

The Church in Springtime

Remembering Catholic Action 1940–1965

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These transcriptions have been typed from the recordings of interviews. I cannot guarantee their complete accuracy because of the possibility of mishearing and occasional difficulties in identifying speakers. I have deleted those repetitions and hesitations that are not necessary for meaning.

The interviews, from which these transcriptions have been made, constitute an oral archive deposited in the Melbourne College of Divinity Research Repository. Readers are urged to listen to the contributors' voices, which give added vitality to their words.

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Preface

This project was undertaken to record the voices of those who remember the heyday of Catholic Action in Australia. It comprises an archive of interviews with eleven people who describe the sources of their ideas and their organisations, including their activities, formation and education, and the legacies of that period for the Church and the society. These eleven people describe the excitement and energy that propelled them or their parents into action and the ideas, people and movements that nourished them or their parents during this heady period. They focus on key Catholic Action and associated movements of these years, in particular, the Campion Society, the Australian National Secretariat for Catholic Action, the National Catholic Rural Movement, the Young Christian Workers, the Catholic Worker, Cripac Press, the Newman Society and the Adult Christian Workers Movement.

While the activities of the Catholic Social Studies Movement and its successor, the National Civic Council led by Mr B. A. (Bob) Santamaria, loom large in these interviews, all voice misgivings about these activities. Some describe their efforts to undermine the National Civic Council, strengthen the Australian Labor Party, set up cooperative building societies and adult education and utopian communities, and promote social justice in the Church and in the society.

Interviews were conducted between March 2009 and November 2010. All of those approached were keen to talk about this period on the record, thereby broadening the sources of information about this period. Some of those interviewed have written or are writing their memoirs for publication and had shaped their stories into lucid and reflective narratives. Others were surprised that there was interest in the period and the parts that they or their relatives had played in Catholic Action but they proved to be willing talkers. Urgency was given to this project as the ages of those interviewed ranged from ninety to sixty-three years. Two of them, Fr Cyril Hally and James Griffin, both died in 2010.

At the outset, it was intended to make this research available as an oral archive. This has been done and is the primary source, enabling those consulting it to engage with these evocative voices. However, it became evident that transcriptions would make these accounts more accessible both to scholars and to casual readers. The transcriptions form the basis of this volume. Necessary explanations are shown in brackets, as are key prompts,

questions and comments. Some contributions have been shortened to ensure the coherency of the set.

No attempt has been made to compare the reflections of those represented in this archive with the public record. Rather this work seeks to provide a record of what those involved remember of their or their relatives' activities during that period. Those who were writing or had written their own accounts of these years had conducted often exhaustive research, some of which challenged their own memories and those of others involved. The narratives recorded here, therefore, offer opportunities for further research and reflection.

Further, the archive reveals quite diverse views about the personalities and attributes of some of the key actors. What a son or daughter sees as a parental failing could be cited as a strength by peers, for example, but the family portraits that emerge of these leaders are generally warm, respectful and often humorous. Some dominant personalities, for example, Mr B. A. Santamaria and some bishops, elicit more varied responses but the record is singularly lacking in spleen. Interviewees focus on actions and their effects rather than character defects and shortcomings.

Contributors

Interviews are presented in roughly chronological order of the formation of the various Catholic Action movements. The earliest Catholic movement recalled was the *Campion Society*, which dates from the early 1930s. The Australian National Secretariat for Catholic Action was set up by the bishops following the Eucharistic Congress in 1934 and the *Catholic Worker* emerged in 1936. The official Catholic Action movements, that is, those with episcopal mandates, included the National Catholic Rural Movement, the Young Christian Workers movement, initially for young men, and its counterpart, the National Catholic Girls Movement, started in Belgium by Cardinal Cardijn and introduced into some Australian dioceses in 1941, the Young Christian Students, for school students, and the Catholic Workers Movement, which operated briefly in Ballarat. The Catholic Social Studies Movement, 'The Movement', was apparently founded in 1941 by Mr Santamaria. Following the ruling by the Vatican in 1957, he founded the National Civic Council as a non-Church organisation.

The interviewees discuss the following matters:

- Paul Maher describes his father Frank Maher's involvement in the Campion Society and in the Australian National Secretariat for Catholic Action, which he initially directed until supplanted by B.A. Santamaria.
- Max Charlesworth discusses the influence of English writers on Frank Maher and the Campion Society, the condemnation of Pope Leo XIII of both capitalism and Communism, Distributism, the origins of the widespread fear of Communism and his own involvement in the *Catholic Worker*, including his memories of Mr Santamaria and Archbishop Mannix.
- Jack Keating recalls his father Frank Keating's days in the Campion Society and his years as the full-time manager of the *Catholic Worker*. He describes Frank's extensive networks of influence, which centred on opposition to the Movement and his promotion of social justice through cooperative building societies and generous good works.
- Marilyn Puglisi's father, Gerard Heffey, a founding member of the Campion Society and the *Catholic Worker*, was shaped by European, rather than Irish, influences. She describes his joy in studying history and law at Melbourne University and Newman College; his scepticism about the Communist threat and the bizarre consequences of the family's opposition to the Movement; his setting up numerous cooperative housing societies; and his family, friendships and values. She discusses Gerard's relationship with his brother, Fr John Heffey, a legendary priest whom she accompanied on his visits to Whitlands and other utopian settlements and whose final years were spent farming apples in Tasmania.
- Arthur Hayes describes his life growing up in a large family in Kyneton, headed by his father, Tom Hayes. He tells how his father gave unquestioning support to the Church, B. A. Santamaria, the Movement and living off the land. He describes his father's involvement in the Rural Movement and its precarious community at Maryknoll and the ideology of unquestioning obedience, then common in schools and the Church.
- Cyril Hally recalls his days in the seminary and his subsequent life as a Columban priest. His championing of the role of the laity, the Young Christian Workers and Catholic Action were criticised by some of his colleagues and he was called a traitor for his opposition to the Movement. He describes the bitterness and ill-feeling

between various Catholic groups and his memories of their leaders. His description of his childhood in New Zealand is also on record.

- Jim Griffin describes his active involvement with the *Catholic Worker* and its leadership dating from 1957. He recalls its operations, policies and the key personalities involved; the *Worker's* expose of the Movement; and the disastrous consequences of Archbishop Mannix's boycott of it. He discusses the influence of Archbishop Mannix, Archbishop Simonds, Frank Maher, Herbert Evatt and B.A. Santamaria.
- David McKenna joined the Newman Society of Victoria at Melbourne University in 1957 and describes its significance, personalities, links with the YCW and conflict between it and the Movement. He discusses the intellectual basis of the Campion Society and its shortcomings. He recalls his own decision to join the Australian Labor Party and reform it as a member of the Participants in order to fight the Movement and the Democratic Labor Party in Victoria.
- John Molony analyses Catholic Action from his early days in the seminary, studying and working in Rome, other parts of Europe, the United States and as a priest in Ballarat. He describes Catholic Action in the diocese and establishing a Catholic Action movement and a publishing arm, Cripac Press. He recalls his earliest contact with B.A. Santamaria, his experience of betrayal and their abrupt and acrimonious end of contact after a conference at La Verna, Kew. His deep unease and anguish continue to this day.
- Kevin Peoples describes his early days as a member of the Young Christian Workers in Terang and his contacts with key leaders, including John Molony and Jim Ross, and the enduring formation and values it gave him. He describes working as a highly successful fundraiser for the National Catholic Rural Movement, and hence the National Civic Council; his contacts with B. A. Santamaria and the executive; the operations of the National Catholic Rural Movement; and his growing unease with its purpose. At the conference held at La Verna to consider these matters, notions of reform were scotched and he describes how he resigned to go to Ballarat and join the fledgling adult Catholic Action movement there, which closed the following week. He discusses the end of the Rural Movement and the legacy of that period.
- Jim Ross describes the operations of the Young Christian Workers and his work as a State and national leader, which included hitchhiking around Victoria setting up groups. He analyses the enquiry method of formation and the differences between

the Movement and the YCW. He recalls the enormous crowds that attended the Catholic Social Week in Ballarat and the subsequent founding of Cripac Press. He describes attending the La Verna conference and his resolve to undermine the National Civic Council in revenge for the abrupt termination of their mandate for adult Catholic Action. He describes the inventive methods he used as an organiser within the National Civic Council to siphon off the Movement's money and members until discovery lead to a career change.

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The participants in this project gave generously of their time and themselves. I am grateful to them all, for their willingness to be part of an enduring archive and for the suggestions that they made for including others in it. Whilst some of these have been taken up in this work, others may yet appear in a subsequent project.

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Helen Praetz

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1 Frank Maher

Paul Maher, interviewed 17 April 2009

Paul Maher's memories of his father, Frank Maher

I was born in 1937 and have no memories of my father in the mid 1940s except that he was a very poor leg break bowler down the front drive. I remember being called Frank Maher's son at Burke Hall sports day, the egg and spoon race, when there were ten in a line. The whistle was blown and nine of them took off and the tenth was me who was looking around and someone said, 'That's got to be Frank Maher's child'. So Frank was a bit like that although the photos of him as a young man show that he looked and behaved fairly confidently because he organised the Campion Society, though it's not clear whether he was the front man or whether there were tougher guys in the background.

My memories date from when I had nearly finished at Xavier. Before then, Frank had a failed legal practice – he was not meant to be a lawyer – though he would tell wonderful stories about how his clients would react. Frank had lots of friends from the Campion Society which was one of those ideal groups in the early days, good company, leading good lives and following admirable professional careers and being involved in the Movement or whatever.

It was something to be Frank Maher's son. People admired him but I cannot remember him as a personality until much later when he was clearly a sad man. The family has always assumed this was because of Bob (Santamaria) elbowing Frank out of the Catholic Action organisation. I would imagine that Frank would not have been a good director with his hand on the tiller – he was more of the writer in the background. But he was an initiator in the beginning – Bob was only 17 at that time. The family theory was that Frank was doing the job all right but not in the way that Bob would have liked it done. Bob actively manoeuvred, with Mannix's help, to get Frank out of the position and he never really had a job after that. He was probably a compliant man and he accepted the result rather than white-anting Bob. I was too young and too immature to remember much of that.

Campion Society (CS)

The CS was the first stirring of a group that had come up through the Brothers – scholarship boys who became apostles for a modern kind of Catholic and breaking away from the Irish

tradition. I am not sure the genesis of the CS because there were people from all walks of life, not just Newman College people. People like the Keoghs and good parishioners who got caught up with highly intelligent intellectuals. Denys Jackson didn't know what day of the week it was but he could recite large slabs of Marx or Chinese art.

There were two groups: the university-trained, and the good Catholics persuaded by others, often with close family relationships and with some parish priests on the side. Frank was right in there at the beginning and he used to talk at the Yarra Bank but I am unsure of the actual genesis of the CS. I have read around this area but I cannot remember any seminal movement when ten people sat down.

Rural movements

Frank was aware of cooperatives in Spain and France but the CS members would have been the last people to have been involved. It was a Chester–Belloc time, the classic English intellectuals, but they were disastrous at hands-on. The Catholic Rural Movement was disastrous. I cannot think of a single source (of inspiration).

All the members had left school at about the same time, in the late 1920s or early 1930s. Newman College must have been a big part of it. Murray McInerney was there, Frank, Val Adami. They were not in the YCW.

I was the firstborn of the children of the group and hence my second name is Campion and I was christened with a glass of beer. My sister, Pip, has written a family history, starting with our great grandfather who settled in Albury, but it focuses on the family. My other sister Megs (Margaret) could be informative as she spent her life looking after Frank.

Frank was installed as director and became secretary of Catholic Action but when I was interested enough and sensible enough to listen to Frank the whole thing was a disaster so some of my information is from reading. When I was growing up there was a flow of friends around – Denys Jackson, Murray McInerney and so on – once or twice a week. I was put in the room, this was supposed to be part of my education, and I was interested enough not to go out again, especially with people like (Fr) Hackett. So I heard all the talk and the gossip but I was a boy of 12 or 13 so I had no sense of history.

At Newman, they (the CS) got together with St Kevin's and there was an alliance with Bob (Santamaria) and it became a big group. There is a photo of five or six Campions having a retreat in the hills: Frank, Val Adami, a judge, Damian Knowles. They had gone up for

sessions. So the group was flourishing and they all had two or three children in the early 1940s.

Catholic Action and Santamaria

Frank was the only one employed in Catholic Action. In the early days, I am not sure if Bob Santamaria was being paid, but they had rooms in Collins Street. Bob got along well with Mannix. Frank was a reflective person, not an organiser, so Bob took over, the mover and shaker. Bob claimed later in his book that he had not asked to be made director but I think he sounded as though he was covering his tracks. Frank was appointed to peripheral positions but he was still being paid. Something happened. He chose to go to investigate rural movements, perhaps cooperatives and Catholic Action. He had the terribly sad experience of going to England with few contacts, who turned out not to be much help, and he lost his position in Melbourne and there was no money. And any ideas that he saw in Europe all come to nothing.

Later life

Then he came back and gave it all away and got into teaching. Teaching suited him – he was a natural – but he couldn't control a class. Ten students would be interested and ten not, so discipline was not good but he was like Mr Chips to a lot of them. He was a hopeless practising solicitor but the family interpretation is that he was not like that until his fall from that position – when he became Mr Chips. He was not bitter but he was crushed. Marilyn Heffey knows more of this story. He never said a bad word about Bob but he had the stuffing knocked out of him. He died aged 82 or 83. He was always very discreet but unburdened himself to Margaret.

2 Max Charlesworth

Interviewed 20 March 2009

I was born in 1925 and joined the Campion Society just after the end of the war, in 1944–45. The founding fathers, people like Frank Maher, Murray McInerney and Xavier Connor, all lawyers, were moving on, contemplating their legal personae and making lots of money. I had heard of Chesterton and Belloc but none of them, in the group that I was in, was terribly keen about the Chester–Belloc phenomenon.

Distributism

Frank Maher was very influenced by an English scholar at Oxford, Christopher Dawson, and they had heard the word 'distributism'. I think that Santamaria, in his own quaint way, was very interested in it but crossed it with a theocratic society, taking over the Shop (Melbourne University) and putting everyone to rights. I am not very hopeful about distributism but when I googled I came across the Catholic critique of capitalism. People forget now that in the great encyclicals of Pope Leo XIII, Communism got the works but equally capitalism got the works. Two errors, as it were, needed to be counteracted. Everyone got on the anti-Communist bandwagon but no-one got on the anti-capitalism bandwagon. Capitalism suddenly became very holy and no-one could touch it. This was largely connected up with the sociological journey of Catholics. I was the first Catholic at Melbourne University to do philosophy. All those other people had done law and a few had done medicine. Very few people mentioned here [*looks through pages*].

A lot of people were put off by the name 'distributism' because it was very difficult to explain what it was. Distributive justice is concerned with what society owes to individual people; it has to treat them fairly in all sorts of ways. Human rights were very little talked about at that time.

Anti-Communism

The anti-Communist thing was very strong at that time and quite decent people, like Arthur Calwell, got mangled by it. Every time he appeared at his parish church in Essendon he was cold shouldered. No-one ever refused him the sacraments but the priest would give his sermon especially for him. He was a very simple Catholic and deeply wounded by this.

Mannix, despite his vices, had many virtues and being courteous was one of them. He would never have said the things that Santamaria said of fellow Catholics and in a very sneaky way. A couple of times I found rumours going around about myself and I just rang up Bob and said, 'Call your boys off'. For example, I was appointed by the Victorian Government to chair the Year of Peace which was to hand out a bit of money to people (for promoting peace) and that got a very bad press with Santamaria's people. 'That's just what we'd have expected from that bastard. He's always been a crypto-Communist and now he is coming out with it!' It was quite eerie, as though to speak about peace was somehow wrong. When I rang up, Bob said, 'It's a big organisation and I can't control what some hotheads say but let me assure you of my undying esteem and affection'.

Santamaria

Santamaria was in the Catholic Worker (CW) group – he was a founding father. He was an intriguing guy. On the one hand he was a Sicilian bandit and said that this would be good for you. But he was very imaginative. He wrote almost all the social justice statements of the bishops and the best of them are brilliant. At the time we all thought they were valuable stuff. Santamaria was heavily influenced for the bad by a Catholic lobby in Italy, founded and supported by the Pope and bishops. The YCW had a charismatic leader in Fr Lombard and he just said, 'No', as did a lot of other clergy who disagreed with what was going on.

Every time people start on Santamaria, I tell them that it is easy to characterise him as a diabolical liar but there's more to him than that. Even his famous theory that he first ventilated in the Indian newspaper, the *Calcutta Times* was it? was a clever re-working of what one thought was a medieval term that came to be condemned by every right-thinking clergyman at that time. Given the disarray of the Labor Party at that time, Santamaria thought that here was a golden opportunity to take over. So I think Bruce Duncan's book is absolutely right. The Sydney people, for base motives, went the right way. They had no trust in the laity.

I found that, after Mannix converted to the Santamaria side, things changed. We at the CW would go to pay Mannix an *ad limina* visit every year. Mannix was always terribly courteous and he would congratulate us: 'The style of that paper is second to none', leaving it unclear about the content. So Mannix said, 'I ought to ban you but I haven't banned anything in my whole life.' But Bishop Fox did the job for him. There was an attempt to take over the Newman Society and John Cowburn SJ waxes lyrical about that.

Rural cooperatives

These had no impact and were a romantic gesture. The only person I knew who was involved was Ray Triado at Whitlands and that was all about Ray. He left to get married and it folded up. The Gladysdale lot were different. There's been nothing coming out about rural cooperatives or Catholics for peace from the bishops in 40 to 50 years. There's none of that. Santamaria supported the regime in Vietnam and invited Diem to pay a visit here.

The Spanish Civil War

The CW people were happy about Franco – it was romantic, what happened in the Spanish soul. Ray Triado and some others saw the war reflected the fight between good and evil and then became anti-Communists.

The *Catholic Worker* (CW)

The CW was not a unified body and some were outspoken DLP supporters. Vin Buckley imported Brian Buckley and a couple of others and they were a restraining influence on the CW. There was a belief that the Communist threat was real and that the CW was being soft about it. I knew a number of chaps in the Communist Party and they were incapable of plotting anything. They were not terribly intelligent, but charming chaps and I couldn't see how 20 or 30 of these could do much. There were about 3000 to 4000 members of the Communist Party at the time but [it was seen as] the smaller the better, a small clique of people, like rats in a corner, who could dominate the world. I would remonstrate with Dr Knopfelmacher who was immensely attracted to the Movement thing and thought that the CW was pussy-footing around. Knopfelmacher had an enormous influence on Vin and Brian Buckley as he'd say, 'You may know about this, but let me tell you that ...' I always had confidence in my own worth and had a few set to's with Vin and finally gave up talking because Vin announced to all and sundry that he was supporting the DLP.

Catholic Action

Frank Maher was shunted aside and given the Catholic Action job but the bishops insisted that you had to have a mandate. People would ask you if you had one. The laity, the so-called intellectuals, were all by grace and favour of the bishops.

Clergy

Priest supporters of the CW were few and far between. The average parish priest was totally confused by what was happening and didn't want to get involved. The debate on the role of the church and the state is continuing with Kevin Rudd discussing the role of religion on the body politic. There were mad Jesuits, Fr Smith and Fr Fahey, going around. (Bishop) Eric Darcy, who became chaplain to the National Civic Council, had earlier written a good thesis on conscience, which came out at the time that the Second Vatican Council was starting up and it was taken up by the radicals and used for their own purposes. Eric got a fright and backed off.

3 Frank Keating

Jack Keating, interviewed 8 September 2010

Jack Keating's memories of his father, Frank Keating

My father, Frank Keating, died in 1971 at 64 so he was born in 1907. He was your typical Irish Catholic; a male of that era; family variously from Melbourne and the goldfields areas and Kyneton where his father owned a pub for a while. He was very Catholic and he was a boilermaker and worked for the railways in the Newport railyards and I think that he was probably quite bright. He was forced out of school by family circumstances and he was certainly very literary; he read hugely.

He had three interests. Sport: he played footy and cricket in the Carlton Seconds (for both), and boxing, which was legitimate in that era. The Church – not the Church as such. He wasn't a holy-roller type. He had a healthy cynicism about priests, which his experience of the Split honed quite finely. And also the Trade Unions or Labour Movement, though of course the two jelled a bit, though not totally, through the Campion Society (CS) which was a big influence on his life.

An anomaly

[How did he come to join the Campion Society?] He was an exception and he always stood out, not only in the CS but in the *Catholic Worker* (CW). I don't know but I assume that it was through Gerard [Heffey] that Frank got involved in the CS. His stepmother was a Heffey, Gerard Heffey's aunt. Frank appears in Colin Jory's book on the CS and I am pretty sure that was it. But Frank independently had strong associations with a lot of Labor pollies, particularly Arthur Calwell who was a close friend. Arthur used to ring, during the 1950s and early 1960s, three to four times a week, because we kids used to answer (and he'd say), 'Arthur Calwell here'.

The *Catholic Worker* (CW)

After the war, Frank took over as full-time manager of the CW. There was an editorial board, and whether he wrote I don't know. He probably wrote newsy sort of stuff for the CW. He gave up being a boilermaker. His exact start date at the CW I don't know but he finished in 1954–55 when the Split occurred and the CW attacked Santamaria and the Movement and

the rest followed. So Frank was out of a job and he was ill – I think he had a stroke – and then he got the cooperative housing society. Heffey was the secretary and subsequently Tony Harrold.

My memories (I was still quite small in the late 1950s and early 1960s) were that they would gather in Frank's office in the city most lunchtimes, 'they' being John Ryan from Melbourne University, Tony Harrold and John Coleman, the main ones. Others involved in that period were Max Charlesworth and Paul Ormonde. Some of the older ones, McInerney, Butler and Heffey, had drifted away by then. Jim Griffin would occasionally come in though it was more difficult for him as he was teaching at Xavier. But they'd come in most lunch times and discuss the state of the world. It was a great life.

Friendship with Arthur Calwell

[How did they become friends?] We can go back to the period of the 1930s. What was Arthur's union affiliation, if there was one? Was that it? Or a school one for that matter? They went to school at St Joseph's, North Melbourne, as did Santamaria for that matter, but Santamaria was much younger than Frank and they would not have been there together. Their association (Frank's and Santamaria's) was suburban (the Catholic Church), the CS and the Carlton Football Club. Frank played football and they used to get him into the players' rooms after the games when he was a teenager, but his exact connection I don't know. He was obviously mixed up with the Groupers and I guess that it was a quasi-organic thing.

The Groupers

There were groups of Catholics of like minds who were trying to organise the numbers in the union elections; and Frank claimed that the idea of using the Catholic church as a basis for organising the Groupers was Calwell's idea and that he prevailed on Frank to do so. If you think about it, it could well be right. The CS was mainly graduate lawyers or student lawyers or students and their links to the labour movement would have been pretty weak so Frank provided a bridge in that regard. Frank was quite emphatic about it and repeated it many times that he started the idea on Calwell's prompting, so whether it started from there I don't know.

If you go to the period after the Split, what they would have shared in common was an old friendship; Catholics put upon by significant elements of the Church, sometimes in a nasty manner, and just the general situation of the Labor Party being out of office for a long time,

particularly in Victoria. Frank's Labor Party membership also lapsed because I remember when I joined up I joined up with Frank and I would have been about 17, which takes us through to 1964 when I joined, so Frank probably lapsed due to illness. But he was sort of secretive – a generational thing. I never knew how old he was; ditto my mother.

When I asked him about the Movement he would have hushed tones. Paul Ormonde in his book on the Movement has several hours of tapes with Frank and this never came up. I remember saying to Paul that Frank claimed that the idea of using the infrastructure of the Catholic Church, of spotting Catholic trade union members and going to them and putting upon them to help organise the Groupers, that idea was Calwell's and he (Frank) actually kicked it off. When I told Paul that, he said, 'He never told me that!' Frank was ashamed of it, I think. It had caused so much pain and damage. Bruce Duncan would say, in the conversations that I have had with him, that it led to the Split, which we know occurred in Victoria and kept Labor out of government in Victoria and federally for a long time.

