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PAPERS IN LABOUR HISTORY
NO.1

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Papers in Labour History No.1 is available from the Office of the Department of Industrial Relations, University of Western Australia for \$10.00. It is anticipated that *Papers in Labour History No.2* will be available for a similar cost in July 1988. Correspondence and proposed contributions should be addressed to The Editor, *Papers in Labour History*, Department of Industrial Relations, University of Western Australia, Nedlands, WA 6009.

The idea for the publication of *Papers in Labour History* grew out of my being called upon to teach the Labour History course in the Master in Industrial Relations program at the University of Western Australia. While I had taught similar courses for a number of years elsewhere I was a little worried about how I was to deal with West Australian labour history, since like so many coming here from the East I had little knowledge of local events. In discussions with colleagues and labour movement veterans I realised that there was a considerable untapped source of knowledge of WA labour history within the local labour movement itself. I set about trying to tap this by arranging a series of seminars at UWA in the second half of 1987. Bill Latter, Lloyd Davies and Joan Williams presented papers to audiences of students and visitors. This gave the MIR students a chance to hear WA labour history from some of those who have been involved in making it. There was clearly an argument for making the fruits of those seminars more widely available. So the idea for *Papers in Labour History* was born. UWA's Department of Industrial Relations supported the concept by offering the new publication a home and initial responses from labour movement students and participants (not necessarily mutually exclusive categories) indicated a sufficient market to make the publication financially viable.

It is intended that *Papers in Labour History* will be a publication of broad interest. Its concerns will range from the institutions and practices of the labour movement to the actual experiences of working women and men. It is expected that contributions and contributors will also cover a broad spectrum from scholars concerned with the traditional academic enterprises of investigating and explaining phenomena to labour movement veterans presenting their views and recollections. *Papers in Labour History No.1* reflects this diversity in the content and form of its contributions.

Bill Latter's biographical article on William Somerville reveals the insights of one of the senior statesmen of WA's labour movement into the life of an individual, whose impact on and place in that movement has received less attention than it deserved. Joan William's autobiographical piece deals, not merely with the events of her considerable involvement in labour politics, but specifically with her own ideological development culminating in the writing of *The First Furrow*, one of the few labour histories written from within the movement. Lloyd Davies' article is a reflection upon the use of WA's "native" welfare legislation against efforts of black workers to organise in the immediate post-war period and reflects his own long involvement in legal work on behalf of Aborigines. Harold Peden's short story is an attempt to present a compendium of his own experience of industrial incidents in the form of "fiction based on fact". The final two articles are scholarly discussions by participants in the 1987 MIR Labour History course at UWA. Warwick Claydon looks at WA's early labour legislation with an emphasis on revealing its ideological roots and Peter McDonald presents a view of the role of ideology in labour movement theories.

Papers in Labour History is a pioneering undertaking for the Department of Industrial Relations. Its success depends very much upon the reactions of readers and the subsequent contributions they offer. We look forward to hearing both the good and bad reactions you have to this first edition.

Dr. Michael Hess, Department of Industrial Relations, University of Western Australia.

DR WILLIAM SOMERVILLE - A LIFE SPENT IN THE CAUSE OF SOCIAL JUSTICE*

Bill Latter†

One could have chosen many men associated with the labor movement who have assumed higher office than William Somerville. People like John Curtin, John Scaddan, Phil Collier, George Pearce, Peter O'Loghlen and Nelson Lemmon readily come to mind. There are other more contemporary figures such as Bert Hawke or Joe Chamberlain about whom one could have spent time to some advantage in detailing their contribution to the cause of social justice.

Why then William Somerville? I chose this man above the others, primarily because he did not reach the public prominence of the others, but notwithstanding this fact, the positions which he occupied enabled him to influence the course of history of the working man in W.A. to a degree no less than the other characters mentioned. His influence was exerted actively for a period of 58 years. This long span of activity itself ensured that his impact upon our society was substantial. This dynamic aggressive champion of the cause of his class never curbed his pen nor his tongue when he thought an injustice was being perpetrated against the working man. It is this aspect of the man which has always interested me and I hope will interest you.

I intend in this paper to depart from the conventional style of talking about a man and his works. Instead I want through his writings, his letters and the causes he embraced to show the man and his character. A number of people have written of him, there have been obituary notices and valedictions, there have been addresses of praise when honours were bestowed upon him, and when he retired from positions which he held. They all have one thing in common, in that a picture of conformity is presented. My view of this tradesman Blacksmith whom our society honoured is completely different. I trust that you will agree with me that William Somerville was a non-conformist who quite deliberately set out to make changes in the social system on behalf of his class - working men and women and their families.

Somerville was born on the 24th of November, 1869 at Merewether, a suburb of Newcastle, New South Wales. He was the son of a coal miner and was apprenticed as a blacksmith at the age of 15 years. He was educated at the local high school to the highest level that was available to the sons of coal miners. Battye's History of Western Australia records that he was educated at a public school. The only thing "public" about the school which William Somerville attended was its location and its accessibility.

* This article was first presented as a paper at a University of Western Australia Summer School.

† Bill Latter is a member of the UWA Senate and a veteran labour movement activist with a long history of involvement in numerous Western Australian unions including the Collie Miners' Union, the Firebrigade Employees' Union and the Trades and Labour Council.

He arrived in WA in 1896 and was employed on the harbour works in Fremantle, by the Public Works Department. He was one of the first Secretary's of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers, the organisation which later became known as the Amalgamated Engineering Union. He was an organiser of that Union from 1903 to 1905 when he was elected as the workers' representative on the Arbitration Court. He occupied this position until 1941. He was the first trade unionist appointed as a Justice of the Peace for the State of Western Australia. He was appointed to the University Senate as a Government representative in 1912, Acting Vice Chancellor in 1931, Pro-Chancellor in 1936 and Acting Chancellor in 1938. He was Vice President of the first Labor Congress held at Fremantle in 1902. He attended the historic National Congress of the Australian Labour Party in 1911 which decided the Commonwealth Bank Policy. These are only a few of the many public offices which he held in a West Australian career which spanned 58 years. He died on Christmas Eve 1954 at the age of 85 years.

What sort of a man was the young William Somerville?

He migrated to Western Australia because of the difficulty of finding employment in his native State. He had already travelled throughout his own State, and Victoria, working in various places in engineering establishments, in mines, wherever employment was available. He was driven to the West in search of employment and was employed the day after he arrived in his trade as a Blacksmith.

Within two years of arriving in Western Australia he presided at a meeting of the Fremantle Lumpers who were then involved in a struggle arising from the employers' desire to see freedom of contract on the wharf. Freedom of contract in those days, meant the right of the employer to employ whoever he liked, without regard to a legally binding contract and disregarding trade union organisation which had sprung up on the Fremantle wharves. The essential issue at that time was the question of the right of the workers to organise into Trade Unions and for Trade Unions to represent their members in negotiations around a uniform contract.

History tells us that whoever became prominent in the Trade Union Movement of that time, was, as a matter of course singled out for victimisation. None but the courageous were prepared to assume prominent roles in actions which arose around trade union recognition. At the relatively young age of 29 years Somerville foresaw the need for organisation much broader than that of the single Trade Union and he was instrumental in forming the first Coastal Trades & Labor Council at Fremantle. He was able to convince the Amalgamated Society of Engineers that they should become a part of this council, but even prior to this his ability was being recognised in the Labor Movement. For instance he was elected Vice President of the first ever W.A. Labor Congress held at Coolgardie.

An interesting sidelight on the makeup of this man was that he had recently married and taken up residence at Cottesloe. He records in one of his journals the purchases of seeds and crops with meticulous care, the financial outlay upon them, the amount of fertilizer which was used, the price,

the weight of the final crop, the costs being totalled and compared with what it would have cost had that crop been purchased at market prices at the time it was harvested. All is recorded with infinite detail. He had an interest in agriculture and horticulture which never diminished throughout his lifetime and it is another facet of his wide interests and activities.

In 1903 as Secretary and organiser of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers he did extensive tours of the Goldfields and the South West enrolling members for both the Union and the Australian Labor Party. His pithy comments concerning the operation of the "Truck" system at the Davies Karridale Mill are worthy of mention. He dramatically describes the conditions which prevailed at Karridale at the time and how the workers were virtually enslaved to the Davies family, not being able to move out of the town unless they used the railway which belonged to the company, not being able to live in the town, unless they paid their score at the company shop.

He tells the story of how the company used to bring a fair to Karridale each year. The Accountant would go to Busselton and bring back the necessary amount of cash to distribute to the employees of the town. During the course of the day when the money had run out, all of it having been loaned to the employees and faithfully recorded by the Accountant, the company would go to the stallholders and borrow back the money which had been paid to them by workers and proceed to re-loan it to the employees. Workers were allowed to overdraw their wages quite deliberately to ensure that their indebtedness kept them constantly beholden to and dependent upon the company. Sommerville's account also tells of how sailors on ships plying to the port adjacent to Karridale would sometimes bring liquor ashore for the inhabitants of the town, and on the one occasion in order to maintain their monopoly of liquor supply in the town, one of the Davies brothers took an axe to a keg which had been smuggled ashore and allowed its contents to spill on the ground to ensure that it was not drunk by the workers. The story is also told of an itinerant trader, who was badly beaten until he agreed not to undercut the "Tommy Shop" and to leave Karridale off his travelling list. The stories which Somerville collected on this particular trip to the South-West are retold with a sense of outrage and one appreciates his determination to ensure that the system of "Truck" was abolished.

Somerville was a charitable and generous man who gave unstintingly of his time and energies both to individuals and the cause to which he was passionately devoted. The depth of his commitment is revealed by his attitude towards those whom he believed had betrayed the cause. In 1905, for instance, Dalglish changed his political allegiance and brought down the short-lived first Labour government in W.A. Somerville and others had argued against the acceptance of Dalglish as the leader predicting that he would depart the fold of labour when it suited his purpose. Somerville wrote to his good friend Julian Stuart:

How do you feel yourself after our "Waterloo". You and I are among those who have the mournfull satisfaction of being able to say "I told you so." The protests uttered by a few of us, when the traitor Dalglish first showed the proof, are now being justified. Yet there were, not wanting, those who said that we were the traitors. However we must get down to business and build again.

Ironically in 1912, after losing his seat the previous year, Dalglish was appointed to the Arbitration Court bench by the employers as their representative and he was to remain as Somerville's opposite number until 1920. There is unfortunately no record of how their relationships fared in this period.

Somerville's own appointment to the Arbitration Court bench in 1905 was not without interest. Lobestein his predecessor had lost the confidence of the Trade Unions and in preselection for the position received only one of some thirty five votes cast by delegates of the Coastal and Perth Labor Councils. Subsequently Lobestein left the Labor Party and appeared before the Court as an advocate for the employers. In a letter to Sir Walter James, his friend and confidante Somerville observed that

Mr Lobestein is not worth wasting much paper on, but in my view if ever time brought justification to any body of men, it brought it to Jack Croft and the Trades & Labor Council when Mr. Emmanuel Lionel Lobestein appeared in the Arbitration Court as the agent for the employers. To me it is impossible to conceive a more traitorous act, to sit for five years as the representative of the men and then use whatever knowledge and skill he had acquired against those he had formerly represented.

The two main candidates for the vacancy on the Court were Driver and Somerville who received an equality of votes in the first instance but the ballot was extended, for a further period by the returning officer, to enable persons inadvertently excluded to cast their votes. At this count Somerville had a majority of one but Driver objected on the grounds that the ballot should not have been extended and that John Curran, Secretary of the Perth Council had found a vote in his office which had been received before the initial count but not included. This vote would have given Driver the majority.

A controversy raged for some time with both Curran and Driver having recourse to the press. Somerville was away on the Goldfields at this time on an organising trip for his Union and the Labor Party, but upon his return he steadfastly refused to be drawn into public discourse on the grounds that it was an internal matter for the Unions to decide. In an impassioned letter Driver implored him to stand down from the election on the grounds that seniority entitled him to the position more than Somerville. In reply Somerville indicated he was giving serious consideration to that course of action because he believed that events were harming the image of the trade unions. The contrast in the two approaches is quite remarkable. Driver's pleading and petulant, Somerville considerate, thoughtful and detached. The issue was finally resolved by a committee which determined Somerville should be the workers' nominee. The extension of the ballot was ruled invalid and some votes in the first stage of the ballot were cast by persons ineligible to vote and therefore excluded.

A reason advanced by Driver in support of his contention that Somerville should stand down was that his prospects of political honours were so bright. By a twist of fate the reverse was to be the

result. Driver was later elected to parliament, but Somerville who stood on numerous occasions for preselection never managed to obtain the candidature.

Somerville had an impassioned belief in Arbitration, he saw the system as being the vehicle by which massive reforms could be made in workers' conditions and it is certainly true that he was responsible for quite significant changes in the accepted standards that governed working conditions in W.A. To some extent this belief in Arbitration was in contradiction with his commitment to Socialism. Arbitration could not be a vehicle of radical change which would affect the social order, indeed in many instances it was able to absorb some of the conflicts of class antagonism and protect the established order. This is best illustrated by its concurrence with the ten percent wage cut in the 1930's.

Despite his belief in Arbitration he was not uncritical of the system and in particular recognised the dangers inherent in the political appointments to the Bench. He was to write to Will Jones of the *Worker* about one President:

To make the articles interesting and truthful I would have to enlarge on (Blanks's) misinterpretation of various clauses. His unfitness for the position of President of such a Tribunal arises out of his family connections, his intimate association with a number of big companies as attorney and agent, his enormous private wealth etc.

He was to adopt a completely different attitude to Sir Walter Dwyer who at one stage of his career on the Court Bench had indicated his intention of resigning his position because of political pressure. In a letter he implored him to reconsider his decision because of the vital need for a person of humanitarian and liberal outlook to occupy the position of President of the Court. Dwyer did reconsider his decision and went on to serve a lengthy period as President with many history making decisions to his credit.

There was a strong streak of stubbornness in Somerville's make-up, and he often ran counter to the accepted belief and viewpoint of the Labor Movement. It is perhaps best illustrated by his 1909 candidacy for pre-selection for the Fremantle seat. Being firmly of the belief that protection was the best policy for the party to pursue, he advised all and sundry that he was standing on a policy of protection. He must have known that in a district such as Fremantle which was predominantly free trade that his stand on protection would almost assuredly mean defeat in the pre-selection as in fact ultimately occurred. An interesting side light to this question is that in 1912 before the party congress in Hobart he received a letter from Senator George Pearce requesting that he take whatever steps he could to ensure that a proposal which was to be submitted to the State Executive of the Party in Western Australia, that would have the effect of instructing delegates to vote in favour of protection should be amended to ensure that they were not committed at the congress but could vote according to their conscience after the debate. Despite Somerville's own personal opinions he pressed at the State Executive for the delegates not to be committed to one policy or another but to be given the right to vote as they chose after hearing the debate at congress. At this congress the compromise "New Protection" policy was formulated.

In later writings Somerville claims credit for having enunciated the doctrine of a basic wage prior to Mr Justice Higgins in the 1907 Harvester case. It is a bit difficult to validate this contention although it is certainly true that in a judgement given in 1905, and reported in the W.A. Arbitration Reports, Somerville expresses opposition to the method of determining wages for a male employee which was then currently in use, that established a worker without a family as the basis of wage fixation. He argued that one could not possibly talk of a worker without having regard to his family. This interest in the basic wage led Somerville to make some observations about the statistical methods used in wage determination, which have continuing relevance. During the period of the war when workers were being urged to tighten their belts "in the national interest" statistics emerged to show that wage rises were unjustified. In a letter to the ALP Central Executive in June 30th, 1916 Somerville drew attention to the hidden meaning of figures put forward by the statistician Knibbs in the Labour and Industry Branch Report:

In his latest report Mr Knibbs definitely takes sides with those who say that the workers should not under present abnormal conditions seek an increase in wages, but should adopt a cheaper regimen, for instance if meat rises in price then dessicated peanuts are equally nitrogenous and nutritious substitutes, again if bread becomes dear then hominy is very good. A further illustration of his meaning can be drawn from the animal world. Stock can be kept alive, until the grass grows, on a diet of chopped straw.

Mr Knibbs apparently favours the idea that something of the same nature should be done by the wage earner. When we see a statistician of all men taking sides like this on a hotly contested question of policy it is time for the workers to take very decided action, and not for one moment let it be forgotten, that the statistics of Mr. Knibbs have by reason of our industrial machinery greater power for good or ill to every wage earner in the Commonwealth, than has ever been exercised by any compilation of its kind ever printed.

It would appear that the workers have been content for too long to accept the figures without satisfying themselves that they are satisfactory from the wage earners point of view.

This created some controversy in the Labor ranks but Somerville went further, a year later in a letter to the Midland District Council, in which he sought to reveal the dangers posed to workers' living standards by "orthodox economics":

There is no doubt that in many cases the temerity of working men daring to challenge the conclusion of Mr. Knibbs, with a long list of academic and scholastic honours after his name, will be scoffed at.

The Labour Movement has since its inception always been at issue with the doctrines of the orthodox economist and if our wages are based upon algebraic formulae then our safety demands that we carefully scrutinise such formulae and take nothing for granted.

I have the highest respect for the great ability of Mr Knibbs, [but] the whole of his training and environment leads him to accept as beyond question doctrines relating to the remuneration of capital which the labour movement has always questioned and must continue to question until they are placed on a basis satisfactory to us.

This disagreement with Knibbs' figures was not confined to resolutions and discussions within the Labor Party. Somerville questioned the statistics which were advanced in the 1921 basic wage

case, and was successful in showing that in a number of instances the figures were wrongly based and certainly commenced from a wrong premise.

1916 was a turbulent year for the Labor Party. It was the year when the party split over the question of conscription and the leadership of W.M. Hughes. Somerville took the anti conscription side and vigorously pursued this position of principle against the pro conscription views of the majority of Western Australians. During this time Pearce who was then the Minister for Defence and who had always been a good friend of Somerville's came to Western Australia to endeavour to convince the movement and the people that they should support conscription.

George Pearce had been a long time friend but Somerville did not let this stand in the way of the position of principle he had adopted. The Government had taken steps to prevent the issue being fully debated by the public and were withheld information using wartime security as an excuse. Somerville wrote to Pearce:

It would be interesting to know by what means of reasoning, you a Labor man continue to support the outrageous action of a number of military upstarts who dare to with-hold the information necessary for the formation of intelligent opinion.

So long as Parliament is sitting and those of it, who are Labor supporters, who are not possessed of the prevailing military frenzy can badger you, you in line with your verbose leader (Hughes) are profuse in your assurance that both sides of this great question will get a fair run. But the moment Parliament is silenced you enact regulations to gag and blindfold the people.

The watchword of a democracy should surely be open and free discussion, the watchword of this Labor Government in their instructions to the censor apparently is to suppress anything which tells against their case. So it appears that our Federal Labor Government see a good deal of virtue in Prussian methods of dealing with the common herd.

