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The demand for the teaching of sociology in Australian universities which was heard even before the First World War was part of a wider plea for the introduction of the social sciences into universities whose curricula were still largely centred on nineteenth century English and Scottish models. At the end of the war, history, philosophy and law were still the dominant humanities: there was one chair of economics in the country, three chairs of education, and some recognition of geography. Until the end of the twenties, psychology was taught in departments of philosophy while political science was to be found under history, law or philosophy. But to its early proponents, sociology was not just *one* of the desirable social sciences that they advocated—it was the 'central science' itself, or, as they variously termed it, the 'mother-science' and the 'fundamental science'.

Addressing the 1912 meeting of the Australasian Association for the Advancement of Science, Francis Anderson, professor of logic and mental philosophy at the University of Sydney since 1890, argued the case. Sociology was the science which gave coherence to all other social sciences: just as the fundamental sciences of physics, chemistry and biology could be described as mother sciences embracing and unifying more fragmented areas of knowledge, so sociology was the counterpart in the social sciences. It welded the knowledge of other disciplines into the whole. Anderson explained that economics, for example, was one of the social sciences but it was not sociology:

> it deals with a fragment, and not with the whole. Its results are valid and intelligible only when brought into connection with the larger life of society . . . (Anderson, 1912: 17).

Anderson's view was endorsed by a fellow-professor at Sydney, R. F. Irvine, who held the chair of economics. Recently returned from a tour of North America's universities, Irvine reported, in an address to the Melbourne University Association in 1914, on 'The Place of the Social Sciences in a Modern University'. Sociology, he too believed, was the subject which alone could make sense of that 'one great unity—human experience'. It invaded all territory from which it could get evidence as to the process of human association and social evolution as a whole, In his formulations, Irvine drew on American sociologists, Albion Small and E. A. Ross, quoting from Ross' *Foundations of Sociology:*

> Sociology no longer falls apart into neat segments like a peeled orange. State, law, religion, art, morals, industry, instead of presenting so many parallels of development, are studied rather as different aspects of one social evolution (Irvine, 1914: 18).

Accordingly, sociology was proclaimed the science of society.

The second claim for the new science was its positive, scientific validity. It was to be distinguished from what had earlier passed for social study, from what Anderson called the 'a priori constructions of philosophers' selected to reinforce deduced conclusions. The modern sociology did not have its links with moral ethics but with the scientism of biology, applied psychology and economics, although for Anderson and Irvine, this was not to absolve social science from its humanistic responsibilities. The great tool and underpinning was to be the use of statistics and the analysis of collected social data. Irvine announced that the methodology of sociology would conform to that of all the positive sciences; he defined it as the analysis of data to discover relationships and the evaluation of facts to determine their worth in the dynamics of human progress. As Anderson put it, the

great 'fact' to be explained was society itself: sociology would discover its genesis, its growth and the laws which governed it.

Such assertions about the holism and positivism of sociology were standard in any discourse about the subject but there was a particular programme for the sociological task in the contemporary Australia of these men: the scientific functions of analysis, evaluation and diagnosis were being urged as peculiarly relevant to the young social democracy of Australia. In the decade after Federation, the new commonwealth was the source of great interest to foreign observers such as Albert Métin, Victor Clark and Lord Bryce, to name only a few. The glowing terms 'social laboratory' and 'political and social experiment' were almost invariably used to describe the cycle of social legislation which had characterised the Deakinite new liberalism. The degree of state socialism, étatism, or government intervention in the Australian economy—from the arbitration system to the maternity allowance—was widely perceived as constituting a unique set of social arrangements which now demanded assessment. It appeared on the eve of the First World War that this impulse to progressive reform had exhausted itself but that it had already generated a body of material and a sum of experience which should be amenable to evaluation. The very words 'laboratory' and 'experiment' implied a process that was not taking place—the experiments were not being tested and the results were not being assessed. This language was not simply a random imagery drawn from the physical sciences as a metaphor to describe Australia's social progress. Those who urged evaluation aspired to an accuracy and objectivity—and a predictability—that they believed it possible to achieve in the empirical manipulation of social data. Anderson lamented the neglect of the science of society 'in a country which claims to be a pioneer in the field of social and political practice' (Anderson, 1912: 16) while Irvine argued that 'nothing strikes visiting economists and sociologists so much as the meagerness of investigation and criticism by Australians of their own social evolution' (Irvine, 1914: 8). F. W. Eggleston also noted that Australia was referred to as a laboratory of social experiment but that it had not carefully 'investigated and tabulated the results as to guide its future action' (Eggleston, 1915: 347). The point was made again in 1916 by W. Harrison Moore, professor of law at the University of Melbourne:

> It has been a standing reproach to the Universities of Australia that in a country that is recognised as the greatest laboratory of economic experiment in the world, they have done so little to influence these experiments or to test these results (Melbourne University, 1916).