Frank's wife

The reason I mention it is that it was validated more coherently by my mother, Margaret Mary Keenan. She was of different stock; a bit of the gentry in her even though they were poor. My father was more working class in his origins: she came from a farm in Yarrawonga and was tremendously loyal to Frank and had a deep sense of injustice, though she was unswervingly Labor all along. She was quite agitated at the time of Santamaria's death because the received history was that Santamaria started the Movement. I think that there was no doubt that he did, but she was interpreting it as Santamaria started the idea of what the Movement did. She said, and I remember it distinctly, that Frank would go out *every* night, round to the parishes, seeing the parish priests. It just got too much for him and he couldn't do it. In the earlier period they were on part-time rosters (in the railways) because of the Depression. All public servants were put on four-day rosters.

What went wrong with the Movement?

It was the right wing unions' corruption and what follows from that: the use of dogmatism in place of policy. Dogmatism replaced policy. The Shop Distributors weren't too bad but the AWU types (were). There are still relics of that around and also, the fact is, the behaviour of many or some of the people associated with the Groupers was pretty dreadful. Some were a creepy lot. Nonetheless, having a bunch of Stalinists running the trade union movement and trying to do something about that was certainly a good thing because you were essentially

using the same strategies – but then the strategies took on a life of their own and it happened pretty early.

Source of ideas

The CW were talking about ideas. Thinkers were clearly represented in the CW, especially Maritain. With Frank, it was the English thinkers – Belloc, Chesterton – who were more influential. With him also it was very much literary. He got into good literature – Galsworthy, *The Forsyte Saga*, all those sorts of things. He started there and then moved into the more philosophical stuff. I don't remember Maritain.

The Distributist stuff was pretty deep. He got a permanent housing society – he and his partner were given one in the late 1960s and it was called Distributist, and then it merged with some others and became Hotham and then became the Bank of Melbourne – but also as kids we used to go up to Whitlands and there was one [another cooperative] in the Yarra Valley. So it was that philosophy that Frank was attached to.

[Did Frank ever consider joining such a venture?] They were influenced strongly by Dorothy Day in America, the CW in America, and because Frank was a trade unionist and the others weren't, that's why he was different, he was less susceptible to some stuff. And that's why it's such a shame that I didn't try to get anything out of him. But it was difficult. The CW didn't have too many workers. If you look at the whole bunch of them –Xavier Connor was different [but] Murray McInerney became a Liberal, and others loosely attached to Vin Buckley came on the scene and they had different sorts of politics – so the ability to switch to Liberal or to the DLP was early.

Whereas Frank was an old-time unionist. I remember once when I was working at the post office and there was a strike and my father said, 'You are not going to scab are you?' You wouldn't have got that from the rest. Deep. I have that myself. When I went into teaching I became a unionist and I didn't scab and all that kind of thing even though it was a culture that wasn't terribly relevant as we later discussed.

Part 2

There were four children in the family: an older sister who became a nun and left after eight or nine years, a younger sister and a brother. I was the political one even though the others vote the right way – but they are not in any way active.

An interesting character

Frank was an interesting character because he was different to the others. Anomalies are interesting. He was a character. He was small, short. He was cantankerous. He was Irish and ideological. He was extremely gregarious. He knew everyone and he was friendly and extremely energetic. His weakness was that because of work he'd have these sessions with *Worker* people; he still wrangled with them and put the CW out. He did work for St Vincent de Paul. He'd go to jails and talk to prisoners. He had a 'Milk for India' thing.

The union stuff would probably have come to a close around the end of World War II. I don't know when Frank's Labor Party membership lapsed but he didn't pick it up again until not long before his death in 1971. He is the missing link between that mob (the CW). Frank's argument was that one reason that he got to know Santamaria was through the Carlton Football Club. I remember Frank saying that Santamaria was embarrassing at the footy because he would go off.

Frank did know everyone. I knew that, as a kid, you'd walk around the old working-class streets in South Melbourne and people would come out of places and around corners. It was said that Frank couldn't walk a block without stopping three or four times. And he would know everyone.

I remember as a kid that I was pretty good at billiards and I challenged Frank to a game when I was 16 or so and Frank just wiped the floor – he was really good. Well, what had he done all those years? He played solo in the Depression semi-professionally for extra money and he was very good at it.

So, a character who linked up a whole lot of things. Clearly, a moral basis, which was a combination of Catholicism and the union movement, was very strong and was deeply principled and very generous of course. But a bit mad, eccentric, very difficult to live with.

He was never cynical, not a touch of cynicism; a bit of anger. One of his favourite words was, 'So and so was a "clot"'. And he was always about politics. The Split was a big number. The big event that I really recall around the dinner table was the Split and its aftermath, what was going on in the Church, Santamaria and, as he called him, 'the old man' (Mannix); and the behaviour of certain characters. He loved to fight with them and with dumb, pompous priests. There was nothing he relished more. He visited a couple of parishes to confront them, so none of the trappings. There was no cynicism.

He would get moody and there was his health. He had high blood pressure; it was hereditary and I have pills, which Frank didn't have. I keep myself a lot fitter than he did too. He had so many friends, and a family; he still believed in Catholicism but he was no holy roller; he was sustained by a set of values which he believed in. And he was too energetic at the end. Someone that energetic couldn't be despairing.

Cooperative housing societies

I remember well when the CW was banned. Frank was out of a job and a bloke called Frank Quinn, who ran housing societies, got Frank in and gave him work as a clerk because he couldn't go back to being a boilermaker. He wasn't well enough and I suspect that he wasn't very good. I used to work around the house and Frank was not very good. He was not a natural craftsman.

Then Frank (Quinn) suggested that Frank apply for a couple of building societies himself, which he got. He gradually built them up and took in one partner and then another and they got the permanent housing society and then he died. Brian Rose, who took it over, was the second partner that Frank brought in. He said Frank hated the new order of what became Hotham because it was the cut-throat business world whereas the co-ops enabled low-income earners to buy a house through cooperative arrangements. They were great things and I wish that I had one. My sister got a bit of one.

A good life

The other thing that always impressed me was that Frank would rock off to work at nine, lunch time they'd assemble, he took a bit of work home but not much, so they had a good life. My mother said when Frank died that he'd had a good life. It wasn't long enough and there was pain and illness over the Split period, but otherwise he knew everyone, lots of time, lots of interests. You could do a lot worse. He had the Church. There were 700–800 at the funeral.

The other story sums him up in a way. When he was dying in a hospital, Mercy Hospital, he got a visit from a bloke just out of Pentridge (prison) who was met by his criminal mates who'd gone to the pub and got pissed. They all rocked up to the hospital to visit him. So they came in and the matron came in and threw them all out and just let in the one bloke. And he left. And five minutes later Gough (Whitlam, then Prime Minister) came in. Gough never knew Frank, never met him, but he'd heard of him. And Gough said, 'I'll be back in

Melbourne in two days time if you are still here'. Gough was in the hospital visiting someone else and someone said to go and visit Frank. So, 'I'll ring the hospital and if you are still here I'll come to visit you'. (But he wasn't.)

4 Gerard Heffey and Jack Heffey

Marilyn Puglisi, interviewed 21 August 2009

Marilyn Puglisi's memories of her father, Gerard Heffey, and her uncle, Jack Heffey

Melbourne University

My father, Gerard Heffey, went to Melbourne University and studied law and history. History was his great love. He got an MA in history and he thought he'd better finish a law course so that he would be able to have a job. His whole education was by way of scholarships. He was a bright kid from a bright family and their love was education. He was born in 1910 so he would have gone to the university when he was 17 and-a-half and he was there for the two courses that he did, so five or six years. He went to Newman College and he was president of the student union (at Newman College) for two or three terms.

This was the highlight of his life. He thought Newman College, Melbourne University, the scholarships, the people he met – I don't think anything ever beat that for him. He was in the debating societies. He retained some sort of fear about the non-Catholic world in that he admitted to me that when he'd get back to Newman College from university affairs and everything he always felt a sigh of relief, as though he'd come home. His family were pious Catholics and his father had had very little education but was very well read and music was a big part of their world.

Australian not Irish

Gerard was taught by the Christian Brothers. He went to St Kevin's and St Ambrose's, Brunswick. He remembered everything his teachers ever taught him. One of the first things that he recalls was that there was a new brother came to St Ambrose's and the children were asked to write down their allegiances as far as country was concerned, whether England, Ireland, Australia. And the children all wrote down, 'Ireland, Australia, England' or 'Ireland, Ireland, Ireland'. But Br Doyle said, 'You're all wrong'. And he went up to the blackboard and wrote, '1. Australia. 2. Australia. 3. Australia'.

That struck a chord with Gerard and I think it was instrumental in his not being so attached to the Celtic Club and the Irish ways that many of his contemporaries were. And the background of his family was that they didn't really go for clinging to the Irish heritage quite so much. At the university, Gerard was reading Chesterton and Belloc and all these writers and the European writers became far more important to him really than the Irish heritage stuff.

A good boy

He was a good boy. He never got into trouble at school, unlike his brother the priest who was always in trouble. Gerard was never in trouble. He was painfully a good boy. So he went off to the university but his parents' love of education was so great that when Gerard, who was the eldest of five children, received a letter to say that, under a particular scholarship, he could go to Newman College which would cover all his fees, Gerard said to his father, 'I can't take this because there'd still be some money for you to pay.' And his father went and got the paper and the ink bottle and the pen and the envelope and the stamp and said, 'Don't waste this opportunity. We'll manage'. So Gerard was sent off to Newman even though he came from a working-class family and was the eldest of five children, all of whom were going through their education.

His father Charlie Heffey

Their father was a good deal older. He wasn't married until he was 41 and then he had five children and worked in the railways. There was never any frugality when it came to anything to do with education. So there was a strong educational bent, a strong interest in England and Europe as opposed to Ireland, and Gerard's faith, which was less pious than his parents' had been. His father made the Stations of the Cross every afternoon and took his dog, Curly, with him down to St Ambrose's and the old dog slept at every Station while Charlie Heffey prayed. But Charlie Heffey could also sight-read music and sing wonderful cantatas and that sort of thing.

University influences

At the university, Gerard made friends with Bob Santamaria. He was another Brunswick boy. He knew him; they were born in the same year and went to the same school. And there was a strong allegiance, too, to the Italians in Sydney Road Brunswick, in those days. Murray McNerny was a very close friend. Jack Galbally. At some stage Gerard met Frank Maher who

was a bit older and the Campion Society (CS) – was it 1931? 32? – that was formed. So there was a lot of reading in common and praying in common and discussing in common and concern about the state of the world, as well they might. When one considers the worldly circumstances at the time I am often surprised by how much time was spent thinking and working out things rather than saving money. It was an intellectual life that Gerard was leading always, that was for certain.

The Catholic Worker

In my childhood – I was born in 1938 – Gerard was in the army in 1941. The *Catholic Worker* (CW) had been started in 1936 and Gerard was in the CW from the beginning. That meant when he came back from the war – I think that he didn't get any further than Perth – my memory is of him going to meetings constantly and giving pre-Cana conferences; going to Mildura to a pre-Cana conference, talking to people about marriage and the family and things. I sometimes wonder how he fitted in his law (practice). There were many, many nights when Gerard was off at meetings with the CW and it's very hard now because they didn't sign their articles so that you don't know who wrote what. Sometimes you can guess if you are reading an old copy of the CW.

My childish understanding was that they were building a new society that was somewhere between capitalism and Communism. Certainly Gerard believed in the dignity of a man and his right to support his family and his children and that sort of thing.

Cooperative housing societies

The cooperative housing society was a practical expression of views that he had developed over his years at the university and at the CW. I am not too certain how he started. I think it was through the YCW and Fr Lombard, and it's not really recorded well enough how much work went into setting up the housing societies.

I don't think people today could possibly understand that banks did not lend money to ordinary working people to buy houses. I've seen many old titles and you could go for decades without a bank being shown as a lender on the back. There were private loans, someone in the family would lend you some money; insurance policies which you could borrow against; and temperance societies. They were the lenders of money but banks weren't going to lend to this tradesman who was a hardworking man. No way. They didn't, they wouldn't.

The cooperative movement enabled a group of people, and you had to have at least 20, to form together and to put a bit of money in and then the cooperative would go to a bank and borrow the money for those people to build their houses. The banks still refused and it really wouldn't have got off the ground had it not been that the federal government agreed to guarantee the banks. And that guarantee was hardly ever called upon because people did pay off their houses. They started in a small group. Gerard would go off and say, 'We're starting a new one. It's going to be Lalor Number 4' – or 'Thomastown Number 3' or 'Belgrave Heights Number 15' or 'Traralgon', 'Morwell', 'Moe'. When we lived in Rosanna the family used to, after tea, go to wave goodbye to Gerard because he was going to Oakleigh to set up another cooperative housing society.

So it wasn't just a question of a few people getting together. It was an enormous amount of documentation and I know that Gerard drafted the agreements and the mortgages and the documents and the constitutions. So once it got rolling it rolled so much it was really quite extraordinary. The number I don't know. There were a couple of Catholic solicitors that were involved in setting them up and in acting for the societies and in acting for all of these people. I can remember working in my father's office and there were lots of jokes about people from the Hills not being all there.

Adoptions

All those same people, and my father was involved in this too, they all got into adoptions. Gerard would have had by far the biggest adoption practice in Victoria and it's strange to think of it now. We thought of it as absolutely wonderful, providing good homes for these poor little children. And they all came from St Joseph's Broadmeadows – that's where all the babies came from – and Gerard was associated with that. So it was adoptions, cooperative housing societies and the CW. Not much politics other than that which, of necessity of course, was dealt with by the CW.

Politics

There's never been a suggestion, nor did Gerard express any interest, in joining a political party. Although he probably voted Labor all his life, he could never be tempted to join a political party, which I find sort of strange now, but at the time that seemed to be his thing. And laymen and priests and bishops came to our house. Late into the night there were discussions. My mother thought it was all mad at various times. Gerard talked of reading

Jacques Maritain. He was quoting him day and night, [even] at the breakfast table. And Chesterton.

Opposing the Movement

And then of course when the fight with the Movement came, and Gerard was very anti the Movement, then various priests and bishops and everything came to try to dissuade him. So there'd be long arguments. I remember Archbishop Guilly Young who said that my father was siding with the Communists and my mother said, 'What a load of rubbish!' And Young would growl – my mother had beautiful food – 'Well, Sylvia, when they come you are going to lose all of this'. And she said, 'Oh no I won't! I'll run away with the Communist leader!' [They didn't have the same fear of Communism as other people at this time?] No, they didn't.

Consequences

I can remember that when I was in Leaving (Year 11) at school, at Genazzano, they never had debates. But for some reason, some priest was coming, and then they decided to have a debate, 'If the Communists came, would they take over Australia?' or something. Fr Turner, the Jesuit, was to hear this. And of course it was all meant to be that the Communists *would* take over Australia.

I remember that my father sat up late at night and wrote out my debate because I wasn't the slightest bit interested. I can still see the piece of paper because at some stage his black (typewriter) ribbon ran out and he had to use the red part of the ribbon on these points. The next day, I was a bit worried about whether they were more important than the black bits but it was only because his ribbon had run out. My father's arguments were so good. All I can remember him saying was, 'We do have an army and a navy you know'. That must have been one of my points and I won and that was a disgrace. Not even *they* could say that the other girl had won.

But then I was excluded from all social studies classes in my final year at school. [What happened then?] The nuns said it was an embarrassment. [Because you held a different view?] My father did. And because on the shelves in the Matric room there was the magazine *Twentieth Century* and my father was at that stage the editor of it. That was removed and I was removed out into the corridor when the social studies classes were on. I think Gerard wrote a letter to Fr Turner who had achieved this coup but I don't really know or care.

It wasn't as though my spirit was crushed and I felt as though I had been excluded. I had always regarded everybody in authority as being slightly mad and it had no deleterious effect on me whatsoever. I really got on extremely well with my father and my other love was my uncle Jack, Gerard's brother, who went off into the wilderness to do his seeking.

Gerard and his brother Jack

One of the main highlights of my life was that I had this father and this uncle and they were very different from each other. Gerard, as I said, was the good boy: Jack [Fr John Heffey] was the highly attractive larrikin, charismatic character. I went on holidays to Whitlands with Jack and, although this was the holier than holy place that they had set up, my uncle taught me all of the Italian lyrics to *La Traviata*, all sorts of songs and bits and pieces and jokes.

Gerard wouldn't have had two pennies to rub together and if he did, he spent it on the kids' education; Jack was utterly committed to poverty and he never lacked for anything because everyone gave him everything – cars, land, anything, anything. So Jack really believed that he would be provided for. Gerard in a sense believed that too and although he had a good law practice he had no idea of saving money. He used to say, 'Somebody said to me the other day that you must pay the school fees out of capital. I suppose that's a good idea'. But it meant nothing to him in reality at all.

Gerard only ran into real financial difficulty once. He couldn't pay his income tax and he'd received a final notice and then got an extension. A week before Christmas he got this final thing. He was really in big trouble and he hadn't told my mother. The next day he was walking past St Francis' in Lonsdale Street and he must have had his head down and he bumped into someone. And this person said, 'Gerard Heffey! I've never seen you looking down. Are Sylvia and the children all right?' And Gerard said, 'O yes, they're fine, all hale and hearty and everything. I was frowning because of money problems'. And this man said, 'Are they the only problems you've got at the moment?' And Gerard said, 'Well, yes'. And he said, 'Well, that's one problem I haven't got'. He said, 'My wife's sick, I've got problems with my children, there's mental illness problems in the family and everything, but I haven't got any money problems. How much do you need?' And he took his chequebook out and wrote out the full amount that was owing to Gerard's income tax and said, 'You pay me back when you are in good times. No interest. I don't want any interest'. And that man was John Wren's son, Jack, whom Gerard had known at Newman. It's amazing that Jack would meet Gerard like that.

Jack Heffey in Tasmania

Jack decided that being up at Whitlands and at Gladysdale wasn't far enough away so he decided to leave his followers behind and go to Tasmania and start again and live as a hermit somewhere. And on arrival, on the first day, he went to St Helens in Tasmania because there was some priest he knew and Jack thought he'd be able to put him up for the night. The priest must have been called out.

Jack went to the local timber yards, just to see what the place was like. And he chatted to everyone and waited for a few hours talking to everybody and said that he was a Catholic priest and that he was coming to Tasmania to go to pray somewhere. Somebody came up to him and said, 'Don't leave. There's somebody just coming off their shift wants to speak to you'. And at 7 o'clock that night Jack rang from Tasmania to say that he'd met this man and this woman and their children and they had this beautiful valley and they wanted to give it to him and should he sign anything? So neither Jack nor Gerard had too much interest in money.

The relationship between Gerard and Jack

It was the conflict between Gerard and Jack that I found interesting. Jack really said, 'Listen. If you stay in the city, in this world, it will get you, it will get you. You have to leave it behind you'. And Gerard would get legalistic and say, 'Well, what are you are setting up, a new religion?' or 'Have you got a constitution?' or 'Who's going to be in charge in these communities? Where's the authority going to come from?' And Gerard would struggle on. And then I would say to Jack, 'Well, it makes sense to say, "All this is too hard. I'm going to leave it behind. It's beautiful, it's seductive but I'm going to live a simple life in poverty and prayer and what have you"'. I used to say to Jack, 'You didn't get Dad. I would have followed you to the ends of the earth if what you had said had been true about Dad. Here he was in a conservative profession like the law and none of the bad side ever seemed to touch him or seduce him in any way'.

The only thing I can remember Gerard being seduced by in any way were the playing fields at Xavier, so he didn't send my brothers to North Melbourne. He said, 'Those playing fields were pretty good'. But Jack could easily be seduced. Jack liked bacon, red wine, opera, and he said he came from the bush and sat in Collins Street and looked at all the lovely girls and the lights in the shops and he'd say, 'It's pretty good isn't it? It looks pretty good'. So he wasn't a Puritan at all.

Threat of Communism

[*Did your parents entertain the threat of Communism?*] Not for a minute. It wasn't as though they were blind to the faults of the Communist system or indeed to the sort of tactics that Communists might use in the trade unions or what have you. It's not as though they didn't know that. But they were equally worried about the infiltration of the trade unions by the Movement. Anything secret or underhand, any secret societies, they really didn't like that.

[*Were they anti-Fascist?*] They were all a bit overcome by Fascism in the Spanish mould. I knew all the Spanish songs. [*Sings*] 'With my face turned upwards to the sun I go.' And many years later I was surprised at Jack when the musical *Evita* came out. I can remember the sorts of things he was saying then, the brotherhood aspects of it that they liked. It didn't last very long I think. Jack was more into it than my father. I don't think that Gerard felt its charismatic draw or anything.

Gerard would have known Fr Hackett, Fr Lombard, Fr Cerini (chaplain to Pentridge) and Fr Murtagh, someone who has fallen off the radar and wrote lots of books. He baptised me and worked at Wilcannia Forbes but he'd written lots of social justice books. He was a friend of my father's. A more social priest was Percy Jones. The connection there was Europe and music and Jack, who had been to Propaganda College (in Rome). Gerard didn't have much to do with the local Irish Catholic priests although they would occasionally come to the house. Most of his friends, though, as time went by, would have been lawyers – McInerny, Gorman, Corson, Xavier Connor. The person he loved most of all those lawyers was Xavier Connor. He regarded him as having complete integrity. But none of those were Movement people at all.

He did know (Frank) McManus. A lot of those people never spoke to him again. Frank McManus regarded Gerard as a traitor. Gerard would speak to Bobby Santamaria about Carlton (football club). They both barracked for Carlton and they got on very well together personally. Gerard would never say an unkind word about Bob in terms of his character but I think Bob really did bugger everything. As time goes by, more and more I feel the alliance between Mannix and Bob Santamaria was a most amazing act. Gerard died aged 95.

Part 2

Legacies

[Was Gerard disappointed in what had been achieved?] I can remember when I was very young, a solicitor, who was very well heeled and worked for insurance companies, they were his clients, and he loved Gerard. He said to me, 'I wish I could have a practice like your father had'. And I remember thinking, 'Well, why didn't you?' He chose the insurance companies and Gerard chose the cooperative housing societies.

I think Gerard was disappointed that it wasn't even more revolutionary, that people in the end preferred their Myer charge accounts. He couldn't possibly get my mother to go to the YCW Co-op to buy a vacuum cleaner or something – she'd go to Myers and so would the wives of all the lawyers who were in the CW. So, in a sense, the cooperative movement didn't continue in the way that my father envisaged it and if he had any disappointment I would say it was really that.

Cooperative housing societies

I think that it was something to do with – both Jack and Gerard were interested in this – with small, small business, small groups, and that the cooperative housing societies were what you'd call 'terminating', which means they have a beginning and have to have an end. There's 20 people to build houses for and when the last person has paid off their loan, there's a 'finalising meeting' – it has been achieved – and of course for the most part, [of] the 20 people, some would need a bigger house after five years and they [would sell] and their mortgage got paid out at that time, and they [would go] to the banks and move out [of the cooperative]. It was very, very rare that one of the original members who got the loan from the cooperative stayed there and finished their loan without selling it off.

Gerard went to one terminating meeting; it was Lalor Number 53 or something. There was an old lady and she'd been at the original meeting and paid her one pound for her share. They sent to Tasmania to get timber to build the houses; it was post-war. Her husband had died and the cooperative had let her off paying for six months or something and then she'd become ill and then they'd postponed her payments. Dad said, 'Because we could! We were a small co-op. We could do this!' She was there to receive her discharge of her mortgage and Haddon Storey, as Attorney General at the time, was at this meeting. And here was an original member of one of those post-war cooperative societies who actually paid out her

loan without selling the house or going elsewhere. And I remember Gerard being very moved by that because it reminded him of what they could do if they were small groups.