This question of conscription is one upon which households are divided. Father differing from son and brother from brother. You and your leader are responsible for blowing the Labor Party to shreds, you are the men who have destroyed the results of a quarter of a century of laborious building. But still I had hoped that we would pass through this without bitterness between old friends and co-workers. But I cannot remain quiet under your vile and cowardly insinuations, without challenging you to come out in the open and say just what you mean. I might retort in time and vaguely hint at rewards which have been received from the past, by one time democrats who have turned on the common herd and turned Dingo. But I will not do so further, but I tell you it is a cowardly, mean thing to attempt to associate men, who have worked with you in the past, and whose sense of honour is as keen as yours, with criminals and incendiaries simply because they dare to differ from you on an important question of public policy.

The latter section of the letter is, of course, a reference to attempts by the pro conscription forces to link all opponents of conscription with the revolutionary International Workers of the World (IWW). The context was the trial of the 12 members of the IWW in Sydney, on what were later admitted to be trumped up charges, and the trials then proceeding in W.A. of a number IWW members on charges of seditious conspiracy. It will be recalled that members of the IWW in 1916 were committed for trial on allegations of conspiracy to commit arson and sedition. All of the twelve were gaoled and a Royal Commission was to record that in most instances they should not

have been, because of the lack of evidence and also, on the grounds that the evidence was procured from informers who had a vested interest in acting as witnesses for the Crown. Ian Turner's "Sydney's Burning" graphically described the events and the climate in which the trials were held.

Somerville had friends amongst the members of the IWW who were arrested and put on trial in W.A. Their defence was conducted by Thomas Walker, a Labor MP and well known radical lawyer who was a friend of Somerville and served a number of years as his colleague on the University Senate. Burnside who had been President of the Arbitration Court was the Presiding Judge at the trial. Somerville had a high regard for Burnside, and quotes many of Burnside's anecdotes and homilies. The jury returned a verdict of guilty and each of the accused was liable to three years' imprisonment, but instead of a sentence Mr Justice Burnside delivered a paternalistic reprimand and discharged them upon their own recognisances to be of good behaviour.

The post war period found Somerville quite firmly entrenched in his position on the Arbitration Court Bench. He had survived an attack some time earlier which had been levelled at him because of his concurrence with certain decisions of the court. This brought him into disfavour with some groups of workers. The extent of the respect in which Somerville was held, however, was indicated by the large number of letters in support that poured in from unions and individuals when the attacks upon him were repulsed.

He was able in this period to make considerable headway with a number of the reforms. One of these, which quite clearly emanated from his own experiences as organiser in the Timber industry and on the Goldfields, was the insertion of a provision in awards which gave a union official the right of entry to the employers premises without hindrance. He saw this as being a major breakthrough to enable unions to properly organise and represent their members. This right had been denied to him in the Timber industry and on some occasions he had to be smuggled into mills so that he could contact and organise his members.

About this time a controversy developed between Somerville and the University Senate. The University was founded as a free University by John Scaddan, who, to ensure that it would be a University where the sons of working men could be educated had endowed land upon the University so that it could sustain itself. One of the means that the University used to obtain revenue was by letting out some of the land for commercial purposes and in some places allowing the development of quarries. One such place was Buckland Hill, which is situated just off the main Stirling Highway and overlooks the coast. Somerville feared that Buckland Hill would be destroyed by the limestone quarrying which was being carried out. In an endeavour to influence Local Authorities and other bodies to prohibit quarrying in this area, he made long impassioned addresses and wrote of the beauty of Buckland Hill and the view which could be seen from its crest, arguing that it was completely wrong for natural beauty spots to be commercialised even in the interests of such an important function as maintaining a free University.

It is interesting to remark upon this aspect of Somerville in the light of the present discussions which are going on, on the question of preservation and protection of the environment. Somerville had quite advanced views on the effect of man's impact on the ecology of the country. For example he put forward a theory that the devastation of the Tuart trees on the coastal plains occurred because man had upset the balance of nature. The wood borer which was responsible for damaging and destroying the Tuarts were expanding rapidly because the natural enemies of the borer had been killed off with the expansion of the towns. He made a considerable study of this question and also how to plant and raise Tuarts from both seed and sapling and it was this study that enabled him to advance the idea and successfully carry out the work of planting Rottnest Island with the Tuarts which are to this day a feature of that holiday resort.

It has already been shown that Somerville was passionately devoted to many causes and he would with enthusiasm take up a large number of projects, many of them at the same time. But his love of trees was an outstanding passion, it is probably best expressed in the words he used to describe that part of the University which is called Somerville Auditorium. He referred to it as his "Cathedral of Trees" which is a most apt description. Somerville upon his death was cremated and his ashes were buried beneath one of the stately pine trees within the Auditorium.

Somerville was never over enamoured with academics and although he worked very closely with them in his activities for the University and on the University Senate he not infrequently found himself in conflict with the views which they expressed. He tended to have the practical working man's scorn of people with academic qualifications, believing them to be "airy fairy" in their approach to practical questions. The academics who have been and still are held in high regard, with whom he conflicts are numerous but his attitude is probably best expressed in a letter to the "West Australian" which they declined to publish. The letter was in response to an article which had been written by Professor Alexander on the question of University graduates at Oxford and Cambridge who had acted as strike breakers during the 1926 general strike in Great Britain. On a reading of Professor Alexander's article, which was rather facetious light-hearted commentary on what had happened, it appears that Somerville misinterpreted Alexander's letter. However his comments on Professor Alexander's article are significant:

It will take more than printer's ink to make the English trade unionists forget. I have faith in their better understanding to the supreme importance of social questions, but it will not be many years before the majority, of those who took part as strike breakers, will realise with shame that they were fools to defeat better men than themselves who were fighting for long overdue reforms. I believe the big majority of the students on the banks of the Swan will notwithstanding Mr. Alexander's writing appreciate the fact that a strike breaker is a despicable creature even when driven to it by economic pressure. How much more so when he acts merely from class solidarity.

Two issues emerge in this comment, his attitude towards academics and his sense of grievance at those who would try to deny the working man his rights. Somerville had little regard for authority where such authority challenged his appreciation of matters political or the class position which he occupied, and so he was to write to the Governor on his failure to invite him to attend a reception

for Lord Jellicoe who was then visiting Australia:

The only reason I can surmise for not getting the opportunity to visit and meet Admiral Jellicoe is because of my political opinions and my main reason for writing to you is to challenge your right to give effect to your personal political bias in the exercise of your duty as the Governor. Judging by press reports the proceedings in connection with the welcome for Admiral Jellicoe with which you had anything to do, was designed for the exclusive benefit of a small section of the community who with offensive insolence arrogate to themselves the title of society. Into that very select society I have no desire to intrude. But when it comes to paying respect to a very distinguished visitor, I want to point out to you that there are other sections of the community who have as much if not a better right to be considered than some of those who apparently monopolise your attention.

Professor Alexander in his history of the University of Western Australia says of Somerville that,

there is no questioning his integrity - it is matched only by his obstinacy. With these characteristics went a strange mixture of complete confidence in personal judgement and an evident inferiority on all matters academic. When Somerville was unable to comprehend a University situation outside his personal experience he invariably fell back upon a class motivation reminiscent of his days as a trade union official and workers advocate in industrial disputes.

Alexander is less kind in his comments on Somerville's characteristics than the evidence suggests he should be. It may well be that in the University situation and his relations with academics, administrators, and fellow senators these characteristics asserted themselves but a larger examination leads to more charitable conclusions. Somerville quite clearly saw himself as the custodian of the original charter for a free University. He considered himself to be charged with the responsibility of ensuring that the sons and daughters of working class families would never be excluded from a University education. It is probable that his proprietorial interest in these matters brought him into conflict with many of his colleagues who sat with him on the senate.

He had a relatively simple article of faith and because of this simplicity he may not have conceived the more intricate matters which were debated by the academics on the senate. However it's not accurate to see Somerville as a person of no erudition. The wealth of writing which he performed, his notes of events in which he participated and the almost religious documentation and filing of correspondence, all testify to a keen sense of history and an appreciation of the role of history in education.

Somerville was a well read man. He had read most of the works on political economy by Adam Smith, Ricardo and Marx. But it is not suggested that his writings reveal that he had a complete or clear understanding of these writings. The ideas which he advanced during the 30's also indicates that he had an appreciation of Keynes but it is not substantiated that he understood the Keynesian analysis of the depression and its causes. That he was perhaps untutored and had little direction, in the academic sense, to his studies makes him no less an educated person. His library as a matter of record was extensive and wide ranging. The papers which he produced and delivered from time to time were not confined to the area of politics or industrial matters. He lectured on such things as Japan as a geographic area, its customs, the ethnic origin of its people and so on.

Somerville's controversy with the eminent geographer Griffith Taylor, conducted by correspondence over a period of two years, shows quite clearly his wide reading. Their arguments ranged over areas of semantics, philosophy and geography. It is true that the arguments frequently were conducted in a rather blunt and unlettered way but none the less they are proof of the extent of this man's reading, even if, they show an incomplete appreciation of what he read. This correspondence was conducted with no little acrimony, charge and counter charge, but it is evident that Somerville emerged from the debate with some of the honours. Griffiths Taylor was to finally write in exasperation that it was better for Somerville to keep to his field of expertise, namely the Arbitration Court and leave the field of geography to those more qualified to comment.

Sometime in 1934 or early in 1935 Somerville wrote a pamphlet which he called a *Constructive Programme*. It was intended as a statement of what was necessary to be done by the Australian Labor Party in that period. He foresaw that capitalism was heading as he termed it for a debacle. The *Constructive Programme* reveals some erroneous thinking but the treatise is interesting from a number of aspects. He sees the developing facism of Germany and Italy as a product of the decline of Capitalism and the competition with Socialism. He also foresaw the possibility of war emerging from the conflict.

It was possible, he believed, for the Labor Party by adopting a constructive programme, to lead Australia out of the morass of unemployment which he believed to be a concomitant of the Capitalist economic system. He states in the pamphlet,

if you believe as I do that these measures, that is the borrowing of money, are no remedy at all. But under that policy unemployment and misery will go on getting worse and worse then you will agree I think that the only way to escape a dangerously explosive state is a drastic alteration in our present system in the direction of applied Socialism.

He says later that because of the remedies then being applied to the economic crisis there would arise a struggle in which either fascism or socialism would emerge successful.

We must not persuade ourselves that capitalism will allow itself to be snuffed out without a struggle. It is impregably entrenched behind press, pulpit and legislative councils and when it begins to fear for its possessions then will it tend to force, if necessary to maintain its hold. It is against the inevitable arrival of this state that the Labor Party must be prepared with carefully thought out proposals, these proposals must more over be of such a character as will commend them to the minds of thousands outside the Labor Party who realise that great changes in our social structure are imminent.

His programme was:

1. A self-contained and self-reliant Australia determined to mind her own business and to be concerned only with the welfare and happiness of Australia. This basically was an argument against continued co-operation with Great Britain in military ventures outside of Australia.

2. Financial reform which will restore to the State exclusive power to issue and control money of all forms. This plank of his programme is a hotch-potch of then current and not so current politico-economic views, Langism, Douglas social credit, Pseudo Marxian, and even Populist ideas crowd with each other for expression.
3. To abolish unemployment, Arbitration Acts be amended so as to instruct the Courts to fix wages at such a level as will absorb Australian production. This plank is based on the concept that is possible for unemployment to be eliminated if the purchasing power of the mass of consumers is large enough to absorb the total production.
4. To fix working hours and investment in industry at such a level that will prevent overproduction.
5. To fix prices at a level which will be fair to the manufacturer, producer and consumer.

This programme was written at the age of 63 or 64 and it is difficult to envisage this as a product of the earlier William Somerville. Mainly because so much of it smacks of the conventional wisdom of his group instead of a reasoned and well thought out viewpoint of an educated mature experienced person. It is a confused view without any ideological basis mixed with an apparent perception which becomes all the more remarkable in the circumstances.

This then is my picture of the man over a period of 58 years. There are many things done which I have omitted or just briefly mentioned. The record of his work in the Arbitration Court. The University Senate, and on diverse other bodies and committees. Each of these particular roles could have been the subject of a paper to themselves. The fact that he filled many of these positions simultaneously is testimony in itself to his energy and commitment. If my paper has at all aroused your interest then you may explore that interest further because there is a wealth of material available in his papers which are contained in the Battye Library. A word of warning some of the material, particularly that written in retrospect needs to be checked against historical fact, some work bears the marks of reliance on memory rather than research.

In conclusion I trust I have validated my initial contention of Somerville's deep commitment to his class, of one passionately devoted to a cause, a non-conformist who sought and worked for a change in the social order. Somerville was not a popular man. His writings show a rather humorless individual and he made a number of antagonists out of the people he worked with in public life. But then there is nothing so irritating to the establishment as one who wants to see and actively works for its demise.

Writing Labor History in Western Australia: My Experience with *The First Furrow**

Joan Williams†

To explain the origin of this work, I have to go back a long way, to how I became a communist and parts of the family history, world and local events that influenced my political development. All these threads came together and have their place in *The First Furrow*.

If I had not become a communist, acquiring a marxist perspective on history, being made by class struggle, I would not have felt the need for the theme that would bring together the influence of socialist thought on radical struggles in Western Australia, and the need to write down working class history that was then largely unwritten. If I had not become a reporter on the *Workers' Star*, for love of the cause and little money, I would not have met and interviewed so many of the people who had helped make this history, or were still making it. If I had not had an extremely free-thinking Labor-oriented family background, I would not have had such a keen interest in history, from *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, which was put into my hands at the age of twelve, to *All Quiet on the Western Front*, which was hidden on top of my mother's wardrobe, and turned me firmly against war. If my grandmother had not frankly admitted her determination to keep my father out of World War 1, I would not have been so interested in the anti-conscription struggles mentioned in my book.

As children, we often questioned my father as to why he had not fought - many returned soldiers came to Kendenup, as we did, in 1920 or soon afterwards. My father gave us more family than political reasons.

An assayer at the School of Mines in Kalgoorlie, he had married my mother, a Kalgoorlie girl, about the time war broke out and I was born in 1916, with my eldest brother soon on the way. My grandmother, Hilda Harman Allen, who had brought up her family in Subiaco, told me of her part in the anti-conscription campaigns. With while feathers flying around, this must have been a painful experience, which I understood more when I read Judah Waten's account of the aptly named Fethers family in "The Unbending".

* This paper was presented in the Seminars in Labour History series at the University of Western Australia in November 1987.

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My father had gone around the world in the first Young Australia League tour of such magnitude from Perth, as trombonist in their band. The name of "J.J." Simons loomed over us like a demi-god, and I was quite shocked later on discovering his ultra-right role when I was doing research for the book; similarly with Sir Thomas Walker, who was also a friend of my grandmother.

The failure of Kendenup, J.C. De Garis's closer settlement scheme, which had some visionary aspects as well as promotional hype much ahead of its time, brought severe hardship to settlers who had paid high prices for small parcels of land on the former Hassell estate. Even the children were plunged into awareness of economic matters, as adults agonised over a desperate situation, whether "C.J." as we called him, was a benefactor or a scoundrel, falling prices, failure of the State Government to intervene, rising hopes as he tried and failed to get loans from the USA to stave off the liquidators. We knew what debenture holders were because my father became their local representative, and we heard stories of "moonlight flits" as many of the settlers fled with what they could salvage or simply abandoned their holdings and their debts. He leased the old Hassell homestead, which had been turned into a hostel, and its paddocks, where I grew up, with seven brothers and one sister, developing a strong sense of history and awareness of inequality of the sexes.

There was an Aboriginal skull at the homestead, which someone had brought there, it was said, to use as an ink-well, and was reputed to be that of an Aboriginal "king". We knew that Hassell had used native labour and indentured Chinese as well.

The depression came early to Kendenup because of "The Crash", as it was known. The early thirties brought more difficulties for those who stayed and battled on until their orchards came into bearing. Our situation was similar to that of the Group Settlements, of which we heard many stories, but we probably had more to eat than the people to whom "Hellfire Jack" gave hope at Manjimup. I didn't know it at the time, but there was a communist or two at Kendenup, one of them Fred Couldridge mentioned on page 112 of *The First Furrow*.

Helping to pick and pack prime quality apples for export, we had a salutary lesson when we saw the final return - a bill - because apples sent to Hamburg did not realise the cost of sending them there, let alone the cost of cases, wrapping paper and production. Similarly, we pondered on the anarchy of market forces as gluts reduced the prices of other produce.

My newspaper career started in a lowly way on the *West Australian* in 1933, a job obtained by the grace of the managing editor. I got off on the wrong foot in the lunch-room on two counts; desiring to shock the social snobs, I announced I was an atheist; in addition, they all knew my aunt was his mistress. Having got the job by influence I set about living this down and hoped that it was talent that prevailed when I finally became a reporter. Only, however, on the women's section, where we had to resign or be sacked if we married in defiance of "West" employment policy. Quickly acquiring a swelled head through the power of the Press, I was brought up with a

shock during a strike of newspaper machinists and compositors. The women's section was headed by Noel White, a dedicated journalist whose father worked in the composing room. I went home to grandmother's house to find "C.P.", as we called him boasting of how he had stalked into the composing room and sacked a supposed strike leader on the spot - Noel's father. My industrial education was helped by hearing the views of management, as espoused by "C.P.", W.R. Vale, of Western Mining and W.S. Robinson, mightiest of the "West" directors, who came over occasionally from Collins Street, Melbourne.

As a member of the Australian Journalists' Association, I was rapidly educated in industrial matters by the younger male journalists, including my first husband, Pete Thomas, E.W. Irwin, Gordon Burgoyne and others. An omnivorous reader, I had been much influenced by Shaw's *Intelligent Woman's Guide to Socialism* and *Quiet Flows the Don* and the *Decameron* of Boccaccio, banned but somehow on the shelf of Foy and Gibson's. Ray McClintock came onto the women's section, lent me the celebrated early Soviet novel, Gladkov's *Cement* and Katharine Susannah Prichard's *Intimate Strangers*. Developing a real interest in the first socialist State, mainly because of Litvinov's stance in the League of Nations, I was always eager to penetrate behind the real iron curtain created by our lack of information and the incredibly simplistic and vicious propaganda against the Soviet Union. My eyes were soon further opened to the unseen censorship.

One of our reporting tasks was to meet ships when they berthed at Fremantle, to interview returning travellers and notables. A french wool-buyer named Rene Prevost and his wife gave me an exciting account of their visit to the Soviet Union, material that I was sure had never been printed before, a scoop that I thought would delight the editor. The story was duly killed.