These observations, commonplace by 1918, were in part a reiteration of Métin's 'socialisme sans doctrines' but it was not an ideology of reform that was being called for so much as a remedying of the gap between social practice and social analysis. It is in this context that the teaching and methods of sociology were deemed essential in Australia.

What these men meant by the scientific investigation of social progress, which they associated with the procedures of sociology, was not at all clearly spelled out. Irvine offered suggestions drawn from American models as the basis of such an activity; it must first of all involve the collection and the organisation of social data. In America he had been impressed by the private and public funding of repositories of data in research bureaux and by the utilisation of such research for community purposes and the formation of public policy. He cited the Social Museum at Harvard and the Capitol Library in Madison, Wisconsin, as two examples of the housing of data on all questions and from all countries. In the collected reports, maps, statistics, newspapers, photographs and so on that were available to experts in such places, one might find out about subjects ranging from experimental town planning in Wurtemburg to the incidence of strikes in Australia. Irvine envisaged, therefore, a sociology that was at the service of social reform. As Australia became involved in war, the aim of reform narrowed more pragmatically to one of 'national efficiency' (Irvine, 1915).

The first person to undertake an explicitly sociological evaluation of Australia's progress was Clarence Hunter Northcott, a student of Francis Anderson, who had gone to Columbia University to work under Franklin H. Giddings. His doctoral thesis, entitled *Australian Social Development* and published in 1918 by Columbia's Faculty of Political Science, was both an attempt to analyse Australia's social experiments and an effort to produce guidelines for continued progress. It was the task of the sociologist, Northcott held, to 'evaluate the ideals and estimate the defects revealed in the development of democracy. In so doing, he unfolds implicitly a program of social efficiency' (Northcott, 1918: 33). His basic assumption was that social forces could be controlled 'towards a consciously realised social end' and that it was the task of the sociologist to discern the positive social forces. In Northcott's terms, the desired end was a more moral social order

characterised by harmony and not by class conflict. In his words,

> In the last resort the creation of social values, consciously recognised and pursued, into which divergent purposes are transmitted, alone can produce social harmony. The enunciation of these values is the work of sociology (Northcott, 1918: 272).

Northcott's basic thesis was that the history of Australian social development was the history of the struggle of a social ideal to manifest itself—that of a progressive social democracy. He began by looking at the conditioning forces of that ideal, the interaction between Australia's immigrant population and the environment. He discovered two mentalities produced in that historical interaction, each associated with region, occupation and the possession of wealth. These broadly translated as 'haves' and 'have-nots', the one derived from a frontier individualism and property-owning, and the other from a collective, urban workforce. Their respective political sympathies found expression in liberal and labour parties, the latter being the bearers of social reform. In the conflict between these two crudely designated classes, Northcott believed that progress had been generated, but he warned that the hitherto productive interplay of forces was now in danger of widening the class cleavage, the result being what he called social inefficiency. Since sociology, as he understood it, was concerned with the 'stimuli that prompt to collective action', it both took the measure of social solidarity and advocated principles and programmes which would promote this. The theory of social inefficiency may have been that of F. H. Giddings but Northcott's practical recommendations at the end of the book were a blend of conservationism, mild industrial democracy and exhortations to the pursuit of industrial efficiency and worker education.

The claims of Northcott's book to any sociological interest lay mainly in his own conception of his task, in the questions he posed and in his attempt to explain progress in terms of groups and classes. As well, his book was based on statistical and legislative materials such as official year books and arbitration reports which Northcott placed as scientific data over against the mere impressionism of travellers' chronicles and the descriptive history that had passed for much of the study of Australia before the war. However, despite the charts of occupation, strikes, wage-rises and the like that raised the status of the work, there was no attempt on Northcott's part to act as primary investigator and to generate his own social data. He remained as part of that secular evangelist tradition which, as Tim Rowse has noted, exalted these sociologists to the position of the 'new moralists' (Rowse, 1978: 43-52).

