

PAPERS IN LABOUR HISTORY

NO.3

EDITOR: MICHAEL HESS

Perth Branch

Australian Society for the Study of Labour History

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Papers in Labour History seeks to publish material of a serious nature about the historical development of the Labour Movement, with particular emphasis on Western Australia. It is intended to carry a balance of contributions from students and veterans of the Labour Movement. Naturally this raises controversial issues and no apology is made for the fact that few readers will be able to agree with all the views expressed here. While the editor has made suggestions regarding each of the contributions these have been of a stylistic nature and have not been intended in any way to interfere with the expression of the views of the authors.

One of the great problems of the history of the labour movement is that few activists have the time or inclination to set down their own versions of events. Some feel that it is a matter of "blowing their own trumpet" and others are simply too busy with current issues. The gap this leaves in the historical record is considerable. This edition carries two articles written by labour movement veterans in Don Cooley and Les Young. Don's contribution is a selection of memories of his 25 years as a full-time trade union official. Les writes of the establishment of WA's railways and the early industrial struggles in the industry in which he was an official for 30 years. Both articles have much information and give more of a feeling for the events than would be the case if written by dispassionate observers.

Owen Salmon, who is now an Industrial Relations Commissioner, has also reached into his fund of labour movement recollections to provide an account of the creation of the 1969 Kwinana Metal Trades Construction Agreement. Owen was intimately involved in the negotiation of this agreement as a union official and he casts an interesting light on these relatively recent events of WA history. Madge Cope's contribution is drawn from one of our Society for the Study of Labour History meetings and presents her recollections of the Perth Branch of the Union of Australian Women. The UAW was in the forefront of the struggle for peace and took up a range of issues of immediate concern to women at a time when women were supposed to be neither seen nor heard in Australian industrial and political life. Stuart Reid's article is also drawn from a SSLH meeting and deals with the TLC's oral history project. Stuart has been responsible for interviewing labour movement veterans and here presents some snippets from the many hours of interviews which were completed.

I have also taken the liberty of contributing two pieces myself. The first is a brief account of the Australian-Canadian Labour History Conference held at the University of Sydney last December. This was the first time the Australian Society for the Study of Labour History has organised a national conference and many worthwhile papers were given. The second of my contributions is the paper I read at this conference on the 1946-9 Pilbara pastoral workers' strike. I thought it was a paper of particular interest to WA readers and hence have included it here.

Finally we have our regular Research Notes with Bill Latter's study of events at Collie Burn in 1911 being the only new piece of work to come to notice. We have also included new section of Book Reviews with Dorreen McCarthy noting the reprinting of Victoria Hoobs' classic history of nursing in WA, while Bill looks at Lenore Layman and Julian Goddard's visual history of WA labour and Duncan Cameron discusses Vic Williams presentation of Monty Miller's autobiographical material. Hopefully this section will continue as more WA labour movement history finds its way into print.

Australian-Canadian Labour History Conference*

Michael Hess†

Although the Australian Society for the Study of Labour History (ASSLH) has been in existence for some three decades it has never before attempted to hold a conference on this scale. Not only did the presence of people from all States make this the first national gathering of labour historians but the participation of Canadian scholars added an international dimension. The work of organising this landmark event fell heavily upon the office bearers of the Sydney Branch of the ASSLH and they are to be particularly commended for their splendid efforts.

I attended to give a paper on the 1946 Pilbara pastoral workers' strike, which is reproduced elsewhere in this edition of Papers in Labour History, and to represent our recently formed Perth Branch of the ASSLH at the national executive meeting which took place during the same week. That meeting formally accepted us as a Branch of the Society with representatives from other States congratulating us on the start we have made. I had taken a few copies of our Papers in Labour History No.2 with me to pass on to other Branches. These were well received and I was surprised at the additional demand from individuals for personal copies. A number of the Canadians also requested copies. I was not alone in representing the West as Realene Francis, then of Murdoch University, also gave a paper on "Skill, Gender, Unions and the Commonwealth Arbitration Court - A Case Study of the Australian Printing Industry, 1925-1939". Vic Williams was also present for the Sydney launch of his book, Eureka and Beyond: Monty Miller ... His Own Story. This was conducted during the first day of the conference with many present expressing an interest and quite a few books being sold. So WA made quite an impact.

The conference itself was very successful with papers being of a high standard and covering the whole ambit of labour history. The papers were organised into the following sections: Aboriginal Peoples, Oral History, Gender and the Working Class, Women Teachers, Work Relations in Colonial Times, Sources and Methods in Labour History, Railway Unionism, The Role of the State, Compulsory Arbitration, Depression and War, and Labour and Politics. My understanding is that the organisers of the Conference intend to publish some of the papers, although just what form that publication will take is yet to be determined. In the meantime if any Branch members are interested in reading particular papers I have copies of most and will be happy to make them available.

One of the interesting aspects of the Conference, from our Branch's point of view, was the marked

* Held at the University of Sydney, 12-18 December 1988.

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difference in character between the various Branches. The two biggest Branches, Sydney and Melbourne are indicative of these differences. The Sydney Branch seems to be pretty much a University/College affair and carries the administrative burdens of the ASSLH as well as the publication of the journal, Labour History. In addition it has its own less ambitious publication, the Hummer, which is used to keep members informed of events and research in the field and to reproduce talks given to the Branch. The Melbourne Branch has a less scholarly orientation with labour movement veterans and activists playing a bigger role. Its publication takes the form of a newspaper with well illustrated short pieces dealing with historical events of significance for the labour movement. With such differences in orientation the discussions at the executive meeting were quite animated. One point of significance for us was the proposal, by Adelaide and Perth Branches, that the ASSLH ought to reflect a national character in place of the current domination of NSW based academics. The general thrust of this argument was accepted by executive and one specific proposal to come from it was that the editorial board of Labour History ought to include scholars from all States. I proposed that Lenore Layman of Murdoch University would be an appropriate person to represent WA in this role.

While the Conference was successful it is clear that events at this national and international level cannot be held often. The real strength of the ASSLH lies, not at this level, but in its Branches. I came away from the Conference convinced that our own Perth Branch has an exciting role to play in ensuring that the heritage of labour in the West is well represented both here and in the broader forums provided by the ASSLH.

The Establishment of the West Australian Locomotive Engine Drivers', Firemen and Cleaners' Union*

Les Young†

Industrial Background

In its infancy, the State of Western Australia pledged itself to the duty of making the interior areas accessible to the miner, the timber getter, the agriculturist and other primary producers, and following closely upon the institution of the telegraph came the development of a railway system.

The first efforts in that direction were made by private companies in the timber forests and the first railway lines were built primarily to facilitate the transport of timber to the coast. Towards the end of 1871, the Western Australian Timber Company built and opened a line connecting their jetty at Vasse with the Jarrah forest about 12 miles away. Shortly afterwards, Mason, Bird & Company, who were working a timber concession in the Darling Ranges, established a railway from Canning to Rockingham.

These and similar moves by private firms seem to have spurred the Government to take action for, in 1871 a Committee consisting of the Surveyor-General and Messrs. Drummond and Gull was appointed to report on the subject of a railway to York and the Eastern districts. Both the public and the press urged that this should be undertaken, together with one from Geraldton to Northampton, so as to cheapen the cost of transport for agricultural produce and minerals (lead and copper ores). Surveys were undertaken and the decision was made to construct the line from Geraldton to Northampton only at that stage. This, the first actual government railway, was commenced in 1874 and completed on 26th July, 1879 at a cost of 147,217 pounds or about 4,300 pounds per mile.

Not until 1873 was any suggestion definitely made to connect Perth with Guildford and Fremantle by a railway, for public opinion seems to have been against it. A fear apparently prevailed that it was too great an undertaking for a small community, as well as a suspicion that it would to some extent interfere with certain vested interests such as the carrying trade on the river. However, it was eventually commenced on 3rd June, 1879 and was opened on 1st March, 1881. The cost of construction amounted to 123,504 pounds. For the nine months to the end of that year, it earned a profit of only 105 pounds over and above expenses and interest and the failure to obtain higher earnings was attributed to the competition of river carriage of goods which was still very popular. By 1886 this line had been extended eastwards as far as Northam, passing through Chidlow and Spencers Brook.

*Material in this article has been used previously by the author at a number of Westrail and Trade Union Training Authority seminars.

†Les Young is Industrial Officer of the WA Locomotive Engine Drivers', Firemen and Cleaners' Union. He has been an officer at the Union for 30 years and was its Secretary from 1972 to 1984.

the history of Labour in Western Australia, as well as a significant field of study for the student of industrial relations.