Another learning experience was the arrival of Egon Kisch. These were exciting days in the struggle against war and fascism which are recounted in *The First Furrow*, pages 152-160. Bill Irwin and others had kept us supplied with information on the struggle in Spain in defence of democracy and I was soon deeply committed to the anti-fascist cause. We were appalled that the western powers could look on while an elected government was overthrown, refugees bombed and the leftist forces reeling under the weight of Hitler and Mussolini's intervention on behalf of the rightists turning the clock back to clericalism and obscurantism.

I attended a public meeting in Perth organised by the Spanish Relief Committee to hear returning members of the International Brigade and was overwhelmed by their first-hand accounts of the courage and suffering in the defence of Madrid. A dynamic, passionate speech was made by Ron Hurd, whom I got to know well later when he came to Fremantle Branch of the Seamen's Union of Australia, with his equally dynamic wife, Patricia, daughter of left-wing Australian-New Zealand writer, whose book *The Butcher's Shop* was banned in both countries around 1928.

As a reporter, I had been sent to cover many meetings of women's organisations, which at that time on the labor side were mostly auxiliaries of male unions, or faction-fighting conservatives like the

National Council of Women. The Women's International League for Peace and Freedom and the Modern Women's Club were a breath of fresh air. Irene Greenwood was making anti-war speeches at WILPF, her mother Mrs. Driver led the Women's Christian Temperance Union, which was campaigning on women's rights and the plight of Aboriginal women. I had been looking forward to meeting Katharine Susannah Prichard and finally did so at the MWC, which met in the basement of Padbury Buildings with the help of its sympathetic owner, Joe Skinner. I had expected a brilliant, impressive figure and was disappointed at first in the pale, slight, gentle woman, though the love and respect for her of everyone there was obvious. Only after some time did I appreciate her steel-like inner strength, her firm stand on principle, her kindness and generosity. I enjoyed a production of her play *Penalty Clause* in the old WA Newspaper Building which now housed the Repertory Theatre. But it aroused more of my interest years later when I found it was based on a government attack on militancy, to take a day's pay off every worker for every day on strike, and that the main character was based on Paddy Troy, who with his brother Lal was in the thick of the struggle against the proposal at Youanmi.

The left-wing plays of Odets, Irwin Shaw, and Ernst Toller opened a new world to me, the fusing of the struggle against war and fascism with new approaches to drama, involving the audience. Jock Hector, a journalist on the Daily News in high standing in his profession was an enthusiastic producer and actor in the Workers' Art Guild. He used his position to produce a double-page spread in the *Daily News* on the WAG. The directors' phones ran hot, Jock found himself without a job, and had to leave Perth for less prejudiced pastures on a poultry magazine in the Eastern States.

It was hard to imagine that there could be a bohemian element in conservative, provincial old Perth. But there was, with the artist Herbert McClintock one of its outstanding personalities. He worked at Gibbney's, the engravers above the old *Daily News* building in the Terrace, with John Lunghi, another of the circle, impoverished but exciting with its avante garde and marxist ideas. Mac plunged Perth into controversy with the first exhibition of surrealist painting, signed by Max Ebert, rumoured to be the name of a German revolutionary, but really only a version of his own moniker. My thinking was also enlarged by the Lintons, Betsy Currie and others and university radicals Eleanor Holland, Hew Roberts and Betty Hamm.

In those days, usually only the rich, stowaways and ship's crews and a few adventurous reporters travelled abroad. Soon after we were married, Pete Thomas and I thought we were very daring in going to Europe on a shoestring - signing on a wheat ship, the Queen Maud, for 20 pounds, as part of the crew, supposedly working our passage, allotted spartan bunks in a tiny cabin that was actually the ship's hospital. In the Bay of Biscay we came face to face with the Spanish Civil War, though not in a military sense, as ships ran the blockade of Western Nations to take food to the embattled Republicans, including the famous captain "Potato Jones", who found potatoes a more dangerous cargo than gun-running for the fascists.

In London we linked up with John Hill, a former WA reporter who had made a name for himself by

finding out what the Queen ate for breakfast. Later killed in World War II, he was a member of the left-wing Holborn Labour Party branch, with whom we marched on May Day, chanting "Down with Hitler, Mussolini and Tojo". Police diverted the huge march into back streets, though Oswald Mosely's black-shirts suffered no interference.

We then saw Nazi Germany from the inside, militarisation visible everywhere: *Juden Verboten* notices on park seats, Goebbels anti-Jewish propaganda plastering city notice-boards and newspapers. We ate *ersatz* jam with bits of wood to resemble strawberry pips, drank *ersatz* coffee made from burnt wheat and were told by tramdrivers and others of the drive against unions. Back in London we had tickets to Parliament courtesy of Megan Lloyd George and listened to hypocritical statements from the Conservatives about "peace in our time" as a result of Chamberlain's betrayal of Czechoslovakia to Hitler.

Returning to Australia, we found a general disbelief in the imminence of war and the menace of Nazism. Menzies, who had been in Berlin hob-knobbing with Hitler, praised him at meetings in Perth. The Left organised and Menzies got a hard time. Interjections were so vociferous that he could not feed off them as usual and lost his temper with "the woman in blue", Phyllis Harnett, ordering the police throw her out.

When the Soviet Union went into Finland to secure its northern border against the dictator Mannerheim, a Hitler puppet, we attended a "cottage meeting" to hear Arthur Rudkin, editor of the communist paper *The Workers' Star*. Though I was not much impressed by Rudkin's defence of the invasion, Bill Irwin persuaded me to become a contributor to the paper.

My experiences with the Labor Party soon confirmed my growing conviction that social change could be achieved only through a marxist party. As members of the Claremont-Nedlands branch of the ALP, we had been prime targets of the witch-hunting of the State Executive, led by officials Nash and Davies, who was secretary of the branch, and Dot Tangney, not then a Senator. We were accused by Dot of having distributed *Sheepskins for Russia* leaflets, one of which she had found in her letter-box the same day as the meeting. We had plenty of proof that we knew nothing about it, but the hunt against leftists continued. It came to a head later when I announced that I was a reporter for the *Workers' Star* and was haled before the Metropolitan Council, which was controlled by the State Executive, and required the signing of the pledge that you were not a communist. My passionate speech caused delegates to vote overwhelmingly against my expulsion, especially as I made great play with a recent incident when Harold Millington, a Minister of the Government, had been called to account for blatant flouting of ALP policy, and told them that they had no power to discipline him. I resigned soon afterward, announcing that I had joined the Communist Party - actually some time after the event. It was clear that the Labor Party members had no control over politicians, who would find ways of evading the progressive points that the left-wing had struggled to have put in the platform. Betrayal of these was the order of the day as it had been in the past.

The main communist campaign had been to expose the "phoney war", more a preparation for the

implementation of fascist measures at home than a genuine fight against Nazism at that stage. We also took up opposition to the National Register, a scheme introduced by Menzies that had all the dangers of today's ID card proposal. Opposing one's own government in time of war brought excitement and danger when the Communist Party was banned in 1940. In the face of many arrests, I was extremely fearful as I typed the stencil for the illegal *Workers' Star*, mostly written by the journalists' branch of the Communist Party and academics at UWA. If we were arrested, there would be nobody to care for our two babies. We buried the typewriter in the family bread tin after each issue. Under illegal conditions, each phase of the work was kept secret and I knew nothing of the distribution. Meetings continued in our house in Stirling Highway, a rather public position opposite the Nedlands Post Office, with no way of escape except through the front entrance. The party leaders, including Dr. Sid Williams, had gone into smoke, as it was called, during the hottest time.

After the lifting of the ban on the CP in 1942, I was offered a job on *The Daily News* to help Gavin Casey on a column called "The Home Front", building enthusiasm for the war effort. Before the war ended, I was persuaded to resign and work full-time on *The Workers' Star*.

As well as a nose for news, I had a keen sense of history, as had most of the people around me, because of the struggles with which they had been or still were associated. Strike leaders and old radicals were referred to me and there were all kinds of leads to follow to glean a story for the paper. I began to accumulate an untidy pile of notes, short-hand and long-hand on scraps of paper, thinking that one day I might use them. Bronc Finlay gave me the real background of the Kalgoorlie riots from the point of view of a unionist and communist involved in trying to avert ethnic tension before the disaster. 'Hellfire Jack' Pratt used to come to Perth for State conferences of the CP. Looking at this kindly old man, it was hard to appreciate how he had got his nickname, and that story too is told in *The First Furrow*. When Harry Pollitt died on his return journey to London on a ship in the Bight, Jack made the long journey from Manjimup, unsolicited, to give the funeral oration for his former comrade. Neatly dressed with unaccustomed collar and tie, he didn't know that Harry's son had had the body taken back to England. (I wrote a short story about this episode.)

Although I had no time to file or work over the pile of notes that grew larger with the years. I realized they were becoming more valuable, the only surviving evidence in some cases of those who were actually part of past struggles, important events that had never been documented but had often been falsified or suppressed by the conservative press. A great deal of the material that would have helped future researchers had been destroyed in the illegal period, during the Anti-Communist Referendum and at other critical points of the class struggle. But I had much of this in my head. Battlers were always urging me to "write it down" for them. The published pieces had an evanescent character; circumscribed by the demands of space, their significance needed to be seen in a wider context, the context of the class struggle as a whole.

But a history of the CP would be too narrow; it would be impossible, I felt, in the climate of the

time to get a publisher. I had been trying for a long time to pin-point the actual date of the foundation of the CP in W.A. In any case, the roots went much further back - to the International Workers of the World, to the struggle to form unions and to the origin of socialist thought in this outpost of empire. There were fascinating links with the Chartists, the Fenians, the Paris Commune, the Russian Revolution, political refugees among emigrants from Ireland, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, Germany. A beginning needed to be made on the history of radical movements as part of WA history, there needed to be a political perspective that would attempt to draw together some of the useful work and had already been done in separate academic theses. With other original material, I hoped that I would be able to provide leads for others who wanted to do further research.

Having established the theme and assessed my material, I found more gaps than solid ground. People I still needed to interview had scattered, burnt out politically, or simply found a haven in distant places. When it became known on the Left that I was doing this work, many brought me actual documents or gave me clues to participants in past events. Katharine Susannah Prichard gave me the Monty Miller material and her own account of the Frankland River March. Tom Orgles, the waterside worker and son of Tom Orgles Snr., an early member of the CP, gave me copies of the 1937 *Waterside Worker*, Annette Cameron lent me copies of the illegal *Workers' Star* and old pamphlets, Bertie Lake supplied copies of *OURS*, the unemployed workers' journal in 1938-39. My second husband, Vic Williams, gave me the Diann story and his memories of John Solosy. I also used material from his *Farmers' Way Forward*, the history of farming struggles he had written as a pamphlet published in 1941. My grandmother had been a tailoress; I had followed up some leads on Mamie Swanton for an article in *Our Women* and Julie Latter lent me a book of cuttings, mostly undated, of her letters and speeches.

When the wartime Landlord and Tenant Act fixing rents and preventing evictions was repealed, I was evicted by a greedy landlord and moved to Fremantle with Vic Williams, who had joined the Communist Party in Victoria in 1939, but whom I didn't meet until he returned from war service in New Guinea. His work on the Fremantle wharf for 24 years opened up an organic connection with working class struggle. The waterfront strikes of 1954 and 1956 brought distress to many families. Communists had a leading role in the strike committee. With their help, a handful of valiant women, including the daughter of Tom Orgles Snr., formed the WWF Women's Committee. There was considerable opposition from the men, but we had the blessing of General Secretary Jim Healy, WA Branch Secretary Gordon Harris and some of the committee. Attitudes changed as we organised strike relief and food distribution, with the help of Fremantle shopkeepers and progressive Yugoslav market gardeners at Spearwood.

I met the daughter of Tom Edwards, who introduced me to her mother. I interviewed her and got a first-hand account of the 1919 strike, the events surrounding it and the killing of her husband. The late Jean O'Connor also interviewed her as part of a contemplated history of the WWF, for which Gordon Harris made the union records available. Her article was published in *The Maritime Worker* and mine in *Our Women*, a progressive magazine published nationally by the Union of Australian Women. Paddy Troy introduced me to Bill Renton, a member of his union, who had

been president of the WWF at the time of the strike. Nobody knew more about the early organisation of women in WA than Cecilia Shelley, secretary of the Hotel Club Caterers' Union, and Irene Greenwood, with both of whom I was closely associated. Our friendship with Donald and Lyndall Stuart, Mary Durack, Nene Gare, Tom Wright and Katharine Susannah Prichard and my association with Don McLeod gave me perspective and detail on the Aboriginal question of which I did not make sufficient use in *The First Furrow*. That is a job which remains to be done by progressive scholars.

While in Sydney, I was surprised to hear that Joe Shelley was still alive. Small, withered and very intelligent, he noted down my questions and sent me a long account of the early struggles of the communists dredged from a retentive memory. I dug up the Fenians in the Mitchell Library. E.W. Campbell, after publication of his *A History of the Australian Labour Movement*, tutored a communist study class in Perth that I attended. This helped me assess the Militant Minority Movement and other struggles which were part of larger Eastern States actions.

After a couple of years of research and writing the manuscript was submitted in 1972 to University Press, which farmed it out to the readers in the History Department, whose reports I never saw. However, it was a touchy proposition politically and the manuscript was finally returned. Vic Williams eventually determined that it should be published by Lone Hand Press - a name rather than an actual publishing firm, titled after an early Australian literary and political magazine subscribed to by his father. Unfortunately I was engaged on other work that prevented me from further revision and inclusion of more material. John Cater, then working for WAIT Printing Division, advised privately on the printing, Lisa Barrett designed the cover jacket as a labour of love.

Apparently there was an explosion from the then Premier, Sir Charles Court, when the book came out and waves from it affected some who had helped. The son of Sir Hal Colebatch, in an article in *The Daily News* attacked my account of his father's actions in the wharf strike, but this did not dampen demand for the book.

Since it was published, I have come across a lot more material. I talked to the descendants of Joseph Fabre who with his father was in the Paris Commune and was sent to New Caledonia and afterwards amnestied with Henri Rochefort and others who returned to Sydney amidst considerable celebration (*Truth Sunday*, Sydney, 23/9/17). Descendants of the captain of the "Georgette" told me of their belief that he deliberately fired over the bows of the "Catalpa" to let the Fenians get away. I recently heard that an early Kendenup settler told my father he had gone to Paraguay with the utopian socialists who went there from Australia in the 1890's.

Though I had a great deal more material on the next 30 years, I ended "The First Furrow" in 1942, with the restoration of legality to the Communist Party, because it was the high point of a long and difficult period. The workers had thrown up new leaders who were capable of writing the history of the many post-war struggles, other people who had been through them as I had or were leading the drive to ensure that wage workers got some of the big profits as industry developed and mineral

resources were exploited - as the communists had always advocated.

Stuart MacIntyre has covered a lot of this ground in *Militant*, the biography of Paddy Troy. Many local historians of high calibre have given their attention to various aspects of the lives of working people. Many more researchers are approaching the question with more open minds. Notice is being taken of the working women "hidden by history" and feminists authors are showing how much more there is to record of women's role. Don McLeod has written a history of the 1946 Aboriginal pastoral workers' strike, and Aborigines are writing their own history in drama and biography, notably Jack Davies and Sally Morgan.

Whatever the inadequacies of *The First Furrow*, I hoped it would give leads for others to follow and I think it has helped a number of students. The rest of the ground will undoubtedly be covered. If it is done while many of the participants are still alive, from the mouths of those who were there, not only will the research be easier, but, I believe, the result will be more accurate and certainly more vivid.

Jim Andrews changed position of his chair and rolled the cigar to the other side of his mouth. The new position enabled him to watch the girls' progress across the yard between the two offices, until she vanished around the corner of the building. The sun shining on the golden hair and the movement of the trim figure brought into his mind, a picture of Betsie. Betsie before she became his wife, looked and walked that way. Now she carried a few more pounds in weight and the hair was more golden, although the shade varied between visits to the hairdresser.

During his employment with Braine and Brawn Construction (International) Co. he and Betsie had had periods of being apart before, but this was going to be a long break. Refinery construction can take a man anywhere in the world, but Australia was a long way from Houston, Texas. Not that the distance was why she had gone home, but the education of the two boys was something that had to be considered and considered carefully. After long debate they had decided that attendance at college could not be broken like their schooling had been.

The boys had attended schools in the States and in South America, Mexico, Scotland, England and Australia and now back home. Paul had always wanted to be an engineer and John's desires hovered between taking up law or medicine or becoming a professional footballer, 'Big Jim' seldom sat in a chair for long. As Construction Manager for the company he liked to be out in the field where the action was, but now he continued to sit. Thoughts of the boys' education jerked his mind back to the present, before the movement of the girl's buttocks had claimed his attention.

The boys final education was going to take money and a few years yet. Years that needed to be secure years, as far as his income was concerned. His association with the company had been a happy one and very satisfying apart from the salary increases as he went up the ladder. Not many welders become managers and he knew that his progress had been cited as an example of what was open to American youth.

* Harold says that, "this story has no deep plot but is a resume of events that have occurred on many construction sites on many occasions. The events of this story have been strung together in an attempt to portray a facet of Australian life, which has often been neglected by more professional writers."

† Harold Peden worked as a welder in construction, metal fabrication, body building and ship repair before being elected as an organiser with the Boiler Makers and Blacksmiths Society at the age of 50. He was later an organiser and State President of the AMWU. Harold was a delegate to the TLC from its inception and was Senior Vice President of the TLC until his retirement. He served on the TLC disputes committee for many years.

However the interview with Clarrie Brawn before he had returned to the States, had not been a pleasant one. Mr. Franklin C. Brawn had not been unpleasant. No one thought of the General Manager any other way than as the "Boss", whether pleasant or not. Pleasant or unpleasant the message was there loud and clear. There must be an end to the continual run of strikes and that was it, or else. No "ifs" or "buts" just some action that would bring an end to the constant "out the gate" syndrome that had beset the job since the commencement date, 12 months before.

God knows they had been lucky. Lucky with the sand and limestone base. Not like mud. Lucky with the weather. Locals said that it was the driest winter on record and the wind had caused concern only on a very few days. There had been no serious accidents and no one had been killed, always an unsettling factor. Suppliers both local and international had met their delivery dates and although there had only been a couple of strikes on the waterfront and the truckies had only been out one day. Not that anyone from the company worried much about those strikes. After all it was a "cost plus" job and the more it cost the more the company would profit.

Now however, the delivery date was coming closer and this was always a period of nail biting for the construction management but more so on this damn job. A late delivery date meant a financial penalty and this was not what the company was in business for. Particularly as it may effect further contracts with the client.

He was also aware that more attention was being focused on industrial relations and those "long hairs" from the University were coming into the field. Companies strike records were now the subject of debate. As far as he was concerned "Industrial Relations" as a written memorandum on a schedule for a construction job was like sexual relations, someone got stuffed and that was that.