What was important about Northcott's work, and what may be the most important thing about all of this failed endeavour, was its attention to the contemporaneous. There was an insistence that Australia in its present state must be studied in the light both of the past and the prospects for the future. Sociology at this time was in many ways a word for the study of the contemporary. This point has force only in its historical context—if one looks at the decidedly uncontemporaneous offerings of the universities and if one looks outside them to the world of social criticism and intellectual debate and appreciates its poverty and thinness. The absence of the sort of intellectual life associated with Europe and America was frequently remarked on—the paucity of serious journals, books, free-lance intellectuals, publicists and so on—and the consciousness of this vacuum played a significant part in the plea for sociology as an activity which might fill this gap. This was the particular conviction of the pioneers of the Worker's Educational Association who were the first carriers of a subject called sociology into the universities and out to the public. The nature and fate of the sociology under discussion was inextricably bound up with the ideology and fortunes of the W.E.A. movement in this period, as indeed was the establishment of both economics and economic history in at least three of the six universities: Hobart, Adelaide and Melbourne.

The W.E.A. was an English movement imported into Australia in 1914, following the visit of its founder, Albert Mansbridge. It was founded by Mansbridge in Oxford in 1903 in an effort to unite the university and the worker, the two streams of labour and learning. He intended to bring to the worker a much more intensive and ambitious education than was offered in the conventional extra-mural lectures. Assisted by what J. F. C. Harrison described as a 'whole generation of progressive, socially-minded, Oxford scholars', Mansbridge forged a movement which took shape at a famous Oxford Conference in 1907 (cf. Harrison, 1963; Whitelock, 1974). It decided that worker education would be organised under a Joint Committee composed of representatives of the university and outside delegates from the trade unions and the community groups which were affiliated in the W.E.A. A new pedagogical method was to be their hall-mark: the University Tutorial Class, composed of fifteen to thirty students who pledged themselves to study a subject systematically for three years in weekly lectures and

discussions. In the university, a Director of Tutorial Classes would be appointed to supervise this education but he would also undertake some university work as well. An account of the machinery of this educational scheme does not begin to suggest the missionary fervour which suffused the movement. It spoke of a knowledge 'saturated with the ideal of social service', of the moral uplift and transformation of the worker into the informed citizen who would eschew the class war in favour of the social whole. The leading figures in the English movement besides Mansbridge and other Anglican bishops, were men like R. H. Tawney, Henry Clay, Alfred Zimmern and G. D. H. Cole; they were assisted by a race of diligent W.E.A. secretaries usually drawn from the labour aristocracy. In very brief terms, their ideology could be described as a compound of the co-operative visions of Robert Owen and the Rochdale pioneers, of the social consciousness of the Christian Social Union and of strands of pluralist, anti-Fabian and guild socialist theory. The first Director of Tutorial Classes to be appointed in Australia was Meredith Atkinson who arrived in 1913 to take up his post in the University of Sydney and who, in 1918, became the first self-styled professor of sociology in the University of Melbourne.

Atkinson announced not long after his arrival that he believed Australia's much vaunted social progress to be played out and that politics and the labour movement had little inspiration left. 'Nothing', he declared, 'but the close study of economics and sociology will give Australia the new ideas she so badly needs' (Atkinson, 1915: 28-9). Economics and sociology, along with economic or industrial history, were the basic diet of the W.E.A.'s tutorial classes since this was the knowledge and understanding with which the worker must be equipped to appreciate his origins and the economic forces which determined his present existence. What Atkinson meant by sociology had less to do with the analysis of social data than with the study of social problems. It was his constant assertion that Australia had achieved the highest social standards but had contributed no social theory to the world to account for them. For him the anomalous gap was between progressive social action and the poverty of sociological thought. To remedy the gap, he embarked upon a programme of publication. In 1920 he edited a collection of essays by various social scientists titled *Australia Economic and Political Studies* which he claimed as the first comprehensive and authoritative work on the economic and sociological condition of Australia; its contributors included himself, G. V. Portus, Elton Mayo, W. Harrison Moore, W. Jethro Brown, George Knibbs and Griffith Taylor. Also, under Atkinson's initial editorship, the Federal Council of the W.E.A. began the publication of a series of books between 1919 and 1928 which were intended to overcome the difficulty of the W.E.A. classes in finding material on social, economic and political problems in Australia. There is no doubt that Atkinson saw himself as one of that breed of publicists, social critics and entrepreneurs of ideas, thought to be so scarce in Australia.