Right from the beginning, the officers and members of the union displayed an admirable sense of responsibility and moderate thinking. An obvious result is that the industry enjoyed a degree of peace unknown to other industries such as coal and stevedoring where, as has been written of the former case, employers and employees "faced each other as enemies, and fought each other with all the bitterness, the high hopes, the despair and the sufferings of civil war".¹

Following the establishment of a government-owned railway system in the late 1870's it was necessary, as the Department expanded, to import a number of experienced and qualified personnel from England to form the nucleus of a technical staff, for insufficient numbers could be obtained from the Eastern States. So acute was the shortage of experienced railwaymen that one historian has commented that, in 1881, when the Perth-Fremantle-Guildford line was opened, "nearly all of the officers and men were strange to their duties, many never having seen a railway before!"²

Many of the railwaymen imported from England had been trade unionists in that country, and in view of the primitive conditions then existing in Western Australia it is perhaps only natural that a union should be established without delay by the engine drivers and firemen in November, 1885. Almost immediately, the union was called upon to act on behalf of its members, for the Department attempted to cut wages by 2 pence per hour. This reduced the rate for drivers to 10 pence per hour although 1 shilling per hour had been agreed to as early as March, 1881. As the union had no official (or legal) standing, it addressed a petition to the General Manager setting out three specific grievances - viz. the proposed reduction of wages; the necessity for the workers to supply their own overcoats; and the inordinately long hours worked each day (in some cases up to seventeen and a half hours were recorded). However, the General Manager (Mr C T Mason) was most unsympathetic, refused to listen to their complaints, and gave the men the option of leaving their employment if the conditions were not to their liking.

The challenge was accepted and on 6th February, 1886 a large number of drivers did, in fact, hand in their resignations. At this stage, the Commissioner intervened and, after meeting a deputation of the men, granted their claims as set out in the petition. Notwithstanding the sympathy of the Commissioner towards the new organization, the attitude of the General Manager continued to be hostile. On the 13th July, 1886, for example, an endeavour was made to obtain five drivers from Adelaide - apparently to replace West Australian men, who had been engaged in the recent 'strike'. These additional drivers were not needed for extra work, as some employees were already required to lose one day per week to allow for the employment of a spare driver, and there appears to be little doubt that the General Manager was prompted by a determination to punish those drivers who had had the temerity to oppose him. Moreover, harsh punishments were inflicted for any infringement of departmental regulations.

Despite its victory in 1886, the union apparently became moribund for, although there is no actual evidence of its being dissolved, there is at the same time no evidence of its existence after the year 1889.

Formation of the West Australian Engine Drivers' and Firemen's Association had taken place in November, 1885 with an initial membership of 16 engine drivers and firemen who had banded together "to help one another in distress, in cases of accident and in cases where they had grievances to rectify or their rights had been infringed upon".³ In the following three years a further twenty one members were initiated, but others had left the service or were removed, leaving the membership at twenty six as at November, 1888. Out of the whole of the firemen and drivers in the Government service, there were only two who were not members of the union at that date.

Cordial relations existed between the union and similar organizations in the other colonies of Australia and it had the support of the Commissioner of Railways (Mr H.J.Wright), who stated that "he had never known a better class of men on any railway he had been connected with".⁴

At first sight it seems surprising that under these favourable circumstances the union would soon afterwards, for all practical purposes, cease to exist. The exact reasons may never be known, but it seems likely that the following factors played a major part:

- (i) The President was not appointed from among their number, but was an 'outsider' - Mr W.E. Marmion, MLC, the Member for Fremantle.⁵ Such a President, while no doubt of assistance in negotiating with the Railway Department, would have little interest in the internal affairs of the union which, moreover, was only one of the many activities with which Mr Marmion was connected.⁶
- (ii) As the railway extended further afield, the cohesion which held the members together would be loosened.
- (iii) The union had no official recognition or legal standing. The members referred to it as a 'society', never as a 'union', which perhaps is indicative of their attitude towards the organization.
- (iv) At the end of 1889, the railwaymen lost the sympathy and support of the Head of the Department when Mr H.J.Wright relinquished the duties of Commissioner of Railways. The new Commissioner, who was appointed on 1st January, 1890, was the former General Manager, Mr C. T. Mason, whose active hostility towards the union has been mentioned earlier.⁷

However, whatever the true reasons for the hiatus may be, early in 1898 the union was re-formed, officers elected, and branches formed at Perth, Midland Junction, Fremantle, Bunbury, Southern

Cross, Northam and Kalgoorlie. Two main incentives appear to be responsible for this second attempt at organization.

Firstly, men who had been driving for a considerable period were downgraded to second and third class firemen. The reply by the Locomotive Engineer to the protests that followed this action was that the men concerned should not have been made drivers at all, and that owing to the depressed state of the colony then existing the course of re-appointing the men to first class firing could not be entertained.⁸

Secondly, promotion depended largely on the goodwill of the foremen, and many senior and efficient drivers and firemen were continually being bypassed by others who were on better terms with their foreman.⁹

Although an officer (Mr Main, the Outdoor Superintendent) had been brought from England to place the Railways on a sound footing, no system was introduced by him whereby the men were fairly treated. It was a matter of complaint by the locomotive men that the Departmental Regulations were flouted by their superiors, privileges taken away, and fines levied for first offences that previously would have been dealt with merely by a caution. Moreover, while applications for increases in pay were denied by the Outdoor Superintendent (although some men had been driving for ten to twelve years with no increase in their wages), most of the Traffic Branch (ie Guards) actually received an increase in pay. This grievance was aggravated by reductions in wage rates in some cases in the Locomotive Branch in contravention of the rates laid down in the Classification Book of Staff.

Many engine drivers and firemen found that they were often unable to lodge their complaints with the senior officers of the Department, and the opinion gradually became widespread that "it would be much better, and much more satisfactory, if an organization was formed"¹⁰ and a General Committee and Branch Committees at the various centres elected, in order to bring all these matters before the General Manager and the Locomotive Engineer. Although the men's thoughts were turning towards organization, the idea may not have crystallized into positive action if it had not been for the harsh and uncompromising attitude of Mr Main, the Outdoor Superintendent.

Driver Langridge, the union President, explained the *raison d'être* for the union to the Minister for Railways on 19th April, 1899 in these words:

With a new system of interlocking, if a man gets off the road through no fault of his own he was merely cautioned for the first offence, but I think it was very severe to fine a man one pound, and if I had been dealt with by Mr Campbell I am sure I would not have been treated in this manner. That is the reason of the Association. If Mr Campbell had still been the same, as before, we would have no cause to form this Association, but since the Outdoor Superintendent has been here we have been treated very badly.¹¹

Mr Campbell, the Locomotive Engineer, had earned the respect of the engine drivers and firemen by his fair treatment of them, and the President was suggesting that if Mr Campbell had dealt with the

grievances himself rather than the Outdoor Superintendent, Mr Main (under the new system), the men would not have been compelled to organize into a union. This, then, appears to be the immediate cause of the formation of the union, and this time there was no question of the organization becoming moribund, for it was placed on a sound trade union basis and eventually gained the legal and official recognition it required for continued existence.

The development of the union in its modern form can be said to date from Saturday, 10th December, 1898, when the first delegate meeting took place in the Rechabite Hall, Fremantle. Those present were:

Mr Langridge	President
Mr Hutchinson	Perth Branch
Mr Snedden	Southern Cross Branch
Mr Elford	Fremantle Branch
Mr Cairns	Northam Branch
Mr Kay	Midland Junction Branch
Mr Trenowith	Kalgoorlie Branch
Mr Day	Bunbury Branch
Mr Blanchard	Acting General Secretary

The first decision to be taken by the assembled delegates was an important one concerning the government of the union, for a difference of opinion occurred as to whether there should be one vote only for each delegate or whether he should be entitled to a number of votes in proportion to the numerical strength of his branch. After a good deal of discussion, the latter proposal was carried and in this, and other matters as will be evident later, the influence of British unionism was strong.

The rules which were to be the constitution of the union were then discussed, and the name decided upon (rule 1) was the "West Australian Locomotive Engine Drivers', Firemen and Cleaners' Association".¹² A little over 12 months later, however, the words "Union of Workers" were substituted for "Association" in the title when registering under the Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Act, 1900.

Originally it was stipulated (rule 3) that only those locomotive engine drivers, firemen or cleaners, who were employed on the West Australian Government Railways were eligible for membership. Here, also, the rule was amended just over one year later. On the 1st February, 1900, it was decided to delete the word "Government" from this rule, which meant that membership was open to men in the appropriate category employed by private companies. In practice, membership was extended only to appropriate workers in the Midland Railway Company but it was sufficient to cause the Union a considerable amount of bother in the Arbitration Court. That, however, is another story.

All in all though, the first delegate meeting of December, 1898, did a remarkably fine job of framing the rules of the Union. Although they have been amended from time to time they are still basically the same rules today - an indisputable testimony to the ability of these early unionists.

The moderate thinking of the delegates, too, is clearly apparent in the stated objects of the Union (rule 2) which read as follows:

The objects of this association shall be to raise funds from time to time by contributions from the members thereof for the purpose of mutual assistance in cases of accident, to act as the mouthpiece of the members in soliciting redress of any grievance under which they may labour, and to extend its powers of usefulness to the utmost limits, consistent with a due observance of the Rules and Regulations of the Railway Department.