You had to have 20, you still had to have 20 members. I still can't understand the actual mechanics of who got their loan. You were supposed to be in order and I suppose that it depended on how much they could borrow from the bank. [*Where did the 20 come from? Parishes?*] It might have been parishes but it wasn't all Catholic sort of stuff but a lot were Catholics. It was certainly local because they were named after localities and they were certainly in far-flung places and all down that Gippsland area – Warragul, Trafalgar, Traralgon, all down there – and in the northern suburbs like Thomastown, and all of the Hills, so we had Upwey, Belgrave Heights and Belgrave. So I suppose it was local in that a few people might get together and they'd announce that they were going to form a cooperative and if anyone wanted to join the cooperative with a view to borrowing to build their house – and that's what made it local. I don't think it was the parishes.

[*Had they bought the land?*] No. You couldn't buy the land first. This is why I don't quite understand how it would work because they might have bought and couldn't get a loan from the banks and the banks would never lend on vacant land. The first people to do that in some fashion was the State Bank and they didn't trust people to build their own houses so the State Bank built them. They were the builders and they organised it. Garden City (in Port Melbourne) – all bank houses. Occasionally you'd see advertised, 'Bank House', and that means it was built by the bank. It was not where the bank managers lived. I think most people think that, but there were lots of bank houses in Burwood – there were lots – so even when the bank directly entered the housing market they certainly didn't trust Mr So-and-So, a clerk in the Railways, to be able to build his own house and not be taken for a ride. And of course they are brilliant houses because they lasted forever.

Gerard used to talk about how wonderful terminating housing cooperative societies were compared to building societies and of course they were in England a lot. He had faith in them as being fair. The people were protected. I still hang on to the view and I often advised people who were terribly anxious about whether they would be able to repay their loan to a bank to get a loan from a cooperative housing society. Even if they chose one of the gigantic ones like the VTU credit cooperative, I knew that they didn't sell people up. Now no-one is going to advertise that. The cooperative housing societies can't put, 'Join us, borrow from us. We won't sell you up'. That's hardly smart marketing but you are very, very unlikely to be sold up by a cooperative housing society, so they still have their uses.

The State Bank

[*When did the banks start lending?*] Well, apart from Garden City, which was a special venture by the bank, by the 1950s they were starting to, but still there were very stringent requirements in terms of deposits and how long you had been with the bank and all of that. The State Bank was the best by far. Purchased by the Commonwealth Bank and destroyed as a business. The State Bank was wonderful, brilliant. Bob Murray is supposed to be writing (has written) a history of the State Bank. There's all sorts of problems when you write histories of these institutions; dreadful problems arise.

Gerard's legacy

Gerard always went to Mass. He didn't make us. He wasn't disappointed in us at all. He always argued with Jack but they got on better and better and better as they got older. They were marvellous talking to each other. Jack would say to me, 'If it wasn't for your father I wouldn't have ever thought of being a priest. It was your father'. Then they'd have arguments. One would be shaving and come out and say, 'But look! So and so and this and that,' and my mother would be tearing her hair. So it was a life of the intellect. The intellect was really quite extraordinary in the family.

Uncle Jack Heffey

Uncle Jack finally ended up down in the tip of Tasmania, down at Cygnet. Wherever he went, people followed him, even if he said, 'Go away. I'm just a hermit'. So somebody gave him a cottage with an apple orchard round it. There were a few problems with this of course. The farmers couldn't understand and he'd say, 'The farmers try to give me advice: "You should be spraying the apples in April," and I'd say, "Oh, don't worry about that. I'm just a simple priest"'. But then, he said, 'Young people who were living an alternative lifestyle were often strangely religious and used to come and say to me, "We hear that you're a Catholic priest and we're concerned about the meaning of verse something, something, something," and I would say to them, "Look, I'm just a simple farmer"'.

Anyhow the local parish priest out at Cygnet heard that Jack was there and that Jack hadn't been excommunicated or anything and he said, 'Now listen, Jack. I've got a mother who's sick in Melbourne and I've got to have a hernia operation. You are going to do a locum,' and Jack said, 'Oh, I don't know'. And he said, 'The test cricket's on and I've got a very good television,' and Jack said, 'Well, I may be able to fit in a few weeks'. And Jack said, 'The

television was pretty good!' So he'd get up on Sundays and preach these almost mystic sermons that nobody would understand. And he said, 'It was funny on Mondays in Cygnet. I'd be there, walking down the street,' – he only wore old pants tied up with string – 'and the women would say, who'd been to Church, "Good morning, Father" and their husbands would say, "G'day Jack"'.

He'd play guitar and he'd sing. He loved *The Rock Follies*, that record. It used to be played late on radio and he knew all the songs in that. He taught my kids to sing Italian songs [*sings*]. My cousin went down to stay with him and some of the ones that had been at Whitlands, actually Whitlands, a long time ago. Rita Flippo and Adele O'Loughlin went down there too and various people came. But he was relaxed in that he didn't care much what anybody did. And they were all rather strange people, rather good at fitting in in Southern Tasmania.

He knew that he'd never be thrown out because he'd been a mate of Guilly Young (Archbishop Guildford Young). They'd been at Propaganda College together and travelled all around the United States in a T model Ford after they were thrown out of Propaganda during the war and he knew that Guilly Young would never throw him out. But the hierarchy there, after Guilly died. John Ward was there. They just kept well away from him.

Jack's funeral

When he died, he had his own coffin because a carpenter down there had made him a coffin when he turned sixty, so he kept his books in it and occasionally if people visited with a kid he'd put the kid in the coffin. So his friends down there decided to bury him themselves. The local undertaker said, 'I'll give you whatever assistance you need to do this – keep him overnight'. They came and they didn't interfere at all. And then it was a question of where he was going to be buried from – which church – and the priests said, 'Oh, no!' because my cousin, Jenny, said that she wanted to speak at the funeral and it might sound more like a sermon than a eulogy. They all got frightened and said no.

One priest said, 'Frankly, whatever happens to me ... bury him at my church and you can do as you like'. So he said the Mass and Jenny really preached a very good sermon. It was terrific – about all the influences on Jack's life and everything – and at the eleventh hour all the hierarchy turned up in their best frocks and (Archbishop Eric) D'Arcy was there and got up and said a few words and they remained at the side. Afterwards he came up to me and said, 'Your uncle, he had many followers'. And I delighted in saying, 'Oh yes, many!' They

were all there. Not one of them asked him to come and have lunch at the cathedral or invited him up to talk to young priests. He was an embarrassment.

45 years on leave

He was always supposed to be in the Archdiocese of Melbourne, and beside his name in the diocesan records it would say, 'John Joseph Heffey – on leave'. He was 45 years on leave and none of his faculties was ever taken away from him by anybody. He was always allowed to go and Archbishop Mannix said, 'If you've got to go, you've got to go,' and just let him go. At one stage after Whitlands he was sent down to Werribee. He was there for 2 or 3 years and finally went back up and said, 'No. I've got to go'.

He was allowed to go up to Gladysdale where he lived in a sort of hut. Fr Cerini gave him a dog and the local butcher sent up a pound of sausages every so often and Hans Knorr came and built him a chapel. Other people all started to come and live in their little log cabins all round the place. Then they wanted a title to their land so they were interested in tenure. And Jack said, 'That's not what I'm about'. He got up and left them, much to their chagrin. People treated him like a sect leader who had let them down but he never ever invited anyone ever to follow him.

A charismatic person

He was enormously charismatic. I had been to Sydney with him and people, non-Catholics, said, 'That uncle of yours. If he'd asked me to give up everything and come with him, I would have gone'. So he really was magnetic.

He'd been a bad boy. He used to sell his dog every Saturday. People would say, 'That's a magnificent dog you've got,' and Jack would say, 'Do you think so? A bloody nuisance as a matter of fact'. 'Oh, if I had a dog like that ...' and Jack would say, 'Well, he's yours for two bob'. And then he's take the two bob and say, 'Off you go, Curly'. And the dog would. Then he'd whistle and the dog would come (home) after him.

He had jokes that would almost change your language. You could talk in 'Jack' because of all these stupid things. He and Guilly Young and Fr Scarborough, were mates. At some stage they had a fourth mate ... Anyhow, they learnt huge passages from *The Three Musketeers*. At some stage in that, somebody says, 'What happened to the fourth musketeer? He was shot at Bordeaux.' Now you could never mention the fourth to Jack or any of his friends. They always said, 'He was shot at Bordeaux'. If you mentioned the fourth! This goes on!

He was nearly thrown out of Propaganda College at some stage because he used to write letters to family members and he was hauled up to explain whether he had any girlfriend that he was still communicating with in Melbourne or anywhere, and he said, no, he'd had lots of girlfriends but he didn't have anyone in particular, and they said, 'Well, who's Ann?' And they had copies of all the letters he'd send and at the end he'd write, 'Love to *all*'. And the way he'd write, it looked like 'Ann'. So after that, every letter he wrote he'd put, 'P.S. Love to Ann'. Everyone would ring us and say, 'Who's Ann?' He'd write to the Archbishop and he'd write 'Love to Ann'. It became just one of his fingerprints.

He was 83 when he died. He spoke fluent Italian, French and Spanish. He was a really good linguist and he was learning Greek. He went up to Melbourne University. I nearly died one day and there he was. He was doing some extra French courses at that stage.

Jack was anti-authoritarian and Gerard was willing to stand up to authority but he really believed in the law and bishops and things. He believed in there being established authority, whereas, a bit like Jack, I cannot stand any authority. But Jack survived anyhow.

Molly Heffey

In the middle they had their sister Molly who was a Good Samaritan nun. The only bits of history that you get is because they kept writing to her so that you get a bit on Whitlands. Gerard was writing about Whitlands. Gerard was writing to Molly on 26 June 1948. Gerard Heffey argued with his brother Jack and it's his writing to his sister the nun. She sent all the letters back because she said, 'If I don't, they'll just burn everything'. So she sent those letters back but Gerard didn't keep any letters. These ones are only *from* them.

Memories of Whitlands

I used to go up to Whitlands as a child. Jack took me up in an Oldsmobile and it had stains all over the back seat because he used to carry sheep in it. We stopped for lunch and he said, 'What do you eat for lunch?' And I said, 'I don't know, Uncle Jacky'. 'Do you like snowballs?' And I said, 'Yes!' having almost never had one, and he brought a tray! That was my first lunch with Uncle Jack. I don't know how my mother let me go with him but he was wonderful. Peter, my brother, came with me a couple of times but I really liked being up there by myself. I really did understand what Whitlands was for and could see that. I could also see that Ray Triado was very much in charge. I remember him telling me to do

something and I said, 'Uncle Jack is in charge of me and not you'. So I had my father's understanding of authority and, while I was there, Jack was very much in charge.

But all the songs! A beautiful chapel that was built by Hans Knorr with the Stations of the Cross done in the gum trees as you went along. I had a lot of bread and dripping – the food wasn't the best – but I ate kangaroo and wombat. It was primitive but as a child I thought it was absolutely wonderful, and the Office and the chanting were absolutely wonderful. And none of the girls would ask anything because if you asked a question they would say, 'Ask Ray'. And it was a bit like that. My brother Peter who must have been very, very young when we were up there, he said, 'I always remember when after tea those who could play the guitar, they got it out and they started singing and people would suggest a song and the next song was always one that Ray wanted'. Peter would have been five. Ray was Mediterranean in style and didn't have much of a sense of humour. I don't know how he and Jack got on so well.

[Is there much written about Whitlands?] Not very much. I don't even know where my father's papers are. There were the Heffey and Butler papers at La Trobe (University of Melbourne). There might be some in the diocesan archives. Gerard wrote a thing called 'What is Whitlands?' because he got so sick of people coming to his office and saying, 'What's that mad brother of yours doing up in the hills?'

When Whitlands was finished, they walked from Whitlands together to see the Archbishop. They walked all the way down, playing guitars. This is in 1950, before there was a suggestion of communes and things. And to my mother's horror, they turned up at our place in Kew, which was close to Raheen, and they all camped in the front garden. And my mother said, 'My God!' Anyway, they went and spoke to the Archbishop and he said that no, he wasn't going to change his mind, and Uncle Jack was recalled. *[Telephone rings.]*

Part 3

Gerard Heffey's last years

Gerard died at 95 and everyone (except Xavier Connor) that he knew was dead by that stage. He didn't expect to live that long and it was terrible, the last five years, because he started to just listen to Irish songs actually. But it was too long. He enjoyed tremendously good health. Xavier would keep up with him and Tommy Butler his partner would too. Tommy died before him and Xavier died after him.

He practised the law until he was 80. I worked for him when I was first through and then I had my own practice. When he retired at 65 he came to give me a hand and he worked with me from the time he was 65 until he was 80. He just did what he was told. There was never any difficulty working with him as an employee. He was very easy. He'd do trouble-shooting with wills and things. He'd go into the city, chat to about 150 people on the way and that many on the way home too. So he kept his hand in as far as the law was concerned.

He read *The Tablet* and when he was 78 he wondered if it would be a good idea if he just bought a six-month subscription instead of an annual one in case he died and it would be a waste of money. But his eyesight failed eventually and his hearing, but he was very easy. He went into a nursing home and there was no trouble getting him to go into a nursing home. He said, 'Well, I'm in your hands, whatever you say'. And that was it.

[*Did he live to see himself justified or wasn't it an issue for him?*] It wasn't an issue. I was sorry that Gerard didn't hear Bruce Duncan speak at Tommy Butler's funeral when there was an apology to these men who probably had been right but had been sidelined or criticised or, in some cases, persecuted. It was really terrible. But no, he didn't feel that his day would come and that he'd be proved right or anything like that at all. He wasn't interested in who was going to win. He was always interested in the arguments that were put and the pluralist society.

Len (Puglisi) was reading Bruce Duncan's book to Gerard and they got into what the bishops were doing and Gerard said, 'This is terrible stuff!' He really summed it up.

[*People didn't know about it until later.*] That was true. They felt very strongly when Arthur Calwell was refused Communion at West Heidelberg or wherever it was (Flemington). But Gerard was always prepared to argue the point and he had very good recall and a very good memory. But he never felt personally slighted or under-appreciated or anything like that at all. Not at all.

[*He was a remarkable man.*] He was. He was a very nice man.

5 Tom Hayes

Arthur Hayes, interviewed 11 August 2009

Arthur Hayes' memories of his father, Tom Hayes

Up to 1953, I was a young lad in Kyneton at the Marist Brothers and my father, Thomas Hayes, ran a grocery store. There were nine children in the family and I was the second eldest. We had a great connection with the Church; my uncle was the bishop of Rockhampton and our home was a repository for priests. Priests would be going through Kyneton and would call in so I was brought up in a household that was very Church orientated.

National Catholic Rural Movement

My father got involved in the (National) Catholic Rural Movement (NCRM), Fr Pooley's outfit. He would have people calling in to Kyneton for the inevitable cup of tea and they would talk about the NCRM that was centred at Maryknoll. I remember that the very good-looking, tall, dark fellow, Jack McDonald (Premier of Victoria) from Melbourne, would call in and talk about the Water Trust. My old man (father) was on the Kyneton Water Board. My father and Jack McDonald had a common interest in the philosophy of getting people on to the land. That was going to be the saviour of mankind.

We were all terrified of the Communists infiltrating the unions. At that stage, I had not come across Santamaria – that was later in the '50s when I went to Xavier – but I have a strong memory of people coming into the house and nodding and talking about the experiment that the Catholic church and people were doing at Maryknoll. In the late '40s I remember Ray Triado, an old Xavierian who even took my mother out when they were young. My father was the Captain of Xavier and my mother was the Captain of Mandeville: I had a great connection there.

Ray Triado got together a group of people and saw Mannix, who was not interested in their version of the NCRM. The group walked from Melbourne to Bendigo to visit Bishop Bernie Stewart and to get his support to set up some commune centred around Catholic values. It was written up in the papers and I was fascinated that they would walk from Melbourne,

about 20 of them. Bernie Stewart gave them the big stamp and away they went. That was my broad picture of those early years.

When I got to Xavier for three years (1953–55), that concept of the land and Catholic Action and the fact that it was unshakeable that the Catholic Church was right was propounded by a variety of teachers, Frank Maher being one. I was taught by Frank, Joe O'Dwyer and Possum (Fr Maurice) and they were very strong because we were coming up to the Labor Split so there was a huge dilemma among more liberal Catholics about whether to stay with the Labor Party or go off to the DLP. My father Tom Hayes and my uncle Frank Hill became strong supporters of Santamaria, so much so that my brother, who ended up a priest and is now parish priest of St Killian's (in Bendigo), went and worked for Santamaria in the late 1950s and early 1960s. It would be worth talking to him about secret meetings and the Movement.

Santamaria

Santamaria was a god. He came and talked in the great hall at Xavier – it was choc-a-bloc – and this little fellow got up and spoke. I was hiding on the stairs because I was not supposed to be there. But the conviction and the ability to talk absolutely 100 per cent that we were right and everyone else was wrong ... was quite dramatic. I developed a cynicism for Santamaria in later years but not for his economics. Santamaria used to write a column in one of the dailies, and economically it was terrific and right on the button on many things, but politically, I'm not so sure.

Battling on the land

My father was involved in those early days and, as kids, we heard the reverence and belief in getting on the land. To that end, the old man bought some acres because he had the grocery shop and all these kids. He bought two cows that I milked every morning and night, as did each boy before he went off to Xavier. The kids had the job of feeding 2,000 chooks after school and milking the cows and on Saturday we had sport. But we had to find and give half a day a weekend to the vegie garden, thinning out carrots, a most demeaning job which I hated, and all this because of the NCRM that we were caught up in. Move the people back on to the earth and you will solve all social conflict. My father, Thomas Hayes, belonged to the National Catholic Rural Movement and went off to conferences.

Fr Pooley was the priest who headed up the trial of little farmlets at Maryknoll and this was the hope of the side. They were able to pool resources to set up 10, 12, 15 families, but they couldn't cut it financially – it lasted perhaps 10 to 12 years. They lived in poverty, they were all idealists and the world was much tougher than that. Go off and tickle two chooks and gather two eggs and think that you are doing a day's work!

Even the 2,000 chooks that they had, and I think it climbed to 5,000, just had no economies of scale even with free labour. I remember that my older brother Tom Hayes, a very smart piece of work, who was dux of the school class and got an AO, did an economic analysis of the old man's chooks – this was when he was still at Xavier – and floored the old man. He showed it was highly inefficient and there were no economies of scale. Putting a set amount of food in this end, and the chooks ate it and produced that amount of eggs, and you sold it and got the cash, and you had to be so much ahead of what you had put in originally. No, no, that took all the fun out of it.

So they were absolutely ideologically driven. And this is only an impression as they didn't have any lawyers and accountants as part of the rural movement or, if they did, they were mute. The discussions that I listened to were all philosophical, about how society was breaking down, industrial society was worse than the old agrarian society – factories, alcoholism, vandalism and bashings. The answer was somehow to get back to the agrarian basis.

Maryknoll

[*How was Maryknoll financed?*] I assume that they rattled the can after Mass and from there you got the people who were prepared to up sticks and live in great poverty – they obviously didn't have much capital to put into it. The land was reasonably fertile in Gippsland, not like Boort or Wedderburn or Birchip. The family was always going to go with Dad to Maryknoll but we never did.

They had a common life at Maryknoll. My impression was that Fr Pooley and the immediate group did things in common – they prayed together and largely cooked together. They lived separately, but it was managed for them. The old man used to rend his garments over the lack of professionalism and that's been an ongoing tenet all my life and my knowledge of Catholic Action. It's cluttered with volunteers, philosophically energised but with no analytical ability at all. I wonder if the DLP was also so charged by Santamaria and his ilk, with the philosophy. I can't help thinking, when we read about suicide bombers who go on

and cause such havoc, that there was an element of that in my youth and it was said and talked about in my home: 'Better dead than Red'. The fear of Commos coming in and taking over and raping all the women and children and putting us in slave camps – that's only one step away from going on the front foot and blowing them up. It's quite bizarre and that's just in my lifetime.

Fear of Communism

[*Where did this fear of Communism come from?*] A top question. We believed we were 100 per cent right and that Communism was a godless society that was backed militarily by Russia, the USSR, and there were horrific stories – the Catholics and the Irish are wonderful at spinning the stories – of the bravery and destruction of 1948 when [the Communist Chinese] chucked out the Columbans. My uncle, the bishop Romuald Hayes, had started the Columbans in Australia. They had big missionaries in China and when Mao and his mob went through they slaughtered them and chucked them out and it was very totalitarian. Just a deep fear, like the Irish fear of snakes.

I ended up at La Trobe University, running the student union, the first manager. With the cleaner, called Fred Maruff, a highly intelligent ratbag but wonderful, I used to go for a run at lunchtime and Fred told me that he belonged to the Communist Party. I was fascinated and wondered where the fear had gone. I was just fascinated to know why anyone would think that way. It came to you as you grew older that it was the ratbaggy fringe that clung on to Communism as a philosophy. The cold war was scary but it was more a super power than a philosophy. But the philosophy of Communism, 'Workers of the world unite', had no energy. But where does that fear come from? I suggest that it was also at Mass on Sunday, the fear things, Hell, the torture of Hell as opposed to everlasting things in Heaven.

No questioning

Tom Hayes, my brother, went to Xavier in 1951 and I went in 1953 and we would come home on weekends and go to Mass. My father had this big black Humber. He had sent all the kids to Xavier and to Loreto – and he would swan around in this big black Humber. He was very loving and it was expected that we would get dressed up in our blazers and ties to go to Mass on Sundays.

One Sunday we'd listen to the most awful Irish claptrap at Mass – his (the priest's) brogue was so thick but he talked rubbish, and we'd been used to the Jesuits giving much more

thoughtful sermons. My mind had moved from milking cows and the chooks to being exposed to some better minds. Tom turned to me and said, 'What did you think of that? Wasn't it a load of rubbish?' and I said, 'I think it was just hopeless. They shouldn't allow blokes like that to talk. You can't understand him and when I did he talked rubbish'.

The old man pulled the Humber up and he turned around with great anger and he said, 'You are talking about consecrated men. Priests are consecrated by God to do their work and no son of mine will criticise them'. So whatever they say, you will not criticise them. So you have to let these lunatic Irish priests talk about the fear of Communism and the devil getting you. A blind belief in their rightness, no questioning. Imagine letting your sons have a word – no questioning. In that fertile arena you would have that fear.

Knights of the Southern Cross

The old man died when I was 16 and I went home to run the grocery shop. My older brother went on to uni. I was asked to join the Knights of the Southern Cross and I went to talk to my uncle who in the in Knights: 'Oh, a very great honour'. Then I talked to a couple of others who said that they were just healthily sceptical of Masons and they said, 'You know what that is? It's the Catholic version of the Masons'. I thought I had enough on my plate and I was only 17 and running the business so he never did join. I was asked to officiate at Easter ceremonies because I was a businessman in the town and an employer, but I never allowed myself to get too close to the Church.

In business

In 1962, I had made enough money selling boats and cars as well and I took off for a year and-a-half and rode a motor bike all over Europe, came back, hocked the business, bought next door, built a supermarket and did really well, enough to pay for all the kids' education. As the last one finished in 1967, I went off to La Trobe University part-time and did an economics degree and graduated in 1972. I put a manager in the store and ran it at arms' length. Then I got married and I bought the business in 1982 from the rest of the family. So I was caught up in the commercial world, not the religious world.

Too many priests

We had too many priests when we were young. Priests would still come in when we were running the business because of my uncle, the bishop. I remember (Archbishop) Guildford Young, who had been a curate with my uncle, coming in one day and swanning around in his

purple and his ring – that never sat well with me. Some Irish priests came in one day and wanted to know where they could go to buy some handkerchiefs and I said, ‘Five doors up there’s a good draper’. ‘But are they good Catholics?’ I said I didn’t know but they sell good handkerchiefs. That little story tells where I sit.

