common ground with Hofstadter, established four perceived populist dimensions. The first was a theory of recreating a 'golden age'. The second was concerned with the notion of establishing 'natural harmony' amongst the productive classes. The third alluded to the fostering of a conspiracy theory. The fourth centred on the view that money should be used for prosperity rather than scarcity. Having established this model it was then necessary to test Keon's public actions against such a framework. In order to complete this task with a fair measure of success three steps were essential. First, an outline of the relevant theory was provided by Hofstadter, often in conjunction with corresponding material from other theorists. Secondly, much of the information brought forward by Hofstadter and others concerning the U.S Populist Movement was tested with the political platforms of the People's Party. Thirdly, after the first two steps had been equated with one another

Keon's relevant actions and opinions between 1939 and 1955 were investigated. This process was complemented at times by information that had been obtained from a host of interviews with Keon's contemporaries.

Given this wide and varied framework it would be most tempting to simply view Keon as a populist in Australian politics. Such a contention would, however, be misleading since a brand of populism on its own does not represent the sum total of Keon's political persona. Indeed, Keon was influenced by factors that do not necessarily fit inside any populist model. Such themes will occupy our attention in the forthcoming chapter.

Chapter Four

Keon, The Catholic

"[Australia is] based upon Christian values, which, if repudiated, must result in the destruction of society itself".

-Stan Keon, *VPD*, Vol.229, 11 April 1949, p.960

"In paying the Family Wage an employer is simply giving his workers what belongs to them. He is handling THEIR money, not his own".

- Social Justice Statement, in M.C Hogan(Ed), *Justice Now! Social Justice Statements of the Australian Catholic Bishops, First Series: 1940-1966*, p.30.

1)Introduction

Standish Michael Keon was a Catholic. The simplicity of this statement is counterbalanced by the difficulty of quantifying and explaining the dynamics of this area of Keon's politics. In an attempt to establish some form of clarity on the issue, a distinction needs to be made between Keon's role as a promoter of Catholicism and his devotion to specific social teachings as outlined by the Church's hierarchy. On one side of the ledger, Keon was a promoter of the Catholic Church by his own accord. This type of support was essentially structured around general issues related to defending the Church publicly. In other words, Keon was not basing his actions on any formal guidelines which had been devised by the Church. At the opposite end of this affinity with the Catholic Church, Keon's devotion can be seen to contain more rigid

elements, as he continually postulated policies and attitudes in his public life which corresponded with lay teachings that had been formulated by the Church's hierarchy.

In order to fully unearth and understand the association between Keon and such principles, three steps can be followed. First, a brief focus must be placed on Catholic social teachings. Such a study will indicate how the Catholic hierarchy wanted modern society to be structured. Secondly, an attempt will then be made to link the Victorian ALP Executive of the late 1940s and early 1950s with Catholic social teachings. This will be an important step because Keon was a member of the Executive during this period. At the same time, however, such a procedure would only establish an implicit association between Keon and Catholic social teachings. In order to establish a more direct relationship a third step becomes essential. By illustrating Keon's *personal* desire to champion causes associated with wage justice, decentralisation, anti-Communism, and anti-Asian nationalism not only will a marked relationship be established with Catholic Social Teachings. Indeed, the fulfilment of such an aim will indicate that Keon was amongst those on the Victorian Executive who were deeply influenced by the Church's teachings.

Hence, it becomes apparent that any study describing Keon's connections with the Catholic Church has two clear and opposite dimensions. The first is very general, and consequently focused on simply promoting the Catholic Church in the public sphere. The second is more specific and rigid. It shows how Keon consistently went out of his way to promote a political doctrine that was intimately related to directives that had been issued by the Catholic Church.

2) Keon's Catholicism

First, we shall focus on the general aspect of Keon's affiliation with the Catholic Church. As we saw in Chapter One, Keon's devotion to his religious faith was most evident by the late 1930s. Indeed, his association with the Catholic Young Men's Society (hereafter CYMS) not only provided a sense of religious sustenance, but also acted as a means of harnessing and developing communication skills that would later allow him to effectively project pro-Church views.⁴³⁹ By the time Keon entered the public sphere it was evident that he still had every intention of promoting his Catholic legacy. Such an attitude, in part, was not centred or influenced by any specific set of ideals. Rather, this dimension of Keon's Catholicism was very general. He simply sought to champion the Church's name at every available opportunity. Keon especially exhibited this facet of his Catholicism in the areas of education and morality.

Keon's desire to defend the Church was not inhibited in any way by party loyalties. In the 1946 Budget Debate, Keon criticised the ALP's education policy because it did not fully aid parents whose children attended non-secular schools. Under the Free Library Services Bill, State Parliament would be distributing funds to Victorian school libraries. No such provision would be extended to non-State schools. This decision, argued Keon, meant that "about 2000" children inside his electorate would be missing out on such benefits. As a consequence, argued Keon, "it is time that this question of the State's responsibility to children attending denominational schools was considered by every

⁴³⁹ C.H Jory, *The Campion Society and Catholic Social Militancy In Australia 1929-39*, p.38.

member".⁴⁴⁰ Indeed, he stated, alluding to the words of Sir Henry Parkes, the current policy which discriminated against children who attended non-secular schools could be equated with "nothing short of oppression".⁴⁴¹

Expanding on his position, Keon argued that the state had a duty to pay for the secular aspect of education in all schools. This process, he pointed out, was not being practiced at the time. Indeed two points needed to be explained when supporting any argument which called on the state to support religious or non-secular schools. First, there was no reason why religion should not be taught at schools since such a practice did not threaten the very fabric of society's existence. Secondly, and in co-relation with the first statement, the government should not pay for the religious aspect of a child's education. At the same time the state should be bound to pay for the secular education of every child, since every parent contributed taxes which maintained society.⁴⁴²

Keon's general desire to champion the Church's cause could also be seen in the area of morality. In regard to marriage, film censorship, and illegal abortion Keon brought forward views that were in strict accord with current Catholic doctrines on morals.

Keon argued during the Landlord And Tenant (Amendment) Bill debate, on 11 August 1943, that society should primarily safeguard the rights of married heterosexual couples. In developing this argument Keon was especially critical of clause nine of the bill which dealt with the "protected persons" under the care of discharged servicemen who were

⁴⁴⁰ VPD, No.222, 16 October 1946, p.2493.

⁴⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴² *Ibid.*, p.2194.

looking for a place to live in the midst of the housing shortage. According to Keon, this provision placed de facto relationships on an equal footing with married couples. In Keon's view, the State Government was obliged to ensure that ex-servicemen's wives, widows, and female relatives were given priority over those in de facto relationships.⁴⁴³ Indeed, argued Keon, by not facilitating such an amendment the "[Liberal] Government [was] in favour of immorality".⁴⁴⁴ Keon received little support from the Liberal Government on this issue, as the Attorney-General, T.D Oldham, advised him that a de facto woman did in fact qualify as a 'dependent'.⁴⁴⁵

Keon's moral slant on censorship became clear during a debate concerned with the Cinematographic Films Bill. On 27 October 1948, Keon criticised the Liberal Government's decision to allow the Commonwealth to administer censorship provisions on films entering Victoria. According to Keon, the people of Victoria possessed high moral standards that were not found anywhere else in Australia.⁴⁴⁶ Indeed, he argued, "the maintenance of our standards of human decency is essential, and while one admits that does not involve a foolish prudery in relation to various subjects, it certainly does involve intolerance towards filth and obscenity where no other end is served".⁴⁴⁷ These very standards, stressed Keon, were being threatened by live theatre

⁴⁴³ VPD, No.227, 11 August 1948, p.2384-5.

⁴⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p.2386.

⁴⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, pp.2387-8.

⁴⁴⁶ VPD, No.228, 27 November 1948, p.3209.

⁴⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p.3211.

shows that exposed both juvenile and adult crowds to unacceptable levels of 'obscene' behaviour.⁴⁴⁸

On 4 May 1949 Keon used debate on the Crimes Bill to underline his hostility toward abortion. This Bill went beyond party lines. Members were called on to vote according to their conscience. Keon demonstrated his allegiance to Catholic morals by vehemently arguing that all illegal practitioners of abortion should be exposed to the severest degree of corporal punishment. In Keon's eyes, the law had simply failed to bring such offenders to justice in the last decade. He argued his case for harsh treatment of illegal abortion offenders accordingly:

In 1940, there were 50 deaths from criminal abortion in Victoria. Of that number there were only three arrests and one conviction. In 1941, there were 44 deaths, 11 arrests, and no convictions. In 1944, the number of reported deaths was 17, but no arrests were made. In 1945, 15 deaths were caused in this way; there were 7 arrests, and no convictions.⁴⁴⁹

Although Keon was expressing his opposition to illegal abortion, one cannot help believing that he may have been hostile to any form of the practice. This theory certainly gains some credence when the debate between Keon and Independent Labor member Charles Mutton on the issue is explored. When Mutton suggested that the punishment for illegal abortion offenders should be reduced from twelve to six lashings, Keon argued that the Independent Labor representative displayed no real grasp of 'true' social justice.⁴⁵⁰ For Keon the issue clearly involved a sense of retribution, as well as punishment.

As a protege of the CYMS, Keon consistently used the debating skills he had acquired in that organisation to voice views that corresponded with

⁴⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴⁹ *VPD*, No.229, 4 May 1949, pp.745-6.

⁴⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p.746.

general Catholic rhetoric. As a champion of non-secular education and moral correctness in the areas of marriage, film censorship, and abortion, Keon was hardly promoting beliefs that would have clashed with official Catholic dogma. At the same time, however, such a slant could hardly be seen as uniquely Catholic. *After all*, these attitudes could also be associated with other non-Catholic ideas. In order to fully expose Keon's role as a Catholic politician, one who based many of his actions on directives formulated by the hierarchy, a different approach must be taken. This process, as stated earlier, involves three tasks. First, one must explore the nature of Catholic social teachings. This fulfils two objectives. On the one hand, it briefly outlines *why* the Catholic Church chose to instruct its laity on social issues. Furthermore, it then highlights the specific areas in which the Church felt obliged to instruct its lay membership. Secondly, a concerted effort must be made to investigate the impact this brand of education had on the Victorian ALP Executive during the late 1940s and 1950s, before the split. This period coincides with Keon's membership of that Executive. If some link can be made here between the Victorian Executive and Catholic social teachings, as expounded by the faith's hierarchy, then Keon can be associated with it by implication. By the same token, however, any assertion which casts Keon as a supporter of the Catholic hierarchy and its teachings can only be justified on a circumstantial basis until evidence is brought forward which draws a direct thread between papal encyclicals, Australian Catholic Bishops' Justice Statements, and Keon's actions in public life. This task represents the third and most important step in demonstrating the belief that Keon's political persona was inspired, to some degree, by Catholic social teachings.

3) **Catholic Social Teachings**

When exploring the origins of Catholic social teachings, Truman argues that it is important to understand *why* the Catholic Church has imposed its opinion on various public issues. According to Truman, Catholic philosophy stipulates that God rules the Earth through a number of laws. Two of the most prominent laws are known as 'Natural' and 'Human'. Under Natural Law, God sets out a moral doctrine that allows individuals to differentiate between 'right' and 'wrong'. Such a principle, argues Truman, is intricately connected with Human Law, which allows man to impose God's moral order on the mortal spheres of commerce, defence, property, employment, and family.⁴⁵¹ These two laws are also supposed to define the temporal and spiritual aspects of society. In this scheme the Church represents the spiritual, while the state embodies the temporal power. If there should be a clash between the two, under Catholic logic, the Church should always prevail. In this context, the character and extent of Catholic social teaching were in direct proportion to the moral shortcomings of modern society.⁴⁵²

Micheal Hogan expands on Truman's argument by labelling this doctrine "corporatist". According to Hogan's interpretation, Catholic social teachings were convinced that modern society was failing because it abhorred harmony and consensus. At the same time, indicates Hogan, such a pattern of thought possessed its own rigid underpinnings and displayed very little tolerance towards socio-economic systems like Communism and even capitalism. In Hogan's own terms, such ideology constituted "a vision of an idealised pre-industrial, culturally cohesive,

⁴⁵¹ Truman, *Catholic Action and Politics*, p.21.

⁴⁵² *Ibid.*, p.22.

medieval Christendom" where society governed through small communities, the family unit, and a strong industrial sector would be firmly motivated by Christian thought.⁴⁵³

By the mid 1930s, elements of the Australian Catholic hierarchy were starting to actively champion the corporatist concept. At the National Eucharistic Congress, which was held in Melbourne during 1934, Archbishop Daniel Mannix told university students and graduates that he was firmly in favour of any program promoting a Christian social order.⁴⁵⁴ Indeed, Mannix claimed:

His Holiness the Pope himself has been sending a clarion call to the whole world, not directed to the Bishops and priests, but to the laity...You are the leaders of the people...any ideas that you may initiate to make things better than they are at present will receive a cordial welcome, and will be assured of the utmost consideration. And I can assure you that I shall leave nothing undone to give effect to any feasible proposal.⁴⁵⁵

In this sense argues Patrick O'Farrell, Mannix and B.A Santamaria, who founded the monthly publication *Catholic Worker* in 1936, were acting upon the policy of Pope Pius XI. Since 1925 the Vatican's head had been calling for the establishment of Catholic Action. Under this doctrine, the Pope urged his faith's laity to involve itself in the apostolic work of the Church and initiate a sense of Christian co-operation which had been lacking inside their respective industrialised societies.⁴⁵⁶

Certainly, throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries the Catholic Church had gone out of its way to create a doctrine of social thought that would annul the errors created by modernity.

⁴⁵³ Hogan, *Justice Now!- Social Justice Statements of the Australian Catholic Bishops 1940-1966*, p.2.

⁴⁵⁴ O'Farrell, *The Catholic Church In Australia- A Short History 1788-1967*, pp.259-260.

⁴⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p.260.

⁴⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, pp.260-1.

Indeed, this commitment was launched with much fervour by various popes who, during their different reigns, released a number of encyclicals which outlined the Church's commitment to supporting an universal society run along Catholic ethics. One such document of note was published in 1891 by Pope Leo XIII, titled *Rerum Novarum*.^{*} The Pope argued that the working class man's right to obtain a fair wage and avoid employer maltreatment should be championed and pursued. This statement, whilst being unique for its support of trade unions during a time when such entities were largely viewed as being radical, coincides perfectly with Truman's interpretation of Catholic Human Law and the Church's self professed rights of intervening when the temporal affairs of the state are not seen to be "spiritually correct".⁴⁵⁷ Certainly Leo XIII was convinced that any act of exploitation in the workplace constituted a breach against the "nature" God had created:

Man's powers, like his general nature, are limited, and beyond these limits he cannot go. His strength is developed and increased by use and exercise, but only on condition of due intermission and proper rest. Daily labour, therefore, must be so regulated that it may not be protracted during longer hours than strength admits.[...] Let it be granted, then, that as a rule, workman and employer should make free agreements, and in particular should freely agree as to wages; nevertheless, there is a dictate of Nature more imperious and more

^{*} Duncan, *Eureka Street*, 3 May 1991, p.4. (and) Fletcher and Taylor, *Eureka Street*, 9 November 1991, p.34.