There was already some slight beginning of the teaching of sociology in the University of Sydney before Atkinson arrived. Under Francis Anderson, a course called Elements of Sociology was listed in the undergraduate degree in philosophy but after a year it appeared, until 1925, only as an option for a masters degree in philosophy (Zubrzycki, 1970: 1). Anderson maintained that on the prodding of motions passed at the Australasian Association for the Advancement of Science meetings, the University of Sydney had on more than one occasion put a chair of sociology among the 'more immediate needs' of the university but that nothing beyond the passing of resolutions was ever done (Anderson, 1923: 161). Apart from the university's lack of sympathy towards modern studies, the funding of new chairs was an acute problem especially during the war years. Two classes in sociology were, however, included in the first twenty classes of the W.E.A. in 1915. One class was conducted in biology and the other seventeen were in industrial history. Francis Anderson and R. F. Irvine were among the staunchest supporters of the new tutorial class movement and it was one of Anderson's students, Clarence Hunter Northcott, who took the sociology classes prior to his departure for Columbia.

At the University of Melbourne, developments in sociology had been projected in 1912. One of the foundation chairs of the university, held first by W. E. Hearn and then by J. S. Elkington, embraced the fields of modern history, modern literature, logic and political economy. On Elkington's retirement it was proposed to make history into a separate chair and to ask the government for a new one in economics and sociology. Disagreement between the University and the Premier over whether or not an Australian must be appointed to the chair led finally to the collapse of the whole proposal (LaNauze, 1949; Goodwin, 1966: 568-81). A few years later, however, sociology came into the university through the back door of the W.E.A. When, in 1917, the Victorian government decided to fund tutorial classes at Mel-

bourne, Atkinson agreed to take the job of director provided that he was allowed the title of professor and a seat on the professorial board. The W.E.A. had enthusiastic and powerful supporters on the council of the university in the persons of W. Harrison Moore, chairman of the Extension Board, Henry Bournes Higgins and James Barrett, who had actually paid for Mansbridge's tour in 1913. It is clear that Harrison Moore hoped to give a stimulus to the teaching of economics through the tutorial class emphasis on this subject but almost immediately Atkinson appropriated the area of sociology. He was himself an Oxford graduate in education, economics and political science. As soon as he got to Melbourne, he wrote to his fellow-director in the University of Tasmania, Douglas Berry Copland, that Melbourne had taken him to its bosom:

> I have made a start with the establishment of a school of economics and sociology . . I am to take sociology and will probably ultimately take that chair, another man taking economics and commerce.

He went on to elaborate his plans for a future linking of economics and sociology first into a sort of External Faculty of Social Science and then perhaps into a Bureau of Social Science at the Commonwealth level (Atkinson, 1918). In view of later events, it may be that these vain-glorious schemes haunted Copland's mind when he became the other man who took the first chair of economics and commerce at Melbourne in 1925.

Atkinson taught sociology at Melbourne until he resigned in 1922. It was offered as a pass subject in the school of philosophy and then in history and political science; a second year was provided for honours work. About a hundred students were enrolled each year. One of these, W. K. Hancock, immortalised the subject in his autobiography, *Country and Calling*, as the 'mumbo-jumbo that was called sociology'. He recalled it as a mixture of 'second-hand fact, disputable generalisations and a pretentious vocabulary' (Hancock, 1954: 70). This was Hancock looking back in the nineteen fifties, yet there is a case to be made that his own seminal work, *Australia*, owed much to the formulation of problems first encountered in that course. Nevertheless, it is true that in the mélange of history, political philosophy, basic economics or political economy, international relations and moral persuasions that constituted Atkinson's writings—and, one infers, his teaching—it is difficult to discover the 'sociological unity' he claimed for his work. His social theory rested largely on the concept of the ignorant masses which were the legacy of the rise of capitalism and individualist liberalism. They were in his view the poor stuff of a democracy still in its cave-man stage, torn by class cleavage, and managed under perverted notions of the functions of the state. For him the key to the continued evolution of progress and 'the new social order' was the degree to which the base and irrational proclivities of the ordinary citizen could be raised up to the altruistic service of the community. The problem, he proclaimed, was how to 'alter the attitude of mind and the character of the masses' (Atkinson, 1919a: 16). The means of this transformation was to be the 'sociological' education which meant a heavy dose of civics for citizenship and ethics. It was, quite specifically, sociology for social reconstruction—a term that filled the air in 1919. Most of Atkinson's thought was clearly derived from contemporary British and American social and political theory. A memorandum to the Premier of Victoria in 1921 provided a list of the referred reading for Atkinson's W.E.A, sociology course and favoured the government with a synopsis of each book. Among those included were G. Wallas' *Human Nature in Politics*, W. Trotter's *Herd Instincts in Peace and War*, L. T. Hobhouse's *Social Evolution and Political Theory*, Mary P. Follett's *The New State* and A. J. Todd's *Theories of Social Progress* (Atkinson, 1921).