The last phrase is particularly significant for it acknowledged the right of the employer to lay down rules which were known to be comprehensive and to cover all aspects of conditions of service. It was not inserted just in order to gain official recognition of the Union by facilitating approval by the Commissioner of the rules in toto, for the officers of the Union reiterated many times that they had no intention of infringing the Railway Rules and Regulations and it remained in the Rule Book of the Union long after they were legally constituted body and registered with the Court of Arbitration with all the rights that this entailed. The phrase implied that no attempt would be made to usurp managerial prerogatives and although the first strike of the Union, in January, 1900, appeared to be in direct contradiction of this, much deeper issues were involved.

Moreover, right from the beginning the Union disassociated itself from politics. The policy was unequivocally stated by the Secretary, Mr T.C.Cartwright, as a member of the deputation to the Minister of Railways on 19 April, 1899, when he said ".....as regards political influence, there is no one, I think, more adverse to it than the members of this Association. We have no desire to mix ourselves up with political matters".¹³ While there has been some modification of this policy over the years owing to the formation and growth of the Australian Labor Party, the Union has never used politics to secure improvements in conditions or wages to anything like the same extent as many other Australian unions.

Five distinct classes of men were apparent in the Union during its formative period, viz:

1. Men who started in Western Australia in the Railways without previous experience.
2. Men with experience in the Eastern States systems who came to Western Australia on their own account.
3. Men who came from the Eastern States on a verbal agreement with the Inspector who had been sent there to recruit staff.
4. Men taken over with the Great Southern Railway under agreement that all their service should count as on the Government Railways.
5. Men brought from England under agreement with the Agent-General.

By far the most influential group in Union affairs were the last mentioned class. Most of the delegates and officers had served on the English railways - the first President of the reformed Union of 1898, Driver Langridge, had 19 years of such service - and their impact on the rules and policies of the Union is clearly evident. One example of this is the fact that the Union was craft based, only workers

in the locomotive branch being eligible for membership. This is in line with the English viewpoint for there the locomotive men, even in 1911, had not accepted the concept of industrial unionism. Mr Williams of the Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen, which was formed in Britain in 1879, summed up the policy in these words - "a fitter has no more to do with the working of a railway than a shoe black in the street".¹⁴ He believed that it was never intended that a railwaymen's union should cater for shop men, for example, and the same policy was adopted in Western Australia. Although in April 1899 the Amalgamated Society of Railway Employees was formed to unite all those railwaymen on the Western Australian Government Railways who were not included in the locomotive branch, the membership of that Union was open to all employees of the Department. No attempt at 'pirating' in recruitment is evident and relations between the two Unions have been cordial right up to the present. Despite this, no attempt ever appears to have been made by the West Australian Locomotive Engine Drivers', Firemen and Cleaners' Union of Workers to amalgamate with the larger Union, and the former has retained the essential craft nature of the Union to this day.

At the same time, the union is also employer based. As mentioned earlier, membership was initially open only to locomotive men of the Western Australian Government Railways but was soon afterwards extended to include men of that category in private concerns. In fact, at a meeting on October 16, 1900, between representatives of the Union and the Commissioner of Railways, Mr B. Wood, it was expressly agreed that this Union should include as its members those employees of the Public Works Department and the Midland Railway Company who followed the same occupation. However, a few short years later the Registrar of Friendly Societies ruled, and his opinion was upheld by the President of the Arbitration Court, that under Section 108 of the Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Act, 1902 membership must be confined to "Government Railway servants", and the rules were eventually changed accordingly. Thus, although the Union is employer based, this is due to what might be termed "an accident of legislation". It is essentially craft based in the same manner as, for example, the Moulders' Union or the Amalgamated Society of Engineers. However, the legislative restriction did not apply to these two craft Unions who were consequently free to organize both inside and outside the Railways.

Although few engine drivers or firemen did not belong to the Union, it required more than mere numbers to make it secure. First, the Union had to obtain the official recognition of the Railways Department, and this was one of the earliest tasks of the Union officials and one to which they attached great importance. Recognition was desired in order that the Union might officially negotiate with the Department with regard to conditions of service and grievances. However, recognition was not forthcoming just for the asking, and a considerable amount of correspondence took place with the Commissioner, the General Manager and the Locomotive Engineer in January and February, 1899. Then, on the 22 February, a letter was received from the Commissioner (F.H.Piesse) stating that he could not recognize the Association.

Outside support was enlisted and, on the 7 March, the Members of Parliament representing the four

Fremantle Electorates and the West Province, all of whom had previously attended a meeting of the General Committee and had the railwaymen's grievances explained to them, approached the Minister. Their representations were aided by the fact that the waterside workers were on strike and it had been stated in the press that the locomotive men were going on strike in sympathy. The upshot was that, on the 17 March, the Undersecretary for Railways wrote to the General Secretary of the Union in the following terms :

I am now directed to inform you that the Minister has further considered your request, and although unable to give the official recognition you ask for, to your Association in its present form, he is agreeable to meet a deputation drawn from the Drivers, Firemen, Cleaners, etc., who may be interested in the Association, and the General Manager and the Locomotive Engineer should be present at the interview. This will afford an occasion for the men to put forth their views not only as regards the Association, but upon all other matters respecting which they may consider they have cause for complaint....."¹⁵

The deputation was not received by the Minister until 19 April, however, after a good deal of further correspondence had passed between the General Secretary and the Under-Secretary for Railways. For the Union, the deputation consisted of the President (R.Langridge), the General Secretary (T.C. Cartwright), and Messrs Kay, Tangney, Sanderson, Carter, Priestman, Larney, King and Hutchinson, while the Minister was supported by the General Manager (J.Davies), the Under Secretary (A.F.Thomson) and the Locomotive Engineer (R.B.Campbell).

At the invitation of the Minister, the men in turn put forward various reasons why the Department should recognize the Union, and after a lengthy discussion the Minister decided to recognize the Union, on condition that

- (a) That the book of Rules of the Association be submitted to the Hon Commissioner of railways for the perusal of himself, General Manager, and the Locomotive Engineer with a view to agreeing to such Rules or to suggest any amendments which are necessary.
- (b) In the event of such suggested amendments not being acceptable to the Association the Association must state their objections in full, for further consideration by the Department, so that, if possible, a mutual agreement may be arrived at.
- (c) That when the book of Rules is approved of, the Hon Commissioner of Railways will recognize them as governing the Association for a period of 12 months, on trial.¹⁶

The Rules of the Association were subsequently submitted to the Minister, the General Manager, and the Locomotive Engineer, and suggested amendments by the Department were considered and agreed to by the General Committee. However, at the expiration of the trial period mentioned, the Minister withdrew his recognition of the Union - possibly due to the strike in January, 1900 and the request by the locomotive men for a Royal Commission.¹⁷

It was not until the passing of the Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Act in 1901 and 1902, and the Trade Union Act, of February 19, 1902, that the Union finally obtained the security it required through

recognition in the eyes of both the Department and the law. With security and official status granted by statute, the Union never looked back and its record of responsible action over the years is one that could well serve as an example to other trade unions.

Footnotes

1. R. Gollan, "The Coal Miners of New South Wales", Melbourne, 1960, p. 1
2. W.B. Kimberley, "History of West Australia", Melbourne, 1897, page
3. Objects as stated by the Secretary, James Snook, at the Annual Dinner, 1888, as reported in "The West Australian" newspaper of 12 November, 1888.
4. *ibid.*
5. The Vice-President (Mr. B.C. Wood) was also a politician.
6. An outline of these activities appears in "The Encyclopaedia of Western Australia, Vol. 1.
7. Mr Mason reverted to the position of General Manager on 29 December, 1890 when, on responsible government being granted to the Colony, the Office was converted to a ministerial one and the Honourable H.W. Venn, MLA was appointed to the dual portfolio of Commissioner of Railways and Director of Public Works.
8. Refer "Footplate - A Paper for Enginemen", Vol. 2, No. 1, January 1907.
9. It was for this reason that the Union fought so strenuously for promotion according to seniority on an official Classification list.
10. Annual Report for year ended February 20, 1900, page 5.
11. Part of a statement made by Mr. Langridge as leader of a deputation to the Minister - refer Annual Report for year ended February 20, 1900, page 10.
12. No reference whatsoever to the earlier Union of this name appears in the printed minutes of this delegate meeting - see "Votes and Proceedings of the Delegate Meeting held at the Rechabite Hall, Fremantle on December 10, 11, 12 and 13, 1898.
13. Annual Report for year ended 20 February, 1900, page 18.
14. P.S. Bagwell, The Railwaymen, London, 1963.
15. Report of the General Committee for year ended 20 February, 1900, page 2.
16. Annual Report for year ended 20 February, 1900, page 19.
17. A Royal Commission was appointed on 22 August, 1900 to inquire into a petition signed by all members of the Union (with the exception of a few who were on holidays) praying that the Running Branch of the Locomotive Department be placed once again under the direct control of the Locomotive Engineer. The petition arose out of the intense dissatisfaction with the attitude and actions of the Assistant to Mr. Campbell, viz: the Outdoor Superintendent (Mr Main).