The lighter snapped open and the flame encircled the end of the cigar. He drew a long breath and then blew the smoke towards the ceiling, as he pushed the chair back and strode to the door.

"Get me that Industrial Relations guy", he called out.

Sam Larter was not a pleasant character, although even his adversaries, and he had many, considered that he was a character. After his summons to the Construction Manager's office and the conversation that followed he was not in a pleasant frame of mind. He had been reminded of what his department was supposed to do and also that the thing that was supposed to be done was not being done. The prevention of strikes and "walk outs" was not being achieved on the site. When he first came to the West from Melbourne, employed by the local Chamber of Employer Enterprises, he had had a marvellous run of achievements. In the East the growth of industry, particularly heavy industry, promoted the strength of militant unionism and a demand for a larger share of the cake in the way of increased wages. Larter was well aware of this and did what he could to prevent it happening here. He had been able to negotiate deals outside of arbitration, in a manner foreign to the local scene where small scale industry had prevailed over the years.

Payment outside of award wages were agreed upon and agreements signed up that held unions captives, with union officials holding the rank and file in check on the promise that agreements had to be adhered to. The result was that in a critical period of having to meet contract times there was industrial peace and industry surged ahead.

As a result of this success his standing with local employers had been good. Most appreciated that his giving way to the unions on some matters that were considered important by them resulted in other problems being solved to the employers benefit in the long run, particularly to those companies that had long range investment in mining and associated work. On the other hand his advice to some union officials, those whose attitudes he thought "sound" had proved useful to them, easing some of their short term internal difficulties, and even now some sought his assistance in award matters and how to deal with troublesome shop stewards.

Recently, however, the situation had gone sour. A deal that he thought he had sewn up with a group of unions had fallen through and the next thing that he knew was that he had a months salary deposited in his bank account and he was out of a job. Sam Larter being sacked was hailed as the joke of the century. The chief architect of hundreds of sackings was now fired and quite a few publicans takings went up as workers in groups all over Western Australia celebrated the event. If all had been known, the celebration would have been even greater.

Arrangements had almost been concluded for his return to the Eastern States, when the job with Braine and Brawn Constructions had been offered to him and he found himself in charge of a group including typists and a woman holding a degree of industrial psychology from the University of WA.

As soon as he had heard that tradesmen had been brought from other States he knew that there would be trouble. Anyone on a working holiday usually placed emphasis on "holiday" and not on working and this was no exception. Anyway there were enough trouble-makers amongst the locals without any importations.

Not that Sam was adverse in a general sense to industrial trouble. After all it kept him in a job. It was when he was not winning, and was seen to be not winning that he was concerned about. The main concern in this case was that bloody delegates site committee. He had never met a worse collection of bastardry in all his life. Metal and building trades and the crane drivers were bad enough but when you had the electricians and transport workers thrown in as well it left a man no room to move. That silly bitch from the University had no right to sign the agreement that gave so much authority to the site committee. Larter had no time for such new fangled notions as "industrial democracy" and "workers' participation". It was all "bloody University nonsense" as far as he was concerned. If he had been around at the time it would not have happened. Bloody Charter or no Charter. Workers committees take authority, everyone knew that, but to give it to them without a fight was insane.

What could you expect, except trouble with a capital T when you had on the committee, Irishmen, Scotsmen, Englishmen, Italians and Australians. The Italian worried him the most. He was too quiet. He hardly spoke at deputations but Sam suspected he concocted many of the schemes afloat. Probably all the bastards were equal in plotting anyhow.

The first big confrontation was over "walking time". The car park was some distance away from the clocks and the demand was payment for the time it took the workers to walk from their cars to clock on in the morning and vice versa in the afternoon. The refusal to pay did not result in a strike as Sam Larter hoped it would. He knew that many of the workers particularly non-tradesmen had come off the dole to this job and the thought of being on strike for a period and the resulting loss of pay could have caused a split between the groups.

This did not happen. The workers were more cunning than he had supposed. All their cars were suddenly parked at the clocks and stretching away over the road with cranes and trucks being unable to deliver material. This did not happen everyday, or even for the whole of the day, so there was no easy way of getting over the problem caused. The settlement involved payment of a half hour extra payment for each day worked.

In the same way the sacking of a worker for insolence to a foreman only resulted in one day out the gate. The next day the worker was back on site doing his duties as an assistant to a boilermaker while the particular foreman was given a torrid time. The security forces did their best but the trades assistant just kept turning up on site and worked until finally the foreman gave notice and quit after a series of incidents. The final one being when after lunch he put his hard hat on, which had been filled with urine while it had been left outside on a bench.

The committee then had the cheek to get the unions to call a conference in the Industrial Commission with a demand that the worker be re-instated with all his back wages paid. In addition they demanded that the whole workforce be paid the one day's pay they had lost in the strike. Two witnesses were produced to say that the foreman had abused the worker and, he the worker, had retaliated by using the same language. The foreman could not be found to repudiate this. The worker was reinstated with all time paid to him. The day's wages to the whole site was not granted.

Larter was thankful for small mercies but this kind of campaign just went on and on. In all his previous jobs he had been able to control situations affecting worker-employer relations but this was different. This bloody Committee had no formal chairman or secretary like the usual run of committees. You could never tell for sure who was leading things, and you could not foresee who was going to be spokesman when a delegations trooped into the office. Just when you were getting used to the company and all associated being referred to as a "shower of bastards" in a broad Glasgow accent, you had to adapt to an Irish brogue, a machine gun Italian/English or a broad 'Strine. But even with changes in the colourful turns of phrase the sentiments they expressed were constant.

There was no doubt that the committee was running the job. In his own mind Larter knew that this was the reason for the excellent safety record. But that was another story and a principle was a principle. Workers' representatives should not be doing the job of management. He had been told that the job had to proceed with the minimum of stoppages from now on. With end of contract coming up the company's economic interest was clear but he also strongly suspected another motive and pressure from another quarter. The State Government had fought the last election on a number of promises, not least being "law and order". It must be understood that this applied not to criminals and especially not to those involved in "white-collar" crime such as tax evasion, but to workers who sought to defend their rights on the job. The Government had stated that there would be an end to strikes. But here was the largest undertaking in the State making a mockery of Government intentions with its continual stoppages. Larter knew now that he would have to change tack and go on another course. On other jobs by this stage he had been able to have all the militants off the job or at each others throats. Perhaps the little Sheila from the University was on the ball when she said that all the trouble was caused by lack of communication.

Yes, he would try another way. Last week there had been a meeting and the workers had gone home, after notices had been inserted in the pay packet indicating that the positioning of the time clocks would be changed next day. The committee claimed that the new position was where the water gathered when it rained and in any case the committee should have been consulted before the change was made. The clocks were still in the original position. Larter did not know why they were to be changed and did not care either, except that it was another walk out.

It was still a while yet to Xmas but plans had been formulated as to which days were to be worked and which were not to be worked and taken as part of annual leave. This situation was always a delicate one with different groups wanting different arrangements and the Yanks wanting all the good weather to be utilised to get the job finished.

If he put out a notice now at this early stage, it would perhaps help to create a better understanding. In any case, it would give the bastards something to talk about for a while. Yes, they had got in early with the "first on and last off" business about retrenchment and now he was going to get in early about the Xmas holidays. It was too late in the day now to write out the notices and have them printed and pinned up.

He swung around to walk to the chair behind the desk and stumbled over the waste paper basket. Only by a rapid grab at the table did he avert falling over. That stupid idiot of a cleaner had been told not to leave the basket there. As Larter rubbed his shin he swore to himself and out aloud. Serve the silly bastard right for falling off a beam and busting his leg. Anyone dopey enough to fall 30 feet deserved a broken leg. He would blast the clown next morning. He himself was scared of heights and would never be up in the air, but then he was not a rigger. The next morning he duly blasted the cleaner. He would have sacked him except for the fact that he would have had another stoppage on his hands.

The table in front of him was covered with sheets of paper on which he had written specimen copies of a notice dealing with the proposals for the Xmas break. He had to be careful with the wording as he had no intention of allowing anyone on that committee to make capital because of the careless use of a single word, or a sentence out of place. Several hours later and with a waste paper basket half full of screwed up sheets of paper, some hand written and some typewritten Larter was satisfied with a specimen copy of a notice that was scheduled to be pinned up on notice boards around the site. The telephone rang and he reached for it.

"Hello! Larter here!"

The sound of the voice came through. Would he like to be at a meeting that afternoon. A gathering of employers were to give a hearing that afternoon to a professor from America. Some expert on communism, and the convenor of the meeting had the thought that as Sam Larter was working for an American company, he may like to attend. Larter indicated he would attend and put the receiver down. Communism? By god he could do with some advice. The site was riddled with commos. His spy system supplied the information that more than six dozen copies of the paper *Tribune* were sold at the gate last pay day. Only a bloody commo or the silly buggers led by the nose by them would buy a paper like that.

He would go to the meeting and leave the site problems until the morning.

The members of the committee were arranged around the table, sitting in a nicely arranged semi-circle of chairs. Months before the custom was for all to stand up whilst being addressed by Larter. That custom was abruptly brought to an end one day when the committee brought in chairs with them. Chairs purloined from the various offices including that of the chief time-keeper, head draughtsman and the construction manager and his typist. Larter continued to read the notice paper on the table before him. Actually he was not really reading, although he was giving the impression that he was.

His hope that someone would ask the reason for the meeting did not eventuate, and so he raised his head and glared around at the assembled men. Bill 'Bullo' Scadden, late of Fairfields Shipyards, Glasgow, sat on his extreme left (where else). Next was John Murphy from Belfast representing the crane drivers. Joe 'Sparks' Finni was next and alongside was Bob Armstrong, picking his teeth with a broken match, a permanent ritual he continued to carry out even when driving a truck. Last but not least was 'Tiny' Thompson, a carpenter from Manchester. Over six feet tall and barrel-chested, his bulk seemed to overflow the chair hidden under him.

Larter knew a lot about them all. He had information and records from all over the State, and from some other States too. Persons like Larter had compiled the information and passed it on as he

would do at the completion of this job. With a few names added of course. Tradesmen went from job to job with a box of tools. Industrial and personnel people carried all kinds of credentials including a list of names. This was a handy list at the start of a job. Larter wished he had been at the start of this job.

He hated them all. His strongest hate however was for that big pommy bastard Tiny who had threatened to "turn his clock around, twist him inside out and cut his arsehole up for washers if he told any more lies". That was their first encounter. In Larter's eyes Thompson epitomised the "British disease". He was the typical "pommy shop steward" so loved as a favourite debating point by Tory politicians on both sides of the world.

The silence continued and Larter remembered other periods on other sites when he had kept workers on tenterhooks. He had held the big stick and the question he knew that was burning into their thoughts was, how many were going on that pay off. That was not the position with this mob however, cheeky bastards.

He cleared his throat and commenced to speak.

"Well gentlemen, as you are aware this project has now been progressing for some considerable time. This has been a period of time when we have had our ups and downs."

Bob Armstrong broke another match and thought about the Yank and his office girl. He would have had some ups and downs alright with his wife being back in the States. Lucky cow any rate. The whole site stopped to take a bo-peep when she left her car and sauntered over to the office each morning.

"We have had some trouble and I am not saying that the faults have been on your side only. You must understand that management can not hope to anticipate all the problems that can, and do arise on a contract of such magnitude."

Later stopped to draw breath and then went on and on.

He was saving the important part to the end. Actually it was not his idea, but had been suggested to him by a chap who had been at the meeting the day before. This young man was in the West to promote a "News Service" to employers, that gave an up-to-date resume of strikes, stoppages, results of conferences and arbitration decisions and was published as a weekly news sheet. He had invited Larter to have a beer with him and the invitation had been accepted. It was after the third beer had been ordered that the conversation turned to workers' participation and the need for industry to have a new approach and indeed to have a personal approach to the workers. If need be, to have discussions face to face. And so he had made the decision that night before falling asleep.

"As I was saying, while I know that matters here have from time to time deteriorated to a level of personalities, no one has regretted this more than what I have."

His long discourse was interrupted by Bill Scadden: "Och mon what about the manner in which you spook to the poor loddie who clears out yer office. What about it mon? Because he had the bad luck to have a fall and have a permanent injury, you got personal with the lod yesterday. Did you not mon? Regret! You and your kind dinna ken the meaning of the word."

Larter hesitated and then went on: "Well we all get out of the bed some mornings on the wrong side. I'll make an apology. As far as I am concerned I agree with the sentiments expressed by Burns 'a mans a man for all that' and now I'll tell you why I called this meeting."

John Murphy thought, "I wish you would, you bludger, it's nearly morning tea time and I haven't had a 'tom tit' yet." He always liked to get his bowel action over early in the morning. Too many bloody flies later on.

"Well gentlemen, I intend to have notices placed on the various notice boards indicating our plans for the Xmas holiday break. However, because of the need for better industrial relations on this site, and a better understanding between management and labour I will read the notice out to you now for your comment and if you desire you may suggest any minor changes. Better still, here is a copy for each of you to read yourselves!"

The silence continued until Larter was about to speak again.

Thompson spoke, or it would be more true to say that exploded. "By goom you are a rotten bastard Larter. You are, you know. We spent two hours yesterday afternoon in a bloody hot tank sticking all the bits and pieces together out of your rubbish basket to find out what you were up to. And now you give it to us all nicely typed out. We knew you'd pull some trick. If we stay here much longer he'll want us to have a cup of tea with him."

As a man they got up and walked out and Larter heard a muttering about "arsenic and cyanide" as the last went through the door. The table top shook as Larter's fists came down together. Once, twice and a third time.

"I'll sack 'em, I'll sack the lot of the bastards. I'll start with that lame bastard who ratted that paper basket. Serve me right for listening to that 'think tank' of a salesman. Christ, I'll sack them if it's the last thing I do."

The editorial of the *Western Times* concluded:

"..... and furthermore, after such a long dispute over such an issue it is to be hoped that a more reasonable approach will be taken by both the employer and the workers. Although all the sacked workers have been re-instated under what can only be described as most favourable conditions, it must be recognised that there are no winners in such circumstances. It is to be expected that the appointment of a University graduate as Chief Industrial Officer with the company can help to bring about the desired results".

The notice pinned to the notice boards of Braine and Brawn Construction announcing the new appointment noted with smug satisfaction that it was the first time a woman had been appointed to such a senior position in the organisation and expressed the pious hope that "such a progressive policy on the part of management" would be met by an "increased flexibility on the part of the workforce".

Broad smiles spread across the faces reading the notices. "Bullo" turned around to address his fellow workers: "Well, lads, at least we seen that bastard Larter off".

**PROTECTING NATIVES ? : THE LAW AND THE 1946 ABORIGINAL
PASTORAL WORKER'S STRIKE***

Lloyd Davies†

A number of recent biographies has made common knowledge the cruel and inhuman practice of the sundering of very young children from their Aboriginal mothers¹. This practice, which one would associate more readily with Hitler's SS or Pinochet's torturers, was not only common practice but official policy in democratic Australia right up to the early 1950's.

The majority of Australians who have learnt of this practice for the first time must be wondering why the Governments of most States (and in the Northern Territory the Commonwealth) should have persisted with this inhumane practice. The answer can be found in the behaviour of the white Establishment in response to the strike of the Aboriginal Pastoral workers in the Pilbara in 1946².

In *Black Eureka* Max Brown points out that a condition of the granting of Citizenship Rights to Aborigines of mixed race was proof that they had not associated with their full blood relatives for at least two years³. Both Brown and Palmer report that the Aboriginal strike leader Clancy McKenna refused for years to apply for Citizenship Rights because it meant that he would have to cease to associate with his Aboriginal mother and all other Aboriginal relatives⁴.

The reason for segregation of Aborigines from their relatives of mixed race was clearly spelt out in the words of a white stockman in a recent ABC "Four Corners" programme entitled "The Dead Heart"⁵. In a passage which runs as follows, the questions being asked by an ABC Reporter and answered by a stockman Clive Stone:-

- Q Clive, as a rule of thumb, can you see any reasons in the bush why there would be a policy on stations of insuring that the black workers don't talk to the white workers?
- A There's a sound basic principle attached to it. It used to be the rule when I first started off, and the reason for it is to stop the black workers being contaminated by the wrong elements of the whites, you can have a pretty loyal workforce in the natives, it can be ruined very quickly by the wrong white people.
- Q Do you follow this policy?
- A I don't follow the policy, no.
- Q Why not, if it's a good policy?
- A Well we're too close to town, if you're in the more isolated areas it's a good policy, but it doesn't work here close to town anymore.

* The original version of this paper was presented at a Seminar in Labour History held at the University of Western Australia in October 1987.

† Lloyd Davies is a barrister with the Aboriginal Legal Service of WA (Inc) and a professional writer. Born in 1922, he served in the AIF (1941-6) and graduated from UWA in 1948. As a student he gave active support to the 1946-9 Aboriginal Pastoral Workers' Strike.

Q And by contaminated, what do you mean. What could, how could the white workers contaminate the black workers?

A It's mostly the inexperienced white workers, the people that don't live on the property, and people that have only sort of come to the property recently, they don't understand blacks, they're very naive, they think they're being exploited and they genuinely probably try to help them, but what they're doing is, doing them a disservice.

Q Why, I mean, what do they tell them?

A They probably tell them how they're not gettin' paid properly, probably working too long of hours, not getting the right food, a host of different um...reasons for it, but the black people..... if they like working for a man and respect him they'll work for him as long as he treats them fairly fairly.

Ever since the occupation of the North of Western Australia by white pastoralists and the disposition and wholesale slaughter of a large number of its original inhabitants⁶ the survivors of the original inhabitants had been treated as a necessary reservoir of cheap labour. Aboriginal men were used as stockmen and Aboriginal women as domestics. Because of the shortage of white women in the area the Aboriginal women were also used by the white settlers in a manner which was virtually wholesale rape and which, of course, was the origin of the half caste population⁷.

Aborigines in fact enjoyed none of the democratic rights of the rest of the population. Until the passage of the Commonwealth Constitution Alteration (Aborigines) Act 1967 they were not even regarded as Australian citizens. In Western Australia they were not permitted to move from one district to another without the permission of the local "Protector" of Aborigines who was usually the officer in charge of the local Police Station. Movement of Aborigines across the twentieth parallel (the so called "Leper Line") was expressly forbidden. Aborigines were not permitted to leave their place of employment without permission of the "Protector". It was an offence to persuade Aborigines to leave their place of employment. Aborigines even had to obtain the consent of the Protector to marry.

As a converse proposition to the prohibition against Aboriginal movement, the Minister had power to cause any Aborigine to be removed and kept anywhere in the State. It was an offence for any Aborigine to refuse to be so removed. As regards to children the Chief Protector was deemed the legal guardian of every Aborigine and half caste child under the age of sixteen and in the case of a half cast "*to the exclusion of the rights of the mother*"⁸. It was this power of removal coupled with the guardianship provision which was used in the legalised kidnapping of children of mixed race. There was no actual legislative provision requiring the removal of small children of mixed race from parental custody. This was just done as a matter of departmental policy.