What was revealed in Atkinson's sociology, however, was a set of contemporary preoccupations about society which he did try to work out in their Australian context. He introduced his students to the problematic of democracy itself, a troubling and uncertain phenomenon in the early post-war years in most countries; to the questions of the relation of the worker to industry, of the citizen to politics and the state; and to the problem of where to locate the life of society itself. In Australia, he believed that the reliance of the citizen upon the power and functions of the state was a flawed and distorted basis on which to build a new social order. More than any other people, he maintained, Australians accepted and saw the state as, 'being themselves in social community', supplanting self-help, group life, local activity and the drives of voluntary associations (Atkinson, 1919b: 125). The core idea of the enlivened citizenship to be achieved by education was, in this sense, a sociological one. It was, then, no accident that those attracted to pluralist social theory and sceptical of the 'servile state' of collectivism should be the proponents of the relevance of sociology as a subject which centred on the interaction of social life and

group experience. Not all the intellectuals of the early W.E.A. movement approved Atkinson's social theory with its conservative messages of social cohesion delivered to the workers from self-consciously élitist heights. He was, in fact, an unfortunate prophet for the new sociology because of his personal reputation for self-aggrandisement, financial wheeling and dealing and what appeared to be his bourgeois capitalist sympathies. His early pro-conscription campaigning in 1916 had left unhealed rifts between the W.E.A. and the trade unions while in both universities, Sydney and Melbourne, his departure was followed by an official inquiry into the affairs of his department. It was not always possible to separate the practitioner from his trade.

A diverse array of forty people applied for Atkinson's post in 1922—a testimony, no doubt, to the slimness of academic employment opportunities as much as to the pressing relevance of worker education. The applicants included George Elton Mayo, who left for the United States in the same year to begin his work in industrial psychology; C. H. Northcott, who did not return to Australia but went to Rowntree's in England as a pioneer in industrial management; R. C. Mills, who withdrew to take the chair of economics in Sydney on Irvine's retirement; Herbert Heaton, soon to abandon Adelaide for North America and a long career as economic historian; H. Duncan Hall, who was instead appointed to a chair at Syracuse University and then went to the League of Nations, and D. B. Copland, still in Hobart. The job specified the special importance of economics and industrial history and the responsibility for teaching sociology. All of the applicants had been involved in the W.E.A. movement but only Northcott had any formal training in sociology. The man selected was a scholar in French philosophy from Liverpool, John Alexander Gunn. His education had been in philosophy and classics, his Ph.D. was a study of Bergson and he had been an active W.E.A. tutor for the University of Liverpool in social psychology, economics and economic history—three fields seen as complementary in W.E.A. education. He was recommended by the English committee of A. L. Smith of Balliol and Albert Mansbridge. Copland was the runner-up; he was also the friend and favoured candidate of the powerful W.E.A. secretary in Victoria, S. D. Thompson, with whom Gunn had to work (Melbourne University, 1922).

Gunn immediately identified his sociology as serving 'social progress' which was the title of his inaugural address. It was, he instructed his audience, the positive study of the social groups of mankind with reference to the psychological, physical and biological factors involved in the process of social evolution. Social progress was defined in a familiar way as the strengthening of social solidarity and, in an equally familiar way, the transition was made to sociology as the subject able to preserve the wholeness of social knowledge (Gunn, 1923). The sociologist, according to Gunn, should present society as a complex of four factors: Breed, by which he meant the biological factor, population and family; Livelihood, which was the economic element; Government, which covered the nature and purpose of the state, and Culture, or 'social mentality', which included ideas of citizenship and morality. What Gunn called Breed and Culture were in his theory governed by assumptions based on Darwinian selection and on current psychological theories about intelligence. The 'group mind' was central to this discourse and Gunn drew on the writings of McDougall, Wallas, Le Bon, Tarde, Trotter, and Lippman, who in various ways raised the irrationalist spectre of the herd-crowd which was susceptible to press and demagogue—the same ignorant masses who worried Atkinson. The other two factors, Government and Livelihood, were also to be understood in terms of contemporary group theory: MacIver, Cole, Laski and Follett were cited among others. Gunn projected a four-volume work entitled *Human Society* to deal with each factor but only one, *Livelihood,* appeared in 1927 (Gunn, 1927).