Frank Maher

Frank Maher taught me and I took out Frank’s daughter Pips. Frank Maher had a house in Franks Grove (Kew) where I’d go to pick up Pips, but Frank and I had a good friendship from school. So before I went off to La Trobe in 1967 I went to see Frank – Mr Maher to me. We sat up in leather chairs and had a chat and I asked Frank what he thought of going to La Trobe. Frank said it was a waste of time. You could get all you want from reading. ‘Settle down, young Hayes. Stop running around after boats and fast women and just sit and read.’ But what a uni course did was give you the discipline because you had to get essays in. This was one of my last meetings with Frank. He never promoted, to me personally, the NCRM but in class the Catholic training was hugely political because it was so supportive of Santamaria, and Catholic values reeked with ‘we know best’.

Attitude to Catholicism

No-one told me of things being grey. But by the time my son said to me, ‘What do you think of the Catholic Church, Dad?’ I said, ‘Put that into two. What do I think of the Christian philosophy and what do I think of the people who run the Catholic Church, which is one outfit that promotes and owns the Christian philosophy? I’d be a very strong Christian if the people who run the Catholic Church ... They’ve moved themselves right away from the people on the ground’. The Father Pooleys wouldn’t get much of a go.

6 Cyril Hally

Interviewed 25 March 2009

I was born in 1920 in New Zealand. My mother was a music teacher who died when I was seven. My father, a farmer and an estate agent during the Depression, supported the Labor Party. I was sent to boarding school at six years of age.

Seminary influences

In 1939 I came to the Werribee seminary, initially for three years, but the war prevented my travelling abroad to Ireland to complete my studies. I was booked to go to the USA on 8 December 1941, but Pearl Harbour intervened and so I completed my seminary studies at Werribee. I was very influenced by Fr Charlie Mayne SJ, who taught canon law and lectured on Catholic Action. Guest lecturers included Ted Long and other YCW leaders. Students who could read French helped translate French theologians, including Congar. In the holidays, I worked on a farm at Tumbarumba and attended YCW conferences at Maiya Wamba. I was very interested in the YCW, which I thought developed young people more in two years than the seminaries did in seven. Seminaries were then very enclosed – there were no newspapers, for example. Leaders in the YCW would lecture for Charlie Mayne at Werribee, including Ted Long and Fr Lombard.

In 1943 when I was made a Prefect, together with Jack Brosnan and Jim Gleeson (later Archbishop of Adelaide), I gained access to newspapers. During the war, all kitchen helpers disappeared so the students did all the cooking and ordering and so I would go to Melbourne. I used to call in at the Catholic Action HQ and listen to the debates going on between Bob Santamaria, Frank Maher, Mitchell and (Fr) Lombard, in which Santamaria dominated. Although popular with seminarians, Santamaria was not favoured by Charlie Mayne nor by me. I was called a traitor in the seminary as a result.

There was division between the YCW and the junior Legion of Mary, with bitterness and ill-feeling. I was on the side of the YCW. Several priests in the Order had been expelled from China. Mao-tse Tung humiliated priests in front of the people they had worked with and then expelled them and as a result they were in trauma. Three of them living here were very anti-Communist and pro-Santamaria and regarded me as a traitor.

YCW (Young Christian Workers)

I supported the YCW because I judged that the development of young men in two years of the YCW was more effective than the formation of the seminarians in seven years. 'See, judge and act' was more effective. I visited Fr Lombard and Charlie McCann, parish priest of Collingwood, and the McCann family. When working in Belgium, I boarded with the international chaplain to the YCW, formerly the national chaplain to the girls' YCW, Fr Brian Bourke, and I met Cardijn and all the big shots. So I had intellectual conviction and, as an educator, I could see the growth of my friends through this formation, which was much more powerful than that of the seminary.

I became a lecturer and was sent to study canon law, in which I had done well at Werrabee because it was taught by Charlie Mayne. I was sent to Rome before the reform of canon law. It was useful to study law but I had little respect for canon lawyers and some were very bigoted. I was then sent to Japan where I studied in secular institutes and then taught at the seminary in Sydney.

The YCW was prohibited in Sydney. Priests who had studied at Propaganda College in Rome (and very few had studied at Louvain) got the Roman view that was aimed at preventing Communists from gaining power in Italy. Christian Democrats were supported by Catholic Action. In Belgium (at Louvain) where diametrically opposed views prevailed, the YCW was apolitical. The YCW was banned in Sydney because it was said that there 'were no (social) classes in Australia'. The YCW leaders would stay at the Columban seminary in Sydney.

This ban was connected to it being a lay movement. In the seminary the model of a priest was not pastoral. The priest was an administrator of the sacraments. Before becoming a sub-deacon, students had to submit to an examination by four Jesuits and go through the Mass to show that they understood all the rubrics. I saw the priest as a pastor. I was keen on Congar and Chenu, who saw the main function of the parish priest as making the laity aware of their charisms.

Role of the laity

The paradox was that Archbishop Mannix supported the laity but it was Santamaria's model of the laity. Archbishop Mannix had little experience of parishes. He was the seminary head at Maynooth (in Ireland), which was an academic not a pastoral place. He trusted parish priests and supported them but his main advisor was Santamaria.

Fr Lombard would argue on the basis of the YCW that people receive formation and accept responsibility for what they do at a personal level: they make prudential judgements and these do not apply to anyone else's conscience. For example, a bishop making a statement in a political area is making a prudential judgement and this does not apply to anyone else. This principle came to me through Charlie Mayne and has been my guideline throughout my ministry.

Santamaria's aim, explicitly working through the trade unions, was to get control of the Labor Party so that they could legislate Catholic social teaching. Santamaria was bright and could marshal arguments, but Long said no, act on your own responsibility, not as an agent of the Church.

I used to visit the McCann family and Kathleen McCann was a leader in the YCW Girls. Members of the YCW would listen to groups of young people deciding where to go out for the evening, for example, and the one who made decisions in the group was invited to become part of the YCW. I was at the McCann home for a birthday party and Kathleen was late. She was working on the leader of the Children of Mary to talk her into joining the YCW. This was the thirteenth time that Kathleen had gone to visit her and the first time she was home. This was the sort of dedication they showed. They believed deeply. They had the theory and saw it and acted it out. I saw the same dedication in my father.

The Columban Order and China

The Columban Order was founded for China. Mao had established the Jiangxi soviet in the centre of China and priests were very badly treated by warlords and Communists, who were worse. They were ill-treated very badly. When I was a seven-year-old I vowed to go to China. When I was 13 I heard of Dickie Dwyer's brother, Tom, joining the Columbans to go to China and I said I would do the same.

I also decided this when I was a prefect at Werribee where the seminarians were very immature. They had never worked and came from privileged families, whereas I wanted formation by reflection and reading. When Pope John XXIII was opening the Council he stated on page 710 in Abbott's edition of the Vatican Council documents, that they were assembled 'where God is moving humanity forward into a new order of human relationships'. The Vatican documents justified my position but it was difficult, hence I was called a traitor to my face.

But this was a long time before there was any understanding about the effects of trauma. In 1963–65, I taught in Ireland at the seminary. It was full of blokes who'd been in China and only one would talk objectively of his experiences there. The others picked up that my sympathy was with the Communists and that was the end of it.

Lecturer at Manly

I came back from Japan in 1953 and taught at the seminary at Manly. The training of priests in Melbourne and Sydney was very different. I was supportive of the Jesuits in Melbourne rather than of the diocesan clergy in Sydney. They were clerical. I found when speaking in parishes on the Propagation of the Faith Society that there were some good pastors but a surprising number were not. They were superior. It was intolerable.

I spent most of my working life in Sydney teaching at the seminary and got the YCW introduced into Sydney via Pat Ford. Pat Ford, a lecturer at Manly, was different – he came from Wagga, which was AFL country, and he had YCW experience. I appointed myself the professor of Catholic Action in opposition to the bureaucracy but I had student numbers and their support. I lectured informally on multiculturalism for the auxiliary bishops. The founder of the Paulian Association and the PALMS (Paulian Association of Lay Missionaries Society) who still send 10 to 12 lay missionaries a year to places, believed in the responsibility of lay people and began to run Catholic adult education programs at the place where all the Catholic organisations had their headquarters. I lectured there on Asia, as did Santamaria, who came via Bishop Lyons and was extremely disloyal to the Archbishop. A bitter, nasty environment.

I left in 1961 for New Zealand. I was sacked from the (Manly) seminary over the system of formation and got shunted off to New Zealand for a couple of years before I went to Ireland. I had been dean of students in the seminary and believed in treating them as adults. Others saw it as my job to supervise the students and hence I was sacked. The Jesuits were split; the Columbans were right-wing anti-Communists because of China; and the clergy in Australia had problems coming to terms with Vatican 2 in both Sydney and Melbourne.

In New Zealand

I went back to University in New Zealand, studied for an Arts degree in history and taught myself Gregorian chant. When Bill Halliday in Ireland wanted to go to Chile, I was brought in to replace him. I had 178 students of Gregorian chant on a Saturday morning and they were

an unruly class. I told them they had to appreciate music from another cultural age and then I also taught them cultural anthropology, introduction to sociology and sociology of religion.

Charlie Mayne SJ

Charlie Mayne SJ and I developed into friends. Charlie Mayne had a classmate who was a Columban and they were best friends. Mayne was pro-Columban and sympathetic. The YCW was not in Ireland but it was in England, where he met Pat Keegan, a big leader, and they became friends. The majority of seminary students were not convinced of the YCW. Mayne, ordained in 1945, was a bit unusual. He separated himself from the Jesuit immersion and was not like most Jesuits. He had a great influence on priests.

The seminary professors were very individualistic. In contrast, Henry Johnstone SJ was Irish and interested in anti-Protestant stuff. He was a Hebrew scholar and a scripture scholar but he had little influence with the students. Most of the students were not influenced by Charlie Mayne either.

Australian universities are the most secular in the world, with no faculties of theology and philosophy departments of not much use. Australia had a self-justifying democracy – having the right to vote had no religious justification.

Later life

I was chaplain to the Secret Services in Japan. I visited Korea, Taiwan and Vietnam, the last on a Vatican passport issued by Archbishop, later Cardinal, Knox to visit Fr John Dooley, a priest. I travelled around the North where the Viet Minh were in control. The clergy were anti-French and anti-Communist: it was a very divided society.

I retired at the end of 2007 and as they were closing Turramurra, I came to Melbourne. I received an honorary doctorate from Brother McDonald (Australian Catholic University) for my work in justice and peace. I congratulated the Chancellor on this decision as this area is not widely recognised. As part of the process, I met to discuss my life with the person preparing the citation. I resolved then to go to New Norcia for a week to reflect on the events and persons in my life and to see it as a whole, a course of action that I recommend.

7 Jim Griffin

Interviewed 11 April 2009

I was at school until 1946. I had, and had even then, a sentimental attachment to the *Catholic Worker* (CW) because of my family background. Also, as an altar boy, I sold it outside St Joseph's Church, Malvern, when it was a penny paper and used to be flogged from the pulpit as they then did. I left school and did various things and eventually I graduated in Arts in English and History. My career, such as it has been, began in 1952 when I went to Xavier. I had been, for some months, a newsreader on radio 3AK, the only Melbourne night station in those days. I'd met Frank Maher again at university when Frank was temporarily lecturing in law. When I decided that I didn't want to be a commercial radio newsreader, and that didn't take too long, I was looking for a job. Frank asked Vin Buckley if he knew anybody who would like a teaching job at Xavier. Of course we are now talking about an era when Xavier was not a professional school in the sense that we would know it. A paternalistic school and I have written a tract on that.

Teaching at Xavier

I was 22 years of age and I started teaching at Xavier. Nobody told me what to do or how to do it or anything like that, though for some reason or other, they took to me and I took to them. I can't say that I have been anything more than a very sceptical Catholic – that is my nature. You would not call me a pious Catholic at any stage of my life after puberty. I had no intention of becoming a school teacher. All I wanted to do was kick the dust of Melbourne and Australia off my heels, get out of Australia and go to Italy.

But after I'd booked my fare to Italy I met a certain young lady (my future wife, Helga) and eventually we both decided that Helga would go back and see her Austrian-German family, and eventually we were married in St Peter's Rome because the Vatican was the only place that would marry us instantly, when we got there. When Helga became pregnant we came home during the Hungarian crisis (1956) as I thought it was a much safer place to bring up a family.

I had no intention of going back to school teaching but Xavier rang up and I went back for another ten years. But it had its limitations and at 38 years of age I'd had enough. I was offered a job at the University of Papua New Guinea by Professor Ken Inglis and spent 15

years there at the University of PNG with an interval of four years in Townsville. I finished my career in the Office of the Prime Minister as a principal analyst on Papua New Guinea.

Joining the *Catholic Worker*

I was asked to join the CW in 1953–54, before I went to Italy, because of my association with Vincent Buckley, one of the younger people who came in at that time. The older chaps, the Heffeys, Butlers, Kellys and so forth – Santamaria had gone by this time – they were all coming to middle age, had families, wanted to send them to expensive schools – we weren't workers, that's the truth of the matter. They weren't sending their children with Paddy Stink and Mickey Mud to the Christian Brothers either, to use James Joyce's infelicitous words. But because I thought I was going to leave Australia for a long, long time, I didn't take up the offer. Also I had difficulties about the faith, which never left me really. But when I came back and went back to Xavier, I decided to join, at the beginning of 1957.

We had been married in Rome by Fr Bill Smith, one of the heads of Belloc House who may have thought that he could recruit me to the Movement and so on. At one of their talkfests in 1957 I did oblige him by chairing a meeting that was addressed by Jim McAuley, but I wasn't into that and when I saw what had happened, the political mayhem that had happened while I was away, the Split in the Labor Party (which appalled me with my background), I thought that as I was making a commitment to Xavier I should also make a commitment to what I termed the 'constitutional opposition' to the Mannix–Santamaria axis. So that's what I did.

The *Catholic Worker*

I started with the CW in August 1957 and there was a lot of hack work to be done. There were no advertisements, no signed articles and some of the fillers were casually concocted out of the newspapers. I remember doing one absolutely useless piece on Liu Shao-chi who was allegedly destined to succeed Mao. The CW operated without professionalism. We had a manager, Frank Keating, the editor of sorts who was Tony Harrold who was also the columnist Marum, who used to collect cheeky excerpts and iconoclastic items. As time went on, Bishop Fox provided us all with a huge number of laughs. Tony would quote Bishop Fox, 'What we need is more babies and less motor cars'; 'If we had more prams and less motor cars, this country would be in a better place', and so on. Tony used to collect clerical faux pas. Tony was a very clever editor, a former editor of *Farrago* and a principal lawyer in the firm Rylah and Rylah.

By the time I joined, the older blokes were gradually, but very slowly, trickling out. They would come in for a special issue or something of that kind. They were all good Catholic *bon viveurs* as well. So if I turned up for a meeting at 8 o'clock on a Friday night, I soon learnt that Tommy (Butler) and Gerard (Heffey) and company would not be there until at least 9 o'clock, having dined at Triaca's with Murray McInerney, Dermot Corsson (who became a judge), Jimmy Gorman (who became a judge), all these legal eagles. So what would happen is that the first item on the agenda, particularly if they had come from Triaca's, would take up the first two hours or more, and then at 11 o'clock, when people were getting weary and their wives were waiting for them at home, they would say, 'Item number 6. Oh Jim, you could do that, an article on Lui Shao-chi and here are some cuttings'. These were not the CW's more vital days. It suffered from piousity. Sometime around then they dedicated the CW to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. I thought they were empty words.

Starting the CW

They all knew Bob (Santamaria). He left the CW well before I got there. Santamaria had jumped the gun as far as getting the CW out. It was discussed in 1935–36. There were models in the US (with Dorothy Day, a very different kind of CW), an English one, a Canadian one too, and the Campions decided to have one independent of the Campion Society. 'Bouncing Bob' decided to start it off and he and Val Adami went up to (Archbishop) Mannix to ask his permission. This was the first time Mannix had met Bob and Mannix said that they didn't need his permission. I puzzled over that because Mannix wouldn't have said that six or seven years later.

Bob wrote the first couple of issues and he put his stamp all over it. According to Colin Thornton-Smith, Kevin Kelly knew Bob and feared that he would go off the track. Kelly read French and was one of the few people who had read Maritain. So they decided that they couldn't let Bob go on dictating what was in the CW, including a tinge of anti-semitism as per Hilaire Belloc. They put a bit in his mouth and changed the editorship to a group of three people – Bob didn't like that. The three people were a movable feast but included Kelly, Leo Ingwerson and his brother or someone like that, and Frank Keating as manager had an interest in it too. So Bob was gradually eased out of it but with the foundation of the ANSCA (Australian National Secretariat for Catholic Action) his focus changed.

Catholic Action

The Champions were 'the flower and fruit' of his adult education programs according to Mannix. He may have failed to get State aid for schools but lots of things were going on in adult education. At the Eucharistic Congress in Melbourne in 1934, at the end of the proceedings, there was talk of setting up Catholic Action (CA). Mannix had progressive ideas about it, whereas Bishop Kelly's view of it was to say rosaries and prayers.

Mannix asked Frank Maher to become director at ten pounds a week, ever the Scrooge. Frank needed a deputy and Kelly was the obvious person but he came from a poor family and was getting married. Bob had the advantage, as his father was very much behind him and so flattered that Bob would be working for Archbishop Mannix that he subsidised the salary of five pounds a week. Bob was getting five pounds a week, which was very little compared with what he could get as a barrister. Several other people were passed over or couldn't do the job – Bob was not even the second choice – but Mannix took a great liking to Bob even then. Each thought the other the cleverest man he'd even known and neither was sophisticated enough to realise that each was talking about himself.

Bob became the secretary and eventually the activity of ANSCA widened. It was supposed to be a think tank. When I was at school I learned the marvellous slough of words, 'Catholic Action is the involvement of the laity in the apostolate of the hierarchy'. Bob and Frank were employed in a very advisory capacity.

Industrial involvement

The first person to start the industrial involvement was Frank Keating, who was really the only worker in the CW in my day, apart from a few farmers. Frank, a boilermaker working in the Newport railway yards, was a very enthusiastic trade unionist who was worried about the influence of the Communists. He talked to people at the Trades Hall and to Bert Cremean, deputy leader of the Labor Party in Victoria. Bert died in about 1946 and many people have said the Split in the ALP would not have occurred if he had lived. Maybe so, but he was a very able chap and, interestingly, a good friend of John Wren's – their families had grown up together. So Bert got involved and he got really worried about what was going on and he became a friend of Dinny Lovegrove, a well-known ex-Communist and they decided that if you wanted an organisation there was a ready-made base in the Catholic Church. We all went to Mass on Sundays and on Friday nights you could find us in the fish-and-chip shop.

Frank Maher

Frank Maher was not that involved in the CW. He was a gentleman and both he and Denys Jackson took on some of the mannerisms of GK Chesterton but Frank was a tweedy, county type. He was an English, not an Irish, gentleman and didn't want to get his hands dirty. I got to know him extremely well. Not only had Frank recommended me for the Xavier job, but we also taught together for five years and eventually I succeeded him as senior history master. We remained on very good terms, had lunch together every day at school and walked together after lunch. He was a man of great indecision but he had an overweening ambition to write a book on decision making. He was always very thoughtful and, seeing him one day in the school yard, ruminating, I said to someone, 'There's Frank Maher thinking about what he's got to think about'. There wasn't that much cerebration going on in proportion to the time it took. I do not mean to disparage Frank. He was a very intelligent man.

Frank had a job in 1951–52 with the Catholic Action secretariat but he didn't have enough dynamism once the Movement got going and Santamaria eased him out with the involvement of Mannix and Fr Murphy at Newman. They gave him an overseas trip except that they didn't pay for it properly. Frank put up with a lot of humiliation over that, and when he came back from overseas he found that he'd been moved and Bob had his job. He had been moved to do research and had a room at Newman College but he didn't do much and so he left. But when he went to the University, Zelman Cowan hired him. The university was getting very concerned about the dropout rates of first-year Law students and they decided they wanted a real teacher. Frank was exactly what they were looking for. He ended up being very distinguished, with an honorary doctorate.

The Movement

The idea of a Movement grew until 1945 when the bishops were persuaded to support it. Mannix, Scrooge that he was, threw in a few thousand and they wanted John Wren to throw in 50,000 pounds but he very sensibly wouldn't have a bar of it because he said it would lead to sectarianism. So the bishops got behind it. What is astonishing is that they ignored what I learnt at school, that the Movement was not supposed to get involved in party politics at all, that the action of Catholics was something distinct from Catholic Action. Yes, you could get involved as a Labor MP or whatever but you couldn't involve the Church in it. The distinction was blurred and the Movement thing got mixed up with mandatory Catholic action, such as the National Catholic Rural Movement, which Santamaria was running and continued to run for years in this anomalous way.

Fortunes of the *Catholic Worker*

The CW flourished and was a roaring success in the early 1940s with a circulation of 55,000. It gradually lost support in the 1940s in relation to the socialistic program of the Labor government, which the CW and Mannix supported. In the powers referendum of 1944 the CW was vehement, even against Labor, about the 'servile State'. Archbishop Duhig was getting more and more restive about the socialism. There was always this argument about whether socialism had been condemned by the Syllabus of Errors in 1864. Mannix said this was not the kind of socialism condemned by Pope Pius IX and Pope Leo XIII and that this was socialisation.

The CW lost more people over bank nationalisation, which was a great mistake by Chifley in the 1949 elections, for doctrinaire reasons. It wasn't needed; what he needed was credit control. Mannix was tolerant of the proposal provided you were given compensation and you set up cooperative banks. The third thing that diminished support (CW circulation fell to 28,000) was the coal strike, when Chif put the mining leaders in jail.

In the anti-Communism referendum, Santamaria and the bishops were red-hot to ban and Mannix sat on the fence because he didn't like banning things. Santamaria in his biography asks Mannix if he (Santamaria) should have agreed with him or not and Mannix says, 'I wouldn't have spoken to you again if you had'. A bit of humbug there really. They were the lead-up things to what happened in the politics of the CW. From the 1950s there was the problem of Evatt – a tragedy. Petrov threw him out of balance.

Action of Catholics

It is extraordinary that Mannix did not understand, as the Vatican had to point out in two rulings, the difference between Catholic Action and the action of Catholics. We learnt that in school. Archbishop Simonds, being a theologian, understood it from the beginning: Archbishop Beovich, Roman trained and director of Catholic Education, took till the 1950s to realise that they were on the wrong track and quite contrary to the action of Catholics. After the Split, Mannix and Gilroy separately both asked for a ruling from the Vatican. It gives the ruling in Gilroy's favour and, the impudence, Mannix denied what the Vatican was saying. Bob was also reluctant to accept it. If there'd been a different archbishop ...

Daniel Mannix

I am 15,000 words short of finishing a biography of Mannix, a very big one, though I might not live to see it come out. The big puzzle is the personality of Dan. The last chapter of my book will be called 'No Mannix, no Santamaria' and that sums it up. Mannix had extraordinary charisma. The opening sentence of the book is, 'Daniel Mannix is arguably the most charismatic person in Australian history. He lived in an aura of majestic self-esteem'. He was a monarch.

There was a lot of mythology around him, for example, that he never ate. I interviewed Jean Goddard, his housekeeper. She used to make up to five small dishes for him of a night time. He always had an adequate diet. It was said that he never wrote his speeches. Rubbish! He wrote and memorised important speeches – he had a marvellous memory and marvellous eloquence. One of the reasons why he could do this was that his ideas were very simplistic. All this stuff about his prodigious reading and learning and so forth – it's absolutely not there. He had a wonderful way of listening to people, he could follow and pick up the elements of a conversation and continue it. He was highly intelligent without being highly well read. [*He hadn't read Maritain then?*] No, no!