The encyclical recorded its centenary in 1991. Bruce Duncan has noted that *Rerum Novarum* "was a step forward in its time". By supporting unionism and a wider distribution of property, whilst simultaneously arguing for a more humane form of capitalism and rejecting socialism, *Rerum Novarum* helped in Duncan's terms "[...to...] legitimate what became the Labor-Catholic alignment". In contemporary terms, Duncan argues, the encyclical still remains relevant as a signpost which opposes the sanctioning of economic hardship in the Third World, former European Eastern bloc and sections of the U.S industrial sector. In Duncan's view, "[Pope] Leo [XIII] led a battle charge; the war continues". Frank Fletcher and Brad Taylor outline that Pope John Paul II also formulated a response to celebrate the centenary of Leo XIII's encyclical with *Centesimus Annus*. Although John Paul II advocates no precise economic system because every country is governed by different historical factors, he does suggest that Catholic social teachings do champion a certain socio-economic spirit. According to Fletcher's and Taylor's views of John Paul II's work, *Centesimus Annus* very much like *Rerum Novarum* is content with supporting the existence of markets and private property provided they "[...] function in accord with the common good".

⁴⁵⁷ Truman, *Op.cit.*, p.23.

ancient than any bargain between man and man, that the remuneration must be enough to support the wage-earner in reasonable and frugal comfort. If through necessity or fear of a worse evil, the workman accepts harder conditions because an employer or a contractor will give him no better, he is the victim of force and injustice.⁴⁵⁸

Pope Pius XI also embraced the same theme when he told Catholics that "they should abandon a purely passive or defensive attitude to their religion [and] advance Christ's Kingdom to all institutions of society".⁴⁵⁹ Pius XI's answer to this 'advancement' was the release of an encyclical letter titled *Quadragesimo Anno* in 1931. In this document he announced that Catholic laity and the Church hierarchy would be allowed to combine their resources in bringing about an "Organic Society".⁴⁶⁰ Inside the manifesto, a whole range of sweeping social changes were advocated in a bid to transform society according to Catholic principles.⁴⁶¹ Capitalism, communism, socialism, industrial councils, and the family were amongst the areas targeted. Pius XI argued that capitalism, in its quest to produce profit at any price, was explosive because it relegated workers priorities to an unimportant level. In his eyes, such a system fostered class warfare since everybody was working towards their own interests, instead of the community's as a whole.⁴⁶² Indeed Pius asserted:

⁴⁵⁸ George, *The Condition of Labour- An Open Letter To Pope Leo XIII*, pp.184-5.

Rerum Novarum is contained in the appendix.

⁴⁵⁹ Truman, *Op.cit.*, p.29.

⁴⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, pp.30-45.

Truman indicates that the "organic society" is another term for the Vatican's idea of a corporatist state. As previously outlined, such a doctrine abhorred both monolithic capitalism and communism, and championed the needs of the individual above those of any state or privately owned institution.

⁴⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p.30.

⁴⁶² Pope Pius XI, *Reconstructing The Social Order- Encyclical Letter Quadragesimo Anno*, p.27.

[The Western] State, which should be the supreme arbiter, ruling in kingly fashion for above all party contention, intent only upon justice and the common good, has become, instead, a slave, bound over to the service of human passion and greed.

Communism was also rejected because of its open hostility to the spiritual dimensions of human nature. It was also opposed on the grounds that it supposedly bred violence through revolution and tyranny with its method of rule. As Pius pointed out:

Communism teaches and pursues a two-fold aim: merciless class warfare and complete abolition of private ownership; and this it does, not in secret and by hidden methods, but openly, frankly, and by every means, even in the most violent.⁴⁶³

Although socialism was not seen in this light, the Church still believed such a doctrine should be opposed. According to the encyclical, socialism placed the state ahead of human welfare by encouraging the nationalisation of industries that could just as easily be administered privately.⁴⁶⁴ The document argued that socialism, capitalism, and communism would not create 'true' prosperity because they were based solely on 'material' and 'temporal' advantages. Indeed, *Quadragesimo Anno* stipulated that only Christian principles could create a society that would benefit all its inhabitants. This was because its teachings were based on 'spiritual' morals, as pronounced by God.⁴⁶⁵

The encyclical did not limit itself to *just* opposing various concepts. Amongst other things, *Quadragesimo Anno* went out of its way to promote wage justice. The formation of industrial councils were supposed to help achieve this aim. Such entities would largely take the form of self-regulating guilds whose prime aim was to ensure the

⁴⁶³ *Ibid.*, p.28.

⁴⁶⁴ Truman, *Op.cit.*, p.32.

⁴⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

welfare of its fellow members. Although these bodies would be largely independent, the government still had a role to play by providing legislation that ensured the community's interests were not jeopardised by any industrial council ruling. This spirit of promoting income equity was extended through the 'Family Wage' concept. According to the encyclical, it was important that remunerative levels were geared to a policy which allowed married women to rear children without having to seek simultaneous employment.⁴⁶⁶ Pius outlined this view most succinctly:

In the first place, the wage paid to the workman must be sufficient for the support of himself and of his family. [...] Mothers will above all devote their work to the home and the things connected with it. Intolerable, and to be opposed with all our strength, is the abuse whereby mothers of families, because of the insufficiency of the father's salary, are forced to engage in gainful occupations outside the domestic walls; to the neglect of their own proper cares and duties, particularly the education of their children.⁴⁶⁷

Both *Rerum Novarum* and *Quadragesimo Anno* provide evidence which suggests that the Catholic Church was concerned with issues connected to industrial relations, capitalism, communism, socialism, and the family. On closer examination, however, it is possible to construct a clearer picture. Indeed, it is obvious from both *Rerum Novarum* and *Quadragesimo Anno* that the Catholic Church, at the turn of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, was beginning to embrace modernity and taking an active role in discerning its stance towards issues associated with the post-agrarian world. This was particularly true of the Australian Catholic hierarchy who issued a range of Social Justice Statements in the 1940s and early 1950s. Such statements, with their issue dates in brackets, included *Justice Now!* (1941), *For Freedom* (1942), *Pattern For Peace* (1943), *A Christian Plan For Australia*

⁴⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, pp.32-3.

⁴⁶⁷ Pius XI, *Op.cit.*, p.19.

(1943), and *The Future of Australia* (1951).⁴⁶⁸ These Statements are very important in any discussion associated with finding a link between Keon's political persona and Catholic Social Teachings. *Rerum Novarum* and *Quadragesimo Anno* both indicate that the Catholic Church was committed to a specific program of reform within the modern sphere. The existence of these Statements underlines the fact that the Australian Catholic Church was committed to a similar cause. Given this scenario, the next question which must be asked is whether such beliefs were much evident in Labor politics where Keon was active during the 1940s and 1950s.

4) The Victorian ALP Executive

In attempting to fulfil the second task associated with showing how Keon was influenced by Catholic social teachings, Truman's work once more becomes relevant. He argues that in 1950 the Victorian ALP Executive was dominated by individuals who followed teachings that were promoted through the Catholic Social Studies Movement (hereafter CSSM or Movement) which was founded by Santamaria during the early 1940s to combat Communism and promote Catholic social teachings. The CSSM had both moral and financial support from the Australian Catholic hierarchy⁴⁶⁹, and Keon himself, whilst not possessing membership status, had great sympathy for the organisation.⁴⁷⁰ In a bid to demonstrate this perceived correlation between the Victorian Executive and Catholic social teachings, Truman offers a number of

⁴⁶⁸ Hogan, *Justice Now! Social Justice Statements of the Australian Catholic Bishops, First Series: 1940-1966*, pp.13-26, 29-33, 38-47, 135, 138-140, 254.

⁴⁶⁹ O'Farrell, *Op.cit.*, p.264.

⁴⁷⁰ Santamaria, Interview, 4 March 1994.

examples. First, he argues that Part Two of the 1950 Victorian State Platform concerning "Labor's Country Policy" coincided in many ways with the *Handbook of the National Catholic Rural Movement*. Secondly, he maintains that the Victorian Executive attempted to impose its "Organic" program during the 1951 ALP Federal Conference.

Decentralisation of power, anti-socialism and anti-Communism were the main themes of the Executive's reform program. Its decentralist agenda was intimately connected with issues surrounding energy, finance, and the rural sector. During the federal meeting, the Victorian Executive argued that power generated from new hydro-electric projects should be reserved primarily for farming. In the financial sphere, the Executive called for the establishment of co-operatives whose funds would be guaranteed by the Federal Government. This measure was seen to decentralise economic power because it directly challenged the banking establishment's influence in controlling private funds. The Executive also believed that cities were out-growing rural areas. As a consequence the influence of agricultural interests, who were seen as fundamental to sustaining society, were being dangerously diluted. In order to counter this threat, the Executive called for an extensive program of rural land settlement. It argued that this policy direction could be maintained through the introduction of migrant labour into agriculture.⁴⁷¹

⁴⁷¹ Truman, *Op.cit.*, p.189 and McMullin, *Light On The Hill*, p.269.

McMullin indicates that many elements within the Victorian Executive were dedicated towards sponsoring policies that corresponded with Catholic Social Teachings. McMullin notes that at the 1951 Conference, many individuals attempted to promote their anti-Communist agenda by actively endorsing the ALP Industrial Groups. Indeed, only the influence of P.J Kennelly and J.Ferguson obstructed a motion which wanted to record Labor's "appreciation of the splendid work performed by ALP Industrial Groups". The same two individuals were also instrumental during this period in hindering a motion which called for the Groups to be established on a national basis.

At the same 1951 Conference, the Executive attacked the socialisation objective which was apparent inside the party. It argued that the "socialisation of Industry, Production, Distribution, and Exchange" concept should be redefined in four ways. First, while the state should have the capacity to intervene when the public's interests were being infringed upon, it should not go out of its way to over-regulate the economy. Secondly, in areas such as public works, nationalisation may be appropriate since no other form of ownership will maximise the community's well-being. Thirdly, promotion of self-employment and small business should be maintained vigorously in all sectors of the economy. Fourthly, co-operatives should be developed and fostered in all areas, including buying, selling, credit, and insurance.⁴⁷²

In tune with the "Organic Society's" distaste for Communism, the Victorian Executive was also amongst the chief opponents of the mainstream ALP's policy to oppose Menzies' Communist Party Dissolution Bill. Whilst the Federal Labor leader, J.B Chifley, stressed that the ALP should use its majority in the Senate to block the Bill, the Victorian Executive argued the opposite. This contradiction was repeated in 1951 during the Communist Party Dissolution Referendum, when a number of ALP Federal Parliamentarians, who were either members of or sympathised with the Victorian Executive, refused to support the ALP's "No" stance.⁴⁷³

It can be seen that Keon was part of a group which had a major affinity with Catholic Social Teachings. Certainly, this point is highlighted when one sees the obvious connection between the Executive's anti-socialism

⁴⁷² *Truman, Op.cit., p.189.*

⁴⁷³ *Ibid., p.196.*

and anti-communism stance, and the rhetoric employed by Pope Pius XI on the same subjects. On a parallel note, a correlation can also be established between the Executive's decentralist objectives and Pius' recommendations. *Quadragesimo Anno* proposed a moral critique of capitalism because it elevated profit and economies of scale above policies connected with social welfare. Indeed, by championing the causes of energy expansion, financial co-operatives, and rural settlement, the Executive was basing its actions on a sense of 'social justice', rather than economic rationality.

Various theorists have attempted to explain *why* the Victorian Executive contained such Catholic leanings during the early 1950s. Truman and O'Farrell represent the two extremes in this debate. Truman argues that the Victorian Executive had been *deliberately* overrun by Catholics who were determined to influence ALP policy with directives that pertained to the faith's social teachings. According to Truman, by the end of the 1940s, the Victorian Executive was dominated by Industrial Groupers whose ranks had been formed in the middle of that decade to combat Communist influences inside the trade union movement. Many of these Groupers were also Catholic and belonged to, or sympathised with, Santamaria's Movement and its concept of an "Organic Society". At the same time, many other Catholics who supported the Movement in one way or another were joining suburban Labor Party branches and strengthening support for the Groupers. The Groupers ultimately secured their position inside the ALP by controlling a majority on the Victorian Executive through their own weight of numbers and important non-Catholics like D.Lovegrove, the ALP State Secretary, V.Stout, the Secretary of the Trades Hall Council, and J.A Little. Hence, in Truman's mind, the Victorian

Executive was an extreme version of that strand of thought which had gained many disciples within the ALP during the 1940s and 1950s.⁴⁷⁴

O'Farrell indicates, in his study of Catholics in the ALP, that the Victorian Executive's general affiliation with social teachings was a natural development, rather than a ~~conscious~~ or secretive ploy. This association was the legacy of two prime notions: socio-economics and practicality. Catholics, as a group, he argues, before the Second World War largely occupied lowly paid positions in the blue collar industries. It made sense, seeing the ALP was perceived as a party of the working class, that many Catholics would join its ranks. In practical terms, O'Farrell points out, Catholics had no choice but to join Labor since the conservative parties were hostile to their interests. Hence, in this sense, the Catholic 'flavour' of the Victorian Executive was very much a result of this 'natural' affinity.⁴⁷⁵

Whilst Truman and O'Farrell provide contrasting views of the 'Catholic nature' of the Victorian Executive, neither is useful in answering any question which asks *to what degree* Keon was personally in tune with Executive policy. Indeed, although Keon was a member of the Victorian Executive, the evidence provided thus far only serves to connect Keon with Catholic Social Teachings by association. In order to explain this connection it is important to re-examine the information which has been provided. Through our overview of Papal Encyclicals, like *Rerum Novarum* and *Quadragesimo Anno*, we have seen that Catholic Social Teachings were dedicated towards informing the laity of the Church's beliefs on industrial relations, capitalism, socialism, communism, and

⁴⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p.156.

⁴⁷⁵ O'Farrell, *The Catholic Church In Australia: A Short History 1788-1967*, p.268.

the family. We have also briefly seen that such beliefs were openly embraced by the Australian Catholic hierarchy through a series of Social Justice Statements. This set of circumstances it seems played a sizeable role in determining the political conduct of the Victorian ALP Executive during the 1940s and 1950s, of which Keon was a member before the split.