Gunn's sociology course reflected the same organising ideas. It was a compound of political philosophy, rudimentary economic history, social psychology and biology (here to be translated as eugenics). He announced the course as a study of community as the 'expression of life' with R. M. MacIver's book *Community* as the text. Lectures on Comte, Spencer and Darwin put forward the claims of positivism and the notion of social evolution. This was followed by a survey of group organisation from primitive man, through manor and guild and factory system, to present social groupings from the family to the League of Nations. The economic factor was treated next: the rise of industry, the division of labour, trade unions, trusts and the problems of distribution of wealth. Theories of the state from Aristotle to Hegel were then expounded and the nature of sovereignty explored. After a brief discussion of Marx, Sorel and the guild socialists, the final lectures dealt with population quantity and quality, the psychology of the group, comparative religion and the influence of the press. Besides MacIver's works, the main reading was to be Hobhouse, Tawney's *Acquisitive Society*, Hetherington and Muir-

head's *Social Purpose*, Jenks' *State and The Nation* and Barker's *Political Thought from Spencer to Today*. Essays were to be presented by students on either industrialisation or womanhood and the ethics of feminism, which was part of the study of sex and the family. The honours year was an intensive study of political theory devoted again to the nature, purpose and organisation of the state. The last term of the course testified to Gunn's belief that the progressive society must be concerned about the quality of its population. Complete with the scientific paraphernalia of tables and equations, a course in eugenics was offered pondering the urgency of such matters as the propagation of the unfit, the havoc of venereal disease, the evils of prostitution and alcoholism, the threat of mental deficiency (Harper, 1925). Gunn was not alone in his enthusiasm for eugenics in the twenties; study circles proliferating in the W.E.A. reflected the general interest and the shift that was taking place away from the old economics and industrial history diet to the new social psychology. With Gunn, a new element entered the teaching of sociology in the identification of social progress with better breeding and higher intelligence. Eugenics was as important as education.

The claims for the legitimacy of sociology in the arguments of Anderson, Irvine, Northcott, Atkinson and Gunn had all rested heavily on the interdisciplinary nature of the subject. Each had asserted its organic wholeness absorbing the insights of other social sciences. But as the professionalisation and the specialisation of those other sciences became more advanced, Gunn's sociology incurred the charges of being superficial and old-fashioned. The old accepted nexus between sociology and economics came under particular fire when Copland began the new highly professional school of economics and commerce in 1925. Copland was a technical economist, an exponent to business and governments of the scientific accuracy of his discipline. When he moved to Melbourne, he became very active in the promotion of the teaching of social sciences and its uses in government and social and economic planning. To Copland, the social sciences were discrete, empirical and trustworthy—with the exception of sociology which he believed to be eclectic and amorphous. His attitude to sociology at Melbourne was further coloured by a deep personal animosity to Gunn, which he shared with his friend, S. D. Thompson, the Victorian secretary of the W.E.A. One of Atkinson's legacies at Melbourne had been an internecine war between Thompson and the W.E.A. on the one hand and Gunn and the university on the other. It was in essence a struggle over who should run the extension programme of the university. Because of Atkinson's neglect of duties, Thompson had effectively become the university's executive officer in these matters, a situation that was not acceptable to Gunn nor to the university. In two inquiries into the affair, in 1924 and 1926, Gunn was vindicated and the power of the W.E.A. was limited. As a member of the Federal Council of the W.E.A., Copland was very involved in the infighting and supported Thompson, even against the cooler judgement of other W.E.A. colleagues, J. B. Brigden, G. V. Portus and F. A. Bland.