In addition to what amounted to virtually total control over the bodies of Aborigines, the Chief Protector also had power to take possession of and exercise control over the property of any Aboriginal or person of mixed race.

Because the pastoral industry in the pre-war years contributed a large proportion of the national

income, and an even larger proportion of the national export income, the Governments of the day (and especially the State Governments of the day) were very much concerned to favour that industry and listen to and give expression to the demands of the pastoralists. It was readily appreciated by the pastoralists and those who served them in Parliament that anyone who was likely to counsel the Aborigines either by word or example that they were entitled to be treated as equal citizens in a democratic community both politically and economically should be kept from contact with the Aborigines.

It is a historical fact that much help and encouragement for independence movements of subject coloured people has come from people of mixed race who have acted as a cultural bridge between the dominant European and subject coloured communities. From the point of view of the pastoralists and their friends it was essential that this process be not allowed to occur in Australia. Even if it meant the tearing of babes from their mothers' arms this was necessary for the preservation of the economic status quo.

The situation which applied to Aborigines generally in Western Australia in 1945, and was particularly enforced against them in the pastoral areas was one of rigid control over their movement and employment, a control exercised by both the employers and the State. As far as the State was concerned, the Department of Native Affairs worked in very closely with the requirements of the pastoralists and was assisted in this process by the Police Department. As mentioned previously, in most districts the Sergeant in charge of the Police Station usually doubled as a "Protector of Natives". The top bureaucrat in this Department was known as the "Commissioner of Native Affairs". Prior to 1936 the Commissioner had been known as the "Chief Protector of Aborigines". The economic and social condition of the Aborigines everywhere in Australia were appalling. In Western Australia in pastoral areas the Aborigines mainly lived in creek beds near the station homesteads under totally primitive conditions. They were provided with some flour, sugar, tea and tobacco by the Department and the local squatter was usually given the responsibility for administering these stores. When the men were required to work as stockmen they were paid a maximum of one pound a week and in many cases did not even get that. The women who worked around the house were lucky if they got any wages at all.⁹

The Aborigines had become increasingly discontented with their lot over the years but had felt powerless in view of the combination of the employers and the State. The war years 1939 to 1945 produced many changes. There was an acute shortage of labour everywhere which gave the Aborigines (and particularly the mixed race workers) a greater bargaining power. After the Japanese attack tens of thousands of soldiers were sent to remote parts of the country and made contact with and befriended the local Aborigines. The soldiers in particular spread the sort of subversive ideas which Clive Stone (Supra) is so worried about. These factors brought to combustion point the anger which had been smouldering in the Aboriginal communities for many years and created the conditions to enable them to achieve the demands which they had been making over the years for better wages and living and working conditions.

It is true that white wage workers had been employed in the pastoral areas for many years before 1939. In the main, however, they saw Aboriginal workers as competitors and a threat to their own living standards. The Australian Workers' Union which organised most pastoral workers took a racist stand and was a very strong supporter of the white Australia policy which was applied as much to Aboriginal workers as to Asian workers with the exception that there was no way that Aboriginal workers could be excluded from living in Australia.¹⁰ It is sad, but necessary, to report that racism did infect Australian rural workers traditionally and expression thereof can be found in the bush ballads:-

There was five and twenty chinamen a-shearing in a row,
So it was shift boys shift to the Stations further out,
I had to make a shift with the leprosy about

The workers from the cities, on the other hand, had a much more tolerant and egalitarian attitude towards the Aborigines and during the war years many workers who had joined the armed forces were outraged at the treatment they saw being meted out to them in the North and openly said so. I personally remember one pastoralist complaining to me and other members of my unit that we were "spoiling the boongs" by treating them as equals. Max Brown reports a similar incident in *Black Eureka..*

In the Pilbara the Aboriginal pastoral workers were fortunate in having a friend and spokesman in the white community in the person of Don McLeod a self employed jack-of-all-trades, who had worked as a prospector, bore sinker, fencing contractor all over the Murchison and Pilbara districts. McLeod was a passionately altruistic man who had struggled for years in an endeavour to better the conditions of the Aborigines and who had taken the time to study the history of their treatment at the hands of the white community including the mass of legislation which had been passed by successive Governments concerning them.

Because the nature of his living required him to travel widely, McLeod was able to speak to Aborigines from the Kimberleys to the Murchison and wherever he went he listened to their complaints and told them they would have to organise if they wanted to change things. Unlike the AWU many of the Industrial Unions in southern areas had begun to campaign for a better deal for the Aborigines, particularly in New South Wales. It is not surprising that in New South Wales a lot of Aborigines were coming into contact with the industrial unions and it was in New South Wales that Aboriginal organisations first became vocal in the demand for a better deal. The Sheet Metal Workers' Union produced a pamphlet entitled *A New Deal for the Aborigines*, written by Tom Wright with a forward by Katharine Suzannah Prichard. McLeod got hold of a copy of this which crystallised much of what he had been thinking. Katharine Suzannah Prichard was a communist and so was Tom Wright. McLeod made contact with the Communist Party which was the only political party in the 1940's with a policy which was favourable to the Aborigines and called for active measures to be taken to improve their lot. At about this time McLeod met up with two Aboriginal militants Dooley Bin Bin and Clancy McKenna. Both were tribal men who had gone through the law but both had a background of employment with all kinds of outback work. Clancy

had a white pastoralist father but had been brought up in the Aboriginal way.

Clancy and Dooley and Don McLeod together discussed the policies laid down in *A New Deal for the Aborigines* which had by now been endorsed by the Labour Council of New South Wales and which advocated the setting up of Aboriginal co-operatives free from domination by the pastoralists and the vesting of administration of Aboriginal Affairs in the Commonwealth. They decided that an essential first step would be to organise a strike of Aboriginal workers for better wages and conditions.

Although the organising of the Aboriginal workers was a complex task, the workers themselves did not need any encouragement for the reasons I have discussed above. The strike began on the 1st May, 1946 and involved the workers of at least twenty stations as well as some in Marble Bar and Port Hedland townships. Their demand was for an increase of wages from one pound a week to one pound ten shillings a week.

To strike on the 1st of May was more than a political gesture, it coincided with the beginning of the shearing season. Although most of the shearing was done by gangs of independent contractors from the South, the Aborigines were needed to muster the sheep and do the odd jobs around the shearing sheds. When they went on strike many of the workers left the station areas and gathered in camps. It had been planned that they would be able to survive on bush tucker supplemented with earnings from alluvial mining, pearl shell gathering, the sale of animal skins and, it was hoped, strike funds from sympathisers in the South.

The Police reacted quickly by arresting Clancy, Dooley and Don McLeod and charged them with a Breach of Section 44 of the Native Administration Act which read:-

Any person who entices or persuades a native to leave any lawful service without the consent of a Protector shall be guilty of an offence against this Act.

It is probable that the provisions of this Section were originally enacted to prevent Aborigines being enticed onto pearling ships where, in days gone by, they had been treated even worse than by the pastoralists and suffered a high death rate. Whatever the original object, its enforcement on this occasion had no concern with Aboriginal welfare but purely with the economic interest of pastoralists. Clancy and Dooley were dealt with separately from McLeod. They were tried by two local Justices of the Peace and each sentenced to three months imprisonment. When McLeod was charged he demanded bail. This, exorbitantly, was set at 300 pounds. The equivalent today would be about \$12,000.00. McLeod came to Perth to consult with a civil liberties committee which had rapidly been set up and named the "Committee for the Defence of Native Rights" (CDNR). This Committee called a public meeting in the Perth Town Hall and very quickly organised wide-spread support in other States as well as in Western Australia. It also briefed an experienced criminal lawyer, Fred Curran, to defend McLeod.

So seriously did the Establishment take the native strike that it delegated the police enquiries to the chief of its political section one Detective Sergeant Richards who ultimately became the Director of

the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation (ASIO) and played a leading role in the Royal Commission into Espionage 1954-5 (The "Petrov Commission").

McLeod was dealt with by a Magistrate and was spared the draconic sentences meted out by the local J.P.'s to Clancy and Dooley instead he was fined 50 pounds with costs of 46 pounds. The present day equivalent of the total fine and costs would be in the vicinity of \$4,000.00 but it was still a good deal more lenient than the three months gaol accorded to Clancy and Dooley. The trial became the focus of much agitation in Perth and elsewhere in Australia and even resulted in an appeal by the CDNR to the Secretary General of the United Nations Organisations complaining of the feudal treatment of the Aborigines in Northern Australia. The financial support for the CDNR was considerable, sufficient to finance 100,000 copies of a 4,000 word pamphlet for mass distribution. The facts of the case and the general story of the persecution of Aborigines in Western Australia even made the London press.

Such was the extent of the protest that the Minister for Justice was prevailed upon to quash the gaol sentences upon Clancy and Dooley and they were released from prison. Despite the arrests and jailings and the fining of McLeod and a great deal of attempted intimidation by the Police a large number of the strikers still remained on strike and occupied camps in the Port Hedland district. The harrassment got so bad that a meeting was called by the Aborigines in Port Hedland and McLeod went to the Police Station to discuss this with them. The Police then arrested McLeod as a result of which a large crowd of young Aboriginal men marched on the jail demanding his release. By the time they reached the Station, however, McLeod had been let go without any charge being laid.

An interesting feature of the developing situation in the Pilbara was the almost total blackout imposed upon it by WA Newspapers. At that time the *Australian* had not come into being and apart from the two weekend newspapers, which seldom reported much serious news anyway, there was no alternative press in Western Australia but the Communist Weekly the *Workers 'Star*.

Because McLeod at that time was a member of the Communist Party and because it was party policy to campaign for a new deal for the Aborigines the CDNR included in its numbers a strong communist contingent. The Editor of the *Worker's Star*, Graham Alcorn was a member of the CDNR and gave much coverage to the strike. Because the *Worker's Star* was the only Western Australian Newspaper that did, the dailies in the other States were forced to rely upon it for sources of information and often quoted from its articles in reporting the strike. The strike and its various incidents were far more widely reported in the other States than in Western Australia. The *Worker's Star* taunted the "West" with the fact that Sir Langlois Lefroy, a leading pastoralist, was on the West Australian Newspapers Board and suggested this had much to do with the suppression of news reports about the strike!¹¹

I would not wish to personalise the issue. The point was that, in days before television, the Australian press as a whole often made a practice of suppressing news which was likely to embarrass its editorial policy. It was certainly against the class interest of the entire Western

Australian Establishment to publicise the Pilbara strike and its associated political activity and particularly the repressive action being taken by the Police and the Department against the Aborigines. It is one thing, however, to suppress news and another to prevent news happening. So ignored by the WA mass media, the strike went on. The CDNR continued to agitate and in August, 1946 it sent one of its members, an Anglican priest (who went by the name of Padre Hodge) to visit the strikers camps, to pass on encouragement from the CDNR and their many southern well wishers and to ascertain and assess what assistance was needed by way of goods and money to help their cause.

The Reverend Hodge was known as "Padre" because he had just been discharged from the Army and had been a very popular Chaplain. When he arrived at Port Hedland Aerodrome he was met by Don McLeod and noticed a policeman hovering in the background. McLeod and Hodge drove to the principle strikers' camp at the Twelve Mile. They did not enter the camp but stopped at a river bed where a large crowd of Aboriginal men, women and children joined them. McLeod explained that they were prohibited from entering the camp it being an Aboriginal Reserve and he did not want to provoke an arrest. Padre Hodge began to speak to the crowd who were obviously enthusiastic and pleased to see him. Suddenly the policeman he had seen at the airport arrived and told him he was under arrest pursuant to Section 39 of the Native Administration Act. He also arrested Don McLeod.

The following day, despite a request for an adjournment to arrange legal representation they were both summarily tried by two Justices of the Peace and convicted. Padre Hodge was fined ten pounds and McLeod given three months jail without the option. McLeod was initially even refused bail pending appeal but was ultimately able to persuade the Justices to relent in that regard. Padre Hodge very bravely faced a public meeting of hostile and abusive squatters that evening but did have some opportunity the following day to investigate the conditions of the Aborigines because the police gave him permission to go to the reserve. In *Black Eureka* Max Brown describes what he found at the camp which included a tidy collection of bush huts; well kept sanitary conveniences and a bush school which an educated Aborigine named Tommy Sampey had set up.

The effect of the convictions of Padre Hodge and Don McLeod simply for holding a public meeting was to arouse public indignation throughout the land and much support both material and moral poured into the CDNR from everywhere. The whole affair attracted the attention of the British anti-slavery Committee who campaigned in the U.K. to raise funds and sent messages of support and protest. The conviction was appealed to the Supreme Court of Western Australia but rejected by all three Judges thereof. An appeal was then lodged with the High Court of Australia.

Section 39, under which Hodge and McLeod were convicted read as follows:

It shall not be lawful for any person other than a Superintendent or Protector or a person acting under the direction of a Superintendent, or under a written permit of a Protector without lawful excuse to enter or remain or be within or upon a place where natives are camped or where any natives may be congregated or in the cause of travel

in pursuance of any native custom...

The balance of the Section deals with a prohibition against entering with five chains of a native camp.

Now it is a fundamental rule in construing a statute which imposes a penalty, to construe such statute narrowly so that the penal effect only applies to the conduct to which it was clearly intended to apply unless the plain meaning of the words require it to be construed otherwise. When you look at the wording quoted above the immediate question to be asked is does the phrase "in pursuance of any native custom" govern the rest of the passage? In other words do the natives have to be in pursuit of a native custom to make the presence of the intruder unlawful? It would seem obvious that in any event, there is a clear ambiguity here, and that, that basic rule of construction should clearly have required the natives to be in pursuance of a custom for Padre Hodge and McLeod to have been offending against the Section.

The three West Australian Judges completely ignored that basic rule of construction and upheld the conviction. The Chief Justice, Sir John Dwyer, in his judgement made the following very interesting observation:

The object of the statute is the better protection of natives. Perusal of its provisions makes it evident that the main method by which that purpose is to be achieved is by segregation of the natives from the non-native population...

This indicated that His Honour at least understood the politics of the situation whatever the law might be.

The High Court unanimously disagreed with the W.A. Court of Criminal Appeal. All the Judges of the High Court reminded them of the basic rule that penal statutes must be construed narrowly and all of them observed that the natural meaning of the passage in any event made it imperative that the whole passage be governed by the words "In pursuance of any native custom". Sir Owen Dixon who has always been considered the High Court's master of the English language had this to say of the W.A. Judges' efforts at Statutory construction:

But, as they are in fact written, the reader, unless his mind be controlled by some considerations external to the precise text or unless his sensibilities to English forms of speech have been dulled, will more naturally understand the second limb of the provision as dealing only with the case of Aborigines, in pursuance of native custom, travelling or congregating.

The High Court upheld the appeal and quashed the conviction.¹² This was a great victory for the cause! It gave freedom to Don McLeod or anybody else who wished to assist the strikers to meeting with them (provided that they did not trespass into a reserve without the permission of the Police) and to help them organise their activities.

I had personal experience of the repressive nature of the law as it stood before the decision of the High Court because the Committee sent me and my former wife Dorothy Hewett to Port Hedland

under the pretext of being students of anthropology to meet with McLeod and such of the strikers as we could encounter surreptitiously at the end of December, 1946.¹³ At this time the appeal had been heard but judgement had not been handed down. It was therefore apparently illegal to meet with any gathering of Aborigines anywhere.

Despite the many years which have passed, I still vividly remember us sneaking along a railway line with Don McLeod one evening and losing ourselves in a thicket from which the sandflies emerged in vicious droves. Deep within the mangroves there was a little clearing from the shadows of which a dozen or so Aborigines arose, including Clancy McKenna. They lit dry mangrove leaves to drive off the sandflies (not altogether successfully) and we conducted a meeting for several hours in which they discussed with us the progress of the campaign and things they needed to keep them going. I can remember being acutely conscious of the fact that it would probably not help my legal career if, as a law student, I got myself convicted for a breach of the Native Administration Act. In the event I need not have worried as the High Court would have looked after me.

With some duplicity, the following day we went to the Police Station and were granted permission to visit the Twelve Mile Camp on several occasions. One of these occasions was at night where we had the good fortune to witness a corroboree by the light of burning spinifex. We were driven there and back by a person of mixed race who lived in the town and had citizenship rights. This entitled him to buy alcohol. In the course of our visit he managed to consume a fair amount of the same and nearly ran us off the causeway into the mangrove swamp on the way home. I was thus introduced for the first time to that other subtle weapon of the white man's attack on the Aboriginal people.

The High Court victory made the establishment even more vindictive. They found it necessary to counter the succour and assistance being given to the Twelve Mile strikers by the allegation that it was "communist inspired". My first reaction was to ask "so what"? "If the communists are helping the Aborigines to improve their lot and achieve political freedom good luck to them". I reckoned without the wave of anti-communist hysteria which was then being whipped up in Australia by all the conservative forces. The non-communists on the CDNR asked the communists to withdraw so as not to embarrass them. Reluctantly they did so which left the CDNR without a number of its most energetic workers.

By this time however much of the necessary work of the CDNR had been done. The Australian public had been made fully aware of what was happening in the Pilbara and a large section of the trade union movement had become involved in supporting the Aboriginal strikers. In the southern part of Western Australia and in all other States the action of the Pilbara workers had been an inspiration to other Aborigines and a number of Aboriginal organisations sprung up to continue the education and agitation which has made Aboriginal organisations the political force they are today. Aboriginal workers went on strike in the Darwin area and were able to force a pay rise from one pound ten shillings to three pounds a week in a broad spectrum of occupations.

Notwithstanding the success of the High Court action the Police continued to harass the strikers.

Two Aborigines were caught collecting funds for the advancement of the Twelve Mile school were charged with stealing and fined. At the beginning of the shearing in 1947 many pastoralists agreed to pay an increase in wages up to two pounds per worker which was something of a victory. By this time there had been a change in Government and the Liberal party had come to power. Because of the Pilbara agitation they appointed a new Commissioner for Native Welfare who had come from the Territory of Papua and New Guinea and had a somewhat more enlightened policy than his predecessor. The Government also set up a commission of enquiry into Aboriginal conditions.

At a national level the AWU moved in the conciliation commission to have Aborigines admitted to the Federal Pastoral Industry Award. This was rejected on the ground that it would precipitate a crisis in the industry but at least it was an indication that even the AWU had accepted the fact that Aborigines were entitled to equal wages. The new Government, however, was no more friendly to the strikers than the previous administration and an attempt was made through the Health Department to declare the Twelve Mile unfit for habitation. Fortunately the Medical Officers who were sent to report on the Twelve Mile reported favourably. Notwithstanding which the Government invoked the Native Administration Act to declare the Twelve Mile area a prohibited area in February 1948, again at the approach of the shearing season. The strikers interpreted this as a deliberate attempt to force them to the stations and refused to move.