As stated, however, *no* evidence exists which directly implicates Keon as a disciple of Catholic Social Teachings. This brings us to the third, and final aim, of our investigation in this chapter. A direct link can be identified when one explores Keon's concept of 'wage justice', decentralisation, and anti-Communism and anti-Asian nationalism. These three themes will now become the major focus of discussion as an effort will be made to equate them with the Australian Catholic Bishops' Social Justice Statements and Keon's conduct in the public sphere.

Certainly, one must also be wary of the fact that these themes overlap with populism. After all, 'wage justice' can be connected with the 'natural harmony' concept discussed in Chapter Three. Also, decentralisation and anti-communism can both be respectively associated with the 'Golden Age' and 'Xenophobic' theories brought forward in Chapter Three. On a parallel note it is also possible to find differences between the two concepts. The 'Golden Age' concept, as explained by Hofstadter and Minogue and outlined in Chapter Three is very much concerned with promoting the farm and distributing home ownership amongst as many people as possible inside any given community. This slant, however, is laced with an anti-urban flavour which seeks to champion the farmer above any individual who resides in the city. Catholic social teachings go beyond this point by taking a

somewhat bi-partisan view. According to a certain Catholic logic* , decentralisation is essential if a society is going to prosper. In other words, both the rural and urbanised sectors of an economy are supposed to flourish under such a system.

Again, one can see a link between the 'natural harmony' theory explained by Hofstadter, Minogue, and Wiles, and the notion of 'wage justice'. In Chapter Three, addressing the economic disparities between rich and poor, labour reform, and arbitration are all seen as necessary objectives for any society wishing to obtain, in the populist sense, a degree of 'natural harmony'. The Catholic Church is also concerned with this notion when it brings forward its theory of wage justice. More specifically, however, the Catholic Church was concerned with using industrial relations as a vehicle to promote a wage which would sustain the family unit. The family, in its eyes, was seen as the cornerstone of society- where an individual could be properly nurtured on a moral and materialistic level.

Finally, in the light of populism's conspiratorial fears, identified by Hofstadter and Wiles and outlined in Chapter Three, one must acknowledge that populism does contain an anti-Communist dimension. At the same time, however, while the populists simply

* Head and Walter, *Intellectual Movements and Australian Society*, p.278.

It is worthy to note that Catholic thought is not monolithic in nature. In fact argues Max Charlesworth not all Catholics have openly embraced the social teachings of the Pope. Indeed, he contends, many Australian Catholics ignored the works of Leo XIII and Pius XI and any associated notion that the Church should enjoy a special role in guiding public policy. Such a mode of thought characterised intellectual groupings like those who supported and contributed to the *Catholic Worker* newspaper. According to such individuals, points out Charlesworth, the Church's prime role was spiritual and whilst Catholics were invited to promote their principles on the political sphere, their methods for achieving such a goal should not have been prescribed by the hierarchy. Charlesworth summarises this view via the following comments: " The *Catholic Worker* group therefore held that the Church as such had no right to intervene directly in the political sphere or to engage in party politics".

opposed Communism because it proposed class war, the Catholic Church saw the Marxist doctrine as an evil which sought to destroy Christianity.

All these differences worked to create some distance between populism and Catholic Social Teachings. In order to prove this contention, and simultaneously underline Keon's personal commitment to Catholic Social Teachings, one must explore the notions of wage justice, decentralisation, and anti-communism and anti-Asian nationalism.

5) Wage Justice

The first area which underlines Keon's commitment to Catholic Social Teachings is associated with the concept of wage justice. As we have already seen through *Rerum Novarum* and *Quadragesimo Anno*, the Church believed that any form of wage justice was intimately related with providing a remunerative package that would sustain family survival. In 1941 the Australian hierarchy released a document, titled *Justice Now!*, which corresponded to such a theme. Hogan argues that this Statement was aimed towards the Labor Party which was now going to fill the power vacuum left by the faltering United Australia Party. *Justice Now!* was formally approved by the Episcopal Committee on Catholic Action. Archbishops Mannix and Simonds, as the President and Secretary respectively, and Bishop Gleeson were amongst the signatories to this statement. In addition to the child endowment payment, which had recently been introduced, the Statement called for the introduction of a wage that would allow a man, as the main or

preferably only breadwinner, to maintain his family comfortably above the economic poverty line.⁴⁷⁶ The Australian hierarchy asserted:

In paying the Family Wage an employer is simply giving his workers what belongs to them. He is handling THEIR money, not his own.⁴⁷⁷

Two years later, the hierarchy released another document, entitled *Pattern For Peace*, which once more pushed the issue of a "family wage". Such a wage, it argued, should increase according to the number of people a man had to support as the main breadwinner inside a household.⁴⁷⁸

Despite these calls for wage justice, the hierarchy argued that Governments should be simultaneously "PAYING HONOUR to family life[...]by making the welfare of parents of large families a primary consideration in legislation and administration".⁴⁷⁹ This attitude was underlined by the hierarchy in 1940 with a Statement entitled *The Family*. In this document the hierarchy spelt out clearly that any policy geared towards improving family living standards should not jeopardise the harmony which was supposed to exist between parents and their children. In other words, it was important to the hierarchy that work arrangements allowed parents as much time as possible with their families. The hierarchy exhibited this attitude quite succinctly on the eve of the forthcoming referendum,⁴⁸⁰ dealing with increased employment powers for the Federal Government, when it warned that such authority, if obtained, would "need to be used with the most

⁴⁷⁶ Hogan, *Op.cit.*, pp.13-25.

⁴⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p.30.

⁴⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, pp.43-45.

⁴⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p.62.

⁴⁸⁰ Jaensch and Teichmann, *Australian Politics and Foreign Policy*, p.41.

scrupulous regard for the rights of parents and the integrity of home ties".⁴⁸¹ The lack of enthusiasm which the proposal received was underlined by the fact that only forty six per-cent of the electorate voted in its favour. On a state basis, only South Australia and Western Australia recorded majorities which favoured the suggested constitutional amendment.⁴⁸²

Keon for his own part displayed an attitude in public life which very much corresponded with the hierarchy's belief on wage justice. Keon's desire to promote a five-day week fully echoed the church's two-fold call for equitable wages and ample recreation time during the working week. He particularly advanced this cause during his tenure as General Secretary of the VPSA. With the Victorian election only fifteen days away, Keon utilised the 1 March 1940 edition of the *PSJV* to instruct his fellow members that only political parties who pushed the Association's cause in areas related to the five day week and classification board warranted public service support. Indeed, Keon expressed this attitude through the following remarks:

the respective candidates' views on such service questions as the five-day week [...] should be the determining factor when the public servant weighs the merits of the respective candidates.⁴⁸³

One political grouping which Keon believed did not support the spirit of wage justice was the A.A Dunstan-led United Country Party. Keon certainly conveyed this message to Dunstan during a meeting between VPSA delegates and Victorian Government officials. Indeed, Keon informed Dunstan that Victoria and South Australia were the only

⁴⁸¹ Hogan, *Op.cit.*, p.62.

⁴⁸² Jaensch and Teichmann, *Op. cit.*, p.41.

⁴⁸³ "Rail Commissioners Want Five-Day Week", *PSJV*, No.20, 1 March 1940, p.125.

states where State Government public servants did not work five-day weeks. Dunstan, for his own part, stated that such a move would result in a loss of efficiency. Keon then attempted to counter Dunstan's argument by stipulating that the Commonwealth public service had not suffered efficiency losses through the introduction of a five-day week. Indeed in Keon's own words:

[...] the five-day week [made] for economy and efficiency [and] there [had] been no complaints from the administration of the Commonwealth Service.⁴⁸⁴

By May 1940, when the VPSA held its own meeting on the five-day week scheme, Keon's passion on the subject had reached its height. According to Keon, the five-day week was an issue that could no longer be relegated to the trivial confines of public debate. He told his fellow VPSA members at the meeting that such a policy was not purely motivated by self-centred interests. He declared that the Association would only support a five-day week proposal provided three conditions were met. First, no inconvenience would be experienced by the general public. Secondly, such a system would not be allowed to be a drain on the public purse. Thirdly, any five-day week operation would have to ensure that efficiency levels did not drop below par.⁴⁸⁵

One can see the parallel between Keon's devotion to the five-day week and the Catholic hierarchy's stance on 'wage justice'. While the Catholic Church was promoting the idea of a 'family wage' and adequate relaxation time, Keon was arguing that both these objectives could be fulfilled under a five-day working week. By ensuring that such an arrangement would neither inconvenience the public nor result in

⁴⁸⁴ "President and Secretary See Premier On 5 Day Week", *PSJV*, No.23, 1 April 1940, pp.155-7.

⁴⁸⁵ *PSJV*, No.29, 1 June 1940, p.225.

efficiency losses, Keon was arguing that a shorter working week could be maintained without reducing wage rights. More specifically, in financial terms, Keon believed that such a program could be installed without costing the State extra funds. According to this rationale the work which had previously been performed in six days could now be completed in five, *without any* loss being incurred by the public or State Government.

6) Decentralisation

The second area related to Keon's affiliation with Catholic social teachings was decentralisation. The Australian Catholic hierarchy, through the Social Justice Statement entitled *For Freedom!*, argued that "true" freedom in society could not be attained without the expansion of the agricultural sector. The document claimed that farms presented the perfect conditions for individual families to obtain self-sustained living, free from state or bureaucratic control. The document explained:

Ours[Australia] is a country bountifully endowed by God with cultivable land, marked out not only to be a great granary, but, even more, to be the stronghold of a class of independent farmers.[...] The land does not exist primarily to feed the cities. The land is the natural home of the family; and the family, as an institution, flourishes best when it is linked to the land.⁴⁸⁶

At the same time, however, it should be noted that the Church had no desire to promote an anti-urban agenda. While it evidently supported rural expansion, the Church argued that such a program should not totally neglect the needs of the urban sector. To this end, it called for a spirit of co-operation between the city and country areas through the formation of a National Rural Council. Such an entity would give the farming community's welfare a high priority while simultaneously

⁴⁸⁶ Hogan, *Op.cit.*, p.33.

promoting an environment of consensus among representatives of "farmers, farm-workers, technicians, consumers and the State".⁴⁸⁷

Throughout his public life, Keon consistently promoted a decentralist stance. During the reading of the Land Tax Assessment Bill on 6 November 1951 Keon outlined his firm commitment towards the notion of decentralisation through the following comments:

The [Federal] Government should implement an effective policy of rural settlement. It should give greater encouragement to young men to go on the land.⁴⁸⁸

One year later, he asserted that the Menzies Government was going out of its way to promote policies that undermined the spirit of decentralisation. Keon argued on 5 March 1952 that Menzies administration was acting most unfairly by maintaining tax-breaks for the gold industry whilst simultaneously abolishing the depreciation allowance which had benefited many farmers. Keon argued that if Australia was going to effectively address its trade and inflation problems it would have to drastically increase its food production figures.⁴⁸⁹

At the same time, Keon's support for the decentralist concept was not blindly associated with championing the farmer at any cost. Keon highlighted this fact during August 1939 when, as VPSA General Secretary, he opposed the Federal Wheat Subsidy Plan. He argued that wheat protection was bound to impinge on public service wages, since the Victorian Government could only fund such a program by cutting its expenditure in other areas. Indeed, he stressed, even if this meant

⁴⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p.34.

⁴⁸⁸ *CPD*, Vol.215, 6 November 1951, p.1557.

⁴⁸⁹ *CPD*, Vol.216, 5 March 1952, p.879.

public service salaries did not decline, many VPSA grievances could be conveniently discarded by a State Government which would point to more pressing priorities in the wheat sector. Keon outlined this view with the following comments:

we[the VPSA] unblushingly declare our support of the [wheat] stand on the very important grounds that the effect of Victoria's efforts to finance the [wheat] bounties would react most unfavourably on the [Public] Service.⁴⁹⁰

Although Keon was speaking from the perspective of a public servant in this instance, it is also apparent that he believed that any improvement to the rural sector had to be accompanied by a mode of consensus which facilitated both city and country interests.

Certainly, by the time Keon had reached Federal Parliament he believed that only through decentralisation could Australian society develop. The issue, in his mind, was not about a confrontation between urban and rural interests. He believed that a decentralisation program would minimise damage during an atomic strike and educate farmers in better land management techniques. In Keon's view, the threat of nuclear war was a very real possibility. The only way to minimise the countless losses from an atomic strike would be if the population was dispersed and settled along a host of regionally-orientated cities. Keon stressed that the Federal Government should devise a scheme which would allow more power to be channelled into regional areas, and cited an article which had been produced by a Professor Titterton for support:

Its theme relates to the efficiency that has been achieved in respect of atomic weapons, and it should be of particular interest to representatives of country electorates in a land which, if it hopes to survive, must disperse its basic industries and huge populations that are now congregated in capital cities on its seaboard.⁴⁹¹

⁴⁹⁰ "Premier's Wheat Stand Warrants Support", *PS/V*, No.10, 25 August 1939, pp.7-8.

⁴⁹¹ *CPD*, Vol.220, 9 October 1952, p.2908.

In Keon's mind a decentralisation program was essential if Australia wanted to increase its primary produce levels. Such an objective, however, would never be achieved if farmers were not skilled at avoiding soil erosion on their properties. During debate on the Wool Use Promotion Bill Keon argued this very point. Woolgrowers, he contended, had been guilty of inducing soil erosion through the use of poor farming techniques. There was no doubt, he argued, that this set of circumstances had unfolded because wool farmers had been "concerned with [obtaining] the maximum profit in the minimum time".⁴⁹²

When looking at the Catholic hierarchy's view on decentralisation and Keon's own views it is possible to discern a close correlation. In *For Freedom!* the Australian Catholic hierarchy outlined its belief that the countryside could bring about true prosperity for individuals. Such a program, however, was not heavily laced with anti-urban hostility. Any decentralist agenda, stressed the Church, should aim for consensus between urban and rural interests. Keon's attitude in this area was patterned around the same belief. During debate on the Land Tax Assessment Bill and gold in 1951 and 1952 respectively, Keon outlined his support for farming. However, his belief in decentralisation was not simply based on a blind devotion to the rural sector. He first demonstrated this point in 1939 when, as General Secretary of the VPSA, he opposed farmers' calls for a wheat subsidy. During his time in Federal Parliament Keon argued that decentralisation should benefit *all* of society. Such a program, in his mind, would minimise losses during atomic strikes. Furthermore, decentralisation would educate farmers to deal with soil erosion, so that more crops could be produced.