During this time, efforts were being made to strengthen other social sciences. The newly formed Australasian Association for Psychology and Philosophy urged developments in psychology and the foundation of departments of social science in each university (Melbourne University, 1925a). In 1925, under the chairmanship of A. Boyce Gibson, professor of philosophy, the University of Melbourne set up a committee to consider the viability of these motions. Gunn argued the need for a chair of sociology in the following terms:

> The existence of a professorship of Sociology (or Civics, Social Science, Social Philosophy, or Political Science, the choice of name is not a vital matter) would raise the standard and status of this important subject not only in the University but in the community and appears a necessary step to the attainment of that informed citizenship which is necessary in our democracy (Melbourne University, 1925b).

The dilemma about the name of the subject—which perfectly encapsulated Copland's objections to it—did not last long. Within the month the chairman of the professorial board made it clear that there was no hope of any chair and even hoped to avoid the costs of circulating Boyce Gibson's report to the thirty members of the board.

The publication of Gunn's economic text, *Livelihood*, in 1927 did nothing to advance his reputation. He maintained in the book that the status of sociology as the social science par excellence cast no reflections upon economics. Sociology took under its purview the whole of society while economics dealt only with wealth and livelihood in the light of statistics. His own attempt to handle this fragment of human experience drew scornful appraisal from economists. Reviewers in *Economic Journal*, *American Economic Review* and even the W.E.A.'s own journal *Australian Highway* concluded that the book was useless, elementary, out-of-date, poorly organised, ill-balanced, care-

lessly written and badly punctuated. However, H. Sanderson Furniss pointed to Gunn's real problem, in remarking that economics had now reached the stage where it was doubtful if the whole ground of economics could be satisfactorily covered in a small text (Heaton, 1927; Sanderson Furniss, 1927; Bland, 1927). By 1927 there was a substantial amount of pioneering research complete on Australian economic problems, a body of work which did not exist when Atkinson began his course in 1918. Gunn could list, for example, Sutcliffe's *The National Dividend in Australia*, Copland's *Commerce and Business* and *Monetary Policy and Its Application to Australia*. Mills and Benham's *Principles of Money, Banking and Foreign Exchange Applied to Australia*, Brigden's *Employment Relations* and *The Basic Wage* and Mills' *Taxation in Australia*. It was clearly galling to Copland that Gunn should presume to include amateur economics in sociology teaching, and, indeed, bring the subject into disrepute in his writing. Copland was not in favour of the amalgamation of economics into a department of social sciences as envisaged by Gunn. He believed such a department would encroach on the domain of the separate disciplines—the very antithesis of the holistic argument. Moreover, he warned of intellectual danger in such schemes;

> this tendency to treat the social aspect of a problem before its economic basis has been thoroughly examined would be encouraged (Melbourne University, 1925c).

It was, in fact, Copland who became the entrepreneur of the social sciences in their early phase in Australia. In 1926, he went abroad for the first time as the representative of the Laura Spelman Rockefeller Foundation which was keen to promote the social sciences in Australia by offering fellowships abroad. Copland was to make a study tour of the scheme in England, Europe and North America, a similar venture to Irvine's, thirteen years before. His task was to collect information and to discuss the problems in the organisation of social science studies overseas, with a view to making recommendations on their development in Australia. One of the areas in which he took particular interest at each port of call was the status of sociology. He wrote back to G. L. Wood, his deputy in economics at Melbourne, that MacIver himself had little time for the vagueness of sociology although he was well disposed to the social sciences; at Yale he reported that he had 'a little more light thrown on the sociology problem' while at Birmingham his doubts were further confirmed:

> I found here as elsewhere great scepticism about sociology and it is clear that some reconsideration must be given to the situation in Melbourne. No doubt I shall have a plan on my return (Copland, 1926).

His return coincided with the university inquiry into the W.E.A. affair when Gunn was reappointed and sociology therefore remained intact. Copland's report on his tour and his recommendations on the social sciences suggested that sociology not be an undergraduate subject because of its vagueness. Other social sciences provided, he believed, sufficient effective synthesis (Copland, 1927: 33, 36).