The 1969 Kwinana Metal Trades Construction Agreement*

Owen Salmon†

First of all, a bit of background. The Court of Arbitration from 1964 had been grappling with the problem of award coverage for the large Metal Trades' Construction Industry, which had been a problem industry in Western Australia since the beginning of the '60's, due to the rapid rate of industrial development under the Court-Brand Government. You had massive development in Kwinana and the southern part of the State running parallel with the new iron ore and nickel mining industry developments and the demand for skilled labour was unprecedented and of course the industrial power of the union was almost unlimited.

The employers of course, at that stage, were great supporters of the arbitration system and it's interesting to compare the attitude of employers today when they believe that they may have the upper hand in the bargaining process. In those days, because the unions were so strong, the employers were committed to the arbitration system and the principle of comparative wage justice. And they refused, point blank, as an organisation, to concede anything beyond the award level of wages for tradesmen, as determined by the Courts and in so far as there may be something extra as a result of demand in the labour market, the official policy of employers was, well what any individual employer was minded to pay his employees ought to be paid and the unions' role was to keep out of that field, to concern themselves only with the award.

Now that was a formula, of course, for on-going strife. What the Court of Arbitration had begun in '63/'64 was tackled again by Commissioner Kelly in the Metal Trades' Award, but a solution wasn't found. By 1969 a stage had been reached where the number of strikes occurring in the Kwinana strip was outrageous. It was a situation that just could not be controlled. The unions had undoubtedly all of the power in the world but they seemingly could not make any advance that was going to bring the situation in Kwinana to some sort of manageable proportion. Now in that context, I had a very special position. I had been the Assistant Secretary of the Electrical Trades' Union and I had been the advocate in the Metal Trades' cases, all the arbitration cases were generally left to me by the Metal Unions. They were quite happy to accept the proposals that we put forward. There was a fairly rough consensus that, as far as the Electrical Trades' Union was concerned, it was seen as a union that

* This is Owen Salmon's "true story" of an important phase in WA industrial relations. This version was told to Michael Hess over a bottle of good Swan Valley red, which seems as good a way to collect oral history as any.

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supported the arbitration system and it had a role in that respect. It didn't generally get itself involved in the more militant issues pursued by the A.E.U. and the Boilermakers' Union and whilst there might have been a difference of opinion between the leaders of the union, there was an acceptance that the two roles played by the various sectors enmeshed and brought a fairly good result.

But, in terms of Kwinana, if, whereas the point had been reached at which employers and the Boilermakers and the A.E.U. were completely off-side, the Electrical Trades' Union could play the role of honest broker, and therefore I decided that I would make an approach, being pretty well convinced that I was acceptable to the employers' representatives, I would make an approach privately to the representative of the employers, Stan Carter, who is now employed by Western Mining, with a proposition that could end the whole thing. And that proposition was; the acceptance by the employers of a true collective bargaining deal. And my submission to Carter on that basis was the principle contractors in the area were Americans, they were twenty-two in number, they understood the collective bargaining scene, they knew that that was based on a concept of a wage and conditions traded for the right to strike. The no-strike clause was a provision to be written into the Clause, into the award and to be observed.

The unions, for their part, had nominated a wage level and they were committed to that as a result of policy and I might say, it was a most short-sighted and typical union policy. It was an acceptance of a wage level determined on the basis of relativities, fixed by the Conciliation and Arbitration Commission in 1947 in some famous case known as The Second Mooney Formula Case.

The Second Mooney Formula Case was a decision of a Commissioner Mooney in the Commonwealth jurisdiction, which re-introduced the relativities fixed in the Metal Trades' Award by Justice Beeby in 1937. Now such is the magic of award determination that that was the basis of the whole over-award campaign throughout Australia in the late 1960's. It was the Holy Grail.

If you could achieve this magic formula then your workers magically received all of the money that they were entitled to and you had no further basis for arguing a case, at least that was the theory. So what was put to the employers was, well if that is really the extent of what the unions are able to logically and ethically argue, well why not accept it? It surely isn't going to break these twenty-two American construction companies. It will meet the philosophical aspirations of the unions and will achieve, at the same time, a collective bargaining agreement which will have as its central point, the no-strike clause.

It seems to me that if we can make that proposition work then we might have found a formula to settle the disputes at Kwinana. Now Carter could see the value of that and he accepted that he wouldn't have much trouble in selling that to his employers for the reasons that I've stated.

But he came back with the proposition that there had to be something in it for the employers and what he suggested was that they would accept the measure of the wage claim being sought by the unions, but it was to be given in part now and in full six months after the Agreement was registered, with a term for eighteen months. And that would allow the employers some face-saving on the basis of being able to say, well, we didn't accept everything that the unions put forward as a proposal.

Now, that proposition was discussed in secret between myself and Carter in his office in the Confederation or the W.A. Employers' Federation, as it then was in 1969, over a couple of days. Well, Carter got back to me to tell me that that was a deal that would be acceptable and then we realized that he didn't have any difficulties with his principles, the difficulties lie in my area. Now, both of us took a Machiavellian view towards the whole thing and we realized that, if it was going to be achieved, if it was going to be consolidated, it had to be seen as the brainchild of the A.E.U. and the Boilermakers. It could not be seen as the brainchild, more especially of Sam and so, therefore, if it was going to be sold at all, it had to be sold on that basis. The question was; how would that be done? The solution was to enroll Jack Marks and to bring Jack Marks into the proposition and to point out to him that if he wants to pick it up and run with it, he could, but we thought that what he ought to do is be prepared to allow the Boilermakers to say that it was their proposition. And given that it was the objective that he had sought and it was obvious that he would achieve it, it would have been a worthwhile proposition for him to sell it as the Boilermakers' proposition.

So we took him to a cafe and with a bottle of wine, we talked with Jack, we talked it over, we got an agreement, the matter was fixed up on that basis and Jack was left with the task. Within a couple of weeks, we had, apparently, all the necessary beliefs established, full-scale negotiations had taken place and for the first time a real collective bargaining exercise was carried out in Western Australia between the unions and all of the principal companies in the construction group. And for the first time, the unions were put in a position where they had to conduct themselves in genuine collective bargaining negotiation procedures. That is to say, there was no running away from the claim and the negotiations on the basis that a third party didn't give us what we wanted. It had to be determined on the basis of: "fellas, this was as far as we would go, we've got the wage that we've been trying to achieve, we had to give things in consideration for what we did achieve, that is the essence of a collective bargaining agreement." And that aspect of it was never ever confronted before that time.

And that was a very, very interesting experiment, a very successful experiment and the success of it lies in the fact that the moment it came into operation, the position in the Kwinana strip was quelled, it was an absolutely successful proposition. It became a model we used in other areas, other construction projects, I think it's still on the books. I don't know about the agreement, it's probably overtaken by an award amendment somewhere along the line but it was registered in the Commission

over the objections of the Director of the Confederation, or the Federation of Employers, who was a Mr. Cross. For his troubles, Carter had to leave the Confederation and he apparently achieved some settlement, but his position was saved ultimately by the unions advising the employers that if Carter was to be punished for what he had achieved in that area, they, the unions, would withdraw from the agreement and Kwinana would be plunged back into the dark ages that had prevailed until then. Some sort of arrangement was arrived at apparently, I don't know, I can't say just exactly what happened but Carter then took up employment with Western Mining and he's remained there till this day.

But then, the experiment was interesting in the sense that it proved that in an arbitration system or where an arbitration system is predominant or supposedly predominant, the unions could negotiate a true collective bargaining agreement, that is to say, an agreement containing the very essence of the traditional collective bargaining agreement. The exchange of strike rights in consideration for wages showed that once that agreement was reached, the unions were as good as their word. They enforced it to the letter, they maintained it, and it held up through the rest of the Kwinana development phase, which was some considerable time and it was so successful that it was applied elsewhere. There was, as I say, some behind the scenes work that was necessary for the thing to get off the ground and not everybody would admit to that. But what I'm telling you is the story. Now you may like to perhaps check it out with Stan Carter!

The Pilbara Aboriginal Pastoral Workers Uprising of 1946 *

Michael Hess†

For the majority of the period of white settlement in Western Australia the labour of Aborigines was an essential factor in rural production. This was nowhere more so than in the pastoral industry. Not only was it an industry based on the expropriation of Aboriginal lands by white settlers but it was also an industry maintained largely by the use of cheap Aboriginal labour. Despite the fact that these workers had the reputation of being "the best stockmen in the world", they were excluded from award provisions and worked and lived under conditions that would not have been tolerated by a white workforce.