⁴⁹² CPD, Vol.221, 12 March 1953, p.1021.

7) Anti-Communism and Anti-Asian Nationalism

The third area where a connection can be made between Keon and Catholic social teachings is anti-Communism and anti-Asian nationalism. In 1951 the Australian Catholic hierarchy released a document titled *The Future of Australia*. Communism, it argued, was monolithic and anti-Christian, and would overpower Australia once it had swept through Asia. However, while the perceived 'red menace' was the nation's biggest external threat, the bishops argued that it was by no means the only threat to Australia's Christian status. In its attempt to validate this hypothesis, the document gave an outline as to why Australia had not been invaded by its neighbours before World War II. It also highlighted why it now believed the nation was in grave risk from external forces.⁴⁹³

According to the bishops, Australia's unchallenged sovereignty before World War II could be attributed to three primary factors. The first was structured around the heavy military presence of the European powers in the South East Asian region during the pre-war period. Indeed, as the document explained, the Europeans had successfully prevented any Asian antagonisms associated with colonialism, poverty, and oppression from spilling beyond their own boundaries. In this sense, argued the Bishops, "the European armies [had] acted as a military bulwark shielding Australia from the grim facts of Asia".⁴⁹⁴ Secondly, Australia was also perceived to be aided by the fact that most of its Asian neighbours were not militarily capable of mounting an operation that

⁴⁹³ Hogan, *Op.cit.*, p.135.

⁴⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp.136-7.

would extend beyond their own borders. Thirdly, the document stated, the countries near Australia's borders were also hindered by economic disadvantages. Modern warfare, it argued, could only be sustained by an industrialised economy. None of these states therefore, with the exception of Japan, could have posed a challenge to Australia even if they had been free of colonial domination.⁴⁹⁵

By 1951, argued the bishops, the situation had changed. Australia was facing danger from two principal quarters. The first was Communism. The Marxist doctrine, argued the document, was monolithic in its outlook and committed to bringing about a world where individuals' lives would be totally controlled by a centralised anti-Christian bureaucracy. As the bishops understood the world situation, there was no difference between the Communist parties of China and the USSR. Indeed, both were "...founded on the same evil principles".⁴⁹⁶ Secondly, the hierarchy also feared that Australia's large geographic size would attract the new Asian nationalist countries who had a program of extending their own national borders by attacking neighbouring countries.⁴⁹⁷ Given this situation, *The Future of Australia* concluded that the nation's 'salvation' lay in immigration, particularly from the European region. Such a program, the hierarchy argued, would allow Australia to increase its population and lay the foundation for the nation to become a strong oasis of Christianity inside Asia.⁴⁹⁸

⁴⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp.136-7.

⁴⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p.138.

⁴⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp.139-140.

The *Richmond News*, which was under the direct influence of Keon, published an article in 1954 which corresponded with the Church's fear of Asian nationalism and Communism. According to the paper, Australia and New Zealand were situated in an area where 1,250,000 people suffered from malnutrition. Communists in the region, the *Richmond News* argued, were already working hard to exploit these conditions and channel Asians' energies into fighting wars. This mode of 'Communist imperialism' had already succeeded in initiating conflict inside China, Korea, Malaya, Indo-China, and the Philippines. Australia and New Zealand's only plan of attack against this Communist aggression, the paper argued, was to launch an extensive aid program inside the Asian region. If Asian people could solve their economic problems, then they would be less likely to be attracted to the Communist program of war. As a consequence, they would not attack countries which were economically advanced, like Australia and New Zealand.⁴⁹⁹

In Keon's mind, Asia and Communism alike represented a threat to Australia's status as a Christian country. During debate on the Royal Commission (Communist) Bill in 1949, Keon told his fellow State parliamentarians that they "should not [be] content with being solely anti-Communist". Australian society, he argued, was based on more than just opposing the Marxist doctrine. Australia, he believed, was "...based upon Christian values, which, if repudiated, must result in the destruction of society itself"⁵⁰⁰. Keon stressed that this ideal was supported by three auxiliary arguments. First, society should be governed with the idea of enacting institutions and organisations which

⁴⁹⁹ "Hard Facts For Australia", *Richmond News*, No.25, 11 August 1954, p.4.

⁵⁰⁰ *VPD*, Vol.229, 11 April 1949, p.960.

serve the individual. In Keon's terms, "the State is made for man, not man for the State".⁵⁰¹ Secondly, democracy must equate with individual liberty. This brand of freedom must allow the person, within the boundaries of the law, to express him/herself fully in the religious, social, political, and economic spheres. Thirdly, democracy also meant a sense of "public morality" which should be accompanied by "simple honesty, truthfulness, and intellectual integrity".⁵⁰²

In other words, very much like the senior hierarchy, Keon believed that Christianity was the major force behind Australia's existence as a ~~moral~~ and acceptable free state. Since Asian nationalism and Communism were a perceived threat to Christianity's survival, both the Church and Keon shared a mutual sense of hostility towards the two phenomena.

8) Conclusion

There is something new to be learnt when one begins to fully explore the dimensions of Keon's Catholicism. In public, his Catholic statements were essentially governed by two elements, which have been defined in this study as "general" and "specific". The "general" element of Keon's pro-Catholic attitude was structured very much around support for issues which did not contradict Catholic policy. At the same time, items which fit under this category could hardly be defined as uniquely Catholic. Indeed, one could just as easily see such issues being advocated by Protestant Christianity. None the less, C.H Jory suggests that Keon had been well versed on how to properly defend the Church's

⁵⁰¹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰² *Ibid.*

cause in the public sphere through his early association with the CYMS. Keon certainly used whatever skills he had acquired as a young debater to champion the Church's cause in areas related to education and public morality. As a State Parliamentarian, Keon argued during the 1946 Budget Debate that the government should pay for the secular education of all children who attended denominational schools. Keon's own belief in a strict moral conduct was exemplified through his hostility toward defacto couples and illegal abortion. He was also a firm advocate of film censorship.

Although Keon's beliefs on education and morality were not alien to the Catholic thought, they were not specifically geared to social teachings that had been formulated by the Church's hierarchy. Truman suggests that Catholic Social teachings were supposed to reflect the way God wanted moral society to be run in the areas of commerce, defence, property, employment, and family. According to the analysis brought forward by Truman, Hogan, and O'Farrell, the Catholic Church argued it had a "natural right" to intervene when society was drifting away from "God's order". In this sense, both *Rerum Novarum* and *Quadragesimo Anno* were documents which had been released to help steer society away from modernity's shortcomings. Both these encyclicals went out of their way to deal with issues like capitalism, communism, and socialism. All three were seen to represent the centralisation of power. Communism was also seen as a threat to Christianity. The family was viewed as the cornerstone of society, while capitalism, in the Popes' opinions, was guilty of fostering exploitation of the worker. This set of principles was embraced by the Australian Catholic hierarchy through a number of Social Justice Statements.

In order to find out whether this set of specific Catholic teachings could be equated with Keon's public conduct, two lines of enquiry have been explored. The first involved a study of the Victorian ALP Executive's behaviour during the period of Keon's membership. To this end, Truman's work on the issue proved to be useful, but rather inconclusive. Truman notes that by 1950 the Victorian Executive had been responsible for initiating a rural policy which very much mirrored the views of the National Catholic Rural Movement- an organisation which had strong philosophical ties to the hierarchy's social teachings. The Executive also made its presence felt on issues concerned with decentralisation, anti-Socialism, and anti-Communism. While a direct link can be made between the Victorian ALP Executive and Catholic Social Teachings, no such association can directly involve Keon. At best, Keon can only be connected by association.

The reasons surrounding the 'Catholic' nature of the Victorian Executive are varied, as both Truman and O'Farrell explain. At the same time, however, they do little to explain the degree to which Keon can directly be associated with Catholic Social Teachings. The link can be made once a number of Australian Catholic Hierarchy Justice Statements are compared to Keon's public conduct. The issues of wage justice, decentralisation, anti-Communism, and anti-Asian nationalism were all postulated by both the Social Justice Statements and Keon during the 1940s and 1950s. According to the Australian Catholic hierarchy, wage justice was structured around maintaining the family unit. As outlined in *Justice Now!* and *Pattern For Peace*, a family's survival was based around a sustainable living and adequate recreation time. Keon championed this cause during his period as VPSA General Secretary when he supported the introduction of a shorter working

week. Despite the reduced hours, Keon believed such a program was possible because there would be no efficiency losses. Indeed, under this system a family's income base would not recede, whilst its leisure time would increase. Decentralisation was supported by the hierarchy on the basis that a co-operative structure could be assembled which facilitated both city and rural interests. Keon maintained a similar attitude during his public life. While he acknowledged throughout debates on the Land Tax Assessment Bill and gold, in 1951 and 1952 respectively, that the decentralisation project could not function without a strong farming community, his commitment in this area did not solely consist of a blind faith in rural life. Keon believed that decentralisation could only evolve under a co-operative structure, where both city and rural issues would be resolved under a spirit of equity. This is why Keon disagreed with a wheat subsidy for farmers in 1939. In that instance, he argued that such a policy would obstruct the interests of other groups. In his period in the Federal Parliament, Keon stipulated that decentralisation was society's only hope if it was to minimise losses during nuclear invasion and increase food crops. The third area where an obvious connection can be made between Keon and the Catholic hierarchy's teachings is the preservation of Christianity. The Church, through *The Future of Australia*, argued that Christianity in Australia and New Zealand would be overrun by Communism or nationalist forces if economic aid was not distributed to the Asian region. Keon postulated similar views in the *Richmond News* and during debate on the Royal Commission (Communist) Bill.

Keon's reliance on Catholic social teachings becomes obvious when one explores his attitudes to wage justice, decentralisation, and anti-Communism and ant-Asian nationalism. It can be concluded that Keon

was amongst those in the Victorian ALP Executive who supported policies that were in line with Catholic social teachings.

Chapter Five

Keon, the Labor Man.

"This [Liberal-Country Party] Government is committed to a philosophy, the basic ideas of which revolve around free enterprise and lack of government interference with private enterprise[...] In speakers' notes issued by the respective Government parties may be discerned a philosophy which consists of a hotchpotch of the ideas of the Manchester school [of Economics] and of Adam Smith, with a little of [Winston] Churchill's rhetoric thrown in for good measure. The Government now realises that in spite of that philosophy it cannot hope to cope with the present inflation trouble unless it is prepared to espouse controls".

- Stan Keon, CPD, Vol.209, 17 October 1950, p.900.

"[The Country Party] Government[s] ... outlook on [Public] Service salaries is governed by the price of butter fat [...]".

- Stan Keon, PSJV, 1 March 1941, p.452.

"[Stan knew that the Liberals] offered no understanding or answers [for the common individual]. There was always someone [from the anti-Labor Parties] tossed out [of the parliamentary chamber] when Stan spoke, because Stan would hit where it hurt".

- Jim Bolger, Interview, 5 May 1994.

1) Introduction

It is now important to establish why Keon joined the ALP and not one of the major anti-Labor parties. The answer to this question becomes apparent when it is realised that the ALP was the only major political organisation which could accomodate Keon's populist and Catholic social inclinations. In two complementary studies, Professor P.Love and Father B.Duncan propose that the ALP contained both populist and Catholic social teachings dimensions. Love explores the populist dimension, and Duncan deals with Catholic social teachings.

2) Populism's Relationship With The Labour Movement

According to Love, the labour movement in Australia was heavily influenced by the U.S. Populists during the 1890s. As Love explains, "the People's Party in the United States was regarded as something of a model for the emerging Labor Party in Australia".⁵⁰³ One of the Movement's most popular publications, *The Hammer*, typified this enthusiasm by often referring to the various Labor parties as representing the "United Australian People's Party".⁵⁰⁴

While Love acknowledges populism's presence inside the Labour Movement, he is also quick to contend that such a concept did not take the overriding role in creating the ALP's ideological spirit. Rather, he argues, by the 1890s populism was one of many 'currents' inside a Labor psyche, "...which included Fabians and Christian socialism, labourism and syndicalism, anarchism and Henry George's single tax".⁵⁰⁵ When looking specifically, however, at the populist dimension of the ALP's 'ideological heritage' Love constructs a theory which relies heavily upon the works of Gino Germani and Ernesto Laclau. Germani argues that populism is a 'moment' within the political process when individuals promoting various doctrines attempt to 'socially mobilize' their populations into believing they stand for the rights of common individuals- who are all represented as constituting the majority of the citizens in every country.⁵⁰⁶ In this sense, states Ernesto Laclau, a wide

⁵⁰³ P.Love, *Labour and the Money Power- Australian Labour Populism 1890-1950*, p.9.

⁵⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p.14.

⁵⁰⁶ Germani, *Authoritarianism, Fascism, and National Populism*, pp.13-40.

variety of diverse movements like Fascism, Peronism, and Maoism have gone through a stage of 'social mobilization' where they have attempted to enlist the support of the masses.⁵⁰⁷

Such a populist 'moment', argues Love, was an integral part of the Australian labour movement during the late nineteenth century. The main sources of inspiration for this attempt to promote 'social mobilization', he argues, were the Populist Party of the United States and the Russian *Narodnichestvo*. Although the two movements were founded and promoted by different individuals (Love argues the U.S populists obtained the core of their support from 'grass roots' groups like the Mid-West farmers, while the Russian variety were mostly intellectuals) both exhibited three characteristics which played a part in shaping early ALP ideology.⁵⁰⁸ First, both celebrated a "world in which familiar practices and instructions have an intrinsic value".⁵⁰⁹ To this end, Love indicates, the labour movement believed that the notions of 'patriotism' and 'democracy' could provide institutions of 'intrinsic value' that would allow "a new and better society" to be built.⁵¹⁰ Secondly, the protection of the common individual was essential.⁵¹¹ Such a principle, Love argues, was intertwined with the concept of equality. Indeed, while the U.S populists had sponsored the farmer and the *Narodnichestvo* was dedicated towards the peasant, the Australian Labor Movement embraced the 'worker' as its symbol of egalitarianism. Thirdly, any force which threatened or opposed these two aims would be

⁵⁰⁷ Laclau, *Politics And Ideology In Marxist Theory*, pp.143-198.

⁵⁰⁸ Love, *Op.cit.*, p.4.

⁵⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p.5.

⁵¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p.15.