One of the greatest pieces of fraudulence of his biographers was the claim that he had written an article on the Commonwealth and the States based on the principle of subsidiarity and the need for new States. This was written by Bob, and there's nothing the matter with that, in the course of writing the social justice statement for 1953. Gilroy and others said it was too political and they wouldn't accept it. Dan liked it and decided to publish it under his own name in his own journal, *Twentieth Century*. I know this because I used to help Frank Maher, the editor, get out *Twentieth Century* and Frank told me. All the chaps in the CW knew that Bob had written the article. The biographers also said that Mannix was a doctor of laws. He was Dr Mannix *honoris causae* for his work in peaceably assisting at the dissolution of the Royal University in Ireland. Later on he got a doctor of laws because of his patronage of its succeeding university, the National University. Now Joh Bjelke Petersen got a doctorate of laws ... It's in Frank Murphy's biography. It's unbelievable really.

Santamaria's ideas

Bob was well informed in certain limited areas. Bob was a debater and didn't care about the truth but about winning points. I had certain arguments with him and if he didn't win them,

he'd pack up. I am not as intelligent and bright as Bob, who was all bounce and dialectic, with his cherubic face and the image he projected. He would start off his speeches, 'We are in a state of dire calamity. It reminds me very much of Thucydides in the Peloponnesian war ...' He was a great name dropper – Gibb, Toynbee, Spengler all those great doom crackers – without realising they were not in agreement. He was a highly intelligent man but such an egotist that he didn't listen to other people unless they were telling him something he wanted to know. He provided the ideas, and Mannix the monarchical seal on those ideas.

Herbert Evatt

Evatt was a wonderful enigma. He used to go to see Mannix at every opportunity he got. He had been put on to the High Court in 1930 when he was 36. He got tired of that and he was a brilliant bloke and churned out books and highly original judgments while he was on the bench. War started, my country needs me. He was ambitious and that got the better of him. He left in 1940 and Alan de Lisle in his biography, *Evatt the Enigma*, says that every time he was in Melbourne he'd frenetically try to make time to see Mannix and Mannix liked to see him and hear from him. They went on talking right up to the year of the Split, 1954. When Bert became leader of the Labor Party he wouldn't have gone to see Mannix very much after that. But Mannix encouraged Santamaria to listen to Evatt and to take him on board as a contributor to his policy. Santamaria had seen through Evatt and said, 'I have now met a man who doesn't have a soul'. Bert was as ambitious as Bob was. Bob was able to recognise someone as ambitious as himself.

Was Santamaria the power behind the throne?

To answer that you would have to investigate how sincere Santamaria was about Catholicism. Dr Stan Ingwerson was pro-Franco and had married into the Parers, who were a Spanish family. Stan told Jim three times that Bob said, 'Stan, the way to power in Australia is through the Labor Party and the way to power in the Labor Party is through the Catholic Church'. Stan used to call Bob 'the Sicilian bandit'. Stan, Kelly and Bob were part of that famous debating team mentioned by Manning Clarke among others. Stan and his brother Leo were the soul of honour. They would not tell a lie and they prided themselves on it. There is a caste of mind among Italians ... A deep faith and opportunism co-existed in Bob. Once he had fallen under the spell of Mannix and achieved this partnership, any ambition was transformed into becoming the power behind the throne. He loved being the grey eminence.

The Ingwerson brothers were put off Santamaria. They were once engaged in a debate and an unexpected question came up and Bob gave a brilliant answer. When it was over, Leo said to Bob, 'That was marvellous! Where did you get those stats from?' And Bob said, 'I made it up'. They never spoke to Bob again. Bob was always capable of that, and dishonesty of that kind never worried him. Bob told whoppers and looked you straight in the eye. Mannix told venials. Bob claimed to have read Machiavelli and rejected him.

The Melbourne hierarchy

Mannix was in delicate health as a student and prior to coming to Australia ... For reasons not altogether clear, he was exiled to Melbourne. He had expected to be either Archbishop of Dublin or of Armagh. He'd been made rector of Maynooth seminary at 38 and was short of 50 when he came here. He was advised by people in Rome not to accept Melbourne.

He was not sent here in disgrace. What people have forgotten is that Melbourne was probably the richest Catholic diocese in the English-speaking world. It was a plum job. Mannix came to love Melbourne though it took him ages to settle down. The reason why he was so out of control during his early days here was the rancour. Gradually he got Raheen and his own newspaper. He lived like a prince and the Catholic people loved him. There was adulation and while some people hated him he didn't mind that. It's nice to be hated by people you have no respect for.

Archbishop Simonds

The victim of this was Archbishop Simonds. Mannix humiliated him. There are many stories. For example, Simonds, in a limo with an honoured guest, is passing by Raheen and the guest asks who owns this fine place. 'I do,' Simonds replies, 'but I can't get the tenant out.' Mannix lived too long in that sense. In 1959 Cardinal Agagianin was sent out to see if Mannix was senile. After being insulted several times he decided Mannix wasn't senile. The Vatican feared an uproar, even a schism, in Melbourne if Mannix had been moved.

The CW didn't agree with Mannix, but what do you do about it? The question was whether we would have a 'sneak society'. McCarthy was such a calumniator, such a rotter, that it was Eisenhower who put him down in the end. Mannix thought McCarthy was OK and he got good going in *News Weekly*. The CW didn't go in for that stuff but they thought things were pretty grim. Menzies in 1948 would have been against banning the Communist party. He

went overseas and was influenced by the Berlin airlift when Stalin put the West on the spot. Someone less resolute than Truman might well have capitulated.

In the early 1950s Mannix himself did not think that Communism could take over in Australia. Why did he change his mind in 1954 during the Split? Because he was so vain. He was challenged and so conviction went out the window. Although the number of members of the Communist party was down to 5000, we were being told that we were in danger of being taken over. And you girls were being told to pack your nighties because the dreadful Comms would be rampaging and men'd be swinging in the street from a lamp post. Extraordinary.

The Spanish situation was absolutely part of this. Mannix had sensible reservations about Franco but he thought that Mussolini was the greatest Italian leader that ever lived. It was one of the great con acts of the 20th century the way Mussolini conned people, including Hitler who modeled himself on Mussolini. When they (Italians) eventually went to war they had two searchlights – that's how well prepared they were. Italy came into the war on 10 June when France was invaded and even Denys Jackson, an out-and-out Fascist, called the Italians 'jackals' for coming in then.

Denys Jackson

Mannix said Jackson was the only Englishman he ever liked. Jackson had a great influence on the other Campions – he was older, he'd been to Oxford. Without sounding brash, they really were underdone and Jackson put it all over them with his broad general knowledge ... He wrote under the names of 'John C. Calhoun', a slave owner for the President of the United States, 'Sulla', the anti-republican Roman consul, and 'The Onlooker' and he had a monopoly of writing about foreign affairs in Catholic newspapers. What was Mannix up to? Why did he allow this? In a relaxed way, he was lazy and a social democrat ...

I always believed Jackson was rehashing journalism from other sources and never believed he was an expert, unlike the other CW members. Colin Thornton-Smith did a marvellous piece of sleuthing. He was coming home from his PhD studies at the Sorbonne and he was reading an article on the Algerian crisis in *Time* on the aeroplane. When he got home, his mother, who was an avid reader of the *Tribune*, gave it to him and he realised that he had already seen the article. Colin was tenacious, numbered the paragraphs 1–8 and found that paragraph 8 in one source was paragraph 2 in the other. It was very cleverly disguised. He sent the evidence to the *Advocate* and Michael Costigan, the editor, said, 'What are you

saying? Are you saying the Denys Jackson could be a plagiarist?' and wouldn't publish Jackson again.

Part 2

The Catholic Worker

When I joined the CW in 1947 there was a phasing out of the old guard. Vin Buckley came back from Oxford about the same time and Vin suggested that they take the CW over, not in a sinister way but as a passing to the next generation. In 1952–53 Vin put Tony Harrold, Frank Reid, Brian Buckley, Peter Kelly and probably Colin on the CW. I had an independent path because I was at Xavier. Vin and Brian progressively fell under the spell of Knopfelmacher ... who wanted them to take over the CW and have a radical socialist, anti-Communist thing. They were very tolerant on the CW and let Brian have a page for a few issues writing under the name, 'Telemar'. In one of these, there was the headline, 'Russia and China, a lovers quarrel'. That was Knopfels lunacy.

I got wind of the business that they were going to stack and take over the CW, or have a controlling majority of the editorial board. The idea was that the CW should change its format and become an intellectual journal with signed articles. While I could see the merit of signed articles, I opposed it because it was being pushed in conjunction with the other (Knopfelmacher's) idea. *News Weekly* could do that.

Peter Kelly was a phenomenon. He was a printer's devil and joined the CW. Vin had a great capacity for educating people who associated with him. He brought people out from the Department of Supply where he was working and doing his degree part-time and encouraged Frank Smith and Frank Reid to study. They ended up as Vin's disciples.

CW banned

What happened when the CW was banned? Tempers were hot after the Split and after Evatt lost the election. Jackson wrote that Catholics who wouldn't support the Movement were 'Barabbas', 'traitors' and so forth. Major Jordan, an intelligence expert, was ranting at Communion breakfasts that the CW were traitors. All that happened was that Gerard (Heffey) wrote an article critical of Jackson. There was no abuse in it, but he said that Catholics have the right to vote for any political party except the Communist Party and, by implication, it is wrong to abuse people for exercising that choice. Before this, when the

Movement came up in the second half of 1954, the CW had an emergency meeting and called in all the people for a big powwow about alerting the bishops that everything was going wrong. They wanted to write an authoritative article about what the Movement was all about.

A letter was drafted to all bishops. This was a very respectful group and the motion to send the letter to the bishops was passed by one vote. That's how cautious people were. Only a handful of bishops replied and all, including Gilroy, said you should follow the direction of your own archbishop. There were some laudatory letters about being good blokes but not very many. Bishop Lyons, who told Colin Thornton-Smith that if a bishop told you that black was white you had to believe him, he simply scolded them as not knowing anything about the real situation. They didn't print anything until after Jackson came out and then only about the right to vote.

They had a censor, a Fr Pierce from Essendon, who was there to tell them if anything was contrary to faith and morals. Fr Pierce said he didn't want to see it (the article) published and Tommy Butler, the chairman, asked if it was against faith or morals. He then was told that the archbishop wouldn't like it. 'All right,' said Tom, 'we'll go to print'. The next thing he gets a note from Bishop Fox, who said they shouldn't publish and that the Archbishop wanted to see the chairman. So up goes Tommy to see Mannix, though first of all Mannix had forgotten he'd summoned him. Mannix gives him a blast and Tommy defended himself. Mannix said, 'You have this niggy naggy approach to the Movement – what will you put in the place of Groupers? How will you stop Communism?' Butler said, 'Well there's the Liberal Party'. 'The Liberal Party? But they've done nothing,' Mannix replied. Butler said, 'There's the army, the legislation about secret ballots and the unions. We are not in any danger'. Mannix said, 'Something must be done about you people'. He got Bishop Fox to write to priests in the archdiocese to take sales of the CW out of church grounds. This was half way to ruination and the rest of it comes when the news gets around that the archbishop doesn't like the CW. The CW went down to about 11,000 (sales) almost immediately.

Mannix said he didn't ban it. But he boycotted it and made sure everyone knew it. The CW older blokes used to call on the archbishop and after things had died down, in 1959, they asked if the boycott could be lifted because they were good for ecumenism and had lots of Protestant readers. Mannix said, 'Why not sell it outside Protestant churches then?' He was 95 at the time and sharp as a tack.

Decline

The CW went down the drain. It coincided with some internecine strife in which I was a hot-tempered participant. So we delayed what Vincent wanted for a few years. Kelly was too uncouth ... but Vincent got him a job on the *Bulletin* and then he went to work for Billy McMahon and he wrote the most vituperative things about the CW. In April 1955, Kelly wrote a letter with a reference appearing in the CW to 'Movement thugs'. This should never have passed the editorial board and that sent Mannix up the wall. I pulled out in 1968 though I still wrote a few articles from PNG.

Exposing the Movement

In 1959 there was a special issue of the CW, an epoch-making expose of the Movement. It was written by Vincent Buckley, with inputs from the committee, especially from Tom Butler. The CW started to get out some special issues, one on the White Australia policy ... Then they started to sign the articles and it became more like a literary magazine with cult of personality able to flourish if they had the appropriate personalities.

There was a blow-up at a meeting one night when Vin tried to railroad a student leader, Bill Thomas, on to the committee. We were prepared to consider him but he was so egotistical and out of control really and made a shocking impression. So I said, 'He's not ready. Put him off for a few years'. In the course of the discussion about him, Vin told a few fibs but an eminent young lawyer was there and he corrected Vincent who was shamed and never came again. I got him invited back but he never returned. Brian Buckley, Bill Ginnane, all that Apostolate lot, never came again. Bill was more on the CW side but he wouldn't go against Vin. Vincent wanted to be the brains behind the editor so instead they got out their own journal, *Prospect*. But their original idea was to take over the CW.

People involved

That left a rump and personnel changed over time. In 1967 there was John Ryan, Max Charlesworth, Colin Thornton-Smith from the French Department, me, Paul Ormonde, son of Senator Jim, Ken Hince, the music critic, his wife Pat Hince, a senior master in English at Xavier, Tony Harrold and a few more hangers in. When the CW was banned it was Frank Keating's bread and butter as the manager. Frank lost his income overnight and he had six kids. Fortunately he was rescued because the CW was getting involved in housing

cooperatives and Frank became the manager and gradually got half a dozen of them to manage and he used the same office.

Max Charlesworth was not prominent until 1960 when he came back from New Zealand. Max became the public intellectual of the CW. Vincent and I became close friends when we first met in 1950. One of the first things that Vin did was to take me to meet Max in the TB sanitorium at Watsonia. Max had a lot of influence on Vin. Vin wanted to be the number one public Catholic intellectual but it was really Max. Vin had the Apostolate and Max did not think much of the Apostolate and I thought it was codswallop. The CW was being run by Tony Harrold, John Ryan, and others including Colin, Jim, Fred Bendeich and Paul Ormonde.

8 David McKenna

Interviewed 14 December 2009

Early life

I had an elite education as the youngest in a family with plenty of money. I had 17 years with the Jesuits – five years at St Louis in Perth, six years at Xavier and six years in Newman College. I had a very, very happy childhood in Perth. My mother was a music teacher and in 1949 my family came to live in Melbourne where my father was taking up a new position. The children were all extremely distressed by the move, as the eastern States were seen as more distant, in Perth, than Singapore or Hong Kong. After some traumatic experiences, I settled in to Xavier and did well in Matriculation, coming third in the school and gaining four first-class honours, doing it easily.

I then went on to Melbourne University, doing honours Arts and Law, a six-year course. Very few people did this because you had to complete an honours degree in Arts and the first two years of Law in four years, and then in years five and six you finished the Law degree. I never had any doubt that my future was practising law but I now think I would have been better joining the Commonwealth Public Service as a lawyer; I was not really suited to private practice.

I was a partner with three others in a law practice for ten years and volunteered to leave when an economic downturn hit. I then joined Legal Aid for seven years. During that time I was often solicitor-in-charge at Ringwood and enjoyed the administration of an organisation that was bringing legal opportunities to disadvantaged people. I retired at 65 because the demands on staff were becoming intolerable. The Federal government continued to fund Legal Aid but made up the funding by exploiting the staff. I was working 60 hours a week and suffering from stress.

Newman Society of Victoria (NSV) and the YCW

The developments of the NSV were set off by the YCW who were the first ones who wanted to unite religious beliefs and working life. Several students, for example, Bill Ginnane and quite a few others, joined the YCW and then NSV. The YCW didn't have the intellectual aspirations of the NSV but it was working with the YCW principles. My brother went into the YCW when there was an extraordinary plethora leaving the YCW to join the priesthood. It

was very common; you worked for a couple of years and got into the YCW and then joined the priesthood.

Recruitment techniques

Some were in the NSV and followed Santamaria. The Jesuits were the theological theorists. There was a typical career, which I thankfully did not follow. First, you went on a weekend to Belloc House conducted by Santamaria and the Jesuits Fr Jack Fahey and Fr Smith, who was very smart. There were talks on Catholic social doctrine. The critical talk was given by Santamaria to attract or frighten people into taking the next step, which was to join the Movement. Then you would have joined groups in the union to defeat the Communists. It went: the theory; Santamaria's view of the world; getting active in the unions.

This was very heavily pushed in the parishes. My father, a senior executive in the MLC insurance company, was asked to take part in the North Balwyn parish but he wouldn't join because he had a secular view. He'd concluded that in his position he should be very secular. He had been converted from the Uniting Church when he was 18.

Involvement in the Newman Society

When I went to Newman College in 1956, I discovered an anti-Fr Golden and anti-NSV sentiment among students, particularly medical students who were there for six years. In my final year, I became the president of Newman College, a position usually held by medical students, and was able to mentor young students into a different view of the NSV. By the time I left in 1961 many more students in the College were also in the NSV.

In 1956 I did not go to the NSV summer school but I did in 1957, reluctantly, and enjoyed it very much, seeing Bill Ginnane, Vin Buckley and Peter Wertheim. I was inclined to participate and was pretty sensitive to the ideas. One night Vin asked me to come down to the hotel in Anglesea and four hours later I was convinced that Santamaria's Movement was inappropriate to the Church.

Santamaria

Santamaria was ambivalent in moral activities and devious, as has come out in Patrick Morgan's book. I met Santamaria socially a few times and noted that he managed relationships with important people very well, for example, with the Prime Minister. The Labor Party was very receptive to what Santamaria was doing. He did remove the

Communists from the higher positions in the unions, especially the Waterside Workers Federation.

I was not actively recruited by the Movement at school as I was clearly going to university. The Movement wanted to recruit bright students who were going to do apprenticeships and who could offer leadership, so their hunting ground was more the YCW rather than the NSV.

In the early years, by the time Vin Buckley was a spokesman for the NSV and Fr Golden was installed, there was a hell of a break-up between the Movement and the NSV. The Movement was operating in universities to draw people to them much as Opus Dei does today. They ran into a brick wall with Vin and Fr Golden, who had political understanding, and so the Movement was never successful there.

The Movement

When the Movement became relatively successful in removing Communists from the unions and installing their own people, a consequence, and a surprise, I think, was that these people were now voting and directing policies in the unions and getting positions in the Labor Party as a consequence of being in the union. Santamaria realised that he was on to something he'd never dreamed of. The first battle was fixing up Dr Evatt and they opened fire on him in a ruthless way. That is why my own attitude, and the NSV's, converted to anti-Movement. It was very volatile and they were mightily opposed.

Reforming the Labor Party in Victoria

I joined the ALP late, as I was in an ideological fix. I went to an ALP conference in the Collingwood Town Hall as a visitor and the Stalinist apparatus run by Hartley and Crawford shocked me. There was no independent disciplinary tribunal and people got expelled by the executive, who were Hartley and Crawford. Dick McGarvie didn't get expelled, because he was too big a fish to take on. I decided not to join under those auspices.

By 1968, I was talking to Michael Duffy, my closest friend with whom I discussed politics interminably, and I said to Duffy that it was no good carrying on about Santamaria; the Labor Party would never be reformed unless people like us get into it. He agreed and we joined the Glenhuntly branch and spent a couple of years feeling our way around, finding out how the Party operated. Then came the masterminds, John Cain, Dick McGarvie and John Button, who were behind the development of the Participants. I was very much involved and was on duty the night we fixed up the Victorian Executive and abolished the Stalinists. All sorts of

things happened then that could never have happened. McGarvie and Button were very clever lawyers, supreme minds.

The trigger to the intervention was the support of the federal executive. Clive Cameron realised that, to fulfil his ambitions for ministerial office, the Victorian apparatus had to be wiped out. He did the dirty work. Hartley and Crawford were disposed of, though Crawford hung around the fringes. They knew about the Participants because we published newsletters. Gough Whitlam was never invited to come to Victoria but he used to creep over the border, virtually disguised, to come to meetings (of the Participants). I remember a meeting in a church hall in Beaumaris. Bob Hawke was there and Gough was telling us what he was building up to when the doors were thrown open and George Crawford appeared saying, 'I've caught youse all! Youse all are having an illegal meeting! I'll have youse all fixed up!' He never did: we fixed him. I continued in the Participants for a long time while practising as a lawyer.

Campion Society

My law partners were Tom Butler and Gerry Heffey, both Campions. Vin was a member too. They had wanted to examine the ideological movement that went along with being a lay person and were greatly influenced by Chesterton and Belloc. Their heroes and literature came from the UK. This was the beginning of a lay intellectual view of the Catholic religion. I joined the Newman Society and none of them was disposed to these English Catholic writers. Belloc was a notorious anti-Semite, appalling, and nowadays he'd be in prison for it. In other respects they had a lot of influence on Heffey and Butler and others but they were always stuck with this anti-Semitism. This was not the case with Chesterton – he was always more friendly. A couple of the English Catholics involved went back to before the Reformation, families like the Howards.

The Newman Society (NSV)

In the Newman Society there was a significant development of views of theology, the best of which were by Vin Buckley but there were other papers on where the Church was going and where it should be going. Because they'd inherited an idea of what the YCW was like, they needed to examine it and see what was in it for them. This pointed the NSV in the direction of working through what were Catholic religious beliefs and what academic life was about. The authors of *The Incarnation in the University* were all heavily involved in that. This was avant garde on how Catholicism related to the world and was very good indeed; it was re-

thinking the religious beliefs that one was brought up with. The two crucial doctrines were the Incarnation and the Redemption and what we were doing as lay people.

Spanish Civil War

This [had] coincided with the Campion Society being influential. It was a very big issue. When I started work with Heffey and Butler I spent a lot of time discussing the war. The average parishioner was being educated that Franco was a hero [for] defeating the Communists whereas, for my group, Franco was a Fascist. The celebration of Franco by the Catholic Church was a terrible scandal.

Communism

Belief that Communism was a threat was limited to an area – really only in Victoria. It would have been good if Santamaria had kept out of the ALP politics. I spent my life studying Australian political history and I believe that Santamaria was one of the disasters of it. Apart from the evil things that you read about him doing in Patrick Morgan's book, he kept Labor out of power for 28 years and they were the years when Australia was receptive to, and could finance, significant social and political reform. This preoccupation with Communists, and only with them, meant that people like Arthur Calwell gradually lost influence.

Santamaria would give history lessons at Xavier and would bang on about how close the threat was – it was absolute lunacy. Then there was Belloc House, Jack Fahey and Paul Duffy (both Jesuits), the latter I assume was assistant secretary to Santamaria.

History group in the NSV

I was a member of a history group that discussed the relationship between Christianity and history and finally we decided that no relationship existed. What we were trying to prove was a connection. Greg Denning, the most brilliant history student and a Jesuit, was trying to satisfy himself but he finally said there was no connection whatsoever. So all those dubious attempts in (NSV) groups to hook religious beliefs into subjects were based on erroneous assumptions.

Political action

The first political activist in the NSV was Bill Thomas whose uncle was Scullin. He got stuck into it to the extent of physical violence. If he'd survived (Thomas was killed in a car accident in the early 1960s) he probably would have lead more of us to action. By and large, the NSV

was conscious of generalisations but it was not into the mucky detail of organising branches and becoming the secretary as the Participants did. Maryknoll and other communal experiments had little influence with students.

Fr Golden SJ

He was an interesting figure and a significant driving force. In 1966, when working as a lawyer, I was a member of the senior group. At meetings Fr Golden never made comments. He pushed subjects for summer schools for the younger students but he was not an innovative thinker. In some respects he was reasonably liberal but in morality he was incredibly conservative. He was a bit of a mystery. He made a decision that he would support and encourage thinking but he was always suspect within the Church, including with Mannix.

Archbishop Mannix

I met Mannix when the latter was staying at Sorrento for his summer holiday and the NSV would come across from the summer school at Point Lonsdale to visit. He would be sitting in an armchair, sharp as a tack, and he would ask what sort of theology we had been discussing and Fr Stormon would answer. It was like meeting royalty or a prince; he had extraordinary dignity and the charisma about him was staggering. He had a brilliant mind and I have no doubt that the Nationalist government in Ireland decided it couldn't let him loose in Ireland.

