Abstract: The role of established Christian churches in attempting to influence the final outcome of the Federal industrial relations legislative framework is examined in the context of the emerging literature on 'new actors' in industrial relations. These churches have a history of intervening in political systems where they anticipate the consequences of government policy and legislation contravenes church doctrine in relation to social and economic justice in the treatment of working people and the unemployed, particularly those most at risk of poverty. Throughout 2005-6, the three main Christian churches and their associated organisations in Australia engaged in media activity, presented submissions to parliamentary committee and engaged in a coalition with social and union groups in the clothing manufacturing industry to amend the Work Choices Bill. They challenged the Federal Government to meet its responsibilities to the most vulnerable workers. It is argued in this paper that in doing so the churches adopted a policy position which constituted a partial and temporary 'new actor' role. The activities of the churches demonstrate that there is a growing diversity of forms of participation in industrial relations which expand the 'patchwork' of actors in a less regulated institutional environment yet affording increased scope for less hierarchical network arrangements. The activities also should indicate to other actors, particularly unions, that they could become a formidable ally.

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Old Churches As 'New Actors': The Role of Christian Churches in the Work Choices Industrial Relations System in Australia

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Abstract
The role of established Christian churches in attempting to influence the final outcome of the Federal industrial relations legislative framework is examined in the context of the emerging literature on 'new actors' in industrial relations. These churches have a history of intervening in political systems where they anticipate the consequences of government policy and legislation contravenes church doctrine in relation to social and economic justice in the treatment of working people and the unemployed, particularly those most at risk of poverty. Throughout 2005-6, the three main Christian churches and their associated organisations in Australia engaged in media activity, presented submissions to parliamentary committee and engaged in a coalition with social and union groups in the clothing manufacturing industry to amend the Work Choices Bill. They challenged the Federal Government to meet its responsibilities to the most vulnerable workers. It is argued in this paper that in doing so the churches adopted a policy position which constituted a partial and temporary 'new actor' role. The activities of the churches demonstrate that there is a growing diversity of forms of participation in industrial relations which expand the 'patchwork' of actors in a less regulated institutional environment yet affording increased scope for less hierarchical network arrangements. The activities also should indicate to other actors, particularly unions, that they could become a formidable ally.

Introduction
During 2005, the Federal Government developed its legislation to change the industrial relations (IR) system, culminating in the Workplace Relations Amendment (Work Choices) Act 2005. The new system has been the subject of extensive debate prior to the legislation and subsequent to it. This became increasingly intense throughout 2007 as the Federal election approached, particularly in the light of policy announcements by the major political parties. In the current context, the debate expanded beyond the established IR institutions to include organisations and groups, including the main Christian churches and welfare organisations which are associated with them.

This paper seeks to address the question: to what extent and how have the oldest traditional Australian Christian churches become 'new actors' by entering the new Federal Workplace Relations System referred to as Work Choices?

'New Actors'
The emergence of the ‘new actors’ literature in IR in recent years has prompted the development of a research agenda into the role of institutions previously considered to be largely outside mainstream IR systems. While the formulation of theoretical perspectives and conceptual frameworks proceeds, there remains a need to test the stages of these developments with empirical exploration. The 'new actors' literature extends the tradition of systems theory, originally an adaptation of Parsons broad structural-functional sociological approach to IR by Dunlop (1958). This attempt at a generalised theoretical framework identified principal actors - for present purposes confined to government (including industrial tribunals and courts), unions and employer associations - operating within the IR system which developed its own structures and processes and drawing upon inputs from wider context. Crucial to this
framework was the output of the system, which for Dunlop was a web of rules. Further refinement led to two broad types of rules, substantive and procedural. The latter may be construed as taking several forms at several levels, particularly legislation which established (and frequently amended) the legitimating 'rules of the game' in a pluralist frame of reference (Fox 1966).

Dunlop's (1958) contention that there existed actors other than the principal actors was overlooked for many years but an interest emerged in them and subsequent calls for the incorporation of 'subordinate social groups' in IR (Dabscheck1995). The decline of union membership has witnessed an interest in other types of organisations (Heery and Frege 2006) and together with the decline of overt industrial conflict has stimulated a response to retain the essence of IR as a field of study and practice. This is underpinned by assumptions of pluralism as opposed to the alternative managerial unitarist direction (Heery and Frege 2006).