There followed the arrest of 13 Aborigines at Corunna Downs for rescuing one of their number who had been physically seized by a squatter at the Marble Bar pictures and dragged off to work on the station. They were given terms of three months and two months imprisonment. Five more men including Clancy McKenna were arrested and jailed for refusing work at Port Hedland. Another 30 men were arrested at Warrawagine and charged with enticing other Aborigines from their place of employment. In the course of that arrest a Police Officer pulled a revolver. These arrests caused another uprising of public indignation in the South with particularly strong support from the Fremantle Waterfront Unions including a threat to place a black ban on Pilbara wool shipments. This last was of considerable significance because wool from the Pilbara was all transported south by the State Shipping Service.

The new Commissioner for Native Affairs and the enquiry into Native Welfare, both by-products of the Pilbara strike, made it clear to the Government that something had to be done about the economic and social conditions of the workers not only in the Pilbara but also in the Kimberley. The report of the enquiry, known as the Bateman Report indicated that unless things changed in the Kimberley, where Aboriginal workers were not paid at all, similar strike action would develop there.

The charges against the 30 men arrested at revolver point at Warrawagine were dismissed because the men whom they were alleged to have seduced from their place of employment testified that they were already on strike and did not need seducing. At about the same time of the dismissal of these charges an agreement was negotiated between the strikers and two Pilbara Stations, Mt. Edgar and Limestone. This agreement provided that there be a general rate for men of three pounds weekly

plus margins for various skills and one pound a week for women houseworkers together with keep in all cases. It was also agreed, that for contract work, the Federal Pastoral Award should apply and that there be accommodation for workers which should include showers and baths. This agreement was not accepted by the majority of the squatters or the Department.

In May 1949 the crew of the State ship Kybra banned the loading of wool until the rest of the pastoralists accepted the Mt. Edgar - Limestone formula. The local representative of the Department then agreed that it would recommend that this formula would apply to all stations. The seamen lifted their ban and the Aborigines called off their 3 year strike. Many stations went back on this agreement but overall the strike resulted in greatly improved wages and conditions for Aboriginal workers.

Although the strike itself had ended and the pastoralists were able to shear and sell their wool, the dream of setting up Aboriginal co-operatives to live off the land and manage their own affairs had not. The Twelve Mile organisation under McLeod's guidance incorporated a mining company which, for a while, prospered by alluvial mining, particularly of wolfram and tantalite. This Company, Northern Development and Mining Pty. Ltd. purchased "Yandeyarra" a run down station as a general base for its workers and their families.

The movement for Aboriginal independence which began at the Twelve Mile suffered many vicissitudes, but has produced three viable self managing Communities at Strelly, Yandeyarra and Jigalong.

The fostering and expansion of such communities throughout all areas where groups of Aborigines still live on or near their traditional tribal lands is seen by many as the means of ensuring that new deal for the Aborigines which the Sheet Metal Workers Union, Don McLeod, Tom Wright and Katharine Suzannah Prichard were advocating some 40 years ago. It is also the reason why the Aboriginal people and all who support them, despite Governmental rebuffs, will continue to press for the recognition of the right of such communities to control and occupy the land which was forcibly and illegally taken from them.

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2. See Generally. Donald Stuart, *Yandy*, Australasian Book Society, 1959. Max Brown, *The Black Eureka*, Australasian Book Society, 1976. Palmer, *Somewhere between Black and White*, MacMillan, 1977. McLeod, *How the West was Lost*, Nomads Group, 1984.
3. See also The Natives (Citizenship Rights) Act (W.A.) 1944.
4. *Black Eureka* and *Somewhere Between Black and White* (supra).
5. First broadcast 3.8.87 Passage at CR36, Slate 164. The extract quoted is published with the kind permission of the Australian Broadcasting Corporation.
6. Massacres of the Aboriginal population in pastoral areas have been documented in Robert

Pullan's *Guilty Secrets*, Methuen, 1983. See also E.B. Gribble *40 Years with the Aboriginal People*, Angus and Robertson 1935 and Brown (supra).

7. Palmer (supra) Introduction ix - x.
8. Native Administration Act (W.A.) Section 8.
9. A live description of the conditions of Pilbara Station workers is contained in *My Place* (supra).
10. At tht time the AWU had a much stronger influence upon The Labor Party both within the party organisation and in Parliament than it has now. The Labor MP's for the "rotten boroughs" of The North West and the Kimberleys had mostly come up through the AWU and maintained an AWU philosophy. In addition they were fearful that any sympathy to the Aborigines would create a white backlash and they would lose their seats. This is the probable explanation for the bitter antagonism of Mr Wise's Labor Government of the day to the Pilbara strikers and moves generally elsewhere in the State to improve Abroginal conditions. After the election of the Liberal-Country Party Government under McLarty in 1947, the "rotten boroughs" in the North were abolished. The new electorates no longer favoured the urban working class pockets around the coastal and mining towns which had made them Labor strongholds. Thereafter the North consistently returned Conservative Ms.P. until the enfranchisement of the Aborigines began to take effect in eighties.
11. *Black Eureka*, p. 131.
12. The judgements of both Courts are reported in *Hodge v. Needle*, 1947, W.A.L.R., p. 1.
13. See Lloyd Davies, *In Defence of My Family*, Peppy Gully Press, 1987.
14. This incident is also described in the preface to *Black Eureka*.

**LABOUR LEGISLATION IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA 1892-1902: ITS
HISTORICAL AND IDEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES***

Warrick Claydon†

Between 1892 and 1902, the West Australian Parliament enacted a series of laws which purported to change the relationship between employers and employees, trade unions and the state. These were the Masters and Servants Act 1892, the Truck Act 1899, the Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Act 1900 and the Trade Union Act 1902. The Masters and Servants Act brought the employment relationship closer to the ordinary rules of contract. It changed the emphasis in enforcement from a breach of the criminal law to breach of contract. The Truck Act sought to eliminate the truck system, which permitted employers to pay workers in kind rather than money; or required workers to spend their wages at the employer's retail outlets. The Conspiracy and Protection of Property Act abolished the common law offence of conspiracy to injure which had been applied to workers engaged in industrial action in furtherance of an industrial dispute. It also defined the extent to which workers could lawfully picket. The Trade Union Act allowed trade unions not registered under the Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Act to enjoy some limited rights and immunities, including protection against the common law view that unions were criminal conspiracies or in restraint of trade. The Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Act introduced state regulation of union morphology through a system of registration of union constitutions; and established machinery for the conciliation and compulsory arbitration of industrial disputes, and for the discouragement of strikes and lockouts. In respect of this legislative response, Crowley concludes that:

".....by successive stages over a period of fifty years legislation gradually recognised an equality between master and servant so that criminal proceedings for breach of contract were replaced by arbitration between the representatives of collective interests. The state still relied on the Law for industrial peace, but no longer regarded the contract of service in the light of the principle of individualism. Perhaps, however, it was only natural that as "strikes" replaced "absconding" fundamental changes should be wrought in the legal system, as well as in the social framework. But it is significant that these changes were brought about at a time when labour or working class representation in Parliament was meagre, if not negligible." ¹

This conclusion involves four misconceptions concerning: 1. the significance of this legislation; 2. the legal impact on employment relations, the effect of status on this relationship and the nature of the employment contract itself; 3. the type of equality which was achieved between employers and employees; and 4. the connection between strikes and absconding as part of a dynamic process for these legal changes. This article reveals the ideological bases for this legislation and the problems with the accepted wisdom about it.

* This article was first written as a major assignment in the MIR Labour History course at UWA.

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1. General Perspective

As a general theoretical viewpoint I have chosen to draw on the criticisms of the writing of labour history developed by Sampson. These deficiencies she identifies have been well represented in WA commentary and a review of that literature in this light will clarify my own approach. First Sampson identifies a tendency to believe that the existing political and social system represented the realisation of an ideal². To some extent, Crowley's work tends to do just this in respect of the quality of rights between employers and employees. He concludes for instance that "the creation of an institution - Compulsory Arbitration is now regarded as a priceless heritage and an integral part of the Western Australian way of life."³

Other WA commentators fall into a second area of deficiency identified by Sampson in the production of long narrative histories concentrating on political and constitutional developments without any analytical rigour. The writings of Dufty⁴, Merritt⁵, Gibbney⁶ and Crowley⁷ are illustrations. Dufty, for instance, attributes the genesis of conciliation and arbitration in Western Australia to union political pressure on Forrest and campaigns throughout the 1890s. His article appears to be a descriptive synthesis of other chronologies written by authors, such as Gibbney⁸ and Merritt⁹.

A third failing identified by Sampson concerns social historians who have tended to be uncritical or populist carelessly transplanting theories and models from other disciplines, including sociology and industrial relations. The Labourist perspective is an example of such populist theorising. Stannage followed this approach in the *People of Perth*.¹⁰ There he described the Master and Servant Act 1842 as the rich man's law and observed that in 1892 the law was altered "to make the courts less places of punishment and more places of justice".¹¹ He noted that in the 1880s:

Social relations were still coloured by the proximity of convictism. By and large the workers were socially inhibited and legally intimidated by the Masters and Servants Act. To the casual observer they seemed to accept uncritically their "ordained" position in colonial society.¹²

Finally, Sampson identified a variety of Marxist perspectives on labour history, including Althusserian and Humanist schools.¹³ In WA this perspective is represented only in *The First Furrow*, in which Joan Williams traced the history of ordinary men and women in Western Australia from a working class point of view.¹⁴ Williams noted that the employers initiated actions under the Master and Servant Act 1892 against striking lumpers in 1899. These actions were later abandoned and Williams concluded that it

was a classic example of how, in practice, bad or repressive laws are changed: by being brought into contempt by the very people they are designed to control, so that the class in power finds it wiser not to use them. This method has face-saving connotations that straight-out repeal would not provide.¹⁵

This is clearly the sort of analysis based on concepts of "class interests" and class struggle, implying a deduction of revolutionary strategy from the study of real material conditions, which Sampson sees as missing from much labour history.¹⁶ But William's views are in the minority

amongst commentators on WA's early labour laws. What then was the true character of this legislation?

2. The Nature of WA's Labour Legislation, 1892-1902:

Hyman has argued that legislation, such as the Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Act, is essentially bourgeois because it was the product of a liberal parliamentary democracy.¹⁷ It was also reformist in nature because it did not attack the fundamental inequalities between capital and labour. The bourgeois aspects of the legislation between 1892 and 1902 can be evaluated from at least two perspectives. The first involves an analysis of the socio-economic developments and make-up of the West Australian population and social classes during this period. The second looks at the ideological positions of the parliamentary promoters and opponents of this legislation.

Some Socio-economic Background:

From 1890 onwards, Western Australia enjoyed responsible government guaranteed by a written constitution and an elected Parliament. In the decade that followed, politics was dominated by the Premier, John Forrest, and his group known as the Ministerialists. Until the election of the Labour members to the State Parliament in 1901, there was no identifiable party politics in terms of a right and left wing divide. If there was any distinction between the Ministerialists and the Oppositionists groups in Parliament, it appeared to be a nascent and particularist one with the focus complicated by both a town and country dichotomy and protectionist and free trade influences. During this period, members of Parliament were not paid for their duties and for this and other reasons, they were drawn mainly from the established settler-farmer and merchant groups. There was no working class or union representation in Parliament. Working class organizations, that did exist, tended to support the election of sympathetic liberal politicians, such as James and Oldham.¹⁸

Secondly, throughout the 1890's, the West Australian economy was based predominantly on primary production. Goldmining was the only significant area of growth after 1897. Secondary industry was small.¹⁹ The population grew from 49,782 in 1891 to 184,124 in 1902.²⁰ But only five percent of Perth's wage earners were unionists.²¹ Merritt concludes that the labour movement was numerically weak, labour relations were paternalistic, and class division was blurred.²²

The proponents of the new labour legislative came from within the Parliament and the evolving Trades and Labour Councils situated on the goldfields and the Perth coastal region. In the early 1890s, the coastal Trades and Labour Council had proposed a legislative programme seeking amendments to the Master and Servants Act, and provisions for conciliation and arbitration, working men's liens and shops and factories regulation.²³ Apart from MPs who had liberal ideas and were prepared to sponsor social or reformist legislation, the Premier made the occasional concession to the labour movement in order to maintain his hold on office. The promotion of the Truck Act 1898, and the Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Act 1900 are examples. Merritt's claim that Forrest's response to labour demands was "calculatingly sympathetic" appears to reflect the reality.²⁴

Parliamentarian Ideology:

The ideology of the West Australian Parliamentarians during this period was somewhat diffuse. Nevertheless, it was generally conservative. Indications of its style and nature may be gleaned from second reading speeches on the Masters and Servants and the Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Bills.

The Masters and Servants Act 1892 was passed with very little debate.²⁵ However, the debate which culminated in the defeat of its prototype in 1884 highlighted the variety of imperialist, racist, laissez-faire and libertarian views prevalent in this legislature in the late nineteenth century. This debate involved a division of opinion between the appointed legislative councillors with ministerial responsibility and the elected (and more conservative!) majority. Attorney-General Hensmen argued that the legislative purpose was "to put workmen and workwomen on an equality with their wealthier neighbours, and to provide one and the same law for the rich and the poor". The Colonial Secretary said that "the general feeling throughout the British Empire.....was that labour had equal rights with capital". Mr. Lee Steere led the opposition to the proposed change. He maintained that the measure did not take into account the special circumstances of the West Australian labour market, especially the supply and demand for labour in the countryside. Septimus Burt articulated a laissez-faire argument that the government was "overlegislating". He also maintained that the bill was impractical because it would put it "out of the power of settlers in country places to obtain labour".²⁶

The second reading debate on the Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Bill provides further examples of colonial ideological justification. The speech of the Attorney-General, Mr. Pennefather who introduced this measure on behalf of the government, was redolent with pluralist notions of harmony and equality; and also paternal statism. For he stated that:

It is undoubtedly accepted as an axiom.....that the industrial prosperity of every civilised country.....depends on the harmonious relations existing between labour and capital.

Furthermore, the Attorney-General indicated that the draft bill had been framed along lines similar to the recommendations of the British Royal Commission on Labour to the House of Commons in 1894. This report appears to have influenced his views significantly because he paraphrased part of its rhetoric when he stated that the purpose of the bill was to "substitute for the barbarous methods of the past the more rational method of a well ordered tribunal to determine disputes..." He also referred to similar developments in other Australian colonies and New Zealand, which he described as "the political laboratory of social legislation", and to other experiments in conciliation taking place in France and Belgium. Although he argued that the state was taking up a neutral position between capital and labour, it was also clear that countervailing power had been reserved. For he stated that ".....the state after all is the mother parent, and labour and capital are her two children, and it is her duty to.....preserve the domestic peace".²⁷

The Leader of the Opposition, Mr. Illingworth, referred to labour being treated as "any other commodity as far as capital is concerned" and to trade unions being "the bulwarks of modern democracy" and having "lifted people from misery". In discussing the right of the state to intervene in disputes to protect the public interest, he quoted approvingly from a reported speech of Mr. Fitzpatrick, a member of the Legislative Assembly of New South Wales as follows:

If by a strike or other combination of workmen, there should be imminent danger of disturbance to the public peace; or if circumstances were such that among the labouring population ties of the family were relaxed....; or if employers laid burdens upon the workmen which were unjust or degraded them with conditions that were repugnant to their dignity as human beings;...in these circumstances there can be no question that, within certain limits, it would be right to call in the help and the authority of the law.

Mr. George, MLA, referred to the necessity to be absolutely fair to both sides and noted that the colony had not experienced the kind of industrial disputation which had taken place in Britain and the USA. He hoped that the legislation would eliminate the paid agitator. For he claimed that the agitator "[foisted] himself on those unions and associations....breeding and fostering grievances where grievances probably never fairly and honestly exist". Another member, Mr. Moran observed that no coercive legislation could prevent an employer closing down his business. Finally, Mr. Solomon gave his qualified support to unionisation because in his opinion "trade unionism under fair rules is undoubtedly a good thing. It is a check against the harshness of employers...."²⁸

By contrast the debates on the Truck Act and the Conspiracy and Protection of Property Act involved a lower degree of ideological intensity. MPs were agreed on that they should emulate the "old country", the "mother country" and thus avoid the traps "socialistic legislation" which gave unions an unfair advantage at the expense of "democracy".²⁹ A lone voice was that of the MLA Vosper, who praised the Truck Act as "social legislation" and accused other MPs of supporting employer paternalism and "snobbish patronage". In particular he criticised parliamentary advocates of the preposterous doctrine that it is the business of the employer to act as a sort of guardian angel over his workmen's affairs. The result of such an approach, he stated, could be seen in the case of one Murchison employer, which required its employees to purchase goods from the company store and to spend a certain amount of their wages at the company pub on threat of dismissal!³⁰

In general, however, it is clear that the conservative values had achieved a normative character. Their proponents did not need to state them and those, like the TLCs and Labor politicians who might have opposed them were at pains to avoid ideological confrontation. The fate of the TLC's policy on state ownership, its support for the tottering Forrest ministry on the issue of arbitration and Pearce's vision of anti-revolutionary parliamentary change were characteristic of the attitudes of organised Labour at the time.³¹

3. The Ideology of the Legislation

Crowley asserts that "legislation gradually recognised equality between master and servant so that

criminal proceedings for breach of contract were replaced by arbitration between the representatives of collective interests" and the subsequent development of a radical critique.³² A perusal of the four Acts indicates an ideology which may be slightly different in emphasis from the ideological positions of the framers. This is the contribution and influence of nineteenth century Positivism on written law.