The dénouement occurred the following year, however, when the requirements for a new honours school of economics within the Faculty of Arts were being worked out. This course was to be under Copland's jurisdiction from the Faculty of Commerce and he emerged as the convenor of a committee of the Faculty of Arts inquiring into the future of sociology in relation to economics, philosophy and a course called modern political institutions. The report concluded that the actual teaching in sociology did not 'correspond with the present title of the subject'—without specifying what that might mean. It recommended that sociology be dismantled and the content of the course be reorganised into three new subjects: political philosophy, which was to cover the history of political thought and be grouped in the philosophy school; constitutional history and international relations to be taken in the history school; and modern political institutions which would be an evening course combining constitutional law and political science (Melbourne University, 1929). Gunn's two former tutors, W. Macmahon Ball and P. D. Phillips, were to be in charge of the new subjects while Gunn, no longer having a field to profess, was relegated to his extension teaching and ad hoc work in sundry departments such as education, philosophy and French. The changes came into effect in 1928, and by 1929 Copland wrote of Macmahon Ball's work to G. V. Portus:

> he has lifted the subject (sociology) on to a decent academic plane. He turned it from a flotsam and jetsam of everything into a well-coordinated study of the history of Political Philosophy (Copland, 1929).

In this instance, at the University of Melbourne, sociology clearly had a 'personal' history in the characters of these protagonists which hindered its permanent rooting. Both Atkinson and Gunn made enemies quickly even among their W.E.A. colleagues. But this does not adequately explain the ultimate failure of the subject in this period, nor why, as Warren Osmond perceptively asked, it left almost no

direct progeny (Osmond, 1972). The problem went deeper into the very nature of the subject as it was then conceived and understood, and beyond that, to the condition of Australian intellectual life itself. Sociology was viable when Anderson proposed it and when Atkinson introduced it precisely because the questions it raised and the contemporary nature of its concerns were not being studied coherently in the universities, but, as this changed with the increasing professionalisation of other social sciences, it became more difficult to make out a case for what was distinctive or indispensable in that sociology. There was no practice of the social measurement in which Anderson, Irvine and others had proclaimed so much faith. Gunn was not ignorant of empirical sociology—he alluded to plans for a university settlement house where the applied study of social problems might take place (Gunn, 1923: 15)—but nothing was done towards this sort of inquiry. There were, for example, no social surveys such as those associated in England with Charles Booth or Seebohm Rowntree or the Blue Books. Except for the reports of the Bureau of Census and Statistics, and perhaps for evidence given before Royal Commissions, the data for social analysis and reform remained uncollected. And, if there was no methodology or research to identify the specific nature of the field, there was also no legitimacy deriving from any inheritance from the classical European tradition of sociology, of LePlay, Durkheim or Weber. Early sociologists in Australia were much more indebted to British liberal social theory.

Osmond suggests that the demise of sociology needs to be placed in a wider context, maintaining that it was part of a broader cultural shift in Australia after the First World War. The nature of such a shift remains as yet undelineated since so little is known about the intellectual and cultural history of these years, although the triumph of political and academic conservatism in the twenties is commonly assumed. Certainly, beyond the conflict of powerful and hapless personalities and the problems of definition inherent in the subject, the failure of sociology to take root may also have been due to its failure to speak to the realities of Australian political and social life in the way that, for example, economics was able to. The pluralist emphasis of Atkinson and Gunn's sociology endorsed the devolution of authority—political, economic and industrial—and stressed the vitality and autonomy of groups, yet the dominant political culture in Australia valued none of this. In the étatist, over-governed and centralising Australia of these years and after, the theory of this sociology would have had as little bite as the appeals of the W.E.A. intellectuals urging the trade unionists to embrace moral citizenship. On the other hand, the economics of D. B. Copland and his colleagues achieved their ascendancy in the social sciences and in the national life because they did serve the existing and growing needs of central government. As John La Nauze has pointed out,

> the first generation of teachers of Economics and the later generation of their students came to play a part in Australian thought, administration and policy which—whatever his verdict on it may be—no Australian historian of the period can ignore (La Nauze, 1949: 22).

It is perhaps fitting to conclude the story with the sad figure of John Alexander Gunn. He became an increasing embarrassment to the university in the thirties, making claims to chairs of philosophy and psychology, growing more and more obsessed with the W.E.A. and finally unable to perform his duties at all. A further inquiry in 1937 terminated his appointment and the post of Director of Extension was given to C. R. Badger. Badger was to have neither the title of professor nor a seat on the professorial board, thus finally revoking the grandeur of Meredith Atkinson and annulling to this day the remnants of the bond between the university, the W.E.A. and the 'mother-science'. Gunn died destitute in an old people's home in St. Kilda in May 1975. The University of Melbourne paid for the funeral (Badger, 1975).

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