Bellemare’s (2000) study of bus passengers in Montreal as end-users opened the IR field for the inclusion of 'new actors'. Moreover, Bellemare designed a framework which provided at least an initial test as to what would constitute a 'new actor'. Actors in this sense can directly influence the IR process or have the capability to influence causal powers of others (p. 386). In extending Dunlop's (1958) emphasis on outcomes (rules), Bellemare states that actors can exert influence along two dimensions (p. 388). Firstly, he argues that there is an instrumental dimension in which means are exerted. Here, the concept of 'intensity' refers to systematic significance and the degree of continuity (e.g. where a union is active over a 25 year period as opposed to a single issue pursued by non-union employees). There is also an accumulation of significance to the extent that an actor exerts influence at three levels (workplace, organisation and social environment). For an actor to become important, involvement at all three levels plus a continuity of action need to be fulfilled. Second, there is an outcomes dimension. 'To be deemed to be an actor, an entity must be able to attain its objectives on occasion, or to produce transformations in the IR system in which it acts' (p. 388). For present purposes, he also argues that '... any involvement that aims and succeeds in having all or part of its outlook accepted by other actors in the system, or in simply imposing it on them, could be characterized as significant' (p. 389). It is also relevant for the present paper that he continues to place emphasis on action at the three levels which relates to 'the evolution of the rules including recognition of and relations between them'. Furthermore, there is emphasis placed on permanent change over temporary change.

The literature is being expanded beyond Bellemare's end-users to include several types of organisations [e.g. those under the state umbrella such as the Australian Fair Pay Commission (Burgess, de Ruyter and Waring 2006), British citizens’ advice bureau (Abbott, B. 2006), advocacy groups in the United States (Osterman 2001) and rugby league players agents (Khoshaba 2006)].

**Churches, IR and Welfare**

While the activities of church and related organisations (e.g. those distributing welfare) may be peripheral to mainstream institutional IR their involvement in IR policy and related social policy formulation in European and former colonial countries has a long history. The provision of some 'welfare services' is established in Christian churches (although not unique to them) and, as such, formed the 'basic elements of a functional
system of benevolence' (Faherty 2006, p. 117). Churches have historically provided welfare prior to or beside that of the state and activated or re-activated it in recent years [e.g. in France and Germany through a revision of mission and methods (Bode 2003), promoted business philanthropy [(e.g. in post-war Britain through church-led organisations and Christian entrepreneurs (Marinetto 1999)) and provided welfare services which are argued to be substitutes for government activities where these are deemed inadequate (Hungerman's 2005 study of the US Presbyterian Church)]. While churches have entered politics in various forms in the US (e.g. Aldous' study of the campaign by churches and unions before the 1924 Child Labor Amendment to promote education of work for children) and the increased role of the Catholic Church in national social policy (see International Review of Sociology March 2006), it is primarily the passage of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act 1996 under the Clinton Administration, often known as the welfare-to-work system, that has generated extended debate on the role of the churches in public policy. Nagel (2006) argues that this legislation aimed to formally include religious organisations in the public welfare system, a direction which broadly continued under the successive Bush presidency under the banner of ‘Compassionate Conservatism’. Several points may be made about such a direction. First, the policy of 'mutual obligation' in Australia may be seen as compatible with the spread of the welfare-to-work extension of welfare policy to counties beyond the US (Economist 2006). Second, Nagel argues that religion has not ceased to be institutional (p. 104). Third, religious groups '...are genuinely political actors, be it in interest formation on the grass-roots level … or by lobbying efforts on the corporative level' (p. 104). The potential cost of church involvement can be the criticism where the churches '...act as an arm of the state...' (Davis 1998).

The welfare role for churches, at least where it engages in policy and applies this to lobbying governments and political parties, may be linked to wage campaigns. Church involvement is no doubt in part induced by the reality of both a multi-layer wage determination system (national to local) but also the absence of an acceptable mechanism for adjusting a minimum rate. For example, the '...Federal minimum wage has been a paltry $5.15 an hour for 8 years' (New York Times, 3 January 2006). Unions have been a part of wage campaigns but these tend to be within coalitions (Reynolds and Kern 2001). In a spread of strategy and involvement with other types of organisations, the activities of inter-faith coalitions [e.g. Catholic, Protestant and Jewish Interfaith Center for Corporate Responsibility (ICCR) which comprises 275 faith-based institutional investors has used financial ownership influence on motor vehicle manufacturers to in turn put pressure '...on their suppliers to improve working conditions' (Wray 2007)]. Although the dual church roles of welfare (both policy and practice) and IR (particularly minimum wage influence) are important in pursuing social justice principles, there is still much to be understood about the consequences of policy. 'The inability of most US welfare mothers flowing into work to eventually earn enough above minimum levels also means we should not expect too much of the "stepping stone" idea of a low-paid job leading to onto better paid jobs' (Frijters and Gregory 2006). The churches have also engaged in both welfare and IR roles (e.g. Camilleri and Winkworth 2005) and other political activity such as opposing conscription during the 1914-18 war (Kildea 2002).