On 1 May 1946 workers on some two dozen stations in the Pilbara region struck. The degree of co-ordination and solidarity they displayed first amazed and then infuriated both the white pastoralists and their representatives in the State Government. While the press condemned the strike sections of the metropolitan labour movement sprang to the defense of the strikers and notable actions of solidarity were organised. The dispute took a number of turns with some employers agreeing to the conditions the workers had sought. At one stage the State Government also agreed to substantial reforms but this was later withdrawn. Some workers returned but others decided that their withdrawal of labour would be permanent. One result of this latter group's actions, which cannot be dealt with fully here, was an attempt to achieve freedom from labour exploitation altogether by acquiring co-operative ownership of the means of production.

The first Europeans to arrive in Australia were quick to note the lack of the three most important pre-conditions for colonial exploitation. There were no easily accessible raw materials, which could be pirated away to swell the coffers of colonial enterprise. There were no existing markets to be exploited by the introduction of new products and there were few native inhabitants whose condition was sufficiently miserable to render them easy targets for labour recruitment. By comparison with other regions the foundations of colonial exploitation had been laid very poorly in Australia. One result, of course, was that the penetration of Australia by capitalist forces of production was extremely slow. On the one hand, this ought to blind us neither to the reality of that penetration nor to the fact that the malevolent effects of colonial enterprise observed elsewhere are also evident in the "development" of Australia. The clearest examples of this are the expropriation of Aboriginal lands by white settlers and the brutal history of both convict and "free" white labour in the early days of that settlement. On the other hand, the lack of a basis for rapid colonial development has meant that Australian capitalism has experienced a very uneven development characterised by a slowly moving "frontier" and Government policies expressly designed to aid that development in a distinctly colonial fashion along this frontier.

* This paper owes a great deal to the assistance of individuals involved in the struggle for Aboriginal rights. Notes, recollections and interviews by Don McLeod, Paul Roberts, Lloyd Davies and Joan Williams were all used. The views expressed are, however, my own. The paper was read at the Australian Canadian Labour History Conference, University of Sydney, 12-16 December 1988.

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In the pastoral industries at the edge of that frontier Aboriginal labour has always been a vital factor. Yet not only was that labour very poorly treated, it was denied the most basic right associated with labour under capitalist enterprise: it was not "free labour". Stevens' work on the cattle industry in northern Australia during the 1960s provides a good example of how the colonial character of both white settlement and Government policy acted to prevent the emergence of a free indigenous labour force in the North capable of partnering capital in that region's development. Not only were black workers paid about one-quarter the wage of white employees (Stevens:65), but their exclusion from the award meant that they were almost totally at the mercy of their employers.

The history of regulating this captive workforce is illustrative. When the Federal Pastoral Workers' Award was granted on the application of the Australian Workers' Union (AWU) in the mid-1920s, the AWU wished to use it to restrict the employment of Aborigines, whom it felt competed unfairly with its white members. The Commonwealth Court of Conciliation and Arbitration, however, refused this aspect of the union's application arguing that Aboriginal labour was vital to many properties whose economic viability would be threatened if it was restricted. Subsequently in 1936 the AWU applied to vary the award to bring Aboriginal workers within its provisions. The Court again rejected the demand "on this occasion without explanation" (*ibid.*:68). Including Aboriginal workers within the award would, of course, have meant giving them access to the bargaining process and there is considerable reason to believe that neither Government nor industry wanted that!

As with so many subject colonial peoples, however, the War seems to have made a considerable difference to the position of Aboriginal workers. During that period of white male labour shortage Aborigines in the North worked in many skilled and semi-skilled jobs, which had previously been the preserve of whites (Morris). Their reward was that both the Federal Labor Government and the Acting Administrator took up their case for inclusion in a special "Aboriginal Award". The Government's view was that this should provide black workers with wages equal to about half the basic wage plus food and accommodation (Berndt). A special report prepared for the Administrator took the view that "the value of the average native [is] about 70% of that of the average white" (Carrington). When it came to a conference with the employers, however, their offer of a cash wage of 15% of the basic wage plus accommodation and food was accepted! On paper this represented a 5% lowering of wage rates for those Aboriginal workers but few employers had ever bothered with the official rate (Stevens: 71).

Subsequently the hidden agenda of these "negotiations" became clearer when a new Liberal-Country Party Coalition Government, with strong support from the pastoral industry, introduced regulations to more strictly control Aborigines in general and Aboriginal workers in particular. The new *Welfare Ordinance* introduced the concept of "wards" who, once "declared", could be employed under the *Wards Employment Ordinance*. The regulations were administered in a blatantly racist manner and their effect was to continue to deny Aboriginal workers access to any sort of bargaining process regarding their conditions of employment and even to deny them freedom of movement or the right to

refuse work.

The result, as Stevens has extensively documented, was that in 1965 when the AWU mounted its equal pay cases, the northern cattle industry was still reliant on Aboriginal labour, which was being administered under a set of regulations which were basically colonial in character. This was simply the way it was in "Australia's Deep North" (*ibid.*:57-62). There is no space here to detail the striking similarities with both the letter and spirit of colonial labour regulation in the Australian administered Territory of Papua and New Guinea (Hess). It is, however, hard to believe that it is coincidental and is a further demonstration of the colonial character of labour relations involving Australia's subject peoples.

Background to the Strike

While there have been many anthropological studies on Western Australian Aboriginals, there has been relative little written about the role of Aboriginal labour. While in general the same elements of colonial exploitation are evident, there are also particular features which give the history of Aboriginal labour in the West an interest of its own.

In 1889 the British colony of Western Australia was granted self-government by an Act of Parliament. A condition of the passage of that Act, insisted upon by progressive British politicians was that the colonial Government take upon itself the responsibility of caring for the region's aboriginal inhabitants. This condition was enshrined in S.70 of the Constitution, which read:

there shall be payable to Her Majesty, in every year, out of the Consolidated Revenue Fund a sum of Five Thousand Pounds to be appropriated to the welfare of the Aboriginal Natives, and expended in providing them with food and clothing and in assisting generally to promote the preservation and well-being of the Aborigines. (Statutes of WA, Vol.2:384)

This money was to be paid to the Aboriginal Protection Board by the Treasurer and spent at their discretion with the proviso that when the annual revenue of the Colony exceeded 5,000 pounds an annual amount of not less than one percent of annual revenue would be substituted.

Within a few years the revered leader of WA's white settlers, John Forrest, had engineered the repudiation of S.70 (Biskup:53). Forrest's argument was that the clause was never meant to stand and was simply a useful sop to the British anti-slavery lobby, which might have had the influence to prevent self-government had it not been included (Correspondence:120). While by no means the most outstanding piece of white settler treachery, the incident illustrates the attitude of WA government to the existence of the region's prior inhabitants. It also provides a fitting path into a consideration of the events in the Pilbara pastoral industry in 1946, where Aborigines made one of the most successful attempts of any colonised people to throw off the yoke of their oppressors and assert their rights against those of their self-styled "protectors".

The central issue of the strike itself was the right to organise, or more precisely to select representatives to negotiate on behalf of the workers. Because the situation was one of colonial

dominance, this was not merely an industrial demand. It was also a political demand which went to the heart of the system of "protection" by asserting that the owners of the means of production and the agents of the State, which acted as their handmaiden, did not have the right to act on behalf of the people. Subsequently the strike led to the establishment of self-managing communities as some of the strikers sought to free themselves completely from conditions of exploitation by achieving control of the means of production. Today some in these communities still claim to be on strike. Thus not only was the 1946 withdrawal of labour significant as an early instance of Aboriginal efforts at collective negotiation (Buckley & Wheelwright:30). It is also one of the longest strikes in Australian labour history. While this crucial event has been almost entirely ignored by white historians its significance to the squatocracy, the foreign pastoral companies and their parliamentary representatives was much clearer. Not since the Bibulman killed Captain T.T.Ellis, first Superintendent of Natives Tribes, at the Battle of Pinjarra on 11 November 1834 had there been such a direct challenge to the view that the Government knew what was best for the "natives" and that what was best for the "natives" was also what was best for the owners of the stations. Not since the execution of the rebel Pigin had white settler sensibilities been so outraged by the actions of Aboriginals.

Yet no-one died as a result of the 1946 strike. There was no mayhem. The strikers behaved with a steady determination in the face of official provocation and often struck a stark contrast with the hysterical action of police and Native Welfare officials. This then is the history of the 1946 Aboriginal Pastoral Workers Strike in the Pilbara, Western Australia. It is a story of a thoughtful determination and a valiant solidarity, which qualities would have long ago ensured it a place of honour in the annals of Australian labour history had its heroes been white.

The Strike Begins

The official position on the condition of Aboriginal labour in the North West in the period leading up to the strike is well summarised in a 1939 report of the Deputy Commissioner of Native Affairs. "Generally speaking", the report concluded, "the natives are very well treated" with some getting wages of as much as one pound per week (Native Affairs, File No.574/1939).