I only met Archbishop Simonds once. It was a tragedy that he never got a chance to make his mark because he could relate very fruitfully to the Australian culture. He had ill health and the calibre of the hierarchy was poor.

Decline of the NSV

By 1966, in the senior group, I could see that the punch had gone out of it. Fr Golden was not getting the support he needed. Vin was going through a period of alcoholism and that was sad and had an effect. All of us were supportive of and committed to the central doctrines and the administrative power of the Church and that gave us permission to go off on the fringes with innovative thinking. Vin became more detached; Bill Ginnane went to Canberra; Peter Wertheim went to Brisbane and had a breakdown. I am more interested now in the questions about God that are raised by physics.

9 John Molony

Interviewed 13 April 2009

Ideas of Catholic Action

I was in the seminary at Werribee in 1945 and was introduced to concepts of Catholic Action (CA) by Fr Charlie Mayne who would get people like Ted Long and others to speak. My interest was sparked quite strongly in what was called the lay apostolate, known more formally as CA, and then in the YCW. In 1947 I was sent to Rome but, needless to say, there wasn't much in the way of CA that we, as seminarians in the College of Propaganda Fide, were able to be involved in. I already had good French and I began to read the works that were coming out of France in and around the lay apostolate: Montcheuil, Yves Congar, Henri de Lubac and many others. My intellectual development took place around the writings of the French theologians that were deeply, of course, motivated themselves by their desire to see the Church in its totality, rather than simply in its hierarchical manifestation. Their attitudes were fairly sharply distinguished from those we were exposed to in our courses on theology and dogmatic theology at the university in Rome.

Italian CA

I was ordained in 1950 and began an apostolate in the Roman countryside on weekends. Each weekend a small group of us would go out, priests who were staying on for postgraduate work. Others had gone home, of course, after ordination. We were assisted by admirable young men from Italian Catholic Action but, without any criticism, what I had already begun to think of as CA and knew something slightly of in Australia through the YCW -- which I was never a member of, of course -- there was a very large gap between that, and what was conceived of as Italian Catholic Action. I am not being critical particularly of these young men. They were mostly students. One who was my constant companion, Lello Alberici, was doing Law. He had no concept of the theology of Catholic Action. They had a chaplain, and I was very discreet, not asking what the chaplain did, but they just went out and acted on Catholic principles. There was no formative method.

Contact with Bob Santamaria

I was ordained a priest for the Ballarat diocese. Bishop O'Collins was the bishops' representative towards the Movement and therefore in constant contact with Santamaria

and other members of the Movement. In 1951, for whatever reason, Bob wrote to me and told me that he was writing to me because Bishop O'Collins had advised him to do so. I then went to Boston to work as a canon lawyer in September or August 1953, so there were a couple of years during which there was fairly constant contact between myself and Bob, whom I had never met. In the seminary, Charlie Mayne SJ had a much less than positive attitude towards the Movement and all that it did. Not that he would ever have denied the need to engage in positive activity on the part of lay people in respect of Communism in the union movement, but he had a very clear concept, he understood the idea of Catholic Action. Nonetheless, Santamaria had assumed proportions, not iconic [although] that was later the case, in the eyes of young seminarians of whom I was one. Bob started to send me *News Weekly*, which came, and that was it.

European CA

In the meantime, I was able to establish relationships with French and Belgian CA. I spent some time in Paris in the parish from which worker priests had emanated and there was a team there of priests. As a side issue, but related to this, our small team in Propaganda College (in Rome) was myself, (Archbishop) Frank Little, (Archbishop) Bede Heather, Bishop Peter Quinn and Ian Burns (secretary to Cardinal Gilroy for years). Frank always said that I was his dearest friend. We were kids together at St Pat's Ballarat, so it was a long relationship. There were two American Maryknoll priests. My reading of the French authors continued and was enriched by Bob Campbell. I started to get books that were sometimes unavailable in Rome and so I became more and more a theoretician of Catholic Action. Then I went to Paris and Belgium and the London headquarters of the YCW. They were wonderful young people, incredible.

Canon lawyer

At the end of that time I had to go and work as a canon lawyer. I would have much preferred to do theology but it was regarded as a practical necessity. Frank (Little) was able to do theology while I was struggling around with interminable canons. You learnt nothing practical, so that's why I had to go and spend nine months in Boston, working in the court there, and needless to say, there was no CA, though curiously, I do remember vividly being taken by one priest in the archdiocese of Boston out into the country somewhere, and there was a little YCW group in early 1954. Then I spent a couple of weeks in Chicago. There was a wonderful publishing house there that published in English a lot of the stuff that I had read

in French, and CA there had taken an informal but quite remarkable development, as a deliberate act. Young Catholic men and women had deliberately intermarried and so I went to a couple of meals, with, say, ten couples. It worried me deeply because they had become a kind of enclave – Chicago 1954. I wondered how it would develop from there. It was a statement of rejection of racism in its most fundamental form.

Curate in Ballarat

I came home then and was thrown immediately into the life of a young curate at the cathedral in Ballarat but I was the diocesan canon lawyer, the diocesan master of ceremonies, the diocesan chaplain to Catholic Action, which only consisted of – there was no talk of any connection to the Movement—the YCW, the National Catholic Girls Movement (NCGM), which later became the girls' part of the YCW, and the Young Christian Students (YCS). In about 1957 I wrote a book called *Towards an Apostolic Laity*, essentially on the Jocist movement and its formation. I then edited the *National Catholic Action Chaplain*, which was a quarterly and only lasted for three or four years, and wrote a fair bit of it.

Anti-Communist

Here we come to the crux of things, namely, my own dilemma, which was deeply personal. My mates in Propaganda College were my family. I was away from home for seven years and when I got home I didn't recognise my brother. We never spoke on the telephone. Propaganda was a family. [During my time in Rome] there was a good deal of suffering. I remember taking a bloke called Max Perenervich to the station to go back to Yugoslavia. He was dressed up like a Roman candle, and was never heard from again. The Chinese, in particular, came [to Propaganda]. When China fell to Communism they never went home and those that did, died. This sadness deeply seared me. I was as anti-Communist as you could find. Looking back, I never, ever went near the Movement; I had nothing whatever to do with it. Nothing. I never went to a meeting. I vaguely knew, and sorrowed over it, that some excellent Catholic laymen were totally devoted to the Movement and it grieved me that it wasn't possible to embrace them into an adult form of CA. Fr Vince Fennelly, Fr Dan Boylan, both Irish priests and now deceased, and younger Aussie priests – they came out of that seminary [Werribee] and they were straight into it.

I have just been reading the reminiscences of Jim Ross. I was the chaplain. Jim had been the national secretary of the YCW. It wasn't until I read Jim's memoir in the last couple of months that I saw what Jim was subjected to by these older priests. They had slammed the

door on him. He was a full-time worker for the YCW and he had no money ... Probably the first volume of my memoirs sparked others, including Kevin Peoples, to write their works.

Founding Cripac Press

With my schoolboy mate, Dr Gerald Caine, now deceased, I founded Cripac Press, which became Dove Communications later when we sold it for a peppercorn to Garry Eastman. I was so imbued with the lay apostolate, that it was not my apostolate, to the extent that I flatly refused to take any role on the board of Cripac Press because it was a lay apostolate – it was their apostolate. Years later, they made me become chairman.

Deep unease

Reading Jim Ross' memoir recently crystallised a deep unease, which I had always felt. I never could bring myself to accept this proposition that the lay apostolate, CA, was the participation in the apostolate of the hierarchy. First of all, it reduced it to servility and was a denial of the essential element of the lay apostolate, namely, it was *their* apostolate, not a priest's. Jim Ross has a startlingly clear mind and he had it as a youngster too. You become part of the system and I was part of a system. I felt it all those years but I didn't have the guts to stand up and promulgate it.

The anguish comes in to this day. The Movement was there combating Communism, in the trade union movement in particular. It was not for me to deny it. At an earlier period, that had happened with Fr Jerry Golden at Melbourne University. I never had much to do with it [the Movement]. I [was a] pretty busy young bloke – reviewing books ... When I look back on it, I must have been blessed with very strong health.

In 1960 I attended a lay apostolate congress held in Rome. Bob Santamaria rang and asked me to get the proceedings and Bob had someone pick them up from the airport. About a fortnight later Bob had done what he wanted to do with the proceedings, [which were] a couple of volumes in Italian. Bob had sent them up to me and then I was reading away. I got the Melbourne *Advocate*. I read this translation and explanation that Bob had construed, based on what I had read the night before of the proceedings. I drove over to Gerald (Caine) with the *Advocate* and the proceedings from Rome and said to Gerald, 'That's it for me: this is a betrayal. The document had been misused to support Bob's view of the world'.

National Catholic Rural Movement

Kevin Peoples from the Ballarat diocese, from Terang and in the YCW, was a lovely, warm and totally devoted young man. He was easy pickings for the National Catholic Rural Movement (NCRM), which existed in the diocese and [with] which, again, I had no contact because, as far as I was concerned, it was a farce. The atmosphere was such in Victoria that I could believe that and act on it but I daren't write it. And to go along to Bishop Jimmy O'Collins and say, 'Look. This is perversion of CA'. Well, let's not discuss it. So Peoples became their [NCRM's] great fundraiser, all around that area of Ballarat and the Riverina, those rural Catholics. The funds were going from direct bank orders to the coffers of the Movement. I did not know that until Kevin told me.

Adult Catholic Action movement

It was completely mysterious. I went to Bishop O'Collins and said that what we needed now was an adult Catholic Action movement. I will admit to some degree there was an element of deviousness.

The thing that vastly irritated Bob was that he could never get people out of the YCW to come and join the Movement. The big thing was to get a mandate. This was the ultimate expression of the participation of the laity in the work of the hierarchy. You couldn't do Catholic Action unless you had a mandate. I knew that there was no chance whatever of getting a national mandate but I thought if I could only get one in Ballarat, then we could move from there. This was at the end of 1960, and to my surprise, Bishop O'Collins said yes, you start it in the diocese, which I proceeded to do. Jim Ross and others were in it.

Conference at La Verna

In April 1961, to my surprise, I was invited to speak at the annual convention of the NCRM conference at La Verna (Kew). I had never been to a meeting of the rural movement although Patrick Morgan, in his book on Santamaria, mis-stated that I was a priest and a member of the NCRM: how could a priest be a member of even a farce like the NCRM? It was farcical in respect of its claim to be Catholic Action. I am not saying that they were not wonderful people and did wonderful work, but it was not CA. It had no formative element in it. I was invited. Rossie and Kevin, both deeply involved, have got their own take on this. I would place more trust in their memory than my own.

One of the reasons is that, at the end of 1963, I left the priesthood. In early 1961, there was no such thought of leaving the priesthood but in leaving I almost emptied myself and destroyed all my correspondence. I went to work at the Heinz factory and I didn't have anything. Even worse, some months later, working at Mr Heinz and washing out tomato cases, I read an ad for someone who could translate medieval Latin and type. I thought there's not going to be too many, but when I arrived to apply for the job, I remember going in to the registrar and he said, 'Have you got anything to prove your Roman degrees?' And I said, 'I've got nothing except my word'. And suddenly I said, 'Hold on'. I had picked up a copy of the *Catholic Weekly* that had a review that I had written of a book. My memory of those early times is clouded. I had a trick to remember and remove information. I would study like mad for six weeks and then after, I would sit down for a week and literally remove it from my brain. That's what I did with those years in order to survive and retain my emotional and mental stability.

Set up by Santamaria

I can only give my version of what happened at La Verna, namely, that it was a set-up job. I was invited to speak on the adult movement of Catholic Action, which I did. Bob didn't speak until the end, but there again, that's my memory. There was a wonderful woman called Maureen Bourke who came from the same world as Kevin Peoples. Kevin was there as it turned out, and Jim Ross was there. Bishop Henschke, as innocent as the day was long, was in the chair. Bob was scampering around in his usual ebullient manner. He was like india rubber. You could whack Bob but he would bounce higher. He was just an extraordinary bloke really. I laid it on the line. The clear derivative implication was that the NCRM was not an adult movement of Catholic Action, that if they were going to do anything reasonable, that's what they had to start. To say nothing of the Movement itself, which I didn't even mention. And it wasn't supposed to be its conference in any case – but Bob was still running it despite the fact that he was no longer secretary of the NCRM.

Bob had taken exception to something that Maureen (Bourke) had said that gave him to think, and it proved to be true, that Maureen thought like Fr Molony. So Maureen was therefore suspect. She felt the need to reassure Bob. Bob was going on – I can't remember, I would be very surprised if I listened.[On one occasion in the St Kilda Town Hall I was very tired. Bob had invited me to come to some big outfit that he had and he was talking. I was up on the stage with other dignitaries and I fell asleep and dropped to my knees!] In the midst of this, Bob must have said something about dedication and Maureen said at the end,

'Oh, Bob, please tell us more about dedication'. Gerald Caine said, 'Sing it for us, Bob'. I thought Bob would explode.

Kevin Peoples stood up at the end of that turnout and said to Bishop Henschke, 'My Lord, I have decided that I want to resign my position. I want to go home with Fr Molony.' We went to the car and I said to Gerald, 'I didn't say goodbye to Bob.' I would have to recognise that there was some element that was a friendship. The most extraordinary thing is that, from the correspondence that I haven't read but for some reason Kevin has been allowed to read in recent times, and it's in the State Library, that it's clear now from excerpts that Kevin has written that what I was trying to do was introduce Bob to a method of spirituality. Bob had enormous gifts that were being misused. The Church needed a new Bob. So I was writing about prayer and so on to Bob. And then this happened. I went to say, 'Bye bye Bob. I'm off,' and Bob said 'You can go to buggery'. These were the last words we ever spoke.

Clericalism

Now all I can say now is that, in a way, I betrayed a greater cause. I would be a priest practising today if I could have not been a cleric. Celibacy didn't worry me, I was too busy. I couldn't stand the clericism. Justin Simonds, the darling, he wasn't a Roman and he treated me in a way that no Roman ever would. On three occasions, he said to me, 'When the old man dies,' and he had great reverence for Mannix, 'you will become my auxiliary bishop'. Dan died in the November.

I knew Denise well. She was president of the NCGM, though there'd never been any relationship. I felt like I left CA in the lurch. I could not have saved the lay apostolate from what it has become. There is very little of it around the world despite Vatican 2. They left out formation. You cannot have Catholic Action without formation. I do not decry other movements, for example, St Vincent de Paul, the Legion of Mary and so on, and I fostered them as a priest. But they were not Catholic Action. So that's the world I left. I was losing my faith because I was playing the priest, because priesthood had been turned into clericalism, and I had to escape. The very thought of becoming a bishop was not even thinkable. I know that would have happened because Justin was determined and I wouldn't have been able to say no because I was a thorough Roman. I had no ambition but I had been the head prefect of Propaganda and all head prefects going back to 1627, all of them, had a mitre. So I said to Denise, 'I'm off, come with me'. And she did.

Santamaria seminar 2008

I spoke at Melbourne University six months ago. It was a eulogy for Bob. Some dear old Jesuit spoke about Bob, and the Chancellor of Melbourne University chaired it. There was a dinner later and I was sitting next to Mrs Cain and she said, 'Thank God you did what you did. John (Cain) had to force me to come to this to hear about Santamaria, and had you not spoken, it would have been a shocking night'. I only had notes and I was told that I would be the last speaker. I was going to wait to hear what the others said and fill the notes out later. They taped it and I have asked them twice for a copy. It was put on by the Santamaria family and Melbourne University Press to recognise the second volume of Santamaria's letters.

Mannix

In Melbourne, I said that the Movement betrayed the Church and the results were disastrous for the generations that followed and to some extent still are; the lay apostolate was betrayed by it; and that I blamed Santamaria less than Mannix, because in my estimate, then as now, Mannix was *the* custodian of the mission of the Church. It was his responsibility to preserve its purity: whether he didn't understand that, which I suspect to be the case. I didn't attack Santamaria but I said he was wrong but he was not only permitted to be wrong but he was fostered to be wrong. My own bishop was completely ignorant of the concepts of CA and so on. I cannot excuse ignorance in people who have no right to be ignorant. There is no excuse for being ignorant if you've got a responsible position in which you should exercise knowledge and act on it. It is a cross to revisit what I said about the Church and to reconstruct what I said in Melbourne. To have it on record would be a good thing.

I was a little boy when I first got to know Dan Mannix. The Pope was a mysterious Italian but Dan ... I was confirmed by him and he preached on and on. This was in Williamstown. He had to teach us the whole of the Church's doctrine in one hit.

I knew Father Lombard well and had deep affection for the total embodiment of the conceptual framework. By extension, the YCW-ers were the manifestation of my apostolate. I was devoted to their formation and the concept that this is their sacred vocation in life. That's the essence of it, that's what the church needs and it's got to come back.

I often felt better to be the John Molony that I am, rather than become a cipher, walking around with a mitre and a big stick.

10 Kevin Peoples

Interviewed 14 April 2010

I got into the Young Christian Workers (YCW) in about 1956 when the organiser for the Ballarat diocese came and called a meeting. I was one of the leaders of the CYMS, the Catholic Young Men's Society, which was a social group. We were asked by the curate in Terang to come around to the presbytery – it was the first time I had ever been in the presbytery – and this young man from Ballarat, called Jim Ross, was a full-time worker. He came and explained the YCW to us and I wasn't particularly interested in it. I wasn't a person who thought deeply about too many things. I'd left school at Year 10 from Terang High.

It was only when I was leaving that I said to Jim, 'Where are you going tonight?' and he said something like, 'I'm not too sure'. And I said, 'Where are you staying?' and he said, 'I haven't got anywhere to stay'. And I said, 'So where do you sleep?' and he said, 'I often sleep out and last night I slept on the beach at Warrnambool'. And I thought to myself, 'There's something going on here that I need to find out about'. So after that, I thought I should join the YCW. So I was one of the ones in Terang who argued strongly in our CYMS group that we convert over to the YCW. And I became a leader in the YCW because Jim Ross didn't have a bed.

[Did you give him a bed that night?] I didn't but someone else did. I went to see someone else who had a great big house and lots of spare beds and said, 'Hey. This fellah hasn't got anywhere to sleep tonight'. So they took him home. And it was that commitment that convinced me to join the YCW.

Fr John Molony

Of course, Jim was an influence but the biggest influence in my life at that that time was Fr John Molony and he was the chaplain for the YCW in the Ballarat diocese. So we started our own group but every now and then we'd drive up to Ballarat and we'd have all the leaders from the diocese and John would sit there, a formidable person. We thought he was extraordinary and he was. He had great faith in us as young workers – he always called us young workers – that we could actually change the world, ourselves. And for someone like myself, coming from a family where my father was a factory worker and my mother a domestic servant who left school at 12 – to actually meet someone like Molony who would

tell us that we were capable of changing the world – we actually believed it after a while – it was an emotive thing for my life. So the YCW was the biggest formative thing for me and I still, I think, have those same values now as when I first joined the YCW.

The enquiry method

The YCW was geared to individuals coming to grips with their own life. I'm convinced now that what Cardijn had, that no-one else did, was this thing called the enquiry method. It's a very simple process but what it did was it led us immediately into our own world so that we were forced to see the things that were actually happening around us and then we judged them in the light of the Gospel discussions that we did at our meetings, and then we were to act. And, as well as that, we had State campaigns and various other things. The whole YCW was geared around the idea of action in life and it was quite revolutionary. We were never going to do really significant things as young people but that formation – that made us think we were capable of being creators and change makers – was a very significant thing when you were aged 18. Very powerful.

Linking up with Bob Santamaria

In some ways the whole Santamaria thing was a contradiction to the YCW. And, you know, life is really about chances; things that happen to you that you don't have any control over. I only found out when I was doing the research that some of the Santamaria people in the town really cultivated me as a person they could get in; that I would join either the National Civic Council (NCC) or the National Catholic Rural Movement (NCRM). So I became friendly with a married couple, [Pat and Maureen Bourke] returned soldiers, and I decided that my life had to change because I really had no qualifications. I worked in an office and so I thought that I had to make a big change and they [the Bourkes] said, 'Well, why don't you come and work for us on the farm during the next federal election?' Which was 1958 and so I went to live with them and of course they lived and breathed Santamaria and it was through them that I ... We had marvellous times talking about the Split.

They used to get these letters from the National Civic Council (NCC) that were cut in half, an extraordinary thing. You'd get one letter one day with half a page cut down the centre and then the next day you'd get the other half and put the two together. It was this whole world of conspiratorial, secrecy stuff and I couldn't believe it. So I suddenly became very interested in the whole DLP-ALP thing. My family was, of course, ALP because of Dad and Mum, and they didn't support the DLP. I was always testing myself out with my father. I had the

Bourkes, Pat and Maureen, telling me the DLP was the answer and I had my father telling me to stay with the Labor Party.

Joining the Rural Movement

As a result of being with the Bourkes, when the election was over I had to find work and they suggested that I work for the NCRM which had just lost an organiser. I thought, OK. I didn't have a job. But the Santamaria group said no, they weren't particularly interested in employing me. I hadn't met them and they said they didn't have sufficient funds to pay me. I thought, 'Oh, well, they're not interested'. But the Bourkes said, 'Why don't you collect funds for them?' The Rural Movement (RM) had had a sub. of one pound and they'd changed it to three guineas and made it voluntary. And seeing the RM was always trying to get its members to go and ask people would they pay the three and not the one, it was suggested that I might become a volunteer to go round and ask the farmers to change payment from one pound to three guineas.

So I went down to Melbourne and I went to an executive meeting at Belloc House at Kew. Santamaria, I presume, was there but I cannot remember. But certainly Bill Crowe, who ran the RM was, and all the executive, who were farmers who had come down for the day. It was great fun and I remember feeling that this was great. I liked the farmers and I was impressed with the meeting and with the Jesuits who ran Belloc House and I met a couple of them. This was a very big deal for me, coming from a small country town, to be in Kew, meeting Santamaria and these blokes.

That was in November 1958 that I went to the executive. Pat and Maureen Bourke, who introduced me to the executive late in the meeting, said that I had worked for them on the farm, that I was YCW, that I didn't know much about the RM, that I was willing to help going around the farms to ask the farmers to pay more money. And I think they thought, 'Oh, well, we've got nothing to lose. Give him a try'. I was 22. I had an old Peugeot car. They said they'd pay the expenses and I said I'd go anywhere. So they gave me a list of members, a green book with the bank orders and a receipt book if I collected cash and said, 'Any time you want to'.

Money collecting

I started in early 1959 and to my surprise I found collecting money on behalf of the RM very easy. [A natural?] Well, at collecting money, I was. I started in my own district and I knew all

the local farmers and they knew me and my family. We'd lived there for a long time and so out of sympathy, they all said OK. And in the '50s they had money; farming was good. I don't think anyone had ever asked them. I developed this technique – now I had no experience at all – I developed this technique of getting someone to go with me and introduce me, and deliberately going out of my way to meet them in their situation – if they were down the bottom of the paddock or wherever. And I had enough sense to know when to speak and when not to speak, so I never rushed in. I didn't push them.

Fear of Communism

I developed a story based on the fear of Communism and where I got that from I don't know. It just came to me that, if this was going to work, I couldn't sell them an idea about how good the RM was, but I could easily win an argument with them about the dangers of Communism because every Sunday at our local church we prayed for the defeat of Communism in Russia and to Our Blessed Lady to save us all. We were all caught up in that Cold War atmosphere of the 1950s. Catholics, in particular, had a dreadful fear of Communism. I would tell them this terrible story – and now I'm embarrassed by it – saying, 'Look, we can't do much here in the country but there are people in the cities who are fighting Communists in the trade union movement and in the Labor Party and the least we can do in the RM is to increase our membership from one pound to three pounds'.

I was selling a story about Communism for a Catholic Action organisation, which in fact shouldn't have had anything to do with the anti-Communist group. But the farmers didn't know and they didn't care and they said, 'Oh, what a good fellow you are and where's the book and where do I sign?' So in time I had signed up all these hundreds of people and the RM executive was absolutely delighted and they said, 'Well, you work for us'. And that's how I started.