The church-state relationship in Australia is tested from time to time over policy issues and legislation where the churches consider that government are likely to adversely
impact upon the social welfare of those vulnerable in the community, undermine the framework of social justice or challenge established religious beliefs. In addition, some churches and organisations associated with them or operating in furtherance of their broad objectives, have engaged in research, publication and negotiation with governments and IR institutions in pursuit of a social justice agenda (e.g. The Brotherhood of St. Laurence, Salvation Army). The role of the churches in Australia is strongly underpinned by the application of moral principles, particularly through the long history of Papal Encyclia from the Catholic church (Abbott, K. 2006).

The basic wage and extension of awards across industry was consistent with both a belief in self-reliance and of a welfare role for the arbitration system. In the latter case, this was produced by protecting the lowest paid through insisting on the moral responsibility of employers to distribute part of their return on invested capital to workers. There was also a consistency with the notion of a balance of the rights of the individual (whether employer or employee) and the responsibility of the individual to a collective. In the current context, Smyth (2003 p. 29) not only identifies the costs of an ineffective state welfare role but that a church perspective can be brought into play. 'So-called "third way" plans today which promote neoliberal economic polices and look to civil society to pick up the pieces do not look very robust from a Catholic perspective'.

While this may be seen as the dominance of welfare over IR, the experience of the sector operating under such a model, particularly for the churches, has highlighted the human costs of a more market-oriented economy. That successive governments pursued policies which involved further withdrawal of forms of protection which were part of the IR system added to the pieces to be picked up where people were unable to meet the costs of increased competition. Consistent with the churches approach to welfare, it was reasonably assumed that it was the role of governments to provide basic forms of protection for those in the labour force.

The church perception of Work Choices, in its proposed and fait accompli form during 2005, was that the Federal Government had withdrawn from its responsibility and was proposing a system that would reduce the level of protection. The draft legislation suggested that this would at least take the following forms. First, there was the possible reduction of real wages with a gap widening between a minimum wage and base rates in key awards on the one hand and wage rates in collective union-negotiated agreements on the other. Although not a clear division, it was reasonable to expect a reduction in real wage rates for those at the lower end of the wage hierarchy who were is a relatively weak bargaining position. For them, wage relativities were more likely than not to decline over time. Second, it was likely that there would be a relative decline in net earnings. Those in a relatively weak bargaining position would lose additional payments in forms such as penalty and overtime rates. In addition, where additional award clauses provided for a range of allowances and loadings, these could be absorbed into hourly rates but without full compensation or there would a decline in the effective hourly rate over time as a mechanism for adjusting rates would not be available in practice. Third, where time-based working conditions were included in agreements, particularly non-union collective agreements and AWAs, the greater possibility was of reduced 'common family time' as a result of increasingly non-standard working time, an extension of total working time and within working time the greater prospect of increased working pace through increased total workloads. The
concern was that the legislation would permit flexibility clauses to be introduced into agreements which would have the effect of skewing the work-family balance away from time available to spend with family. Finally, the proposed changes to unfair dismissal sections of the existing Act could reasonably be interpreted as removing the problem of 'go away money' at the expense of legitimate claims to unfair dismissal avenues within a just system. This raised the prospect of a system in which redressing unfair treatment within employment and dismissal was available to some but not all. Moreover, to the extent that the larger workplaces were more likely to be largely or partially unionised, those dismissed from smaller workplaces had less protection prior to dismissal and more costs to meet to receive any compensation after dismissal.

Taken together, the proposed legislation was interpreted by the churches as a withdrawal from a legitimate role of government for which it had an established social responsibility. Whatever the arguments and twists and turns of the emerging debate, at the time and subsequently, the churches pursued a set of arguments well-established in their belief in social justice. At least to some extent the problem for the Federal Government in rejecting early criticisms of the Work Choices system by the churches was that positions were set on a course to become entrenched. The line between which estate had moral responsibility for the welfare of which sections of society was blurred by the Work Choices legislation and had within it the potential to compromise the wider state-church relationship as to the continuity of existing arrangement including the employment agency role of church-based organisations.