An alternative view was put forward in the same year by the NSW Trades and Labour Council, which endorsed a pamphlet by its Assistant Secretary, Tom Wright, calling for "a new deal for Aborigines" (Wright,1939). Wright argued that the situation of Aborigines was generally one of neglect and deprivation and that raising the demand for a new deal for them "must be one of the tasks of the Labour Movement" (*ibid*:6). In his view, Government policy saw "the salvation of the Aborigines in their transformation into workers (generally without wages) for station owners, miners, mission stations and others who have already contributed largely to the destruction of the native population and treated them virtually, both male and female, as chattel slaves". It was, in other words, "their 'usefulness' to whites", which was the major determinant of Aboriginal Policy (*ibid*.:16). A major justification for the policy was that Aborigines were a "vanishing race" and unless integrated into "white civilization" would disappear completely. Wright pointed out that in fact "it is whites who have deliberately caused their destruction" in order to grab their land and that the official policy of

"protection" would preserve that land theft and add to it the exploitation of Aboriginal labour (ibid.:16). He argued that this would further the disintegration of tribal life and would truly fulfill the prophecies of a "vanishing race".

Wright's alternative was a radical program of land rights and Government support for Aboriginal self-management. Existing "reserves" were to be turned over to their Aboriginal inhabitants. New reserves were to be created with "adequate legal ownership" vested in the tribes currently on them. Non-Aborigines were to be excluded except where their presence was necessary for medical or technical functions. With security of land tenure as its basis, Wright saw the encouragement of co-operative, self-managed enterprises becoming possible. He called for at least one million pounds "for initial expenditure in restoring and extending reserves and establishing essential organisation" (ibid.:31-2).

Now Wright was Secretary of the militant Sheet Metal Workers' Union and a leading member of the Australian Communist Party (ACP). The foreword to the pamphlet was written by another well known communist, the author Katharine Susannah Prichard. It excited considerable interest amongst WA communists and found its way into the hands of Don McLeod a young man working at various trades in the Pilbara. McLeod was known for his sympathy with the plight of the Aboriginal people and it is recalled by other local activists of that time that Wright's pamphlet "crystalised much of what he had been thinking" (Davies:34). Since the Communist Party was the only organised political force in white society which had a policy favourable towards Aborigines, it is hardly surprising that McLeod appears to have become a member for a period of time. In any case Wright's pamphlet, or at least the ideas it contained, became a topic of discussion between McLeod and some of his Aboriginal acquaintances.

At the same time the Communist Party in WA took up the demands made by Wright and began to publicise them. By 1944 Leah Healy, State Secretary of the ACP was broadcasting the view that the establishment of an autonomous Aboriginal Republic would provide the material conditions whereby Aborigines "can be brought from savagery to the highest stage of civilization - socialism" (Native Affairs File No.77/44). The ACP went further in advocating the view that Aborigines could be "won as allies of the working class" and promoted a policy of social action to remove repressive legislation, provide adequate health and medical services and extend to Aborigines the benefits of social welfare (ibid.).

The Minister for the North West, in WA's Labor Government, wrote immediately to the Commissioner for Native Affairs to point out that "the Communist Party knows very little about the fundamental difficulties of the native question" (Letter, Minister to Bray, 19/1/44). He continued, "the talks suggest that the natives possess an intelligent capacity, but you know as well as I do that this is not so" (ibid.). Official concern with "the disruptive activities of the [communist] party in native circles" (Letter, Bray to Minister, October 1944) continued and by 1945 included references to the activities of "that communist chap" McLeod. E.H.Green, manager of Talga Talga station, complained

that McLeod was "exciting [the natives] to strike" and demanded that "McLeod's permit to employ natives be revoked" (Native Affairs File No.800/45:10). At this stage the Department did not seem too concerned and even managed to file the complaint under "Mcloud". It was not long, however, before a Constable Fletcher took the matter further reporting that local police saw "McLeod as a dangerous man among natives" (*ibid.*:17). Just what was in danger in McLeod's activities may be judged from the fact that the "natives" he employed at this time were earning eleven pound a week (Dooley et al:3). The Commissioner duly revoked the permit but McLeod appealed successfully in the Magistrate's Court and it was restored (Letter,Bray-O'Neill,22/8/45).

Despite such official concern with communist influence, however, the real starting point of the strike was not Leah Healy broadcasting in Perth, or even Don McLeod employing Aboriginal workers at ten times the going rate. It was, in fact, a tribal law meeting, which took place before the events described above. McLeod has described the meeting at Skull Springs in 1942 as "an event of great significance, the sort of Law meeting which took place traditionally perhaps once every fifty years" (McLeod:40). Two hundred representatives from 23 language groups were present and the meeting lasted six weeks. McLeod records that it was this meeting which decided on taking positive action to improve the situation facing the region's "Beneficial Owners" and gave him "authority to take decisions in this area as problems arose" (*ibid.*:41). This meeting also elected Dooley Binbin, who was not present but had great presiege as a traditional Lawman, to represent the desert Aborigines and left it to these two to select a representative from the settled areas. They later chose Clancy McKenna, a mixed race man from Port Hedland, to fill this role (Letter, McLeod-Hess,28/10/88).

This was to plunge McLeod into two years of negotiating with the Native Affairs bureaucracy and the State Labor Government. From the outset the machinery of the sSate refused to recognise him as a spokesman and a central demand of these negotiations became the right of the people to appoint their own representatives. Without such recognition, of course, Aboriginal people were effectively denied the right to organise. In particular they demanded that McLeod be appointed Inspector of Aborigines, and hence their go-between with white society and the State. They also demanded that some stations be handed over to Aboriginal management to enable them to undertake self-supporting enterprises of the type described in Wright's pamphlet. Of his efforts to talk sensibly with the Government and its agancies, McLeod recalls

the attempt was in all respects unsuccessful. I was threatened, abused and told I was sticking my nose into business that was no concern of mine. The native question, I was told, was considerably beyond my meager comprehension and certain competent people were dealing with it. (*ibid.*:41-2).

Another recollection of the same meeting is that it was after the tribal law meeting that "Kitchener [one of the brothers working for McLeod] started another meeting and talked to the people about what was wrong" (Dooley et al:3). In any case it is clear that after much discussion in what amounted to a united nations meeting of the tribes of the region a decision was taken. Years later a group of those involved recalled that decision and their words tell of the frustration with attempts to go through the proper channels. "What we felt was that somehow we have to break through - we've got to break through" (*ibid.*).

Word about the meeting spread slowly. Dooley Binbin recalled that he first heard about a plan for direct industrial action from white workers on the station where he was employed as a blacksmith. He recalls, "I heard a whiteman say 'Bye-n-bye you blackfellows will be better off - you're going to make a strike'" (*ibid.*:2). Subsequently meetings were held in many places and the strike was discussed many times. Dooley recalls, significantly, that these discussions were primarily amongst Aboriginal workers themselves but that "sometimes Don [McLeod] came along" (*ibid.*:3). In his version of the story it was at Nullagine in 1945 that he and Don McLeod got down to seriously discussing the situation facing the people. Dooley's tribesmen recall that Dooley worked with McLeod for four months and that during that time "Don was listening to Dooley and getting what he thought about things" (*ibid.*). Dooley was a man of high traditional status, a Lawman who was widely respected. McLeod had been given a status as representative of the people by the Skull Springs meeting and he was one of the few whites in the Pilbara, or indeed WA, who saw the "native question" as the burning issue of the times. They must have been fascinating discussions between the desert Lawman and the young white radical.

In March 1945 Dooley Binbin set off around the stations travelling on foot and by rail with the message "strike on 1 May 1946". Each station got a calendar, written out on a food tin label, showing how many weeks it was until the appointed day. Dooley recalled that McLeod was worried that some of the stations wouldn't strike, but he just kept going around arguing and convincing the people. The authorities were also closely watching the "preparation for the strike" (Native Affairs File No. 800/45: 22-24). They singled out particular "leaders" for close scrutiny. But while this many have intimidated some and limited their freedom of movement, Dooley seems to have been both more determined and more able to escape attention. He recalled

I just wanted to go ahead and get those fellows out - even if I did go to jail I kept it dark and didn't let the whiteman know. I didn't let the policeman know. I said to the others, "If I go to jail, you can still go ahead". (Dooley et al:4).