The Masters and Servants Act 1892:

This act, which is still in force, replaced the Masters and Servants Acts 1846 and 1868, and their amendments. The orthodox view promoted by its authors and reiterated by later commentators was that it was designed to bring the employment relationship into line with the ordinary rules of contract against employees. The logic of this position, spelt out by Macken *et al*, claims historical justification. In feudal times, it is argued, the relationship between the master and servant was based on status. The status arose from feudal obligations associated with land tenure and a hierarchical society based on fealty. The feudal system started to break down as a result of the Black Death in 1348. This plague caused a shortage of labour which forced masters to bid for labour and the price of wages escalated. In order to stifle this freedom, Parliament passed the Statute of Labourers in 1349 which attempted to freeze wages at pre-plague levels and prescribed imprisonment for anyone leaving his or her employment before the agreed time. This considerably increased the implied legal duty that an employee was obliged to render exclusive and faithful service to his or her master. This implied requirement was enshrined later in the Masters and Servants Acts 1842 and 1868, which prescribed imprisonment for any worker leaving his or her employment.³³

The duty to work was reiterated by the Statute of Artificers in 1562. Although this statute was designed to assist the flagging guild system, it also restricted work in the trade to those who had been apprenticed to the trade. Workers were therefore bound to their master craftsmen and Justices of the Peace were given power to fix wages. The Statute of Artificers was replaced by the Apprentices Act 1814. However, this act and its subsequent replacements maintained the obligation for apprentices to be subordinate to their employers and added the duty to undergo training. Furthermore, by the middle of the nineteenth century, the duty which arose originally from status considerations, had been transplanted successfully into the contract of employment and thus continued the legal subordination and subservience of the employee.³⁴

The current Masters and Servants Act retains some feudal attributes. Sections 7, 8, 9 and 13 prescribe criminal sanctions, such as fines and imprisonment for specific types of default. Furthermore Section 21 states that proceedings under this act are alternatives to the parties' "civil rights and remedies for any breach or non performance of the contract of service by an action or suit in the ordinary courts...., in any case where proceedings are not instituted under this Act". Finally, Justices are given a range of remedies for dealing with disputes over the terms of contract. Section 7 gives power to "annul the contract, discharging the parties from the same and apportioning the amount of wages.....due up to the completed period of such contract....". These

remedies are more efficient than the common law remedies of rescission and damages for breach of contract because reinstatement or more properly specific performance is not normally given.

The Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Act 1900:

This act was passed in 1900 and its marginal notes indicate clearly that it was modeled on the New Zealand legislation. There were several provisions which indicated an objective of minimising industrial disputes. Section 25, 83, 87 and 88 prescribed measures for the enforcement of awards and agreements and penalties for their breach. Section 30 penalised any strike or lockout which occurred during conciliation and arbitration proceedings. Section 67 required each award or agreement to specify the employers, unions and persons bound, limited contracting out and indirectly gave some recognition to common rule. Section 2 was more significant because it defined "industrial matters". The effect of this definition was to limit the ability of the Arbitration Court to arbitrate on certain subjects, including manning disputes and dismissals. Thus, any issue which did not come within the definition of industrial matter fell under the doctrine of managerial prerogative. So the introduction of labour shedding devices, investment decisions, marketing, pricing and workers' participation, were immune from the arbitral process.³⁶ This tended to impact significantly on areas where the employment relationship involved subordination and subservience.

Conspiracy and Protection of Property Act 1900 and Trade Union Act 1902:

These statutes are still in force and both have a clear policy of qualified tolerance of trade unions and industrial activity. The Conspiracy and Protection of Property Act was introduced after the passing of the Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Act. This occurred because a legal opinion at the time was suggesting that unions registered under the latter were nevertheless still illegal and subject to the common law doctrine of conspiracy.

Sections 2 and 5 make workers and unions not liable to criminal prosecution for conspiracy to injure. The basic approach was however, to abolish the rather general common law offence with specific statutory offences. Section 3 permitted a financial penalty or a term of imprisonment to be imposed on anyone convicted of breach of contract without proper notice which either caused an interruption to the supply of electricity, gas and water; or which caused danger to life, injury to the body or exposed valuable property to destruction. Section 7 prescribed similar sanctions for anyone convicted of intimidation or annoyance by violence or otherwise.

Finally, the Trade Union Act 1902 clarified the legality of all trade unions and also provided for an alternative procedure for their registration which was less onerous and less beneficial than the registration procedures and entitlements under the Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Act. Section 3 declared that any registered trade union did not make its members liable for criminal conspiracy at common law, merely because the union could be considered in restraint of trade. Section 4 declared that no registered union could be classified as unlawful merely because it was a restraint of trade. The effect of registration under this Act gave a union and its members the protection of sections 3 and 4. Section 31 allowed unions to be registered concurrently under the Industrial Conciliation Act. However, any union not registered under one or the other of these

statutes was still liable for criminal conspiracy; and was unlawful and in restraint of trade.

4. Conclusion

So, what of Crowley's conclusion that the legislation was based on a recognition of equality between employers and employees? My criticism of it is that it completely ignores the real, concrete, difference in power between these two classes in a capitalist society. Workers do not own property of any significant value, nor do they control the capitalist mode of production and exchange. Workers, thus, have only their labour to sell. This, they exchange for wages and in so doing place themselves under the direction and control of the employer. It follows that the employer retains not only the ownership of the goods and services produced by the worker, but also the surplus value derived from the sale of the production and maximised through minimising the cost of labour. Given these circumstances, the inequality of the exchange implies simultaneously inequality of both economic reward and authority or power.³⁷ It is clear that Crowley did not consider this aspect of equality when he maintained that an equality between employers and employees developed gradually over a period of 50 years.

What equality do these provisions evince? First, the Masters and Servants Act recognises a theoretically equal treatment before the law. This is evident in the wording of the legislation and in the rhetoric of its Parliamentary past. Mr Hensman for instance stated that it was the intent of the Masters and Servants Bill in 1884 "to put workmen.....on an equality with their wealthier neighbours...".³⁸ The reality is clearer in the case of the Protection of Property Act. Although it abolished the diffuse offence of common law conspiracy it instituted more specific offences to control particular effects of industrial disputation. Both this act and the Trade Union Act gave recognition to registered trade unions, but maintained impliedly the common law controls for unregistered organisations. Under the Protection of Property Act, members are protected from criminal conspiracy at common law; whereas their union is not. The Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Act granted legal status and recognition to unions registered under it; gave them the right to initiate conciliation and arbitration proceedings; and established through a system of enforceable awards and agreements a status for labour to counteract some of the extremes of freedom of contract. A primary objective however was to control strikes and lockouts and thereby limit some expressions of self-determination. This approach was a reversion to mediaeval solutions of wage fixing through judicial arbitration.

Furthermore, although the ideology of the legislators indicated some rudimentary pluralism, the views of both Mr. Pennefather and Mr. Illingworth were overlaid by a unitary frame of reference.³⁹ They simply did not believe that workers could have legitimate aims contrary to the interests of employers. Furthermore, the jurisdiction of the act was limited by the definition of "industrial matter". This prevented effectively any arbitration on the employers' prerogative or the distribution of the surplus value and any matter associated with the wage bargain. Finally, the Truck Act limited the ability of employers to subordinate workers to accept payment of wages by means other than cash, or to control them in the mode of spending wages. These changes tended, nevertheless, to reinforce the wages system and the capitalist mode of production and exchange.

They promoted procedural equality and an assumption of formal equality of power through the two sided nature of bargaining and the apparent ability of both employers and employees or unions to wield sanctions. But they overlooked the inequality of the structural position implied by the labour contract.⁴⁰

Furthermore, Crowley seems to have understated the role of the state as being that of a keeper of the "industrial peace".⁴¹ Legal analysis of these statutes seems to invite the conclusion that the state and the law supported and thereby strengthened the market power of the employers.⁴² This can be seen in the enforcement provisions of the Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Act and the existence of concurrent and distinct remedies under the Masters and Servants Act and at contract. Accordingly, the position of the employment relations was still affected by status. Furthermore, the status requirements inherent in the duty to render personal and exclusive service had not been abolished by the legislative changes between 1892 and 1900.⁴³ This is reinforced by the dominant paternalist ideology of the state as "the mother" with both capital and labour as "children".

Finally, it is an exaggeration to maintain as Crowley does, that "it was only natural that as 'strikes' replaced 'absconding' fundamental changes should be wrought in the legal system, as well as in the social framework".⁴⁴ There is no record of such thinking amongst the framers of the legislation and according to Crowley's own research, absconding appeared to have been a rural problem.⁴⁵ The opposition to the proposed Masters and Servants Act 1884 seems to confirm this conclusion. Strikes, however, were not a significant problem in the countryside. They manifested themselves in the towns and on the goldfields among tradesmen, miners and other non-agricultural workers.

Crowley's conclusions are also by no means the only possible explanation for the advent of the new labour legislation. It seems more likely that the changes in Western Australia's labour laws between 1892 and 1902 were influenced by a simple and atavistic need to achieve some comity with the Imperial and colonial legal systems of which Western Australia was a part. The colonial legislators were simply copying recent changes in the legislation of "the mother country". That this suited the particular needs of the settler-farmers and merchants they represented is also clear and hardly surprising. Labour laws which suited the exploitation of workers and the appropriation of their products by the owners of capital in England could and did fulfil the same purpose in Western Australia.

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Peter McDonald†

The material presented in this paper forms the first part of a proposed study on the role of intellectuals in the labour movement.

When I began reading the work of a range of labour movement theorists in order to determine how they approached this subject, it became immediately obvious that most defined both intellectuals and their role in accordance with their own ideological standpoint. I had originally intended to examine the emphasis given by theorists to the ideology of labour movement activists, or intellectuals, in determining the way labour movements developed. However, in order to make this task meaningful, it became necessary to classify the theorists themselves as to the ideological perspective from which they viewed the world. Some state quite explicitly the perspective from which they are writing. With others it becomes necessary to make judgements about their basic assumptions. This is particularly the case with those writers who claim that their work is purely scientific or descriptive; that it has no normative basis, no conception of what 'ought' to be.

The first part of this paper explains how I have used the terms 'ideology' and 'labour movement'. Three other attempts to classify theories of the labour movement are then reviewed, and my chosen form of classification outlined. A range of theories are then examined in the light of this framework.

Definition of terms

The term 'ideology' can be a confusing one, with different writers using it in different ways. I distinguish between two useages of the word, following the example of Kellner (1978). Ideology as political 'ism' is used to refer to a person's or group's general social and political world view. Liberalism and socialism, for example, are different, consciously chosen ideologies which provide their supporters with differing explanations of the causes and nature of social problems, and provide different strategies for social and political change. Ideology as hegemony is used to refer to the prevailing dominant belief system in a particular society. This useage can help explain how individuals come to accept and support an establishment order, even though, objectively, it may be against their interests to do so. Ideologies, as Therborn (1980) has argued, tell us what exists and what nature, society, men and women are like. They tell us what is good and bad, right and wrong, beautiful and ugly. And they tell us what is possible and impossible. Between these two useages of the term, it is impossible for an individual to be without ideology.

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I do not attempt to precisely define the term 'labour movement'. Its usage is inextricably bound up with the ideological framework of the theorist employing it. For some writers the term is interchangeable with that of the 'trade union movement'. For others it can have much wider significance. It does, however, have some value in imposing a limitation upon the scope of this study. Theories of social change are only considered where their proponents accord a crucial role to the labour movement, no matter how wide the scope they give to that term. The term 'trade union movement' is used where that is the chosen form of words of a particular theorist.

Classification of labour movement theories

Mark Perlman, a management theorist, first published 'Labor Union Theories in America' in 1958. He felt that early American theories of the labour movement fell into five 'natural' groupings. He called them (1) the Protestant Christian Socialist and the Roman Catholic Christian social movements, (2) The Marxian Socialist movements, (3) the environmental psychology discipline, (4) the neo-classical economics discipline, and (5) the legal or jurisprudential history discipline (1958:vii).

Perlman grouped approximately 20 writers under these five headings, and felt that the differences between them were 'irreconcilable' (1958:226). Superficially it may appear that Perlman had identified five different ideological positions, but Poole has pointed out how his classification mixed together the ethical-political (or ideological) and disciplinary roots of the theories, leaving them unable to be logically resolved into differences of type (Poole,1981:7). For the purpose of this paper, such a form of classification is unsuitable. To impute an ideology to a discipline, for example to call psychology conservative, is to contradict the definition of ideology I have adopted. To argue, as Perlman does, that only some theories have a normative base is to deny that a particular world view is embodied in the approaches he terms psychological, economist, or legal.

The Australian theorists Dabscheck and Niland discussed labour movements by outlining seven different theoretical approaches. They called these (1) psychological reaction, (2) vehicles of social efficiency, (3) vehicles of revolutionary change, (4) selected Australian Catholic writers, (5) guardians of the democratic process, (6) worker's scarcity consciousness, and (7) work group psychology (1981:82). They did not claim this list to be exhaustive, but for my purpose it suffers from the same drawbacks as that of Perlman. Dabscheck and Niland appear to have defined ideological theories as those where a writer knows 'what is best for trade unions', or 'has imbued trade unions with behavioural traits of his own making' (1981:84). This use of the concept of ideology is not appropriate to this paper.

The form of classification adopted by Howard (1977) more closely fits my requirements. He used the threefold classification of (1) traditional capitalist theories, (2) communist theories, and (3) politicization and underdevelopment. His first two headings do suggest fundamentally different ideological positions, with that of traditional capitalist theories effectively encapsulating six of Dabscheck and Niland's seven categorisations. However his third heading sits uneasily in the company of the others, creating an overall impression that, rather than ideology, his classification

is of the only three possible forms of modern society.

I have chosen to adopt a dual classification, which will allow for comparison of theories both within and between the two headings of 'theories of regulation', and 'theories of radical change'. The terminology is borrowed from the work of Burrell and Morgan (1979) who saw the two as opposite poles of a continuum upon which, in their case, theories of organisation could be located. They explain their terminology in the following way:

The sociology of regulation is essentially concerned with the need for regulation in human affairs: the basic questions which it asks tend to focus upon the need to understand why society is maintained as an entity. It attempts to explain why society tends to hold together rather than fall apart. It is interested in understanding the social forces which prevent the Hobbesian vision of 'war of all against all' becoming a reality.

The sociology of radical change is concerned to find explanations for the radical change, deepseated structural conflict, modes of domination and structural contradiction which its theorists see as characterising modern society. It is a sociology which is essentially concerned with our emancipation from the structures which limit and stunt our potential for development. The basic questions which it asks focus upon the deprivation of man, both material and psychic. It is often visionary and utopian, in that it looks towards potentiality as much as actuality; it is concerned with what is possible as much as what is; with alternatives rather than with acceptance of the status quo. (1979:17)

This framework facilitates the attempt to classify theories in relation to their fundamental normative differences. Differences between theories in each grouping are also explored, particularly in relation to the influence they ascribe to the ideologies of labour movement activists.

Theories of regulation

There are a number of theorists whose work cannot be ignored in a survey of this type. Without giving a detailed account of their arguments, this section attempts to explain my location of their underpinning ideologies, as well as outlining their conception of the role of ideology as they define it.

John Commons

Commons was a student of the early American labour movement, producing most of his work in the years 1900-35. He came to believe that the rise of trade unionism was an inevitable stage in the development of industrial society.

The labour history of the country is here treated as part of its intellectual and political history. It is the story of how, in the course of three centuries, the wage-earner, as a distinct class, had been gradually, even violently, separating himself from the farmer, the merchant, and the employer, and coming to feel that his standing and progress in society depend directly on wages and not directly on prices, rents, profits, or interest. (1918:4)

Commons' ideological perspective was a form of pluralism, one in which the common good was ultimately served by allowing, up to a point, conflicting interests to be represented by organised groupings. Mark Perlman saw Commons as arguing

that bargaining between collective socio-economic groups tended to supersede individual political expression as the sovereign power in a democratic state. An exception to this

was governmental determination of the rights of bargaining groups. He felt that disinterested groups could and should seek to mediate between competing groups. Through their technical ability, he believed experts (were) capable of bringing reason and order to the borders of social hegemonies. (1958:189)

Commons thus came to see the state as disinterested, as representing the common good. This concept was far removed from the notion of the state contained in his early writings, when he was influenced by the Christian Socialist movement. Many of his early statements came from an explicit 'radical change' perspective. He had, for instance, argued that:

Private property is but another name for that coercive relation existing between human beings through which the proprietor commands the services of others....But private property, contrary to the legal view, is not the creature of the state, nor is it subject to the state. It is pristine and interior. It springs from the very nature of man. The state is rather the creature and offspring of private property.

The function of the political economist is to show that the standpoint of a class is the best standpoint; and he does this even when he claims to speak from the standpoint of society as a whole; for, then, he is arguing in favour of the class which benefits by leaving private property as it is.(Perlman,1958:175,172)

The writings of the later Commons contain an implicit notion of the 'correct' role of the labour movement. He had set out to test Marxist theories via empirical research of the actual behaviour of labour movement organisations, and claimed that his research into the history of the shoemakers demonstrated that one of the prime purposes of unionism was protection against the competition of cheaper labour, rather than the advancement of the interests of a general economic class (Perlman, 1958:180). His empirical, descriptive form of research suggested a role which accorded the 'intellectuals', or those who tried to imbue in the labour movement a sense of being a vehicle for change, a movement concerned with more than the short-run economic security and well-being of its members, no constructive place.

This was a theme to be taken up and developed by Selig Perlman, who studied under him and continued the tradition of what was to become known as the 'Wisconsin theory'. However it is worth noting that it was in 1901 that Commons "first learned to distrust 'the intellectuals' as leaders in labour movements" (Perlman,1958:33). Indeed, he came to see the only constructive role for intellectuals as belonging within the ranks of management. It was enlightened management, imbued with the morally desirable and economically efficient concept of 'goodwill', which could eradicate the destructive aspects of capitalism:

for it is goodwill that converts the 'class struggle' of socialism into class harmony. It converts retaliation into reciprocity.... (Commons, 1969:27)

Dabschek and Niland argued that

Commons saw trade unions and the practice of collective bargaining between unions and employers as a bulwark against the rise of totalitarianism and a potent force ensuring the preservation of American democracy. (1981:94)

Howard saw him as attempting to refute Marxist theories (1977:256). In this task he was certainly

influential, being a forerunner of what Dabschek termed 'North American political science pluralism of the 1950's' (1983:489).

Selig Perlman.

Perlman, like Commons, saw trade unions as an essential component of democratic industrial societies. Also like Commons, he moved from an early commitment to socialism to a position where he 'made an obvious attempt to do for the Wisconsin theory what Marx's historical sociology had done for the Marxist approach' (Perlman,1958:195). He attempted to produce a general theory of the labour movement, one capable of explaining the development of the labour movement in any given country. In this process he broadened Commons' approach to give a clearer picture of both the role of the intellectual and the psychology of the worker. He claimed that:

Three factors emerged as basic in any modern labor situation: first, the resistance power of capitalism, determined by its own historical development; second, the degree of dominance over the labor movements by the intellectual's "mentality" which regularly underestimates capitalism's resistance power and overestimates labor's will to radical change; and, third, the degree of maturity of a trade union "mentality". (Perlman,1949,x)

Perlman's theory is one of regulation because of both its overt normative orientation and the approach he took to empirical analysis. His extensive research into what had happened in terms of trade union development in the United States turned not only into a prescription as to what should happen, but also became the yardstick by which labour movement developments in other countries should be gauged. As Gulick and Bers (1953) pointed out, Perlman took a detailed description of the nature and development of the American labour movement and then in effect used that description as a theoretical explanation of the nature of that development. His perceptive account of the development of the 'job-conscious' rather than 'class-conscious' labour movement, a form of consciousness fully compatible with capitalist society, became that of a development toward 'maturity' for the movement. The normative concept of maturity was buttressed by a theory of the psychology of the 'laboring man', derived from the same sources; the working rules, customs and practices of labour organisations. This psychology was related to the concept of scarcity consciousness.