Work Choices and Churches

Three broad dimensions of church involvement in the Work Choices debate are covered here. These may be seen in the context of the moral foundations of the churches because they arise from those traditions. Abbott, K. (2006, p. 14) for example, in discussing the relevance of Catholic social doctrine notes the problems which become manifest in free market economics and their remedies '... which place significant responsibilities on the rich and powerful; to wit, in being the owners of particular personal qualities and/or inordinate material wealth they have both ethical and moral obligations to look after those less advantaged than themselves'. Church social doctrine is also used extensively to link the Work Choices Bill to the Federal Government's 'Welfare to Work' changes. 'Concurrent to the government's proposed IR legislation is the push on their "Welfare to Work" policy, designed to shift many disabled persons and sole parents onto the rigorous NewStart allowance regime and off the pension' (Social Action Office - CLRIQ 2005, p. 5). In a submission before the Western Australian Industrial Relations Commission in 2006, the Uniting Church of Australia made its role clear. It quoted from the 1988 Assembly Statement to the Nation by the Uniting Church of Australia: 'We recognise a widening gap between the rich and the poor, not only within Australia, but within the whole human community. We will strive to uphold the rightful claims of the poor on the resources of this nation and the world. We will seek to identify and challenge all social and political structures and all human attitudes which perpetuate and compound poverty' (Uniting Church of Australia 2006, p. 5) (our italics).

Building on the foundation of moral principle, the churches defined their role in some documents. For example, the Australian Catholic Commission for Employment Relations stated that one of its responsibilities was '... negotiating and consulting with Federal Government Ministers, political parties, and national employer and union

Media Campaigning

The churches and church-related organisation made statements in the media and through their websites which challenged the Work Choices Bill prior to and during its passage through the Parliament. For example, Anglican Media Melbourne reported on 4 November 2005 ‘grave concerns’ expressed by all Archbishops and 17 Bishops on the lack of enough time to assess the Bill’. More critically, the Salvation Army’s position was that the changes were ‘...unethical and will exploit Australia’s most vulnerable people’ (ABC Online, 18 October, 2005). The Australian Political Ministry Network stated that it was concerned that the proposals would '... fail to ensure an industrial and workplace system that upholds the dignity of the worker' (http://www.polmin.com.au/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=1&Itemi accessed 14.11.2006). The Uniting Church 'condemned' the proposal in part because of '... the limited safeguards ... which do little to protect the rights and conditions of Australia's most vulnerable workers' (http://assembly.uca.org.au/news/mediame/eases/2005/release101005_2.htm accessed 31.10.2006). The Anglicare Victorian CEO, Dr Ray Cleary, in Anglican Media Melbourne News said '... the IR and welfare reforms will lead to an increase in social disadvantage and poverty' (http://www.media.anglican.com.au/news/2005/06/church-calls-for-conservatism-in-ir accessed 31.10.2006). Mr. Justice Macken (2005), a former judicial member of the New South Wales Industrial Commission, said in an article in The Catholic Weekly: 'Stakhanovism, the glorification of work for the sake of the state is not qualitatively different to the Prime Minister's "new breed" of "enterprise worker" who will put the long-term needs of the economy before his/her own interests'.

Consistent with submissions before the Senate Inquiry, the churches tended to focus on the distribution of working and non-working, particularly family, time as a detrimental consequence of the legislation. Bishop Saunders, Chairman of the Australian Social Justice Council, in a Bishop's letter said '... there had been a massive encroachment of work into family time over the past two decades' (Morris 2007). Criticism continued after the Australian Fair Pay Commission's (AFPC) minimum wage decision with the Uniting Church welcoming the decision but stating that ‘...it does not mitigate the other detrimental effects of the … legislation’ (http://uca.org.au accessed 26.10.06).