Collections were started to raise a strike fund and despite official opposition and harrassment the fund slowly built up. McLeod was also building up contacts in Perth. In April 1946 the publicity really started. McLeod spoke on the Esplanade in Perth and Graham Alcorn of the ACP was delegated to organise support for the strike in Perth (Workers Star,12/4/46:1). The ACP's newspaper in WA, the Workers' Star, began a series of articles supporting Aboriginal workers in their demands for better wages and conditions (*ibid.*:25/4/46). In his role as ACP country organiser, Alcorn had been corresponding with McLeod for some time. Their correspondence canvassed issues such as the organisational support the strike would require, as well as how public and union support could be developed (Letter,Williams-Hess,2/12/88). Joan Williams, an active member of the ACP at this time, recalls that one of the obstacles in the public relations campaign was McLeod's appearance:

Don was perhaps the only man in Perth with a beard, except for the occasional Navy man. His beard, although quite neat, didn't help his image in the paranoia of the time. (*ibid.*)

Early Days of the Strike

The strike began on schedule. The West Australian reported merely that De Gray station and "at least 11 others" had struck on 1 May (West Australian,3/5/46:6). Eventually workers on some 25 stations left their jobs and they were joined by many others from the towns of Marble Bar and Port Hedland. The demands were better wages and living conditions and that the Government and its agents recognise McLeod as the strikers' legitimate representative for the purpose of negotiating these and other matters of concern to the Aboriginal people of the region.

It was the start of the shearing season and employers were desperate to get their men back to work. Some immediately offered better wages. Others called in the police. Both had the effect of getting some workers back on to the stations. Efforts were also made to end the strike quickly by gaoling "key leaders". This strategy was to fail miserably because of two factors. The first was that, despite the apparent beliefs of officials, the strike was not merely the work of "agitators" but enjoyed widespread support amongst both workers and their families. The second was that the "leaders" were only representatives of the will of the people so as quickly as one "leader" was gaoled, the strikers threw up another to take his place.

Nonethelss those whose activities made them prominent suffered considerable personal hardship and their courage deserves to be recorded. Clancy McKenna, who had played a vital role in organising around Port Hedland, was taken into custody late in April, although he was not formally charged until 7 May. He was sentenced to three months under S.47 of the *Native Affairs Act* for enticement to strike. It was not, however, Clancy the authorities were after. So deeply imbued with racism were they that they felt that the Aboriginal workers would be unable to act if their "white adviser" were removed. Bray, Commissioner of Native Affairs telegraphed North West police seeking co-operation against "McLeod's insidious anti-Fascist Communist activities" as the most effective means of ending the strike (Bray-O'Neill,3/5/46). The police felt that Clancy would give them the evidence they wanted against McLeod. The official report of his arrest to the Native Affairs Department claimed that "Clancy is only the mouthpiece of D.W.McLeod." Unfortunately for their scheme, however, the report added that "so far he has given very little information against McLeod". Nonetheless in the tortured logic of racism the officer concluded that "I expect that he will now do so when he realises that McLeod has deserted him" (Native Affairs File No. 800/45;70). No doubt the fact that Clancy did not come to this realisation was attributed to his supposed lack of "intelligent capacity"!

The strategy of gaoling the "leaders" failed even more completely at Marble Bar where the strikers simply refused to nominate a leader and Constable Gordon Marshall had to be content with chasing them out of town since the gaol could not hold the whole mob! They strikers moved to Moolyella. Marshall reassessed the situation and went out there to arrest Dooley, whom he kept chained to the grille of a cell for six days while he awaited trial. Dooley and Clancy were tried together on the same charge and Dooley too received a three months gaol sentence. In the meantime the West Australian was content to run, but not too prominently, the publicity line of the Commissioner of Native Affairs

that "most Natives are happy" and the strike was the work of "a few malcontents" (West Australian, 4/5/46:14). The demands of the strikers were well formulated by this stage, although they received no mass media coverage. They were for a 30s. minimum wage, the right to elect their own representatives and the right to freedom of movement (Native Affairs File No. 895/46).

Back in Port Hedland, McLeod was arrested and charged under S.39 of the Act with entering a "native camp". He was released on bail without too much fuss. By the time he was released, however, word of his arrest had reached the strikers and 200 men were marching from the Two Mile with the intention of setting him free or being locked up themselves. Port Hedland, at this time, had a white population of something less than 200 and the sudden appearance of the strikers marching down the main street created considerable anxiety amongst white townfolk. Unaware of McLeod's release the marchers surrounded the gaol hitting the corrugated iron walls with sticks and demanding that the police produce their man. It was only after someone discovered McLeod visiting a friend in the local hospital that they left. The march had been a peaceful show of strength and McLeod records that the strikers "had quite a different status in Port Hedland after this event" (McLeod:56).

Support from Perth

In the meantime in Perth, a Committee for the Defense of Native Rights (CDNR) had been formed at a public meeting in the Town Hall, attended by 300 people (Workers' Star, 27/5/46). The meeting demanded that Clancy and Dooley be freed, agreed to engage leading lawyer Fred Curran to defend McLeod and set about organising food and financial support. The Secretary of the Committee was an Anglican clergyman, Padre Peter Hodge, while its Chairman was Dr. Alec Jolly. Although its most active workers were communists (Davies:39), the list of speakers at the meeting shows that the strikers had much broader support in the community than this would indicate. They included N. Payne of the Tramways Union, Mrs Vallance of the Women's Christian Temperance Union, Tommy Bropho of the Perth Aboriginal community, Katharine Susanna Prichard of the Modern Women's Club and Mr. Foxcroft of the Society of Friends (Native Affairs File No. 894/46). The commitment of some of the non-communist participants in the CDNR was to be sorely tested as their support for the strikers placed them in unaccustomed situations. McLeod, for instance, recounts the incident of a visit by Hodge to Port Hedland and the 12 Mile camp later established by the strikers. They were both arrested. The charge of "being within five chains of a *congregation* of natives" must have seemed particularly ironic in view of Hodge's profession! On the same occasion the Padre was to demonstrate the courage of his convictions by addressing an extremely hostile public meeting of white town and station people in Port Hedland.

After an initial hearing McLeod was kept in custody and only after an exchange of letters with Fred Curran was it possible to convince the official concerned that he ought to be bailed. Further obstruction was encountered when bail was set at 300 pounds (West Australian, 21/6/46:6). Today's equivalent would be approximately \$12,000! Nonetheless being bailed enabled McLeod to get to Perth where he addressed many meetings and received expressions of support from unions and community groups. These were by no means all left wing organisations and included both the Women's

Temperance Union and the UWA Students' Guild. The students even staged a march in support of the strikers (Workers' Star,22/6/26: 12).

Eventually McLeod was fined fifty pounds and ordered to pay costs of 46p.16s.6d. An interesting aspect of the trial was the use of the CIB's Detective Sargeant Richards, who later played prominent roles in the Petrov Affair and the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation. On this occasion, strangely like the Petrov matter, Richards produced a "document" which he alleged McLeod had written and which suggested that there were "1,000 good Communists" amongst the Pilbara Aborigines. McLeod denied authorship but the West Australian reported that he had admitted that the document was his! (ibid.). The occasion of McLeod's sentencing was one of rejoicing for the authorities. Commissioner Bray wrote to the chief police officer in the North West to congratulate him on the "success" (Bray-O'Neill,26/6/46).

Curran's defense had been based upon the view that the *Native Affairs Act*, under which McLeod had been charged, contravened the British *Anti-Slavery Act* of 1833. This made some ground in the public arena but totally failed to impress the local Magistrate. The gaoling of Clancy and Dooley had already provided a focus for public support for the strikers and the trial and conviction of McLeod added a second. The Committee for the Defense of Native Rights used it as the basis of an appeal to the Secretary General of the United Nations Organisation in which they detailed "the feudal treatment of Aborigines in Northern Australia" (Davies:36). The case also received some attention from the international press, but in WA it was very much a case of the mass media carrying only the employers' and Native Affairs Department's side of the story, leaving it to the Workers' Star to print the facts.

The combination of the public campaign and the fact that many strikers were remaining solid despite the harassment led to the release of Clancy McKenna and Dooley Binbin late in June. They served seven weeks of their three month sentences. The catalyst for this action was reported as being "representations from the ALP" (West Australian,25/6/46:6). Certainly some sections of the Australian Labour Party did support the strikers. Senator Dorothy Tangney was one of the leading figures to identify publicly with the campaign. The mass media, however, ignored her press release and it was left to the Workers' Star to report her saying:

Aborigines are being exploited in the North West by the big landowning companies and absentee owners, who employ them at a few shillings a week, and don't even provide sanitation or shelter for them (Workers' Star,12/7/46:2).

The State Labor Government was not as impressed by the apparent injustices as the Senator.

The CDNR, however, did not have the public campaign all its own way. After the release of Clancy and Dooley, the Committee attempted to send a deputation to see the Premier and Minister for Native Affairs with the intention of demanding the repeal of the Act. Premier Wise refused to see them. Another indication of the difficulties they faced occurred in the coal mining town of Collie, where the local Council refused a request to support the strikers and dismissed the CDNR as "cranks". It was the sort of report about the strike which the mass media did feel able to carry (West Australian,

10/7/46:5).

Starting Again

Despite the efforts of the authorities the strike showed no signs of going away. In July, some stations having finished shearing, reduced the wages they'd increased in May to get the strikers back to work. Some of these workers now rejoined the strike. In another case strikers were promised two pound per week if they returned but when they got to the station found they would only be paid one pound and they too rejoined the strike (Workers' Star, 19/7/46:6). Clancy and Doonley had both been released and were active again. In fact Clancy was employed by Constable Marshall to fix his car for 30s. per week. They set about visiting the stations where strikers had returned to work and were told that they'd only done so because of police coercion.