⁵¹¹ *Ibid.*, p.5.

treated with open hostility. While the U.S. populists and their Russian counterparts had demonised foreign and monopoly interests, and the Tsarist system respectively, inside Labor ranks argues Love there was a deep hostility towards an English ruling class "...who would bend the knee to all things British".⁵¹²

In this sense, we can see how the ALP's populism streak would have appealed to Keon. In threading this contention together, one need only compare Keon's conduct with the three populist characteristics which Love argues are part of the ALP's 'ideological heritage'. First, as mentioned above, Love argues U.S Populists and the Labour movement were equally anxious to bring forward "a better society". For the American Populists, the countryside was seen as the necessary vehicle to bring forward society's salvation. In Labor circles, 'patriotism' and 'democracy' were seen as the necessary foundations of prosperity. Keon also believed that certain ideas would help foster a harmonious society. As explained in Chapter Three, he believed that measured support for the countryside and patriotic opposition to Communism would help institute a better Australian society. Secondly, the American Populists, Russian *Narodnichestvo*, and Labour movement all believed that the common individual should be promoted and championed. For the American Populists this meant supporting the farmer. For their Russian counterparts the peasantry was given primary consideration. As Love has already noted, for the Labour movement the common individual was defined as "the worker". As we have already seen in Chapter Three, Keon believed in supporting a cross-section of the 'productive classes'.

⁵¹² *Ibid.*, p.15.

* As stipulated in Chapter Three the "productive classes" encompassed both employers and employees who used their labour to produce tangible wealth.

Thirdly, the American Populists, the Russian *Narodnichestvo*, and the Labour movement all opposed those who threatened their view of a "perfect society". The American strand opposed monopolists and foreign financial interests, whilst the *Narodnichestvo* were particularly hostile towards the Tsarist regime. In this sense, Love has pointed out, the ALP saw Britain as a barrier against Australia achieving 'patriotism' and 'democracy'. As we saw in Chapter Three, Keon believed that his idea of a perfect society would also be threatened if monopolies were allowed to flourish.

3) ALP and Catholics

While Love identifies the populist dimension in the ALP's "ideological heritage", on the other side of the ledger Duncan argues that most Catholics who agreed with the Church's teachings before the 1955 schism joined the Labor Party because it was seen as the most likely political vehicle to accommodate their aims. According to Duncan, most Catholics could see that the only way to institute change was through a political entity that was non-sectarian and committed to a benevolent social reform program. The ALP was the only party which could provide such a scenario. Although Duncan concedes this sometimes meant that Catholics, Socialists, and Communists were made to work under the umbrella of one organisation, "there [simply] was no other alternative".⁵¹³ Indeed, argues Duncan, "as long as communist policies

⁵¹³ B.Duncan, *The Church's Social Teaching: From Rerum Novarum to 1931*, pp.197-8.

did not prevail, Catholics could still work within the Party for their programs of social change".⁵¹⁴

Duncan's view that there existed an affinity between Catholics and the ALP moves beyond the boundaries of speculation and opinion when one explores the experience of the ill-fated Democratic Party during the 1920s. In the midst of marshalling and promoting policies that supported wage justice, decentralisation, and small businesses as opposed to large monopolies, ~~the Democratic Party~~ argued for a philosophical program "based on the writings of Pope Leo XIII, Very Rev.Dr.Ryan, Father Husslein, and the American War Council [of Bishops]".⁵¹⁵ The Party not only professed to champion Catholic Social Teachings, but also argued it would develop "true Labor members [not] bound by the [ALP] Caucus Pledge".⁵¹⁶ Given such a set of circumstances, Patrick O'Farrell argues, one would have expected the Democratic Party to obtain significant electoral support from its Catholic brethren inside the ALP. By the end of the 1920 New South Wales State elections, however, the Party had been badly beaten. It failed to return even one candidate. According to O'Farrell, the result is overshadowed when one explores the political path most Catholics embarked upon during the election. The Democratic Party only won sixteen-thousand votes from a potential pool of onehundred-and-fifty-thousand. Moreover, half of the returned ALP members were Catholics.⁵¹⁷

⁵¹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp.195-6.

⁵¹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵¹⁷ P.O'Farrell, *The Catholic Church and Community: An Australian History*, pp.346-7.

This goes a long way towards proving Duncan's hypothesis. Most Australian Catholics before the 1955 ALP Split were not interested in forming a sectarian political organisation that promoted the Church's social teachings. The ALP, with its non-sectarian overtones and spirit of reform, was the most suitable vehicle to promote these teachings. It is at this point that one can perhaps begin to establish a link between Catholic Social Teachings, the ALP, and Keon. By the time Keon had become active in public life during 1939 as the Secretary of the VPSA, most practising Catholics saw the ALP as their *natural* party. This scenario can then be used to partly explain why Keon joined the ALP and why he was vehemently opposed to the two major non-Labor parties.

Both Love's and Duncan's respective assertions, which stipulate that the ALP exhibited populist and Catholic social teaching dimensions, can be used to explain partly why Keon joined the Labor Party. At the same time, it should be realised that Love's and Duncan's contributions, albeit valuable in the context of this discussion, can only be used as a starting point since they do not specifically deal with Keon's conduct. It has been highlighted in Chapters Three and Four that Keon possessed political qualities that could be associated with populism and Catholic social teachings. Also, it has been highlighted in this chapter that people who followed such political doctrines saw the ALP as their *natural* party. Whether or not Keon can be grouped with such people has only been partially-proven thus far. In order to find out why Keon chose the ALP as a vehicle for this cause one must explore his philosophical relationship with the two major anti-Labor parties and *demonstrate* how they represented the antithesis of his political vision. If this point can be sustained then perhaps Love's and Duncan's

respective suggestions will be given further sustenance. More specifically, however, one will be able to establish that Keon joined the ALP because he saw it as *his natural* party.

4) Process Used To Illustrate Keon's Incompatibility With The ^{Anti}-Labor Parties

In order to establish this point, a framework of comparison which explores the differences between Keon and the two major anti-Labor parties, in areas connected to populism and Catholic social teachings, is needed. As we saw in Chapter Three, two of Keon's populist tendencies revolved around championing the productive classes and opposing monopolies. In Chapter Four, we observed that Keon's devotion to Catholic social teachings translated into, amongst other things, support for a decentralist policy. During the 1940s and 1950s Liberal and Country Parties were often opposed to these political ideas.

In order to substantiate this contention three interlocking steps will be followed. First, where possible, the philosophy governing the anti-Labor parties will be discussed. Secondly, the ideas which influenced these parties will be complemented by primary information which was released during the 1940s and 1950s. This data will essentially be drawn from the Liberal publication *Hard Comment*, and the Country Party newspaper, *The Countryman*. Thirdly, these ideas will be compared with Keon's beliefs in areas relating to decentralisation, the productive classes, and monopolies. This step, more than any other, will illustrate that neither of the major anti-Labor parties could accommodate Keon's populist and Catholic perspectives.

5) Liberals On Decentralisation

First, we shall turn to the issue of decentralisation. Keon was especially critical of the Liberal Party's general ambivalence towards decentralisation. D.M White, in his discussion of Liberal Party philosophy, appears to echo this message, especially when referring to the organisation's 1946 platform. White argues that under the 1946 Liberal interpretation "the nature and purpose of society" is enshrouded in three "desirable national qualities": loyalty, harmony, and unity. According to Liberal Party logic these aims could only be achieved through the exclusive promotion of "education, cultural homogeneity, and law".⁵¹⁸ Interestingly, amongst these basic tenets of Liberal Party philosophy which were supposed to govern society's structure, no specific mention was made of the decentralist concept.

White's assertion regarding the Liberals disinterest in decentralisation is supported by J.Sosso's extreme example. The Party's neglect for this concept, Sosso argues, is highlighted perfectly when one explores the plight of the Queensland Liberals. According to Sosso, the 1983 Queensland State Election "resulted in the virtual annihilation of the Liberal Party as major force in [State] politics".⁵¹⁹ As he points out, however, this debacle at the polls was connected more to the past than any contemporary event. Certainly, intra-Party differences and poor campaign management played noteworthy parts in ensuring that the Liberals only secured 14.6 per-cent of the primary vote.⁵²⁰ More importantly, however, notes Sosso, the result commemorated the

⁵¹⁸ D.M.White, *The Philosophy of the Australian Liberal Party*, pp.32-3.

⁵¹⁹ Sosso, "Queensland: A Division Under Threat" in Brandis, Harley, and Markwell, *Liberals Face The Future: Essays On Australian Liberalism*, p.151.

⁵²⁰ *Ibid.*

Party's historical tendency not to focus on an electorate that was largely decentralised. This ambivalence towards the non-urban sector, he stipulates, can be traced to the 1940s and 1950s- the period which, incidentally, fully coincides with Keon's participation in public life. Throughout this period, the Liberals were content to be the junior members of any non-Labor coalition state governments after a pact with the Country Party had precluded them from contesting all rural seats except Lockyer. With the ALP obtaining most of its support from the provincial areas, the Liberals' power base rarely extended beyond the Brisbane suburbs. The Liberals, it seems, were quite ambivalent towards promoting themselves in an area where decentralist issues would have been of prime importance. Indeed, argues Sosso, even after the pact with the Country Party ended inside rural electorates, the Liberals still fared miserably because of an inadequate branch structure in these areas.⁵²¹

The Liberals were quite content to occasionally champion this cause publicly during Keon's era. The Party used its own publication, *Hard Comment*, to support the promotion of new states and federalism. Such ideals were supposed to foster a decentralisation of power. Its support for new states was certainly illustrated in January 1949 when it called for the creation of New England from the Northern New South Wales region. The Party's own political journal, *Hard Comment*, argued that the proposed state would enhance population increases and allow people from inside the Northern New South Wales region to obtain federal and state representation on the political sphere. Such a scenario would generally enhance democracy and the federalist concept of

⁵²¹ *Ibid.*, p.146.

Australia.⁵²² In further attempting to champion the cause of decentralisation the Liberals promoted federalism. Democracy, it was argued in *Hard Comment*, could only prosper through the existence of a mechanism which "spreads the control of political power".⁵²³ Federalism, contended the periodical, not only achieved this objective but also established concrete barriers against dictatorship.⁵²⁴

Despite these calls for new states and greater federalism, the Party indicated during the same stages of 1948 that decentralisation was not one of its primary goals. In discussing the apparent advantages and disadvantages of any proposed decentralised system, *Hard Comment* used the words of H.L Harris, Director of Child Welfare, to outline a view which argued that whilst decentralisation was 'desirable', it was not altogether 'practical'.⁵²⁵ This comment, of course, brings us back to White's and Sosso's assertion regarding the Liberals' perceived ambivalence in this policy area.

6) Country Party On Decentralisation

Keon also found himself in disagreement with the Country Party over the decentralisation issue. Although the Country Party had found themselves in favour of expanding the rural population base, both had different views on how to achieve this goal. While Keon argued

⁵²² "State Divisions To Develop Remote Regions", *Hard Comment*, Vol.1, No.11, February 1948, p.5.

⁵²³ "The Iniquity of Socialization", *Hard Comment*, Vol.1, No.10, January 1948, p.2.

⁵²⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵²⁵ "Decentralisation-Pro and Con", *Hard Comment*, Vol.1, No.11, February 1948.

decentralisation would succeed through an intensive immigration program, the Country Party stipulated during the 1940s and 1950s that such a goal could be achieved by encouraging native Australians to boost the national birth rate. This line of thought was constantly promoted through the Party's publication, *The Countryman*. Indeed, the paper reported that the Party had agreed during its 1939 Victorian Conference Agenda meeting "that Australia's best immigrant was the native born".⁵²⁶ In support of this stance, H.H Hilbert, as one of the delegates, suggested the introduction of a "child bonus" scheme where employees would be rewarded with an extra five shillings each week for every child they possessed. Another delegate, R.Unkles, saw the need to solve the population problem as a less perplexing task. According to Unkles, the nation's numbers would increase immensely if "...the sale of contraceptives and books on birth control [were] strictly prohibited".⁵²⁷

The Country Party illustrated its hostility toward any decentralisation program that included migrants in May 1941. *The Countryman* argued that the Victorian irrigation system was creating "little Italys". A member of the Country Party, W.R Tinkler, reiterated this concern by stating that: "Sheppparton, like Werribee, is fast becoming a little Italy[as a result of the irrigation system]".⁵²⁸ According to another Party member, A.C Everett, this unacceptable mode of decentralisation was occurring because "foreigners undoubtedly [could] live where

⁵²⁶ "Australia's Best Immigrant", *The Countryman*, Series 14, No.4, 27 January 1939, p.2.

⁵²⁷ *Ibid.*

Both these resolutions were passed so they could be discussed at the Victorian United Country Party Conference.

⁵²⁸ "Irrigation Areas Are Fast Becoming Little Italys, Says QC", *The Countryman*, Series 16, No.20, 23 May 1941, p.1.

Australians cannot".⁵²⁹ This situation, he contended, could be significantly altered if an "attack" was made on "...the social system rather than irrigation practices".⁵³⁰

7) Keon On Decentralisation

Keon, himself, was convinced that the Liberal and Country Parties alike had no concrete desires to advance decentralisation. On 17 May 1955 he argued that if the Liberal-dominated Menzies Government had been serious about such a concept, it would have installed a decentralist provision in the Public Works Committee's list of objectives. Certainly, under this revised environment, he argued, federal government funds would be outlaid to produce new dairy farms in Gippsland rather than developing Moorabbin, and the construction of one-hundred rural homes would take precedence over any proposed new Australian Broadcasting Commission offices in Sydney.⁵³¹

Keon's belief in the decentralisation process, contrary to Country Party ideas, was structured around an intensive migration push. Indeed, during the Nationality and Citizenship debate on 21 April 1955, he argued that if Australia was to truly prosper it would have to increase its population through migration. According to Keon, Australia's naturalization process was inefficient and could not cope with the vast demand of migrants who wanted to become Australian citizens. In attempting to support this claim, Keon outlined that 134,000 people

⁵²⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵³⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵³¹ *CPD*, Vol. H of R 6, 17 May 1955, p.775.

had entered Australia's shores as permanent residents. By the same token, he stated, only ten-thousand of these migrants had been naturalized.⁵³² Keon also used the same parliamentary discussion to vent his hostility at the Country Party's attitude on the issue. He remarked during the same debate that only one member of the Country Party had attended the 1955 Australian Citizen Convention, which was really a naturalization ceremony for migrants who wished to obtain domestic citizenship. Keon argued that the Country Party's devotion towards the migrant cause could certainly be classed as dubious since the Labor and Liberal Parties had sent more officials. This suspicion could even be given some validity, he argued, when one considered that while business, media, education, and religious institutions were present at this naturalization convention, the main supporter of the Country Party, the primary industries, did not send any representatives.⁵³³

Keon's incompatibility with the anti-Labor parties in the area of decentralisation was most apparent on two levels. He was quite critical of the Liberal Party's general stance on decentralisation. Indeed, when one compares White's and Sosso's theoretical works with the Party's own literature it can be seen that the Liberals were, at best, ambivalent about the decentralist concept. Keon's dispute with the Country Party on this issue had more specific dimensions. While both agreed that rural regions could be expanded through an increase in the population, no such consensus existed when discussing how this aim was going to be achieved. While the Country Party generally favoured a program

⁵³² CPD, Vol. H of R 6, 21 April 1955, pp.121-2.