The range of criticism from 'concern' to 'unfairness' ignited a debate between the Federal Government and the churches, restrained at the highest levels but resulting in a strong response by some church organisations. For example, the Australian Catholic Social Justice Council referred to the challenge to the church in the debate, stating that the church would continue to provide a voice for the importance of work for the dignity of individuals and families (http://www.acsic.org.au/Pastoral-Lettershtm.htm accessed 13.9.2006). Similarly, some Catholic organisations defended the church position in relation to a perceived threat to its advocacy. 'The Government argues that the Unions are scaremongering and the academics have got it wrong, while churches are simply being dismissed as not having a right to voice their views' (Edmund Rice Centre for Justice and Community Education and the School of Education, Australian Catholic University, 2005). The Jesuit publication defended the leaders of the Anglican Church, Archbishop Jensen, and of the Catholic Church, Cardinal Pell, saying that '... it is far too cavalier for government or their supporters to dismiss church leaders who have

The Senate Hearings
In addition to challenging the proposed legislation through media channels, the Anglican, Uniting and Catholic churches made submissions to the Senate Inquiry into the Workplace Relations Amendment (Work Choices) Bill 2005. All of the submissions were critical of or at least expressed ‘concern’ about aspects of the proposed legislation. The churches emphasised principles which should be the basis of any legislation. The Anglican Church Submission contained concern that the proposals would '... impact on shared and community time, and ... appear to shift undue power to employers' (Social Issues Executive, Anglican Church, Diocese of Sydney 2005, Submission to the Senate Employment, Workplace Relations and Education Legislation Committee, Inquiry into Workplace relations Amendment (WorkChoices) Bill 2005). The Uniting Church in a covering letter to its submission stated that 'An examination of the WorkChoices Bill shows that our concerns have not been addressed'. The submission noted the Synod Resolution 203/05s in relation to IR legislation needing to have concern for the families and individuals who are ‘... poor, less skilled, legally vulnerable and economically disadvantaged'. Moreover, it defended its role in following church principles and '... work with employees and unions to oppose the erosion of workers' rights and protections...'.

'Fairwear'
'The Fairwear campaign is a coalition of churches, community organisations and unions' (http://www.fairwear.org.au/emgine.php?SID=1000029 accessed 14.11.2006). Major sponsors included The Uniting Church of Australia-NSW Synod and Assembly and the Sisters of Charity Foundation Ltd. and had 'other financial contributors', including national, State or Federal branches of unions and the Labor Council of NSW. The objective was to influence the Government to change provisions of the proposed legislation that had the potential to move outworkers in the clothing industry onto independent contracts and for reducing real wage rates. Such a coalition of church and union is significant for influencing proposed legislation because it was the clearest example of an alliance directed at opposing a legislative outcome. The Fairwear campaign supporters also organised submissions before the Senate Inquiry. It terms of outcome, they secured a statement of intent from the Government to retain existing outworker protection. Although not guaranteeing existing provisions (including within State legislation) Fairwear established a platform for continuing a campaign to secure protection where 'gaps' appear in the implementation of the legislation.

Churches as 'New Actors'? The starting point for assessing the churches as ‘new actors’ is Bellemare's (2000) framework of dimensions. There is a temptation to use the established institutions as benchmarks. 'New actors' do not perform the same functions as Dunlop's (1958) original actors because they are removed from the employment relationship, although they may act upon it. This is from a position outside institutional IR systems and is
indirect, often having to go through the actors to get to Dunlop's rules as the output. It may be that the focus on rules has become too dominant for too long, something that has been debated since Dunlop pronounced it. However, to replace it with other factors (not necessarily outputs) would seem to force a revival of theoretical alternatives to systems theory (e.g. radical approaches to power as critical to how IR operates at all levels). It is beyond the scope of this paper but it may be worth exploring alternatives within the confines of Bellemare's approach, in particular the extent to which influence on output is a more useful concept than institutional and managerial power on distribution and the costs and benefits of production and who bears these.

That said, the actors, old and new, have been obliged to address the Work Choices system in Australia since its inception and the consequences of it seen in the contested policies and campaigns of political parties and IR institutions. What these have largely demonstrated by any significant empirical measure and analysis and despite considerable difficulties in having access to data with which to test the theoretical and practical aspects of the system, is that the interests differences between the institutions have been brought into policy conflict. Pluralism, not surprisingly, has demonstrated itself to be the theoretical foundation for tripartite systems which has passed the test of longevity if not continuity. To the extent that the procedural rules in the form of legislation have brought interests differences into a form which can only be temporarily accommodated through the system is a constraint on existing paradigms in IR. Without a breakthrough into alternative paradigms, rules look set to remain an important element in IR even if they are not formulated as outputs of a system. In the case of the churches campaign to influence the Work Choices legislation, the rules were important because they changed the capability of the institutions to survive by enabling, constraining and preventing sections of the Act. The difficulties with the concept of influence also go to identification of it and its forms, the process of it and the ability to connect it to an outcome as opposed to other causes. In the last of these, the age-old problem of distinguishing causation and correlation would seem to intrude into analysis.