Communism

I wouldn't have thought anyone had ever seen a Communist but it didn't matter that they didn't have first-hand experience. What they had was the Church teaching them that Communism was a great evil and if they didn't do something to stop the Communists in Australia they would take over the Australian Labor Party and we would have a Communist-led government in this country. Most Catholics had grasped that message. Farmers in general were not left-wing people. Most of them would have been National Party or Country Party voters as it was then, or Liberal voters. So they didn't have a bias towards the Labor

Party. In all the time that I was collecting from farmers and the rural community, I rarely met someone who might have got their head around the intricacies of the Communists and the Labor Party. It was never raised.

Working for Santamaria

It was unusual but I realise now that I was a pragmatic person and that is the way I am. I was always capable of sizing up a situation and seeing what was the best for me to do in that situation. And I was rather keen on the idea of flying around the countryside in a brand new car every year and playing Frank Sinatra and Doris Day and listening to the top pops. I was a great romantic and I loved the music. As a kid, you know, growing up in a country town, to find yourself being introduced as the National Organiser of the NCRM – I couldn't believe it! And I didn't meet anyone who was any smarter or more knowledgeable than I was. They were all sort of milking cows or shearing sheep or [growing] wheat and oats. I didn't meet anybody who said to me, 'Well, what sort of a dope are you? Why are you doing this?' No-one ever challenged me.

I only ever had one situation when I realised that I could be in trouble and it was in the Upper Murray region. It would have been in 1960 and the person who was taking me round said, 'I don't want you to tell your story to this particular person or he will become very angry. And he's a good friend of mine so don't you upset him'. I thought that was very odd and I was at a bit of a loss. I'd got to the point where I was like a trained actor. I walked on to the stage, sang my song and it worked. But here was someone who, if you sing that song, is going to boo you, so I was a bit stuck for words. I now think that that person had been associated with the *Catholic Worker* group at Melbourne University and he was a graduate from Melbourne University and was no friend of Santamaria's – but was a very active member of the NCRM. The person taking me round knew that my story wouldn't work. But in 99.9 per cent of the cases, it did.

Not Catholic Action

I don't know how I would have sold the RM as a Catholic Action (CA) movement because the truth was, when it was explained to me before I started – and we did a lot of talking about this on the phone when I worked for the Bourkes – it didn't seem to be the genuine CA article. I had only one point of comparison, which was the YCW. The YCW, particularly through the training that we did with Fr John Molony, had made it clear that the formation of people was absolutely critical. The action that was taken in the person's life was individual

action or it could be that the organisation itself or its representatives would take action. But it seemed to me that essentially what decisions were taken were basically ours.

When the RM was explained to me it was presented as a set of policies. People were expected to join organisations and impose [the policies] in some way on their fellow citizens as an answer to their problems. That seemed to me to be out of kilter with my understanding of CA. So I never felt comfortable with the RM as a movement of CA and I think that was a great credit to the people who trained me as a YCW leader, because even though I had very little education, I was able to see that something was wrong with the RM.

How the Rural Movement worked

It was desperately in decline. Now I know that it had been in decline since 1945 and I joined in 1959. The RM in those war years when it started, in 1944–45, spread throughout Australia and there was a group in every State. But when I started in 1959, the so-called 'National Organiser' never went out of the State of Victoria. There were very few groups by the time that I left, in 1961. There would have been about 20 groups. But the members stayed on. That was the interesting thing. They had all these members. Hardly any of them went to a group meeting or were active. It was very difficult, granted the situation that Bob Santamaria had got the RM into. After the Split in 1954 and by the time I was there, the RM had become the NCC acting in the country.

But there were always some in the RM who saw it as something other than a branch of the NCC. They actually tried to set up credit unions and cooperatives and tried to help people get on the land and to bring out migrants. They did a terrific job, some of these people. Even in the area where I lived, I knew that the RM was active. They brought out migrants after the war. By that, I mean that they sponsored them. They met them, they brought them back, they provided homes for them and they got them a job. This was really all part of the RM. So there were always people in the RM who did really good things. Those same people would have been also members of the NCC and fighting the good fight against Communism. But they were very active people –a small minority by that time.

RM groups

They did have groups. There was not a program like they had in the YCW. They did have programs in the early days. Bob wrote the programs, very detailed programs, with what you did on the first week, the second week, third week. The meetings went on for two and a half

hours and they simply followed through. But by the time I got there, there was a fairly substantial booklet but not the sort of thing that was very useful to run a meeting. And so unless you had very capable people in the group who could translate what was in that handbook to the actual running of the meeting, it didn't work. And there was no training program that would have got people in. So one of the problems I found was that people would say to me, 'But what is the RM? What does it do?' It was terribly nebulous.

If you joined a group in Terang that my friends were running, you would have come to a meeting. There might have been 10 to 12 people there. You would have started with the NCRM prayer like they did in the YCW. They would have had correspondence with the city. There would be talk about the coming convention and who would go, and then if the local people had been doing anything, there might be a report on housing cooperatives. The group in Terang started a number of housing cooperatives. They were cooperatives where you'd get \$130,000, a huge sum of money, and people would borrow from that. They also started in that particular area a scheme for giving people calves – people trying to start up on the land. If you were a wealthy farmer you'd donate one of your calves and give it to someone starting up. So they were very creative, imaginative efforts but it all depended on the local person.

[*There was no training?*] No. And that's why the thing fell apart. Because there were only about 20 people who were capable of doing that sort of thing in the State. I was saying they needed a training program but I think that, by that time, Bob and other people at the top had decided that the RM had had its day. As far as they were concerned, the real job was Communism.

Focus on China

Recently, Patrick Morgan, in his book of documents, says that Santamaria had decided by 1960 that Communism was no longer a serious threat in the Labor Party in Australia and the real issue was Chinese Communism in Asia. So, as far as Bob was concerned, the real work of the RM in my time was to ensure that Red China was not recognised and that there would be no trade with China. So he was very keen for the RM people to join all those organisations, like the Victorian Dairy Farmers, and other wheat-farming groups. Bob saw the main work of the RM as joining these organisations and ensuring no trade with Communist China and no recognition of China. That was about it.

Annual conventions

Then they would have this annual convention, which was like a bit of a picnic, and Bob would come and give his speech and everyone was rapt in what he'd have to say. It would have absolutely nothing to do with the RM and nothing to do with CA. It would all have to do with the importance of migration; that was a big issue in my day. It had to do with the RM settling migrants in the country, not in the city. There would be talk about cooperatives and credit unions because they were still on the go and there would be talk about 'permeating' (Bob's word), 'permeating' organisations and institutions. The two things go together. I still can't say one without the other. Permeating, and putting forward the policies of the RM (no recognition of China and no trade with China).

Need for change

When I was in the RM I dropped out of the YCW. I didn't go to any meetings but I realised that I was viewed with great suspicion by my previous YCW comrades, who couldn't understand how I'd come to find myself working for the enemy. The relationship between the RM and the YCW had been bad for many, many years. I knew nothing of that history and so, as far as I was concerned (but I wasn't being totally honest, I realise that now), I was saying to myself, 'I'm working for CA'. But in my heart I knew it wasn't a proper CA organisation. So in my second year, I started talking about the need for change.

There were plenty of people – there were people who were members of the national executive – who were disappointed that the RM had become simply an organ of the NCC. So when I would say to them, 'Things have got to change. We have to have a proper training program. We have to have proper formation. We have to have Gospel discussions and people have to take control in their own lives of what they do for the RM. It shouldn't be based on a set of policies determined by Santamaria and the NCC,' I got a pretty good hearing for that sort of thing. By this time, I'd worked through 1959 and 1960, so I'd been there two years when I started to talk like this. I'd built up quite a bit of support, particularly in the Upper Murray region, for change. Even people who were strong supporters of Bob also felt that the RM should be more than some auxiliary body to the NCC. But they didn't have any experience like I had in the YCW. They had no commitment to the enquiry method.

The other thing was we hadn't had CA in Australia based on the Cardijn principles because the moment Bob started the NCRM in 1939, he instantly launched it with a set of policies. So we hadn't had an adult CA movement. So what I was saying was we needed an adult

movement based on the principles of the youth movement without realising, of course, that it would be breaking new ground and if it could happen that it would be quite an achievement. But I didn't think too much about whether you could do it. I thought, 'This YCW works. Why wouldn't it work for adults?' So I never saw the problem.

Bill Crowe

I eventually went to Bill Crowe who by that time was the national RM secretary. The RM office was in the same building as the NCC in Fitzroy. Bill was an active NCC person but Bob had him chosen to be the new secretary when Bob resigned in 1960. It didn't make any difference that he resigned, he still ran the RM. And I put it to Bill that, rather than have these conventions that were just a glorified way of Bob coming and talking about the state of the nation, we should have a special convention that would talk about the state of the RM. We should talk about how we could develop ourselves as a proper CA movement. And Bill was interesting because, even though he was one of Bob's staunchest supporters, since he'd become national secretary of the RM he wanted it to succeed. He realised that there was hardly anything out in the field and he'd say to me, 'I don't get any reports. We've got hardly any groups. We've got no chaplains. The whole thing is a farce'.

A special conference

We'd agreed – and what were we going to do? So I suggested, 'Let's have a special conference'. Now Bob and Co. had been planning a special convention in the Kew Town Hall to support the anniversary of Federation. Bob saw this as a magnificent opportunity to launch himself and he wanted some ecumenical gathering at the new Olympic swimming pool as well, so it would be a grand event. And here I was suggesting that we go out to Belloc House and just have 20 or 30 people and talk seriously about the RM. Now, to my amazement, that's what happened and I still don't know to this day why Bob agreed. But Bill was keen enough and the executive was keen.

We didn't meet at Belloc. We moved across the road and met at La Verna, which was a Franciscan mansion. When Bill and I were talking about what would happen at this convention, I suggested to Bill that we invite Fr John Molony to talk to the group about CA. Bill hadn't heard of John but he was quite happy but he said he'd talk to Bob. That was the way it worked. And so Bob said, 'Yes! Yes, we'll get him'. I didn't know they knew one another.

I was asked, again it's all very strange, to go to Ballarat and ask Molony if he'd speak. So I did. And unbeknownst to me, Fr Molony and his ex-YCW people who were now 25 years old and some were married and could no longer be in the YCW, they had just started their own adult movement, given permission and a mandate by the local bishop. And that was called a Christian Workers Movement and it was really the first adult movement that would be a serious attempt to emulate the Cardijn principles in an adult group in Australia. And so I turned up to say to John Molony, 'Would you come down and talk to the RM? Because there's really a chance it might change and it's possible that you could develop the principles that we believe in within the RM'.

Now at this stage, I was something of the meat in the sandwich because my emphasis was on rejuvenating the RM. John Molony and Jim Ross and Gerald Caine in Ballarat, their emphasis was on building up a Christian Workers Movement. What happened was that John said he wanted to talk to Bob to make sure he was welcome. Unbeknownst to me, although my memory is not marvellous on this point, John and Jim and Gerald wanted to work within the RM to capture or to take over the RM to gain its mandate, because it was a national mandate, and use it for their own purposes to set up a Christian Workers Movement. Whether I understood that or not, I don't know. My memory is not good on that. One of the most difficult things that I've had to do when writing about this period is to come to grips with my own attitude at that time and what I knew and what I didn't know, but what I did know was that I drove Fr Molony to Melbourne to meet with Bob. The two of them had a discussion. After that meeting, John told me that it went very well and that he would come and speak to the group. And that's about all I remember of that.

John Molony and Bob Santamaria

What happened was there was a whole world within worlds going on outside of what I remember, certainly, and I don't think I knew about. But what happened was that John decided that he would be open and frank with Bob and say directly that the RM had no future and that it should be terminated and would you, Bob, like to come with us and we'll set up a genuine movement for adults based on the YCW principles. We will do the running of it from Ballarat. And if your people are interested, and there's not many of them left, they can join with us.

Now Bob evidently gave John the impression that that could be debated, that it was an option on the table for this meeting that they would have at La Verna. John never told the

other Ballarat people that he had been open and frank with Bob. As a result, that little team was divided, because they came to Melbourne not realising that Bob knew their plan to get the mandate from the RM and use it for themselves. They came to Melbourne thinking that they would have an open discussion. Bob said, according to Jim Ross, that he would be neutral, that if the members thought that this was what they wanted, then they could go and join Molony at Ballarat and they could start their adult movement. What happened was that Bob was certainly furious that John said that the RM should be terminated, absolutely dismayed that anybody would want to take the RM's mandate from him and turn it into something that he never believed in. He never believed in the principles of the YCW.

The La Verna meeting

When they got there, John thought Bob was going to speak first, and Bob said, 'No, you speak first'. So John gave his talk on CA, which was mumbo-jumbo to most of the members. There was some little discussion. I don't remember what happened after that, but a whole lot of the RM people then spoke and they had prepared papers that were really off the point. They should have stopped when John finished his talk. They all should have sat down then. And Bob, if he'd been open and honest about it, should have said, 'We've now got to the point where you have to decide. Do you want to be with Molony and join an organisation based on his ideas, or do you want to stay with mine?' But it was never an open discussion.

Bob never, ever, said to the members, 'You've got a choice here'. He never put the case so they could have seen that. That never happened. And so Bob spoke on the second afternoon and on that occasion he said the YCW was wrong, that it could never work. Molony of course gave up the ghost at that point and had no more to say. Jim Ross was always strong and abrasive and was not intimidated by Santamaria. He argued with Bob and explained the YCW – so those two had an altercation – and my dear old friend, Maureen Bourke, whom I'd argued with valiantly over the years, she stuck with was us, the Ballarat Cardijn thing. Her husband didn't.

Then I was asked to speak and I said there was no point in speaking because my views were the same as John Molony's and clearly that view had lost the day. It was my greatest moment, I think. I said, 'No, I don't want to speak'.

The next morning they had their National Executive meeting. It was surprising that Molony came back the next day. I think they went home each night but he was there on the third day. Bob still had the RM, which he needed, as far as he was concerned, to continue the

fight against Communism, and the RM to act as the NCC in the country where there were no NCC branches. The other thing for him was he desperately needed to have his hands on a Catholic organisation, because it was important for him within the Church and for his relationship with bishops to have him as a person involved in a Church organisation. Otherwise he had just this weak body. So it was terribly important for him to hold on to the RM and of course John Molony realised that, but Bob wasn't prepared to toss it over.

But, in an extraordinary turn around, because he'd won the day Bob said to the meeting, on the next morning, 'It's just marvellous what John Molony is going to do in Ballarat. We should give him all the encouragement that we can. We should see it as an experiment with an enquiry method for adults and we should invite him back to our conference next year to tell us how he's got on. Now would you be prepared to come back, Father?' Loud clapping and cheering and John said yes, he'd come back. John was broken-hearted at this stage.

Bombshell

When they were just going to break up, I said that I didn't want to work for the organisation anymore and that I would be resigning. That was something of a bombshell. I remember silence for some time and then Bob said, 'I think that's a good decision. And he said, 'I think your interests are with Catholic Action in Ballarat and the adult movement. Your experience is in the YCW and I think that it's probably good that you go'.

So the bishop thanked me and the meeting ended at that point and I walked out to the car with John Molony and Jim Ross and Gerald Caine from Ballarat. And John said for me to come up to Ballarat and they'd find work for me and I would join their organisation. And then John said, 'I didn't say goodbye to Bob. I'll just go back and thank him,' even though he had nothing to thank him for. He was back in a few minutes and they said 'How did you go?' and he said, 'He told me to go to buggery'.

At the same time, and I didn't realise this at the time, Maureen Bourke had gone to say goodbye to Bob and he told her she could go to Hell. So he was upset, he was flustered. Of course we were all greatly shocked. We were learning about life. I was very naïve. I wasn't politically astute. I never quite understood what Ballarat was on about. I understood in general terms, of course, the argument and I could see that they'd lost the argument about CA. All those people that I had been speaking to in the RM – they just went quiet. When Bob spoke, they just all fell apart. There were only two or three people, mainly from the Upper Murray, who fought it out with Bob. Most people just caved in.

Santamaria victorious

I would say that Santamaria was loved by those people. They admired him enormously and even though they wanted something better for the RM, if they thought for one moment that you were trying to put one over on him, they would come out against you. A huge personal loyalty. And I don't know how this happened, but my friend Maureen Bourke, who got the job for me in the RM, she wrote a letter to Bob a month after the convention, worried about her own personal relationship with him because he'd spoken so crudely to her. She made some comments about the convention. One of the things that she said was that it was conducted in a very bad atmosphere and also conducted in an atmosphere where people came to believe that the Ballarat group was out to 'get' the RM. Now where did that idea come from? Certainly nothing that Molony said, or anybody said, would give that impression.

Somebody, and I don't know who, I think there was some work done before we got there. People thought or understood that Ballarat was coming down to take over the RM and steal its mandate. In other words, John, innocently, decently, had told Bob everything. Jim Ross is a different sort of person. Jim would never have trusted Bob with any of that information. He would have taken on Bob in the same way that Bob took on everybody else, in a very political manner where you held your cards close to your chest. John wasn't like that. He was an upfront, honest priest who loved Bob, as it turned out. I didn't know that story, which is another story for later, but John couldn't bear to deceive Bob in any way.

Bob knew exactly what he wanted and Bob planned, I think, for them to be done like dinners when it came to the crunch. But I don't have proof of that. All I know is that what happened was that they were treated badly, as those who hadn't come with a serious proposition to put, but to steal something. But at the same time, Ballarat wanted the mandate and they weren't honest and open about that. John was to Bob but John never ever said. He gave his talk [at La Verna] on abstract notions about Catholic Action. If, instead, John had come in and said, 'Look, I'm starting up, or have just started up, an adult movement of Catholic Action and Bob has asked me to come here and speak to you. It could be we might discuss how we could work together,' and sat down, now what would have happened then? John Molony didn't have political nous. He was dealing out of his depth. Bob was far too cunning for all of them.

The fate of the RM

The RM didn't close down until 1984, which is absolutely amazing. I didn't know that it went on for so long. But of course nothing really went on except the name and seven or eight people. What happened fairly quickly was the thing virtually fell in a hole. So the old days were gone forever. I didn't actually know that, but I'd actually killed off the RM by having this sort of a convention. So when they went to set up their 1962 national convention, the numbers were so small they had to postpone it. In 1963 they had to postpone it again. Nobody was missing it. The thing actually died after La Verna. It had been dying for years but then terminally. By the time '64 came, again they couldn't get a group together so a small number went to Albury and discussed what might happen to the RM. Bishop Henschke was still going, he was the chair, the bishops' chair, and he employed a person part-time to keep the thing going in Wagga.

The RM, because of the money that I had collected, appointed an organiser. No-one for a while, no-one for a year after I left, and then they appointed someone. So they had this organiser, they had a part-time one in Wagga but they were all chiefs and no Indians. They still had national executive meetings and after a short time the RM just came down to a national executive and those people had some groups. Fr Markey, who was a friend of Bob's and a close supporter of the RM, said that perhaps in 1961 there were only 15 groups in the nation. Now it would have got down to two or three after that.

It kept going. Bob, I think, felt responsible, because he wouldn't let it go to Molony. Bob felt responsible so he gave it a new direction in about 1962 and the direction he gave it was that it would concentrate on working with similar groups in Asia. He was taken then with this idea. He'd been to the Philippines himself, he'd met with the priests up there with the poor in the landed areas, he thought that the RM with its skills in building community and building cooperatives and credit unions might be able to assist these smaller community groups in the Philippines and in Indonesia and in some places in India. He had good contacts all around these areas. So the RM, and I have looked at the minutes and reports after I left, spent much of their momentum supporting these groups in Asia.

Attempts to abolish the RM

The Second Vatican Council started in 1962 and went on to 1965. Bob told the group that new things were afoot in the way Catholic Action would be defined and it would be defined in ways, according to him, more suitable to the way he'd always understood it. So this was a

good time to seek change in the Australian Catholic Action organisations. He put the view to the executive that perhaps it was proper that they drop the whole idea of Catholic Action for the RM which he'd never believed in anyhow, and that the RM become 'action of Catholics', which was the same idea that he had for his civic organisation, the NCC.

There's a real thesis to be written about what happened at that point, because the poor old bishop, Bishop Henschke, clearly had never understood what Catholic Action was, but had an emotional attachment to it, and he always felt that the RM was a CA body. When Bob suggested that it drop that nomenclature completely and become an 'action of Catholics' movement, he was, I think, a bit shocked. I have read the material between the two of them as Bob tries to convince Henschke that nothing really will change, they will still have their groups, they will still say their prayers, they will still do all the things but they will have the freedom to operate without asking each bishop if they can go into dioceses, they will be free as citizens to do these things and they won't have any political worries about embarrassing the Church, not that that had ever worried him. And so Henschke said he would put that to the Australian bishops. This material in the Santamaria archives is the most interesting stuff that I have read. Henschke finally puts it to the bishops in about 1965 and the bishops say no.

Now it is extraordinary that the bishops had never, ever stopped the RM years before. In 1957, when Rome made its statements about Bob's Catholic Social Studies Movement and said that he couldn't be involved in politics and Catholic Action, they did the dividing up but they left Bob still with the Catholic Action body, the NCRM. They should have, at that time, when Bob started his civic organisation, they should have cut him right off any involvement with Catholic Action. I can't understand that. They must have thought that it was not worth worrying about; it was so small, and it's his baby and it's a silly old thing anyhow. But they left him with it. When he came back in 1965 and said, 'I don't want the NCRM any longer to be Catholic Action,' ironically, they said, 'No. We want it to be Catholic Action.'

So it stayed on, coming out of the NCC office. In the last few years it was funded completely by the NCC. The bishops stopped paying any money to it in the late 1970s and it just managed to struggle on to 1984, with *Rural Life*, its periodical, coming out once a year, and the money for the organiser. He didn't have much to do because it would have been one or two reps around Bendigo by that time. At that stage Bob said, 'We can't fund you anymore.'

Part 2

In Ballarat

[The members of] the little group that met in Ballarat had no connections with the RM or Santamaria and most of them would have been horrified to think that anything would have gone on between that group and Santamaria. The only person who would have had connections with Santamaria would have been Molony himself. Certainly Jim Ross would never have gone back anywhere near Santamaria after the events at La Verna. But John had agreed, after La Verna, to accept Bob's invitation to come back to the next RM convention and report on what would happen and what had happened to what Bob called, 'the experiment in Ballarat'.

It would be wrong to see what was happening in Ballarat as an experiment because before I got to Ballarat to ask John if he would come to Melbourne and speak, they'd already got permission from their bishop to start. They had a very clear idea on how it would run, the way it would operate. So any talk of experiment was quite wrong. They had a very clear idea on what was going on.

So I went to Ballarat to live and I lived at Jim Ross's home. We had our first meeting. There had been one meeting before the RM convention, which I hadn't gone to, so this was the very first meeting that I had gone to and it was held in the YCW office. John Molony came late to the meeting – there would have been about ten of us there – and I was pretty excited because this was the first meeting for me of a new way of life, a new organisation, and I understood that it would be an adult movement based on the YCW principles. I had great hopes for it. Now Molony didn't come. We waited and waited and in the end we went down – the room was in Sturt Street – and we went down and waited for him to come.

Mandate withdrawn

So we went out on the street and saw John coming along. Surprisingly he was walking. Normally he would drive his car. And I could tell that John didn't look too well. So we went up and started our meeting and went through the preliminaries and when we got to the section where we were going to talk about our lives and the various things that had happened to us, he, then, Molony said, 'I think we'll leave it at that because I've been told by the bishop that this movement no longer exists and, as from now, that's the end'.

We were all terribly shocked and there was some talk amongst us. The oldest one of us would have been 27 so we were all pretty young, a couple of married members, some of whom had put big stakes into this organisation, particularly Jim Ross – he'd come back to Ballarat to help start this – and here it was, second meeting and it's finished. John never gave any reason, as far as I remember, why the bishop decided to cancel his mandate. We certainly couldn't continue without his mandate and John made it clear that this was the finish of it. There wasn't a great deal of discussion amongst us. We all just went our way.