⁵³³ *Ibid.*, p.123.

which would entice native born Australians to increase the national birthrate, Keon argued that migration levels should be increased.

8) Liberals On The Productive Classes

In Chapter Three we saw that Keon's populism included a very public desire to champion the cause of the productive classes. In Keon's eyes, neither of the major anti-Labor parties advocated policies which would help people that belonged to this socio-economic group.

With the Liberal Party it was obvious that Keon shared no real affinity in this area. Indeed, as the Victorian Public Service Association General Secretary who had continually called for shorter working hours, Keon would not have agreed with *Hard Comment's* criticism of the McKell ALP Government's endorsement of the forty-hour week in 1947. The Liberal periodical fully agreed with the stance postulated by *Sydney Sun* journalist John Wilkes on this issue. According to the journal's interpretation of Wilkes' piece, the forty hour week reform would contract rather than enhance production. Such a theory, contended *Hard Comment*, had been validated in France during 1936 under the Left Wing administration headed by Léon Blum.⁵³⁴

9) Country Party On The Productive Classes

Keon also found himself disagreeing with the Country Party over issues that concerned the productive classes. In his eyes, the Country Party

⁵³⁴ "The 40 Hour Week In France", *Hard Comment*, June 1947, p.12.

seemed to favour only those working people who had rural interests. Indeed, various writers have suggested that the Country/National Party has always been a sectional political entity catering specifically for its rural supporter base. D.Jaensch has stated that country "areas have a distinctive economic base [therefore] rural people have a distinctive political culture".⁵³⁵ D.Verrall, I.Ward, and P.Hay go further by arguing that the Country Party's history "is essentially that of a rural sectional interest party".⁵³⁶ The argument advocated by these writers indicates that the Country Party has never had any serious commitments to city dwellers. Norma Marshall has attempted to extend this view by arguing that Australian farmers have always equated their own interests with the nation's prosperity. Given the leading role they have played in providing exports for the Australian economy, she concludes, farmers have *demande*d specific representation in Federal and State Parliaments.⁵³⁷

As Keon began his tenure as VPSA General Secretary in 1939, *The Countryman* provided views which sought to promote rural interests. Indeed, the Country Party used its publication to continually alienate itself from urban working-class citizens. Such a view was certainly advocated by the senior vice-president of the Party, Walton McManus. He said that other industries, especially in the urban areas, must be made to aid wheat farmers. Not only was the wheat industry, in McManus' eyes, the "greatest creator of employment", it also provided in

⁵³⁵ D.Verrall, I.Ward, and P.Hay, "Community, Country, Party: Roots of Rural Conservatism", in B.Costar and D.Woodward (Ed), *Country To National: Australian Rural Politics and Beyond*, p.8.

⁵³⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵³⁷ N.Marshall, "Rural Interest Groups", in B.Costar and D.Woodward (Ed), *Country To National: Australian Rural Politics and Beyond*, p.9.

the perfect economic environment enough produce to be society's most affordable staple product. Certainly, he contended, in such an environment the price of potatoes and other vegetables was lowered.⁵³⁸ Indeed, without being drawn into the complexities of an argument concerning which primary product has the greatest nutritional value, it is obvious that McManus was placing the interests of wheat growers above all else.

In August 1939, the Geelong branch of the Country Party brought forward a similar position. The Geelong branch, as a collective, claimed that "the problem of the city unemployed is grave enough, but add to this the possibility of large numbers of broken and ruined primary producers and we have a picture extremely unpleasant to contemplate".⁵³⁹ It is obvious that whilst the Geelong branch of the Country Party possessed a degree of concern for the urban unemployed, it equated rural joblessness with sheer disaster.

The editorial staff of *The Countryman* was also anxious to champion the rural worker above his/her urban counterpart. The paper argued in October 1939 that the city consumer was ignorant of real "economic facts". Indeed, according to this publication, every time an urban consumer successfully bid down the price of agricultural produce he/she was depleting farmers' incomes. Given that the farming community provided the economy with its greatest source of consumers, any loss of income would eventually translate itself into a decrease in domestic consumption. Such a scenario, reasoned *The Countryman*,

⁵³⁸ "All Industries Should Aid Wheat Men", *The Countryman*, Series 14, No.33, 18 August 1939, p.5.

⁵³⁹ "Economic Security As Important As Defence", *The Countryman*, Series 14, No.34, 25 August 1939, p.2.

would also increase the unemployment figures. The periodical explained this view through the following comments:

I wonder when some intelligent walking delegate or orator of the labouring masses will come along and preach to them, that in order to keep the [economic] wheels going round, they must first of all see to it that so the lowly dirt farmer gets a fair break. If they would only realise that, they would not have to worry much about continued jobs.⁵⁴⁰

During the 1940 Victorian State Election Campaign the editorial staff continued to promote this pro-rural stance. After the Allendale Country Party candidate, A.E. Hocking, argued that rural interests were not being aptly remunerated for their services, *The Countryman* stated that "the existence of a vigorous Country Party [be maintained] to secure justice for [the] most important section of the community".⁵⁴¹ C.Nielson, as one of *The Countryman's* readers, expressed this view more clearly by arguing that Labor did not cater for rural interests and hence possessed a policy which would not bring about "the greatest good for the greatest number".⁵⁴²

10) Keon's View On The Productive Classes

Keon's belief that the Liberal Party did not cater for the productive classes interests was underlined during industry and budget debates, in 1952 and 1953 respectively. Keon used the last session of Federal Parliament in 1952 to criticise the Menzies Government's excise tax and illustrated how the same surcharge was adversely effecting the

⁵⁴⁰ "Agriculture Must Fill The Gaps!", *The Countryman*, Series 14, No.41, 13 October 1939, p.1.

⁵⁴¹ "On The Political Battlefront", *The Countryman*, Series 15, Number 10, 8 March 1940, p.1.

⁵⁴² "Our Readers Express Their Views", *The Countryman*, Series 15, Number 10, 8 March 1940, p.1.

efficiency of the Bryant and May match factory inside his electorate. He called on the Liberal government to abolish the tax after eight-hundred workers had signed a petition which argued that the levy was directly responsible for creating a three day week. The match industry, he argued, was certainly worth defending in the name of efficiency and employment. He claimed that:

[...]when the 40-hour week was introduced[...]the Bryant and May factory in...[his]...electorate maintained production at the level that had prevailed under the 44-hour week[...].⁵⁴³

One year later, during the budget debate Keon dismissed a Liberal sanctioned economic statement as a "miserable fizz". According to Keon, the Liberal-dominated Menzies Government had provided little financial relief for ordinary citizens. The budget stipulated that people on social security benefits, such as old age pensioners, war veterans, widows, and invalid individuals, would receive a pay increase of 2/6d per week. In Keon's eyes such an amount did not come close to preserving living conditions for these people. Indeed, he argued, such a rise in benefits "mock[ed] the sufferings of the most defenceless and deserving section of the community".⁵⁴⁴ For families there had been little relief in the area of sales taxation. Food and clothing, he argued, would hardly decrease as the Liberal government only wished to scale down its eighty-eight million pound sales taxation revenue base by one-million. Also, child endowment payments remained unchanged. Yet Keon contended that inflation continued to rise within the economy. Furthermore, income tax was also set to rise. In 1951, he argued, that a wage earner with a family of two children only had to pay £8/14 from his basic wage in

⁵⁴³ *Richmond News*, No.5, 17 December 1952, p.6.

⁵⁴⁴ "Nothing Over 2/6d For Pensioners", *Richmond News*, No.42, 16 September 1953, p.1.

income tax. In 1953, he stated, this figure had now jumped to £14/6- an increase of over five pounds sterling.⁵⁴⁵

The belief postulated by various writers that the Country/National Party has often been concerned primarily with rural interests, is certainly given weight when one looks at the anti-Labor grouping's attitude during 1939 and 1940. During this period, which coincides with Keon's entry into public life, one can see through *The Countryman* that the Country Party on an executive, branch, editorial, and membership level was simply not interested in championing the causes of the productive classes. For his part, as General Secretary of the VPSA, Keon could not abide by this attitude. Indeed, this clash of opinions became most evident during 1941. While Keon and the VPSA continued to press for wage increases that matched living standards, the Country Party minority State Government emphasised that its first priority concerned its rural supporters. According to Country Party sources, Victorian farmers were experiencing great difficulty in selling their produce because of the depressing economic climate which had been created by the Second World War. In order to illustrate this point, the Party argued that a pound of butter fat during World War One was sold at £2/7/5 a pound. The corresponding figure, it argued further, had dropped to only £1/3/5 because of global hostilities. In Keon's eyes, such rationale for deferring public service payments was simply illogical. The fact that farmers were experiencing grave financial difficulties, he stressed, was a community issue rather than one which involved Victorian public servants specifically. Indeed, he argued, the Country Party minority government was obviously an administration "whose outlook on

⁵⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

[Victorian Public] Service salaries is governed by the price of butter fat".⁵⁴⁶

Three years later, in his VPSA General Secretary annual report, Keon continued to be hostile towards the Dunstan State Government. In his own mind, the Country Party throughout the last twelve months had done nothing more than cater for its own sectional interests. While a swarm of public service dilemmas relating to permanency, general conditions, and an independent board had been allowed to simmer without being resolved, Keon pointed to a host of rural issues which had been addressed. The proposed pieces of legislation which he referred to included, amongst others, the Farmers' Advances Bills, Farmers' Protection (Amendment) Bill, Land Settlement Bill, Water Bills, and Marketing of Primary Produce Bills.⁵⁴⁷

We saw in Chapter Three how Keon's politics contained populist dimensions, which included a desire to champion the productive classes. After broadly reviewing the attitudes of the anti-Labor parties, it is possible to see that neither the Liberal or Country organisations could facilitate Keon's philosophy in this area of policy. At the same time, it should be noted that Keon's hostility toward the Liberal and Country parties in this instance contained different characteristics. Keon saw the Liberal Party as an entity which was generally insensitive to all individuals who belonged to the productive classes. He displayed this belief during an industry debate concerning the match industry in 1952. During debate on the 1953 budget Keon argued that the Liberal dominated government in Canberra had shown little consideration for

⁵⁴⁶ "Butter Fat...Salaries...Common-Sense", *PSJV*, No.48, 1 March 1941, p.452.

⁵⁴⁷ "1944 And All That!", *PSJV*, No.144, November 1944, p.1.

protecting ordinary families against inflation. The Government had not increased wages and child endowment payments. Indeed, he argued during the same debate, ordinary families would still be penalised when buying food and clothing because the sales taxation rate had only been minimally reduced. There had been even less consideration in Keon's mind for those who once belonged to the productive classes (like senior citizens, war veterans, widows, and invalids) and were now receiving social security payments. While Keon believed that the Liberals issued policies that affected both urban and rural dwellers equally, he asserted that the Country Party, when not the junior member of a coalition government, would always promote initiatives that relegated city workers' needs to a low priority. Various writers like Jaensch, Verrall, Ward, Hay, and Marshall have all proposed views which argue that the Country/National Party has often been guilty of being too exclusively pro-rural in its outlook. The Country Party certainly fostered a pro-rural attitude when Keon first entered public life. This could be seen through its weekly publication, *The Countryman* on an executive, branch, editorial, and membership level. Certainly, Keon soon found himself opposing the Country Party after entering public life in 1939. In 1941 he complained about the Party's desire to allow the falling price of butter issue to take precedence over other grievances in Victoria. In 1944, he argued that a sizeable degree of the legislation passed in the Country Party-dominated Victorian Parliament had unfairly favoured rural interests. Indeed, the issue to remember here is not that Keon saw himself to be anti-rural, but rather that he perceived the Country Party as an *exclusively* pro-rural grouping which was insensitive to urban workers' needs.

11) Liberals View of Monopolies

In Chapter Three we also saw that Keon's populism strongly opposed the existence of private monopolies. Indeed, in accordance with this argument, he stated that all private monopolies should be disbanded because they created a concentration of ownership inside any given society. Certainly, in his mind, if monopoly ownership was inevitable inside a particular industry then the state would be obliged to administer it, so as to avoid exploitation and to promote the public's good. On this point, Keon and the Liberals found themselves philosophically misaligned. Starr in his own study of the Liberal Party indicates that the Menzies-led organisation was not preoccupied with any argument concerned with distribution of ownership. Menzies himself, in presenting the *First Statement of Political Faith and Aims* of his newly formed Party on 14 October 1944 argued that:

There cannot be rising living standards if all we propose to do is to redistribute what we now have. We must produce more and produce it more cheaply if we are to survive and grow.⁵⁴⁸

According to the Liberal Party's philosophy monopolistic corporations were simply innocent off-springs of a free capitalistic system which ensured that only efficient and competitive entities survived inside the market place. Such a view was championed with firm vigour by the Party's official monthly publication, *Hard Comment*. Any statute which made it mandatory for any private monopoly to be transferred into public hands, argued the periodical, could simply be equated with the Socialist doctrine. It based this theory on a premise which suggested Socialism repressed the notion of freedom on two levels. First, argued *Hard Comment*, the transfer of private monopolies to the public sector

⁵⁴⁸ G.Starr, *The Liberal Party of Australia- A Documentary History*, pp.92-3.

would mean governments could interfere inside the lives of their citizens at a greater pace. *Hard Comment* expressed this facet of its pro-private monopoly stance through the following comments:

Socialism accuses free enterprise of producing a monopoly of power in the hands of a few. It [foolishly] proposes to correct this [situation] by bringing about an even greater concentration of power [into government hands through the nationalisation of all monopolies].⁵⁴⁹

Secondly, and as a consequence of the first scenario, governments can translate this interference into full control by *planning* society's fate. This objective, outlined *Hard Comment*, can be achieved because governments would have monopoly control of industries that were once controlled by private interests. *Hard Comment* outlined its second point of defence concerning private monopolies through the following comments:

If the [Australian] community decides for socialism [and the subsequent break-up of private monopolies]...it decides for a limitation and reduction of its own power in favour of a great extension of the power of the state.⁵⁵⁰

12) Keon's View On Monopolies

Keon himself was convinced that the Liberals were not concerned with breaking up private monopolies and distributing wealth through the community. Indeed, on 9 March 1950, he used Question Time in Federal Parliament to ridicule Menzies over his election pledge concerning monopolies. According to Keon, before the 1949 Federal Election, Menzies had promised the electorate that his party would nationalise any monopoly which threatened the public's interests. Given that such a pledge had been made, Keon argued, the Prime Minister

⁵⁴⁹ "Democracies To Make Big Decisions", *Hard Comment*, Vol.3, No.1, April 1949, p.16.