The most severe challenge to the concept of 'new actors' is their lack of representation of the constituencies of the old actors, namely individual employers and employees. 'New actors' may be partial alternative representatives of workers or employers but they are not substitutes for the institutions that have the role of direct representation through membership. Where they can perform a representative role is where they exist on a fee-for-service or insurance basis. This would seem to proceed from a different platform: the stimulus to take some form of action is temporary and pragmatic as opposed to an attachment through a belief system. In other words, it tends to be economic rather than social in nature. Furthermore, it is likely to be cast in individual rather than collective terms.

It may be that a more temporary, less-attached and individualistic web of representation is gradually or sporadically spread where this is more compatible with beliefs and practices in societies. In which case, the IR role of new actors' has potential to develop into substitutes to the existing roles. However, to the extent that the established IR functions of wage and conditions protection, bargaining and conflict resolution in addition to a wider welfare role, particularly for workers towards the bottom of any economic hierarchy (e.g. through minimum wage and unfair contract provisions), then 'new actors' are more likely to be members of a coalition of influence. Such coalitions
may include weakened IR institutions where the influence of institutions has been eroded or replaced by markets as the source of outputs of an IR system.

The churches role in the Work Choices campaign may not measure up to falling into the category of a 'new actor' by using the emergent criteria. First, the churches influence was not continuous, however, it was significant at a point in time for Australian IR - whether the system was moved further towards a deregulated market-oriented system or stabilised at it's Work Choices framework or re-established as a system with various forms of protection for workers.

Second, the churches operated primarily at one level, namely national. Although decisions to participate in the Senate Inquiry and the Fairwear campaign were more specific forms of influence they were brought about by the system and thus the churches responded within the system.

Third, the churches influenced the outcome of the final legislation in a relatively minor way directly, their indirect influence contributed to political activity in the forms of protracted actions by the old actors in the IR and party political systems. In this sense, the churches cannot act as substitutes for the old actors but can influence the context in which they operate and can directly assist then to influence outcomes through co-operative arrangements.

Fourth, churches are institutions, separate from but interacting with other types of institutions. The intensity of their influence arises from the separateness, as an outsider representing directly their constituency but indirectly because that constituency become insiders. In this sense, churches derive their potential influence from a source different from non-institutional 'new actors' such as consumers. The attachment to a belief which can be transported into IR is their strength. In this case, it is a manifestation of the belief in social justice.

In general, there is a case for exploring processes of influence rather than being true to a systems theory approach with an emphasis on objectives which can become outcomes. True that influence acts with the conversion box which lies between inputs and outputs but to lock it there is to expose it to another round of critique of systems theory. The process is as important as the objective. Studying attempts to influence is as important as the results of it.

The churches in the Work Choices period of Australian industrial relations history are 'new actors' but they are not like any other in important respects. The emergence of diversity within the 'new actors' ranks is better understood by tracking and analysing differences and similarities.

Conclusion
Two general conclusions may be drawn from the role played by the established Christian churches in Australia. First, they engaged in challenging the moral basis and practical consequences of the legislation. The churches have a proven track record in providing welfare in their own right, lobbying governments to meet their responsibilities for people dependent on welfare who are outside the employed labour force and urging governments to enact legislation that provides minimum protection - particularly wages and working conditions - for working people. They did so on their
own account and in conjunction with other organisations. They did so by engaging extensively and intensively in the process of political debate. It is not clear that they were significant in an 'outcome' sense but it is reasonable to conclude that they contributed to amendments to one the significant aspect of the legislation, namely the partial restoration of the no disadvantage test in the form of the 'Fairness Test'. What was revealed to established IR actors, particularly unions, and other 'new actors' was that a formidable ally for the present and the future had emerged.

Second, the churches role prior to the introduction of the Work Choices legislation demonstrated the sprawling diversity of IR. To the extent that institutional IR as a system loses some efficacy with the substantial decline of overt industrial conflict, the dilution or abolition of the state structure of tribunals and the shrinkage of union membership, the spread of 'new actors' with more specific 'niche' roles becomes significant in maintaining and developing IR. The churches role here suggests that any 'new actor' may act alone or in a loose web of alliances, particularly for specific purposes.

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