A couple of us had started a window-cleaning business because I didn't have a job, Jim didn't have a job, and so one of the priests up there had given us 500 pounds. We bought a truck and a ladder and some chamois and we just went back cleaning windows. But for me, there was no reason for me to stay on.

For the first time in my life I'd come to a dead end. I'd always felt up to that time that I could move and do something. After the RM, and after this particular ending of our adult movement, I was at a loss to find where to go to from here. Cleaning windows didn't seem a marvellous option but that's what I did for most of the year.

Jim Ross

Jim Ross, who was made of tougher stuff than me, had quietly decided that Santamaria wasn't going to get away with this and that he would join that organisation and white-ant it from the inside. I don't remember that but that's what he did. By about October or November of that year, and I had left in April, Jim had got himself a job with the NCC as an organiser and the work he did over the next couple of years was to try and change that into an adult movement. His argument was 'If you can't beat them, join them'. My own life was virtually ... I was incapable of fighting back in any way.

Part 3

Student for the priesthood

I didn't have any qualifications of any sort, so I thought the only thing that's left for me – this is not the way you approach a vocation to the priesthood – the only way left for me is to go back and do some study and be a priest. I spoke to John about it and he thought it was a good idea, so I went to see my old friend Bishop Henschke from the old RM days and he said he'd be happy for me to study under his auspices and he would pay for me. I finished window-cleaning until the end of that year – and then in 1962 I went to Chevalier College in

Bowral which was a Sacred Heart College, and I started in form 4. In those days it was the old Wyndham Scheme in New South Wales, so I had year 4 and 5 and then matriculation. So I had two years there and then to Springwood and studied there for three years and [then] to the university. So I do everything ten years after everyone else.

Legacy of the NCRM

The essential thing was that, because of Santamaria, we never ever got a legitimate form of an adult Catholic Action movement in this country. We had a chance in 1961 to do something. There was a possibility of that in the RM itself, if Bob had agreed to work with Molony, because they had a very good relationship. John was a supporter of the NCC and wasn't a person who would oppose Bob's political machinations; he was a supporter of those. If anyone was going to work with Bob it was John, and I think that Bob had an opportunity there that he should have recognised. In my view now, there wasn't anyone better in Australia that he could have got to run the RM. He could have said, 'You run the RM for us'. And he would have got the best of both worlds. He would have got the people who were his supporters to support John but they would have got training in what it was to be [members of] an adult movement of Catholic Action. But Bob missed a golden opportunity. It was a terrible legacy that he missed that opportunity.

Post Vatican 2

After Vatican 2, Catholic Action died. It was just nothing after that. Even the YCW died. It's a really interesting question why this occurred and I have asked both Jim and John what happened after Vatican 2 that everything seemed to die. It seems that, in the new way that the Church was defined, the pilgrim Church, the emphasis fell on the notion of how the Church should change in the liturgy and within the Church, in a way. This sounds ironic for the Church that defined and related to the world.

The Church turned in on itself as the emphasis for change came at that clerical level. So we turned the altars around and we had singing and guitars and the whole thing revolved around the organisation. Little emphasis was placed on the lay apostolate or Catholic Action [as had happened] in the '50s – I can see now that that was only a moment in the life of the Church – when all these people suddenly came together who were willing to give their time. They all grew old, they all got married, they had children and it just didn't happen ever again. And so it's never picked up since. It's all downhill. But I haven't read anything much about what happened to Catholic Action. No-one's written on it seriously that I know about.

11 Jim Ross

Interviewed 17 November 2009

Joining the Young Christian Workers (YCW)

I initially [joined] a group in Ballarat and at 13 joined the local group of Young Christian Workers (YCW). Then gradually over time I moved from the local group to the diocesan council, to the State level and then to the national level. I left school at 14 to work in an abattoirs and after working there for about a month I discovered that I'd actually won a scholarship to St Pat's College at Ballarat. So I went back, and afterwards worked in an accountant's office for a couple of years and then I worked for the YCW.

I was State president in May 1956 and at that point we had a State organiser named Len Chalkey, who was about to retire after about a year, so I decided to apply for that job – which I did – and started working as State organiser in August 1956. I was acting national secretary for a period and then finally national secretary based in Melbourne in 1958–60.

I was drawn to the YCW initially by the invitation of a person who was both older and a fairly significant footballer in Ballarat to come and so I did. I became a member of the leaders' group and there was quite a significant change because in the leaders' group we looked at issues like the Gospel and the implications of the Gospel in daily life. It was quite a different experience from what I had had at school. For a person from my family who didn't regard going to Mass as a serious thing it made a transformation in my thinking.

The priest there was a very significant priest even though he was not a John Molony. But he started seven YCW groups in the various parishes as he got moved around the diocese. He was an Irishman, Fr Daniel Boylan, and he had a fairly simple attitude. This was my first contact with a priest and that experience had a big impact on me. It was suddenly discovering in some ways that the Church was different to structures and power; and something that was happening in our lives; and how we, in fact, could have some significant role in bringing about change. It was an invitation to be significant. That was a bit unusual for a young person.

State President of the YCW 1956

During that period of time, there were serious political differences with Santamaria and that mainly came from the chaplain, at that stage, Fr Lombard. Generally there was an ethos in the YCW that was opposed to Santamaria. That came about because Santamaria tried to turn the YCW into a kind of junior Social Studies Movement and there was serious resistance. Certainly there was resistance that he would, in a sense, control it.

There were quite strong divisions among the bishops, for example. The bishop of Sale wouldn't have the YCW in his diocese mainly because of their attitude to Santamaria. There was no YCW in Sydney. So there was quite a number of bishops who actually politically refused to have it. Sydney was a different issue: it was not about Santamaria there, but about a difference of opinion about the lay role. Then there were some strange ones like Bishop O'Collins in Ballarat and Bishop Stewart in Sandhurst and Bishop Beovich in South Australia who had different political views. Some of them, like Bishop O'Collins in Ballarat and Dan Mannix in Melbourne, too, gave very strong support to Santamaria but simultaneously gave very strong support to the YCW, even though they knew there was a very strong ideological dispute at that time. It was, in some ways, a wider conflict but, for those involved in the day-to-day, it was where they were going and what they wanted to do.

State organiser of the YCW

I got to know Fr Lombard when I was taken out to meet him but, when I started working full-time, Fr Lombard had retired as national chaplain. So while I met him a number of times, I didn't know him that well. When I became national secretary, Fr Kevin Toomey was chaplain.

As State organiser, my job involved wandering around various dioceses and going into towns and trying to set up YCW groups. It was fairly bound up with making visits, initially to priests, and talking to them about the YCW and getting them to either give me a list of names of young people, or take me around or, as some did, call a meeting and I would talk to them. In the process, I would have started large numbers of groups and that was the role that I had.

It wasn't an easy role. I never owned a car and I always had to hitchhike so it meant that I was never certain how long I was going to be or how long it would take to get from one place to another. That was pretty awkward. Sometimes it was quite stimulating, and particularly when you got good responses from people, but often it was just very hard work – waiting for three or four hours on a back road for a lift, for example. Fortunately, the pluses were greater than the minuses.

Training program for the YCW

Every new YCW group had an initial 12-week program, which introduced them to the YCW and set out the whole framework. Meetings were based on firstly a Gospel reflection, then they had a census when people continually tried to identify other young people in their area and to make contact with them. Then they had items of interest, which was an attempt to keep exploring the reality of their lives and what was happening in the area or their district or even in the church; and facts of action where people had taken action and the group reflected on that.

The enquiry method

The central part of it was the enquiry method: 'see, judge and act'. That was a formalised campaign in the sense that every week they went through the process around certain themes; to look at the situation in their daily lives; and then to reflect on that in the light of Christian social principles; and then to decide how to address the contradiction between that reality and experience and those principles which were claimed as a matter of faith or of social teaching.

That type of process was a continual process, over time, around themes. Those themes could have been issues relating to home or to work or to leisure. They covered, sometimes, trade unions. There were many themes that were followed, on a national basis, using the campaign booklet. All the meetings revolved around that.

'See, judge and act' was significant as an educative tool because people were trying to look at what is happening in their life, what is occurring, why is this taking place; and then to see, whether or not because of that reality, people are being affected or had lost a sense of faith or a sense of justice; and then to try and address that. Every time the group decided to take an action, then they would have to reflect on that the following week to see what happened, and quite often there were new discoveries and new actions that had to be formed. So it was a continual process, which almost became automatic over time as you became conscious of what was occurring out there. Friere uses that term 'conscientisation', which he could have borrowed from Cardijn. That process made people continually aware of the realities of their lives and the possibilities for change.

Contact with Cardijn

I met Mgr Cardijn in India when I was sitting at the back of a big hall, having been there for a while at a conference. Then suddenly Rom Maione (international President) got the floor and announced that the vice president wouldn't be speaking tonight. Instead a visitor from Australia would. This was the first I knew about this and I had to walk all the way up this hall. It was a very dramatic experience and I spoke for some time. Really, it was a rehashed version of Cardijn's own writings, but nonetheless he grabbed me by the arms and said, 'That's it! That's it!' I met him a few times after that. Later on, Cardijn came as the main speaker to a Christian Social Group conference that we ran in Ballarat and spent a few days there as well.

Return to Ballarat 1961

I went back to Ballarat and we started a movement called the Adult Christian Worker Movement (ACWM), which was meant to be an adult movement that was based on the YCW but interpreted in a more adult way. We had just started that when Kevin Peoples, who worked for the National Catholic Rural Movement (NCRM), said that there was a lot of unhappiness in the National Catholic Rural Movement and that it wanted to move in a different direction, develop a sense of Catholic Action (CA) and move away from the NCC. So we got ourselves involved in that process and John Molony was invited down to talk.

John Molony said that the RM had a national mandate that no new organisation would get as a CA movement. [The Ballarat CA group] intended, to – 'take over' is too strong a word – to 'build a relationship' with the NCRM in a way that brought them much more into an axis with them. Ultimately we thought we could influence the RM quite substantially in those directions.

Kevin Peoples has written this up very extensively. A conference took place and it turned out that initially John Molony had made some arrangements with Santamaria and thought he [Santamaria] was quite happy with this process, and, if the [NCRM] members [were happy with it], he was quite happy. It turned out at the meeting ... that, in short, Santamaria did us in the eye. He really set us up. Instead of building a bridge with the RM as members, we ended up being identified as being mischievous and so on. We returned to cut our losses, but one week later Bishop O'Collins withdrew our mandate (as an official CA organisation.) He didn't give a reason, but on the information we got, it was essentially because of what we were doing at La Verna and our attitude to Santamaria.

Working for the National Civic Council

That was a problem and I and a couple of others spent some time talking and we decided to join the NCC and to build an adult lay apostolate movement out of the NCC. We talked a lot to Doc Caine who was the leader of the NCC at that stage (in Ballarat) and finally he became convinced that Santamaria's approach was not useful. So I started working full-time for the NCC but in fact we introduced a program that was very consistent with the YCW. We moved into a Gospel discussion and the enquiry process. We had about ten groups. Over the next three years, I built it up to 44 groups. All the new groups understood it as a lay apostolate movement.

We did a fair amount of work that took the heart out of the NCC in the Ballarat diocese. We took all their members and even took all their money and all their members. Finally, when this was discovered by accident, Santamaria proposed to the bishop that they divide and that we set up our own apostolate movement.

Bishop O'Collins was, in many ways, ultra-conservative politically and theologically, but he was a Ballarat nationalist. He didn't think it was outrageous of us to siphon off money for the Ballarat diocese when we had raised so much out of the diocese. In fact he accepted that, and we then had an arrangement that we would divide and groups could decide where they would go – stay with the NCC or stay with the adult lay apostolate movement. The vast majority didn't know any other approach. Some groups split in half, around Mildura and Swan Hill, where some members went one way and some went the other. But generally we ended up with having a very substantial movement and Bishop O'Collins paid my wages for the next three years. That became a very strong adult movement in Australia over the next eight years or so, 1962–69. The road to an adult lay apostolate was a bit circuitous.

Then I left to come to Melbourne and decided to go to university because I thought universities may have answers to a number of questions we were facing. It didn't take me long to discover that wasn't true but nonetheless I still stayed there for a number of years.

Impact of Vatican 2

Vatican 2 had a strange impact. It endorsed all the things that we had been saying for about 20 years and yet, within a few years of its release of documents and so on, all of the adult lay apostolate movements, as well as the YCW, started to decline. They rapidly declined throughout the world. Between 1966 and 1970 it really was virtually the death of the lay apostolate movement in whatever form. I think that the view that emerged (from the

Council) was that we no longer needed specialised lay apostolate movements because, in the mind of Vatican 2, the parish should be the means of bringing about the formation of people. In fact, the Church itself was said to be an apostolic church. But then the parish councils became bureaucratised and parish priests emerged with their sense of power and gradually that initiative was lost. So in some ways the whole thing collapsed as a type of serious apostolic process.

Cripac Press and religious education

We started Cripac Press (in Ballarat) under John Molony's suggestion. We developed the concept of having a Christian Social Week that ran for eight days. A number of people were responsible for actually preparing talks. Every night there were three talks and there might have been about 30 people involved – ten people preparing each talk and one person giving it. We used to average about 800 people a night with 1000 on the final night, when St Pat's hall was always full. And we used to publish the findings. The first book we published was called *The New Age of the Human Person* and we published that through the *Advocate* (the Melbourne Archdiocesan Catholic newspaper). John Molony then suggested thinking about doing our own publishing. So while he wasn't at that stage a party to it – he was involved later on when he became laicised – a number of us actually set up Cripac Press.

The initial thing was to publish the findings of the Social Weeks but then we decided to move into religious education. We developed a bookshop as well, which we had in Ballarat and we published notes for teachers, mainly on a catechetical style – the new catechesis approach. Then at that point Garry Eastman, whom I had known through the YCW and who was in Swan Hill, was producing a magazine called *The Marian*, for the parish. He had come across an American publication called *Witness* and he came and made a proposal that we should change our approach from [publishing] these notes to teachers and build a magazine for students and teachers notes. That's when we started *Move Out* and that came into very widespread use. It became a very significant influence on religious education throughout Australia and for some years after that.

Cripac Press came to Melbourne with me when I started part-time at university. And then I went full-time and then, because we wanted to keep the name, we moved into Dove Communications and eventually Collins Dove. Cripac Press only survived for a while because we didn't actually do much publishing after that. Certainly, for the period of time, it contributed substantially to some of the issues that were based on Catholic social teaching

and had a very big impact on how religious education was taught in schools throughout Australia for some years as well.

I then went part-time doing an MA and taught at Caulfield Institute. They had consolidated part-time hours into a full-time position and I had to apply for the full-time position, which I got. I moved into that position by accident really and remained there for 20 years, even though I had involvement in a lot of other issues. But it was at that time that I moved away from those issues.

Destroying the Movement from Ballarat

I and others deliberately set out to destroy the NCC (the Movement). There was a bit of a problem because I carried a lot of that. Several things had to happen. One was to build groups that were loyal to us rather than to Santamaria and we did that. The NCC was based on the almost mystical view of Santamaria and when we started developing groups in Ballarat from the time I was (working) full-time, Santamaria never got an image. The organisation did, but he never came into it. He was not a part of what we communicated. And so to that extent then we built quite a large number of groups who had a much stronger commitment to the type of process of reflecting on the Gospel and on the type of experience of their local communities and on the type of things they could do to develop these and to bring about change.

The experience of people in the Wimmera and the Mallee and even the Western District – it was anathema to the idea of Communism. They didn't even know what a Communist looked like. They didn't respond to that. Some had in the past. Santamaria had built a number of groups who wrote out how-to-vote cards for unions (the law at that time said they had to write them out by hand) and he had raised quite a lot of money on the fear of Communism. But most of the groups, I discovered, were shallow, message-boy groups, not groups that had a life of their own. They were episodic in the action they took because they were told what to do from the central office. The groups that I started had a program of their own and were quite different in terms of what they were invited to do and how they were invited to do it.

The second thing was to challenge the leadership. While there was a central regional council [of the NCC], we actually changed the membership of that quite dramatically, a bit by democratic means, a bit by manipulation. It meant that the regional council over a period of a couple of years became very much committed to the Ballarat diocese rather than to

outside it, and quite a lot of those were ex-YCW people whom I had known for some considerable time. Then we got rid of some of the old-time leaders who had been leaders of the group, traditionally for ten years or so. I kept advocating that it was general policy that the leadership should alternate rather than one person remain, so in fact some of those changes occurred. The ethos changed completely too because of the style of the program that we had. We were very much community-development based rather than fear-of-Communists based.

Subversion

There were tricky things. It was difficult to keep turning up every month and being a part of the program planning for the State and on to the national level and to hear Santamaria's – not talks or discussions – briefings. He had a 'this is not a debating society' type of approach to meetings and I used to spend some time being creative in those. For example, I remember one time arguing that one of our problems was that people were not experienced in door knocking and they really needed some type of brochure that showed them when to door knock and how to door knock. They produced about 3000 of this door-knocking thing. Ballarat got 1000, which I didn't even open. I put them in the furnace out the back. So there were a lot of things that were subversive, there's no doubt about that.

The final act of subversion, and the one which brought about the problem, was [when] we started to siphon off their (NCC) money, which came via bank orders. The NCC got all their money through bank orders so we (myself and others) actually designed a bank order that was identical but the bank that was on the bank order when it was renewed was actually a bank in Ballarat that only I and Doc Caine had the signatures to. They would have had about \$20,000–30,000 siphoned off per year (for three years) on that type of process, which we hadn't done anything with. We had it in a State Bank at Ballarat. When the people signed their bank order each year they got a copy of *News Weekly*, so I took out an annual subscription on the side for those people so they got *News Weekly*, and their bank order continued on.

But it turned out that a fellow named Monahan, a chemist in Stawell ... Somehow I made an error and didn't renew his subscription, and when he was sent a renewal subscription, he rang them (the NCC) up and said he didn't have to pay it because Gerald Caine told him when he took out his recent bank draft that in fact that was automatically paid. They were a bit uncertain and started to track back and finally found out what we were up to. It was a

very small action. Our plan initially was that organisationally we would weaken the NCC, which we did. The office gradually checked back and discovered what we were up to. [Our] aims were to seriously weaken the NCC because it was the serious view of most of us that the NCC was one of the most destructive forces in the Church.

Neglected potential

One of the things that we were very unhappy with was that almost all young people of my age were almost neutered or gelded and denied the opportunity to be seriously involved in processes in the ALP, for example. I was in the Trades Hall Council for a couple of years and I was the only one, the only Catholic young person there for some considerable time. It meant that a whole generation of young Catholics, who were really quite well trained and had a very serious commitment to the Church, were really denied their potential.

Fighting an insidious organisation

We saw the NCC as a very insidious organisation. I confess that I had been socialised in the YCW towards that view for some considerable time. John Molony had not had that view and he had left the priesthood before we moved into [subverting] the NCC and had moved to Canberra. A fellow [priest] named Vincent Fennelly, an Irishman, was much more instrumental at that stage. Our attitude to the NCC was that it really was an insidious organisation, that it wiped out the potential of a generation of young Catholics and also made it very difficult for Catholic Action to be meaningful because of the confusion with the RM and the NCC, and so on. So we were very determined not to share that sort of view.

[In] a lot of things that we did, there was some question of legality but from our point of view they were moral. It's a question of personal conscience about morality and legality. When it was finally suggested that we might be in legal trouble for siphoning off that money, I said, 'Listen. I've kept all of the mail that I have received for the last three years and I am happy to make it public if you wish'. I heard no more about it.

Things changed after that. People like Frank Sheehan, who came back to Ballarat from being president of the YCW, moved straight into the ALP. That was inconceivable earlier when I came back from the YCW. At that stage, the DLP had been formed and it was strongly supported by the bishop and priests and others. One of those involved in that adult group [Jim Byrnes] did a lot of work in the DLP until finally he launched an attack on Santamaria at the State conference and got on to the national news. The NCC developed a debate and they

set Jim Byrnes up [against] (Senator) Jack Little who was not a Catholic but a very, very strong debater and it was meant that he – James Byrnes, he was only a young man – [was] suddenly being confronted with [such a debater]. In some ways that was a pity because James lost out and didn't get that much support. Jack Little, in a sense, denied that Santamaria or the NCC had influence on the DLP.

Some of those things were tricky at the time but our political position was bound up with a moral position that we were dealing with something that was a destructive organisation, so a lot of the things we did were acceptable from that point of view. We also felt that a lot of the money that was raised in the diocese was raised on false pretences, a lot of the proposals about the threat of Communism.

Santamaria

I feel that the issue with Santamaria was power, not anti-Communism, and I had a number of experiences which reaffirmed that view. The way people were sold the message of anti-Communism through the NCC was really not reasonable. It was exaggerated, and deliberately so, because there were other issues at that time that should have been raised.

Kevin Peoples examined every issue of *Rural Life* – he worked for the RM – and followed the political, theological and moral processes of Santamaria. From being a very strong supporter he became totally disillusioned. A lot of what Kevin was putting out was out of his head not his heart.

So that is what we were about with the NCC. We absolutely, categorically blamed Santamaria for the bishop withdrawing our mandate, a very significant blow, and we saw it as an act of revenge, so that was one motivating factor in our actions.

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I met him on a couple of occasions but I was absolutely impressed by his continued, very strong support of the YCW and his ability to accept conflict between us and the NCC and his very strong support for Santamaria. He was unusual in that he could hold two competing things in his hands without bias. He never at any stage tried to push the YCW into cooperation with Santamaria, at all. He was quite old when I met him but he still managed to be a significant figure.

Legacies of this time

In the 1950s and 1960s the Church in Australia was in springtime. It was an exciting time. All around the place there was a sense of commitment, a sense of understanding the Church in terms of serious involvement in the world. It was a time of bringing influence to bear on all reality in a way that would be significant in terms of social change. The level of commitment and generosity, and the sacrifice of time and money and effort, that a lot of people made were extraordinary. It was a time of contradiction to the institutionalised Church that I had experienced in the rigid 1940s, a rigid type of process when the priest was in control and the parishioners were a flock under their shepherd. Now what happened after that, I don't know. A lot of people became disillusioned with the Church, even those who were most active in it. The emergence of some of the leaders was a betrayal of what we had expected and believed and wanted.

It is a two-fold legacy. A [first] legacy [is] people being prepared to stand outside the Church and still feel as though they have a commitment to Christ and a whole sense of the Gospel, and yet not be part of the institutional Church. A lot of people whom I would regard as very spiritual, very committed to being a Christian in the world in these times, in some ways are almost anti the Church as it exists.

A second legacy is [that] when all these movements and expectations and enthusiasms collapsed, there was a loss of what it meant to be a lay person in the Church. The Church retained with almost renewed vigour a character of a Church as almost medieval. It was a different type of Church. There was a loss of hope and [of] a feeling that the Church was significant. Most of the people I knew in the 1950s and 1960s thought the Church needed to speak out and know where it stood in regard to the poor and those being badly treated. These days the Church is silent. Even for justice for those who have been sexually abused and so forth, the Church is almost more conservative than I've ever known it in the past.

Another legacy is the failure for us to maintain the momentum that we had. I have thought about my own position and have got a relationship to those feelings.

I and others went and joined [the NCC] in order to go within [it]. People like Les Kemp, whom I recruited and who was national secretary of the YCW after me and who would never have joined the NCC, saw it as their mission. 'If we can oppose it, let's do it.' Even Brian Hayes, national president of the YCW, even though he knew what I was up to – and I tried to

get him involved but he wouldn't – he, nonetheless, was very committed to the idea that something needed to be done in this area.

There was a certain amount of anger in a lot of those young men at that time, who felt that we had been sidetracked by the Church, [which] had allowed Santamaria to become the concept of the Church. We rejected that, and thought it was a very serious problem, which shouldn't go unchallenged.