⁵⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

was now obliged to tell the House whether that measure could be executed under the confines of the constitution.⁵⁵¹ Menzies responded by stating that he had no intention of addressing issues connected with 'policy' or 'law' during Question Time.⁵⁵²

Two months later, on 4 May 1950, Keon indicated that he viewed Menzies' response as a sign that the Liberals had no desire to promote redistribution of ownership policies. According to this viewpoint, the Liberals were going out of their way to undermine the existence of the Industrial Finance Department- an entity which he believed had provided the credit for many individuals to set up their own businesses and enjoy "...the fruits of...their...own labor".⁵⁵³ The Liberal-dominated government, Keon argued, by injecting only two million pounds sterling into the Industrial Finance Department, was stifling Australian individuals chances of establishing their own businesses. Indeed, Keon stated, such measures would have no doubt suited the bigger enterprises operating on Australian soil who passionately opposed any competition that threatened their market control.⁵⁵⁴ Certainly, he argued, the Liberal-dominated government through this policy was displaying its devotion towards the monopolistic causes of "Broken Hill Proprietary Limited [BHP], Industrial Acceptance Corporation Limited and similar organisations".⁵⁵⁵

⁵⁵¹ *CPD*, 9 March 1950, p.573.

⁵⁵² *Ibid.*, p.574.

⁵⁵³ *CPD*, Vol.207, 4 May 1950, p.2198-2199.

⁵⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p.2199.

⁵⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p.2198.

Keon was convinced that certain interests operating within the steel and shipping sectors of the Australian economy, for example, were driven by a desire to stifle competition and maintain a concentration of ownership in their respective markets. In Keon's mind, these sectors had fallen prey to such interests because of the Liberals' ambivalent attitude toward monopolies.

In 1952, Keon argued that the housing shortfall in Australia could be connected with the Liberal-dominated government's inability to penalise companies who used their market strength to promote scarcity. In his mind, entities such as BHP, which monopolised the steel industry, were making it increasingly difficult for an individual to purchase a home. BHP, he contended, for its own self-interest produced 300,000 tons of steel below its capabilities each year. This meant that Australia had to import this commodity from external sources- at a price difference which exceeded 200%. According to Keon, in 1952 the price of domestic steel totalled £25 per ton. The cost of steel purchased from Japan and other external sources equalled £85 per ton.⁵⁵⁶ In Keon's eyes, given the Liberal dominated government's inability to eradicate this situation, it was no wonder the price of an average house had sky-rocketed by just under 400% between 1939 and 1952. According to Keon, the price of an average house in 1939 totalled £885. This same figure had increased to £4000 by 1952.⁵⁵⁷

Even after the Labor schism, Keon continued to argue, as an ALP (Anti-Communist) member, that the Liberals should be regulating monopolistic interests. On 17 May 1955, he argued that if the Menzies

⁵⁵⁶ CPD, Vol.216, 21 February 1952, p.202.

⁵⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p.201.

Government was sincere about waterfront reform it had to impose legislation that would curb the influence of shipping cartels. Keon was specifically arguing that the coalition government should not limit itself only to reforming the trade union aspect of the waterfront as it had done through the Stevedoring Industry Bill during November 1954.⁵⁵⁸ In his eyes the shipping companies would severely hinder the Australian economy by imposing a proposed ten per-cent increase on all goods leaving and entering the country. According to this scenario, he added, the domestic cost of living would increase and Australia's international competitiveness in the wheat, meat, butter, and canned fruit markets would significantly diminish.⁵⁵⁹ According to Keon, there was no real justification for these freight increases. The shipping companies were simply exerting their monopolistic influence to satisfy their own greed. In an attempt to validate this statement, Keon brought forward two supporting arguments. First, the shipping industry was recording healthy profits. Even a modest company like Peninsular and Oriental Steam Navigation was able to pay sixteen per-cent of its 1954 earnings to shareholders without upsetting its trading liquidity. Keon was quoting the 1955 Stock Exchange Official Year Book.⁵⁶⁰ Secondly, the shipping companies could not justify any increase by arguing that it had been induced by lost revenue periods associated with industrial unrest. Using the Stevedoring Industry Commission report as his aid, Keon revealed that only 4.5% of working days were lost in 1954 as a result of strike action. On a parallel note, the same publication showed

⁵⁵⁸ CPD, Vol. H of R 6, 19 April 1955, p.762..

⁵⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p.763.

that 30.1% of all working days resulted in non-production.⁵⁶¹ This situation, he argued, was not manufactured by any union-inspired go-slow campaign. Rather, it was due to "inefficient management on the part of the people charged with the control of ships".⁵⁶²

In Chapter Three we saw that Keon's populism dissuaded him from supporting the existence of private monopolies. He saw such entities as unfairly concentrating ownership. In accordance with this form of populism, Keon argued that monopolies should be nationalised in industries where this mode of ownership was inevitable. Starr, in his own analysis, argues that the Liberals during Menzies' tenure in power were not particularly concerned with curtailing monopoly ownership. Starr argues that for Menzies, the whole notion of wealth distribution was superseded by the idea of *creating* material advancements at any cost. The Liberals certainly argued in *Hard Comment* that any nationalising of monopolies would give birth to socialist practices like government control and a planned economy. Keon himself was not in tune with this philosophy. Indeed, only months after obtaining his position in the House of Representatives, he urged the Liberals to nationalise any monopoly which threatened the public's good. As in May 1950, he argued again that the Liberals had every intention of aiding monopolistic interests after the Menzies administration had injected only two million pounds-sterling into the Industrial Finance Department. This belief was reinforced in Keon's mind by the Menzies Government's ambivalence over perceived monopolistic practices concerning BHP and local shipping companies, in 1952 and 1955 respectively.

⁵⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶² *Ibid.*, p.764.

13) Conclusion

One of the most interesting points of discussion when reviewing Keon's public life is trying to answer questions concerned with why he joined the Australian Labor Party. After all, as we have seen in Chapters Three and Four, he was a man of principle who possessed both a populist strain and who was strongly shaped by Catholic social teachings. Indeed, in general terms one would have to suppose that he joined the ALP because he felt such a political grouping could accommodate his philosophical interests. P.Love and B.Duncan both indicate that this contention is most plausible. Love argues that the Labour movement was populist at the turn of the twentieth century. Populism, he contends, along with various other political trends, is part of the ALP's ideological heritage. Moreover, Love indicates three characteristics which he believes the ALP acquired from such populist groupings as the American People's Party and the Russian *Narodnichestvo*. In the light of my argument in Chapter Three, it is possible to see that Keon possessed similar traits. First, Love contends that the ALP was driven, at the turn of the century, by a desire to promote familiar practices and oppose the unknown, so as to bring forward a better society. In this sense, reasons Love, Labor was convinced that 'patriotism' and 'democracy', as familiar practices, would ensure Australian society's advancement. Keon also believed in a similar cause. Measured support for the countryside represented support of familiar practices, while his rejection of Communism constituted hostility toward an alien concept that was not celebrated in the Australian parliamentary tradition. Secondly, Love argues that there existed a belief that the common individual's cause must be constantly championed. In Labor terms such a person was

defined as 'the worker'. As shown in Chapter Three, Keon celebrated this tradition by supporting the 'productive classes'. By this term he encompassed both employers and employees who were creating tangible wealth through their skill and labour. Thirdly, Love points to Labor's opposition towards any grouping which possessed views that contradicted these two beliefs. The early Labour movement, Love claims, saw British interests as a barrier to its goals. Keon argued that the centralisation of power through government or private sources was the greatest threat to creating a better society.

When looking at Catholic social teachings, Duncan proposes a similar view to Love. According to Duncan, for those who supported Catholic Social theory Labor was the only main political grouping that would give them any form of expression. According to Duncan, if Catholics were going to initiate change, they needed a political vehicle that was both non-sectarian and supported social reform. Only the ALP filled this role. Duncan's argument is sustained by O'Farrell's description of the Democratic Party during the 1920 New South Wales State Election campaign. Despite espousing a firm commitment to Papal Teachings, the Party was abandoned by most Catholics. As O'Farrell explains, most Catholics remained loyal to the ALP because the Democratic Party was seen as an organisation that would taint every initiative of social reform with the 'sectarian brush'. By the time Keon entered public life in 1939, the ALP remained the only non-sectarian outlet for promoting Catholic teachings.

In a collective sense, both Love and Duncan have indicated that the ALP was the only vehicle which people like Keon, with populist and Catholic social tendencies could utilise. In order to test this theory, and find out whether Keon had no choice but to join the ALP, a framework

comparing his attitudes with the anti-Labor parties was devised. Such a construct was designed to deal with both populist and Catholic social tendencies. On the populist side of the ideological equation views on the productive classes and monopolies were contrasted with the beliefs of the major anti-Labor parties. In regard to Catholic Social Teachings, the decentralist vision which Keon possessed was matched with the philosophies of the Liberal and Country Parties. This process was arrived at by three steps. First, where possible, the philosophies governing the anti-Labor parties attitudes in these areas during Keon's period in public life were explored. Secondly, this information was complemented by primary sources which originated from anti-Labor ranks. In the Liberals' case, *Hard Comment* was consulted while in relation to the Country Party, *The Countryman* proved to be useful. Thirdly, and most importantly, these two areas were compared with Keon's attitude on decentralisation, the productive classes, and private monopolies.

In all three areas, a point of difference was located. In the area of decentralisation, Keon found himself opposed to the Liberals' belief that the concept was not altogether practical. In regards to the Country Party, Keon agreed with the view that any decentralisation program could not proceed without an increase in the population. It is at this point, however, that the two sides found themselves in conflict. While Keon believed that the population could be increased through a broad European migration policy, the Country Party argued that any directive of this nature should only include British individuals. In regard to the productive classes, Keon saw the Liberals as an organisation which initiated policies that were insensitive to the needs of ordinary people. With the Country Party Keon found himself disagreeing once more,

because he believed this political organisation only catered for rural interests. On the private monopolies issue, Keon believed that the Liberals endorsed such units of production because they contributed to the spirit of a free-enterprise economy. Keon could not accept this argument because he felt private monopoly interests were often guilty of exploiting the general public for financial gain.

At this point, it is worth returning briefly to the views proposed by Love and by Duncan. Both have argued that the ALP's ideological baggage contained, amongst other things, populist and Catholic elements. Seeing that the major anti-Labor parties did not accommodate any of these philosophical tendencies it seems Keon had no choice but to join the ALP and eventually become one of its parliamentarians, at both State and Federal levels.

Conclusion

Standish Michael Keon's political exploits are not fully documented in the published material that is available. Keon, himself, is not the central subject of any published work. Writers have described Keon as a figure of limited importance who made some contribution to Australian public life between 1939 and 1955, a situation somewhat understandable given that these individuals have researched topics which only cite him as a supporting character. Such areas of scholarly investigation have included ALP politics pertaining to the 1940s and 1950s, the history of Richmond, Catholicism, the Labor Party split, and the eventual formation of the DLP.

At the same time, however, while these writers do not treat Keon as their central focus, they make a host of judgements which, at best, only partially examine Keon's political identity. As was demonstrated in Chapter Two, these assessments are subdivided into three schools of thought.

The first grouping of writers indicated that Keon was a 'rebellious' or truculent figure. Although none of these figures **directly** label Keon 'rebellious', there exist two reasons for still applying such a term. First, all these writers indicate Keon had a tendency to promote agendas that were not necessarily popular with the whole Labour movement. Secondly, Keon also attacked **any** individual or organisation who openly disagreed with his views. Kate White argued that Keon's specific agendas in the Labour movement included showing very low levels of

respect for the ALP leadership. She illustrated this point by highlighting Keon's readiness to contest the Victorian ALP Deputy Leadership position against John Cain(Senior's) wishes. She also noted Keon's open contempt for H.V Evatt, despite Keon's standing as a junior member of Labor's Federal Parliamentary ranks. Furthermore she argued that Keon's sectarianism also led him to champion causes that were not universally supported by the majority of the Labor Party. This contention is supported by his clash with a fellow Party parliamentarian, R.Holt, who did not complete the reading of the Land Settlement Bill in the Victorian parliament. Keon argued after this event that Holt was a freemason whose sectarian bigotry had precluded the ALP from initially passing legislation that would benefit Catholics. Robert Murray, another member of this school of thought, argues that Keon's specific agenda inside the ALP was dictated by a fervent desire to oppose Communism. In this respect, Murray argues, the Soviet Union, China, and non-anti-Communist members in the ALP were all seen by Keon as opponents of this agenda. Janet McCalman and Catherine Watson argue that Keon's specific agenda in the ALP was related to his local electorate of Richmond and could be equated with civic duty. According to McCalman's and Watson's accounts, Keon wanted to distance himself from the individuals who had previously dominated the local Richmond ALP. He sought to challenge them at every opportunity because they had unethically used their positions of influence in local and state politics to further their interests, at Richmond people's expense.

We saw in Chapter Two that the second school of thought concentrated on *why* Keon acted in this rebellious manner. It is made up of two main groups- historians and political contemporaries. All the historians

agree with the idea that Keon's actions were primarily based around anti-Communism. They argue he acquired this impulse because of his fanatic Catholicism. Historians and commentators such as Robin Gollan, Ross McMullin, Kylie Tennant, Susan McKernan, and Allan Ashbolt postulate such a view. Amongst the political contemporaries who write about Keon's exploits, Les Haylen and Gil Duthie agree with the view brought forward by the historians. Frank McManus offers a different analysis. In his mind, Keon's anti-Communist fervour was associated with an astute judgement which recognised that the 'Reds' were intent on capturing control of the ALP.

The third school of thought explored *to what degree* anti-Communism and religious duty dictated Keon's actions during the split and beyond. There are three members of this school- Robert Murray, who is also represented in the first grouping of writers, Paul Reynolds, and Gerard Henderson. Murray indicates that anti-Communism, minus any firm affection to Catholic beliefs, played the overriding role in dictating Keon's actions during the ALP Split. Reynolds' view, while not mirroring Murray's thoughts, is sympathetic towards any notion that Keon was not primarily motivated by religious fervour during the ALP Split and beyond. Reynolds uses Keon's announcement against the DLP becoming a church-based party in the late 1950s to justify his stance. Gerard Henderson differs completely from Murray and Reynolds. He argues that both anti-Communism and religious fervour played significant roles in determining Keon's conduct.