The scarcity consciousness of the manualist is a product of two main causes, one lying in himself and the other outside. The typical manualist is aware of his lack of native capacity for availing himself of economic opportunities as they lie amidst the complex and ever shifting situations of modern business. He knows himself neither for a born taker of risks nor for the possessor of a sufficiently agile mind ever to feel at home in the midst of the uncertain game of competing business. (1928:239)

Such a statement comes very close to arguing a genetic basis for the existence of different social classes. Once again, this psychology was ascribed to the labouring class on the basis of studying what labour organisations had tended to do, and then used to prescribe limits as to what they should attempt to do.

Perlman had a clear picture as to what should be the role of intellectuals, or ideologues, within the

labour movement. He wrote that:

Trade unionism, which is essentially pragmatic, struggles constantly, not only against the employers for an enlarged opportunity measured in income, security, and liberty in shop and industry, but struggles also, whether consciously or unconsciously, actively or merely passively, against the intellectual who would frame its programs and shape its policies. (1928:5)

Intellectuals he saw as all those who tried to lead the labour movement away from job-conscious unionism. Intellectuals were 'higher idealists' who could be classified as either ethics oriented, efficiency minded (fabian socialists), or socially deterministic (marxists).

Every one of these three types of 'intellectuals' projects from his own abstract conception of 'labor as a mass in the grip of a force' a mental picture of the workingman as an individual. Consequently, every one of these pictures differs widely from the real person whom employers and union leaders know. (1928:283)

Thus Perlman's view of the correct role of the intellectual clearly reflects the ideology of his theory of the labour movement. The objective social scientist must advocate job unionism and capitalism. To do otherwise is to deal in abstract conceptions rather than the real world. The real world, to him, was the capitalist world, was the United States. He said in 1922 that:

to students of the social sciences, it is self-evident that the prolonged rule of the proletariat in Russia in defiance of nearly the whole world must be regarded as a product of Russian life, past and present. (Perlman,1950:295)

Such a cultural specificity presumably did not apply to the United States, where the data which generated his general theory of the labour movement was obtained.

Frank Tannebaum.

Tannebaum, writing in the United States in the 1940's, shared many of the views of Perlman. He also saw trade unions as an inevitable component of industrial society, made necessary because of the psychological disposition of the worker.

The union represents the spontaneous grouping of workers, thrown together functionally as individuals, for the manifestation of that moral identity and psychological unity which men working together always discover, discover because they need it and could not live without it. There is nothing new about this. (1947:170)

Tannebaum's ideological position is a mix of a clear normative perspective on what 'should be' the role of trade unions, together with a deterministic view of what must be their role. Conveniently, the could and the should coincide. His extreme determinism is demonstrated in statements such as the following, made in the context of a discussion of socialism, communism, nazism and fascism.

These vast, but in their nature secondary, movements are merely symbolic of an underlying drift of the economy, which involves a natural, or rather organic, clustering of men about their work. (1947:161)

The concept of the 'underlying drift' occurs throughout his work. It is a drift which occurs despite any human efforts to alter its course. This assumption allows Tannebaum to 'objectively' rule out the long term viability of any arrangement of society not to his liking.

But state ownership and control, under whatever guise,...is essentially a political solution. By its very nature a political solution is unstable. (1947:192)

He saw the long term drift of society (presumably all societies) as being toward a situation where, without the political interference of the state, employers and workers would recognise each others needs, thus establishing a moral basis for industry. While trade unions were to have a vital role in this process, Tannenbaum was at pains to point out that it should not go as far as blurring the boundaries between management and workers.

Those who manage the industries must remain free in a functional relationship, or the industries will in the end prove inoperative. That is a lesson that folk bred on general theories will find hard to learn; but a little acquaintance with the complexities of a modern industry, even a small one, will sober most men not wedded to an ideology. (1947:193)

It is clear from his theory that Tannenbaum views the role of the intellectuals in much the same way as Perlman, with the crucial difference that their efforts can never ultimately succeed in altering the direction of the 'underlying drift', but merely retard its progress. In speaking of the labour movement he said that:

Its very lack of ideas made it strong, enabled it to concentrate upon immediate ends without wasting its energies in a futile pursuit of the 'will-of-the-wisp'. (1947:162)

Tannenbaum's theory is a clearcut example of how a clearly normative theory can be presented as objective social science. Indeed, he almost recognises this himself.

There is a seemingly normative quality in the latter parts of this essay - though the effort has been to stay within the visible trends and their obvious implications. There is no programme of action suggested. This is the seeming outcome of the drift of our time. (1947:192)

Other American Theorists.

Many theorists writing from an ideological perspective of regulation were influenced by developments in mainstream American sociology. Some, including Lipset (1960) and Wilensky (1956) put emphasis on unions as organisations, and applied the work of Weber and Michels to modern developments in unionism. The results tended to be rigidly deterministic, even in the eyes of other evolutionists. Cochran argued that:

While the story of American unionism would seem to furnish textbook illustrations of oligarchy and bureaucracy, the thesis has the shortcoming that is characteristic of merely descriptive sociology; by implication or affirmation, its authors tend to freeze the evolutionary process, in this case, with the consolidation of the bureaucracy. (1977:340)

The rise of what has been called American political science pluralism led to arguments such as that made by Moore that earlier theorists, like Perlman and Commons, were implicitly 'vulgarly marxist' because of their acceptance of a two class analysis of capitalist society. Moore proposed a general theory of labour organisations, centred around four bases of loyalty and identification; the industry, the occupation, the productive organisation, and general status. He was an evolutionist who argued for a 'natural history' approach to the study of industrialisation.

There is a substantial basis for thinking that a generalised sequence exists in the

historical and contemporary evolution of labor organisations and their relations with employers, and thus that various 'early' stages of such evolution can be identified in areas now industrialising. (1960:395)

Moore was an early convergence theorist who believed that the evolutionary process would lead to occupational unions and a high degree of governmental regulation in all advanced industrial societies.

John Dunlop applied the theories of Talcott Parsons to the study of the labour movement and developed what has become known as the 'systems approach' to industrial relations. This approach took the focus from a study of labour organisations *per se*, to a concentration on the interaction between the various components of the industrial relations system of which the labour movement is but one. Thus:

Changes in union structure and government have in the past provided an outward indicator of the inward pressures created by changes in environments: in product and labour markets and in the larger community. (1960:102)

In Dunlop's theory, all components of the system were not only constrained in their actions by the system; actions could be fully explained by reference to the dynamics of the system. Those involved could always be clearly understood as being acted upon and responding, and never initiating. It is a theory in which the ideological perspective of the author is implicit, rather than being spelled out. As Marsden has argued:

Dunlop appears to think that facts 'speak for themselves', and all that is required for theory construction is to collect and sort them. Next, he maintains that industrial relations systems can be 'carefully observed'. I have never observed an industrial relations system, nor have I observed an industrial relation. If the idea of a system is derived from 'experience', it is because it is given to experience by ideology. (1982:240)

Another group of theorists, including Liebermann (1986) and Neufeld (1960) relate the later development of labour movements to the economic conditions under which they develop.

It is therefore suggested that the attachment of certain contemporary labor movements to different political ideologies and their consequential fragmentation are directly related to the degree of relative economic backwardness of the countries in which these labor movements developed. (Liebermann, 1986:7)

All the above theories, to the extent that they are evolutionist and determinist, place little weight upon the long-term influence of the activist or intellectual. Intellectuals are necessarily 'will-of-the-wisps'. They are trying to impose their own belief systems on to a world which is 'naturally' locked into a certain course. The theories are thus all regulation and 'status quo' oriented. What, must be, is their message.

In this respect they differ from the overtly ideological theorists like Schumpeter, De Man, or Barbasch. Schumpeter argued that "men of critical mind eventually impart revolutionary bias to the most bourgeois trade-union practices" (Wilensky, 1956:143), and De Man that "the working masses are the dough, whereas the ideas of non-proletarian intellectuals are the yeast" (Wilensky, 1956:28). Barbasch argued that "communist penetration of unions is, as has been said, along with

racketeering, a form of union pathology." (1956:324)

British Theorists

The discussion of British writers is confined to those areas in which there are significant differences to the American theorists already mentioned. The major difference can perhaps best be described as a moral one, well captured by Hyman in his discussion of the difference between 'British' and 'American' pluralism.

American pluralism, like its British predecessors, thus came to assign key significance to intermediate groups between the state and the individual: a protection against the social atomism of the mass society in which citizens were susceptible to totalitarian manipulation. But whereas British pluralism stressed the functional interdependence of intermediate groups, the American version emphasised inter-group competition. British pluralism idealised a pre-capitalist past; American pluralism idealised the existing political institutions of American capitalism. (1978:19)

This tradition, together with one of non-revolutionary socialism, has given the writing of many British theorists a distinctively different flavour than their American counterparts. The Webbs, for example, employed a methodology similar to that of Commons and Perlman, an exhaustive compilation of descriptive data on the historical development of unionism. They arrived at an explicitly anti-marxist position, more because they concluded Marx's analysis to be faulty than because they considered his vision undesirable. The Webbs came to believe that the lot of the British worker could be substantially improved by the growth of trade unionism and by limited political action on behalf of the labour movement. They also shared, along with later British pluralists, a belief in the public interest, a public interest safeguarded by the state, and not merely defined, as in the American tradition, as the outcome of competition between competing power groups. Thus:

whenever an industrial dispute reaches a certain magnitude, a democratic state will, in the interests of the community as a whole, not scruple to intervene...The state is a partner in every enterprise. In the interests of the community as a whole, no one of the interminable series of decisions can be allowed to run counter to the consensus of expert opinion representing the consumers on the one hand, the producers on the other, and the nation that is paramount over both. (Webb, S and B, 1902:xxvii)

This belief in the autonomy of the state, together with the stress on functional interdependence already noted, has not produced many writers with specific theories of the labour movement; rather the relationship between social groupings has been of importance. Given the moral component discussed above, this issue has tended to be framed in terms of what should be the relationship between groups, rather than what must be. Writers including Flanders (1965), Clegg (1975) and Fox (1974) have wrestled with the concept of the most appropriate role for trade unions. This intellectual climate has spawned much of the literature on industrial democracy and corporatism.

These theorists espouse a clear ideology. They tend to argue for the best possible deal for workers within the confines of modern capitalist society. Not surprisingly, they see the role of intellectuals and labour activists as crucial. Their influence is capable of either helping destroy the social fabric, or of helping create an enlightened and socially just future. This attitude was clearly expressed by Allen:

It has already been mentioned that the task of decision making for a trade union leader is complicated by the existence of trade union traditions. An added difficulty is created by the interaction of contending loyalties such as the needs of the union, the majority of opinion in it, the prestige and strength of the Trade Union Movement, the maintenance of effective union/employer relationships, the stability of the Labour Party, and the welfare of the community. (1957:25-26)

Australian Theorists.

There have been few uniquely Australian contributions to labour movement theory. As in most academic disciplines, Australian writers have tended to draw heavily on British and American traditions. Perhaps our most well known 'export' of a theorist was the case of Elton Mayo. To eventually achieve notoriety for his association with the 'Hawthorne experiments', Mayo developed an explicitly psychological theory of radical unionism before his departure from Australia in 1922. This theory encapsulated an extreme version of psychological determinism, in which revolutionaries were analysed according to their mental states, infantile histories, and social incapacities. He concluded that:

To any working psychologist, it is at once evident that the general theories of Socialism, Guild Socialism, Anarchism and the like are very largely the phantasy constructions of the neurotic. (Bourke, 1982, 229)

Most explicitly Australian 'regulation' theorising about the development of the labour movement has been in an attempt to explain the empirically observable differences in our union structures and activities as compared with their British and American counterparts. Particular attention has been paid to our large number of unions, high participation rates, and the degree of political involvement of the labour movement. Goodrich, a visiting American scholar, made the following observation in 1928:

In the United States and New Zealand the "boundless opportunities" of new countries have been for many workers opportunities for individualistic independence; in Australia they have been opportunities for effective group action. Of this difference, then, quite as much as of those in the importation of people and of ideas, an explanation of the contrast in labour movements must not fail to take account." (1928:207)

Howard (1977) in an attempt to explain the differences noted above, proposed a two phase development of the labour movement in Australia. He argued that the movement developed along similar lines to America until the series of crushing industrial defeats in the 1890's. After this time:

the labour vote became the vehicle of labour power. Legislation, and quasi-judicial decisions benefitting workers, took the place of protection of union organisation, and the rebirth of unionism depended heavily on state assistance. They were in very large part the offspring of a social consensus, reached by society as a whole rather than by segments of it. (1977:263,272)

Howard's theory is an interesting mixture of the determinist and the normative. He proposed a social consensus, one which existed at the turn of the century, if not before or after, which brought into being a structure which has in effect determined the role of the labour movement since that time. I find it difficult to locate the effect, or potential effect, he allows the activists or intellectuals. They are certainly not mentioned in his theory.

The most overtly ideological of the Australian theorists have been those writing from within the Catholic labour tradition. Writers such as Santamaria have not only argued against the desirability of the trade union movement aligning itself with communism, but have argued for a form of business unionism with a moral base, a "social reconstruction based on the inspiration of christianity" (Rawson,1954:39). Their theories have implied a clear role for intellectuals as necessary to help the movement maintain its moral clarity.

In this section I have tried to accomplish two tasks. Firstly I have attempted to clearly explain why I believe that all the theories discussed above fit within the 'ideology of regulation' I outlined at the start of this paper. I have tried to show that they are concerned with social order, with how the status quo is maintained, with social integration and cohesion, and above all with explaining what is, rather than what could be. Secondly, I have attempted to show that the significance they attribute to the role of 'intellectuals', to the ideology of members of the labour movement, whether conservative or radical, diminishes to the extent that their theories are determinist or positivist. A determinist theory I define as one that regards people and their activities as being completely determined by the environment in which they are located. A positivist approach I define as one which seeks to explain and predict what happens in the social world by searching for regularities and causal relationships between its constituent elements (Burrell and Morgan,1979:5).

In the final section, concerned with theories of radical change, I shall argue that the determinism/voluntarism, postivism/anti-positivism distinction remains crucial for an understanding of the significance given by theories to the ideology of labour movement activists and participants.

Theories of Radical Change

Theories of radical change are by definition idealist, in the sense that they are concerned with strategies for bringing about, or analysing the conditions necessary for the coming into being of, societal structures which do not exist in the present. Marx was the first, or at least the first influential, theorist of the labour movement. To the extent that most theories of regulation can be seen as arguments against Marxism, so most radical change theories can be seen as arguments within Marxism. Perhaps the only radical change theories to seriously challenge fundamental aspects of Marx's historical analysis are feminist theories centred on the concept of patriarchy. As yet there has been little feminist theorising of the labour movement. (see Williams, 1981 for an example). However within the range of socialist theories there have been major differences as to the significance and potential of the trade union movement as a crucial factor in the transformation of capitalist society. At the core of these differences lies fundamental disagreement as to the degree of determinism involved in Marx's theory of history, disagreement incapable of resolution by reference to the work of Marx himself. This disagreement is encapsulated in the following exchange between Lenin and an opponent.

(Lenin's writing) gives too little consideration to the material elements and the material environment of the movement whose interaction creates a certain type of labor movement and defines its path, from which the ideologists, in spite of all their efforts, are incapable of diverting it, even if they are inspired by the best theories and programs.

To which Lenin replied that:

An 'ideologist' is worthy of that name only when he marches ahead of the spontaneous movement, points out the road, and when he is able ahead of all others to solve all the theoretical, political tactical and organisational questions which the 'material elements' of the movement spontaneously encounter. ... To say, however, that ideologists (ie conscious leaders) cannot divert from its path the movement created by the interaction of environment and material elements, is to ignore the elementary truth that consciousness participates in this interaction and creation. (Even the) Catholic...labor unions in Europe are ... an inevitable result of the interaction of environment and material elements. The difference, however, is that it was the consciousness of priests...and not that of socialists that participated in this interaction. (Hammond, 1957:27)

The position taken up by Lenin not only makes the role of the trade union movement in bringing about change problematic, but also gives a crucial role to intellectuals in both developing strategy and defining the nature of the social changes to be fought for. The first position has been called that of 'economism' and involves a belief that the proletariat can lead themselves, that objective developments will lead them to follow the proper course. In this sense a similarity to determinist theories of regulation, such as that of Tannembaum, can be noted.

Major differences occur between non-determinist socialists when the issue of the role of the intellectual is addressed. One crucial distinction is that between theories which see in the trade union movement the potential for becoming the agent for social transformation, and those which argues its role as being structurally and historically limited. The second position is held by writers such as Anderson who argues that

as institutions, trade unions do not challenge the existence of society based on a division of classes, they merely express it. (Anderson,1978:334)

and Lane whose view is that 'trade unionism on its own carried within itself a politics of accomodation to a capitalist society' (Lane,1974:25).

These writers fit within the broad Leninist tradition which has stressed the necessity of the trade union movement becoming part of the broad revolutionary political movement. The other position is represented by the early anarchists and syndicalists, like De Leon, Sorel and Mann, who believed that the trade unions were the chosen instruments for achieving socialism. Modern versions of this theme can be found in the work of writers such as Gorz, who argued, in response to the Leninists, that "there is no crisis in the workers' movement, but there is a crisis in the theory of the workers' movement." (Gorz,1968:20) He stated that:

Only in the union can socialist man be forged in the present: the worker organised with other workers to regulate production and exchange, the producer dominating the production process instead of being subordinated to it, the man of creative praxis. Socialism will be little - or nothing at all - if it is not first these men, if it is not a new order of priorities, a new model of consumption, of culture, of social collaboration. (1968:18)

This survey of radical change theorists has been brief, and has ignored other differences, some major, some subtle, between theorists. The work of the Italian marxist Gramsci, for example, who fully developed the concept of ideology as hegemony, provided different insights on the role of the intellectual in relation to the labour movement, as did some of the work of Satre.

Most Australian theorists writing from this perspective have been firmly rooted in the Leninist tradition. Sharkey and McPhillips are two who have tried to clearly spell out the relationship between the communist intellectual and the trade-union movement. They both emphasised

the primacy of the political struggle over the economic struggle and the primacy of political organisation over trade union organisation. (McPhillips,1981:15)

Other theories have received support from activists at various times, but tend not to have been articulated from within the peculiarly Australian context.

To many readers the argument resulting from this paper, that theorising about the nature and role of labour movement activists cannot be detached from the ideological perspective, or world view, of the theorist, may appear as commonsense. To others, perhaps, it may come across as biased, selective, ignoring the contribution that good solid empirical research can make to understanding the world around us. Perhaps there may be agreement that, although good research may provide us with answers to our questions, it cannot tell us what questions to ask. That remains the role of ideology and represents the genuine role of the intellectual in the labour movement.

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