An overview of Keon's origins and young manhood in Chapter One indicated that the description presented by these writers is hardly complete. Indeed, Keon's ideological repertoire was much more diverse and complicated. Keon's young life had been dominated by three

overriding concerns. The first was centred around the notion of self-betterment and helping those who, like himself, originated from the lower end of the social scale. The second revolved around Catholicism, and to this end at least the published material which is available does correctly note one key area of Keon's political personality. At the same time, this sense of religious devotion went beyond solely acting as a springboard for developing anti-Communist sentiments. Thirdly, Keon was also concerned with becoming an ALP activist. As outlined in Chapter One, this set of attitudes was encouraged by his parents. Indeed, such principles reflected the Keon family's socio-economic position, their bond with the Catholic Church, and firm political allegiances with the Labor Party.

Keon's Irish legacy also served to tighten his affinity with promoting the common man. It augmented his devotion towards Catholicism and his vehement dislike for representatives of the establishment classes. Keon used the editorial position at the *Irish Review* to simultaneously articulate his viewpoints and maintain a link with his ethnic heritage. In relation to the common man, Keon's editorials would often state that any economic policy conducted in Ireland needed to take into consideration the plight of the lower classes. Keon placed a similar brand of enthusiastic emphasis on Catholicism. For Keon there was an intimate and visible link between Ireland, the Catholic faith and progress. Indeed, Keon expressed these exact sentiments when describing the opening of some sugar mills in Ireland. According to Stephen Alomes, people with such Irish and Catholic backgrounds naturally gravitated towards the ALP because of its tendency to oppose the Anglo-ruling elite and accommodate people from lower socio-economic strata. Keon satisfied these criteria in both areas. First, his

decision to follow his parents into the ALP at the tender age of fourteen shows that he had no desire to support the ideas of those who represented the establishment classes. Secondly, Keon had no choice but to translate any political inclination into ALP membership because Labor was the only major grouping that would not discriminate against his origins.

Keon's time within the Catholic Young Men's Society(or CYMS) only further strengthened his dedication to Catholicism and the common man's cause. As a dedicated Catholic activist, we saw in Chapter One how Keon obtained public speaking and organisational skills, as well as intellectual stimulation from papal encyclicals like *Rerum Novarum* and *Quadragesimo Anno* . Such experiences firmly moulded Keon's attitude as he entered public life in 1939 as General Secretary of the VPSA.

In Chapter Three Keon's pro-common man inclinations were discussed. This support for people from the lower end of the socio-economic scale was heavily enmeshed with populist tendencies. Richard Hofstadter's work on the U.S People's Party was used here as the linchpin to create a populist model. Such an analysis possessed four central themes, which are also evident when studying Keon's political conduct. Indeed, the analysis in Chapter Three showed that Keon, like his populist predecessors in the United States, was intent on pursuing policies connected to recreating a golden age, championing the productive classes, fostering conspiracy theories, and fighting money power interests.

In explaining the golden age theory Hofstadter pointed out that U.S populists were committed to promoting agrarian living. Keon showed in his public life that he was committed to a similar program. Indeed in

1949, despite differing party loyalties, Keon expressed support for the Hollway Liberal Government's decision to establish a state-backed Rural Finance Corporation. Such a body would dedicate itself to servicing the banking needs of rural dwellers. Keon also wished to see housing provided for citizens of both country and city areas. He showed his dedication to this cause in 1947 by calling for a National Security Act which would ensure that universal housing became a main Victorian Government priority. One year later he chastised the Liberal-Country State Government for allowing theatre refurbishment in Melbourne access to precious building materials, while many people still lived in substandard housing. In Federal Parliament, Keon maintained this theme by constantly advocating that the Commonwealth Bank needed to provide low interest rates for home-buyers of modest means.

In further studying Keon's populist tendencies, we also looked at Hofstadter's notion of championing the productive classes. According to Hofstadter's assessment, populists are convinced that society is made up of two main socio-economic groupings. One of the groups, the productive classes, consists of farmers, unskilled workers, and small businessmen who created 'real' wealth through their own toil. The other section of society encompasses monopolistic business interests who, through their unshakeable grip on most of the wealth, were insensitive to the economic miseries they were inflicting upon others. Peter Wiles noted that populist thought is motivated by a desire to alter this state of affairs through a structure that possesses a mixture of capitalist and socialist structures. It favours a co-operative system that looks after the interests of individuals like consumers, farmers and manufacturers. By the same token, it also possesses a capitalist streak which demands that the ownership of property remains private. Keon championed the

productive classes and this economic middle way by attempting to address the imbalances between rich and poor, and championing a program related to labour reform and arbitration.

Keon consistently attempted to address the imbalances between the rich and poor during his period in the VPSA, and in the Victorian and Federal Parliaments. At the VPSA Keon attacked the Country Party Government because public servants were increasingly being assigned to the lower ends of the socio-economic scale. In 1941 Keon helped ensure public servants received their first wage increase in fifteen years. In 1948, as a State Parliamentarian, Keon opposed the Metropolitan Gas Company's proposed price rise on the basis that it discriminated against low-income consumers. In Federal Parliament he urged wool growers to sell their produce at a cheaper rate in Australia, so that clothing could become more affordable. He also wanted to see price control on basic commodities, free medicines for low-income earners who attended dentist consultations, and investigation into 'super' petrol prices.

Keon's belief in labour reform could be gauged during his period in the VPSA. Keon favoured the establishment of an independent board free from government interference which would fix minimum and maximum wages for public servants. In 1942 he was one of the main protagonists behind launching a High Court action against the Victorian Government on this issue. One year later, during the Victorian elections, he urged his fellow public servants to vote against the Country Party Government because it continued to oppose an independent board. During this period Keon also promoted the concept of arbitration. In the Victorian Parliament he continually painted a positive picture of the ALP-

endorsed Industrial Groups who always favoured arbitration over strike action in their respective unions.

The third element of Keon's populist philosophy revolved around a conspiracy theory. Hofstadter argues that the conspiracy theory also plays a sizeable part in the psyche of populists who often seek to re-create a standard of 'correctness' which has supposedly been overshadowed by perverse forces. For the populist, it is important that every measure is taken to defeat such influences. For Keon the greatest challenges to his notion of a correct society were the Communists. He believed that they were attempting to undermine Australia in the industrial, international and educational spheres. On an industrial level, Keon argued that union ballots should be supervised by the electoral commission so as to prevent Communist malpractice at the polling booth. From an international perspective, Keon wanted Australia to establish an expanded defence force so that the nation could defend itself against Soviet and Chinese Communist aggressors. He also believed in a psychological campaign that would aim to inform the world's population of Communism's 'evils'. On the education front, Keon argued that Communist objectives flourished in schools that did not teach Christian ideals. The Victorian Education Act, Keon argued in 1949, by promoting secular education, was therefore benefiting the Communist cause. He also wished to see Communists ~~removed~~ from university institutions and the media.

The fourth, and final, aspect of Keon's populist philosophy was concerned with using money to promote prosperity rather than derive value from scarcity. Hofstadter argued that the U.S People's Party, at the turn of the twentieth century, did not want the nation's currency pinned to the gold standard. Since gold was a scarce commodity the

People's Party was convinced that interest rates would always remain high and consequently discriminate against ordinary people who were trying to buy homes or establish small businesses. In their eyes, private monopolistic interests and banks were responsible for creating this state of affairs. Keon exemplified his affinity with this brand of thought in three ways. First, he displayed hostility toward private monopolies. Keon argued that if a monopoly must exist, it should be in state hands so as to minimise any possibilities of public exploitation. During his period in Federal Parliament, Keon stipulated that the insurance and motor oil industries should be dominated by the government. Secondly, Keon was vocal in his opposition to foreign monopolies. Indeed, in 1950 he argued that efforts should be made to halt the increasing sell-off of local cinema centres to U.S interests. Thirdly, Keon favoured the break-up of large land estates. According to Keon, the monopoly on land could only be removed if a high levy was imposed on individuals who owned excessive property.

In Chapter Three we discussed Keon's Catholic underpinnings. The comment many have made that Keon was a pro-Catholic politician cannot be doubted, but when put in such a simple context it does lack depth. Though Keon was a Catholic activist, this facet of his political philosophy was governed by a range of different elements. In Chapter Three, we saw that Keon's 'general Catholicism' was evident in his championing of the Church's name at every available opportunity. He particularly underlined his Catholic roots in State parliamentary debates involving education and morality. For example, Keon consistently argued that the state should pay for the secular aspects of a child's education, whether he/she attended a government-sponsored or Church-administered school. In the area of morality, Keon

consistently brought forward views on marriage, film censorship, and abortion that were in line with Catholic Church policy.

The second aspect of Keon's Catholicism was aligned to the teachings which were espoused by the Church hierarchy. The philosophy was largely based on two papal encyclicals- *Rerum Novarum* and *Quadragesimo Anno* , released in 1891 and 1931 respectively. Such documents illustrated the Catholic hierarchy's opposition toward Communism, socialism, and unregulated capitalism, while simultaneously underlining the Church's support for the family unit and industrial councils. The Australian bishops showed their commitment to this set of objectives by issuing a range of social justice statements which included *Justice Now!* (issued in 1941), *Pattern For Peace* (1943), *A Christian Plan For Australia* (1943), and *The Future For Australia* (1951). These directives impacted upon Labor politics when Keon was active during the 1940s and 1950s. The Victorian ALP Executive by the early 1950s included a number of individuals, of which Keon was one, who possessed a philosophical affiliation with Catholic social teachings. As Truman has noted, decentralisation of power, anti-socialism, and anti-Communism were all themes pertaining to the Executive's agenda. Keon's role as an active supporter of such philosophy was seen when we studied his attitudes in relation to wage justice, decentralisation, and anti-Communism and anti-Asian nationalisation.

When they released *Justice Now!* the Australian Bishops were intent on bringing forward a process of wage justice. They reiterated this stance in a similar document, *The Family*. Keon, for his part, supported their views during his period in the VPSA. He consistently argued that a five-

day week would serve both industry and employer interests, while simultaneously promoting equitable wages and ample recreation time.

Keon and the bishops also shared similar interests in the area of decentralisation. The Australian hierarchy outlined its belief in a co-operative social structure, accommodating both rural and urban interests, in a document titled *For Freedom*. Keon echoed this call during debate on the Land Tax Assessment Bill in 1951. He firmly believed that farmers deserved tax concessions for their efforts. At the same time, however, Keon was aware that urban-rural consensus could only occur if both sectors were governed by decisions that were made on objective, rather than favourable, grounds. For this reason in the early 1940s Keon attacked the Federal Wheat Subsidy plan because it gave farmers benefits at urban workers' expense.

We also saw in Chapter Four that Keon and the bishops shared similar opinions on issues related to anti-Communism and anti-Asian nationalism. In a document labelled *The Future of Australia*, the bishops outlined their fear that Communism and Asian nationalism threatened the nation's status as a Pacific Christian outpost. Keon showed his alignment with this argument during the debate on the Royal Commission (Communist) Bill in 1949, when he claimed that Christianity constituted the basis of Australian society and therefore individuals had a duty to oppose any force which threatened its existence.

In Chapter Five we saw that Keon had no choice but to join the ALP. The major anti-Labor forces simply could not accommodate his populist tendencies and Catholic social theory. Peter Love and Bruce Duncan,

through their respective studies of populism and Catholicism, provide a degree of evidence to sustain this point.

Love has shown that the Labour movement (and its ALP offspring) at the turn of the twentieth century mirrored American and Russian Populist movements on three levels. First, the Labour movement expressed a belief in creating a 'better society'. It proposed to achieve this aim through 'patriotism' and 'democracy'. Secondly, the Labour movement felt an obligation to protect the common individual in society- namely the 'worker'. Thirdly, the Labour movement opposed those who threatened their idea of a 'perfect society'. For those supporting Labor's cause, the British ruling elite were their greatest nemesis. From the evidence provided in Chapter Three, we can see that Keon's populist tendencies fell perfectly inside Love's model in three respects. First, Keon believed that measured support for the countryside and patriotic opposition to Communism would help create a 'perfect society'. Secondly, Keon supported the common individual by trying to better the condition of the productive classes. Thirdly, Keon believed that monopolistic interests threatened this 'perfect society'.

Duncan for his part suggests that the ALP was the only major party which would make allowances for Catholic social teaching during Keon's youth and young manhood. More specifically we saw in Chapter Five how Duncan postulated that Labor offered Catholics the only non-sectarian path to political office. In order to support this contention, O'Farrell's outlining of the plight of the Democratic Party during the 1920 New South Wales State Election was examined. The Party openly announced its total affiliation with Catholic social teachings and was consequently unable to win any parliamentary representation.

Love's and Duncan's collective assertion that the ALP was the only party which could accommodate individuals who subscribed to populist tendencies and Catholic social teachings, was not only proven by Keon's Labor Party membership. This view was given further sustenance when Keon's populist and Catholic-orientated thoughts were compared with the philosophies and policies of the Liberal and Country Parties. It was seen in the populist context that Keon had a different view to the coalition parties in areas related to the productive classes and monopolies. In terms of his Catholic-inspired view of decentralisation, Keon also found himself on incompatible grounds with the coalition forces.

It is obvious that all of the published material that deals with Keon has not fully represented his political principles. It is true that most writers acknowledge that he had some form of affinity with Catholicism and/or anti-Communism. However, even on this score they fail to see that these two streams of Keon's thought contained a number of dimensions. Indeed, Keon's anti-Communism was governed by differing factors which pertained to populist philosophy and Catholic social thought. His Catholicism was also structured around complex guidelines which we defined in 'general' and 'specific' terms. Certainly, Keon's affinity with a sense of populism and Catholic social thought were the main reasons why he could have joined no major political grouping beyond the ALP. The accuracy of all these findings is illustrated further when one considers that Keon's post-parliamentary experience was continually marked by an affiliation with the common man, Catholicism, and the 'Labor' cause.

In the final analysis, it should be noted that Keon was not the only individual who possessed an affinity with such principles. The

formation of the DLP in 1955 and its subsequent presence in Australian political life for nearly twenty years, indicates that Keon was not alone. After all, the DLP prided itself on its support for the common man , it contained many Catholic members, and thought of itself as the 'true' Labor Party. At the same time, however, it is doubtful that any of Keon's comrades demonstrated their affiliation with such principles more regularly or more precisely during their period in public life.

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