Dooley's idea was to "start the strike again" at the Port Hedland race meeting, when workers from the stations would be in town. A train load of strikers left Marble Bar for the race meeting but at the Four Mile outside Port Hedland police stopped the train and ordered them off. Clancy and Dooley got them into ranks and they marched into the Two Mile Camp. The next day the Port Hedland police got a shock when the fellow they'd sent out to the Four Mile to sell food to the strikers rushed back into town to report that he couldn't find anyone there. So local Constable Fletcher went out to the Two Mile camp with Richards and O'Neill and ordered the strikers to return to the Four Mile. They voted to stay where they were and to continue the strike (Interview, Dooley et al). That night McLeod crept out to visit them evading the police whose job it was to ensure that the camp was isolated. A meeting was held and it was decided that the strikers would avoid any outright confrontation with the police. The next day the races were over and station people and their workers streamed out of town. At the Two Mile they were stopped by the strikers. McLeod recalls, "they lost whatever Blackfellows they were carrying to join the mob" (Interview, McLeod).

The problem now became one of how to feed the growing mob. McLeod was working as a wharfie in Port Hedland and donated most of his income to buy food. Under post-war rationing, commodities such as tea, sugar and butter could only be purchased on production of Government issued coupons. Previously the Aboriginal workers had received these from the stations on which they were employed. Now in the camp outside Port Hedland the strikers were not getting these coupons. Dooley and another leader, Jackson, went to the police station to demand the ration coupons, which were properly the property of the strikers. They were told that the station managers had the coupons and that if they returned to the stations they'd be able to get them. They then asked McLeod to help but when he went to the police station he was hustled away by the four policemen. Under the impression that he'd been arrested again Clancy got the 80 strikers who'd been waiting at the cricket ground for news of the outcome and they marched on the police station. Once again they surrounded it and demanded McLeod's release. But the police had already let him go. So instead they demanded rifle and beachcombing permits which would help them subsist. The marches on the gaol provided the focus for the ballad "Clancy and Dooley and Don McLeod" by Dorothy Hewett. This ballad paints the emotions of the time well capturing the sheer heroism of the strikers and the strength of their leaders in standing up to entrenched prejudice. It played a significant part in the public campaign in support of the

strike as Hewett was often called upon to recite it at public meetings.

After another meeting McLeod again approached local police in their role as "protectors of natives" regarding the ration coupons and was again arrested under S.39 for meeting with the strikers at their camp (Workers' Star,9/8/46:1). In town the white ill-feeling was increasing. There were reports of the formation of white vigilante gangs and the proprietor of the Pier Hotel threatened to shoot McLeod (ibid.,16/8/46:1). The strikers decided to split into two groups. One would camp at the 12 Mile outside Port Hedland and the other would return to Moolyella, inland from Marble Bar.

It was at this time that Padre Hodge visited the 12 Mile and was arrested along with McLeod for doing so (West Australian,14/8/46:6). Hodge was dealt with immediately and was fined. McLeod was remanded in custody for two weeks (ibid.,15/8/46:10) and was then sentenced to three months imprisonment.

In the meantime Clancy was organising various self-supporting enterprises. He had got McLeod's old Ford V8 and travelled the district settling up camps as collection points for pearl shell, kangaroo skins and goat skins. Schools were also established by two self taught strikers, Tommy Sampi and Gordon MacKay at the 12 Mile and Moolyella camps. The Education Department refused to send them teachers but did provide correspondence courses (Workers' Star,4/10/46:5;8/11/46:5). The schools also acted as information centres with the literate teachers reading newspaper reports and correspondence about the strike to the people.

The camps continued to be visited by station managers, accompanied by armed police, trying to "encourage" the strikers to return to work. With basic provisions in short supply there was constant pressure on the strikers but, rather than give in, they continued to develop their organisation. After refusing an offer made in the camps of .one pound per week for a return to work, the strikers formed the North West Workers' Association, with the central policy of a full pastoral award wage for Aboriginal station workers.

In October the appeals by Clancy, Dooley, McLeod and Hodge against their convictions all failed in the WA Court of Criminal Appeal. The West Australian, which had given no space to the views of the strikers or their supporters, reported those of the "learned judges" rather more completely (West Australian,31/10/46:11). Just how learned those views were was revealed shortly afterwards when the matter was taken to the High Court. The point at issue was the interpretation to be placed on S.39 of the *Native Affairs Act* which made it unlawful for anyone apart from officials "to enter or remain within or upon a place where natives are camped or where any native may be congregated or in the course of travel in pursuance of any native custom". In the appeal case the Chief Justice of WA Sir John Dwyer observed that the law was intended to protect the natives and that "the main method by which that purpose is to be achieved is by separation of the natives from the non-native population". Lloyd Davies' comment that this indicates, at least, that His Honour understood the politics of the situation seems apposite (Davies:38). That the actual law was not so well understood in WA was

revealed in the High Court where Sir Owen Dixon "who has always been considered the High Court's master of the English language" (ibid.), said that the WA judges' construction of the clause could not have been reached by any person "unless his mind be controlled by some considerations external to the precise text or his sensibilities to English forms of speech have been dulled" (WARL,1947:1). The convictions were quashed!

While the legal arguments had raged, the strike itself had become much more than a withdrawal of labour. Self-governing communities, supported by their own enterprise and donations from supporters had been established at the 12 Mile and Moolyella. All the attempts of managers, police, courts and Native Affairs officials to intimidate the strikers had proved fruitless. Far from losing momentum, the strike was growing. The experience of independence in the camps added dignity and solidarity to the strikers armoury. In November 1946 the Workers' Star had reported a further 100 workers joining the strike over intimidation by the companies (Workers' Star,29/11/46:6). The Department had also given in on the question of ration coupons which were now being supplied to the 12 Mile Co-operative Store (ibid.:5). A report by a medical inspector at this time, told the Commissioner for Native Affairs, no doubt to his considerable chagrin, that "these natives are well behaved, making an effort to uplift themselves and endeavouring to keep some laws of hygiene" (Letter,Musso-Commissioner,2/1/47). The Doctor went on to suggest that the proper way to solve the dispute was to call a tripartite conference in which the "natives should be given an opportunity to state their views"!

Not all of the strikers, however, remained fully committed. In January 1947 some of the Warragine mob were moving back to the station when they were met by Clancy and a group of activists intent on talking them out of returning to work. After considerable argument and a show of force by the pro-strike faction, they agreed to travel down to the 12 Mile camp with Clancy in McLeod's old Ford. This resulted in Clancy and 12 others being arrested and charged under S.9 of the Act for preventing those men from working (Workers' Star,31/1/47:1).

In the public arena reaction to this arrest showed the extent of the gains the campaign had been making. When the CDNR held meetings to demand Clancy's release (ibid.,7/2/47:5), the Minister for Justice, Nulsen, replied that "if the facts you have been giving me are correct we should be supporting the native co-op at Port Hedland [the 12 Mile] and giving them all the help we can" (ibid.,14/2/47:6).

Elsewhere the "trouble with natives" was spreading. In Carnarvon a demonstration of Aboriginal workers led by Walter Cameron demanded better conditions while at Berrimah in the Northern Territory a strike by Aboriginal workers quickly got increases to 30s. per week plus canteen, school and other benefits. From Broome also came reports of "unrest", while Perth Aborigines sent Tom Brophy and Jeff Harper on a tour of the South West to look at working conditions and gather support for the North West strike.

After one month in goal Clancy's sentence was remitted. During his absence Ernie Mitchell had been

looking after the 12 Mile and his success may be judged from the fact that after Clancy's release he and his wife, Topsy, were sent on a holiday. Subsequently Mitchell too was arrested when police visited the camp "and remonstrated with them for stopping any natives who desired to return to work". In response Mitchell "spoke out loudly" and was arrested for his pains (Letter,McGeary-Commissioner,24/9/47). The courage it took to stand up to police in such a situation can hardly be over emphasised. The oral tradition reserves a particular place for another leader of the strikers' community, Jackson, who frequently faced armed police coming into the camp to deliver similar messages with just two words indicating, in language to which they were well used, that their presence was not welcome.

On the other hand, the High Court decision had made S.39 of the Native Affairs Act almost unenforceable and this allowed the strikers a new freedom of organisation. McLeod was able to take a more direct role and put great effort into organising self-supporting activities. The work Clancy had begun with getting goat skins was allocated to the disaffected Waragine mob giving them something useful to do and shelling parties were organised both north and south of Port Hedland. But the big break through was the introduction of prospecting for minerals as a major activity. This would later develop into a sizeable business and provide an economic base for self-supporting communities such as those at Strelley and Yandeyarra. In fact many mineral discoveries made by what later became known as "McLeod's mob" were subsequently exploited commercially after the Mob had been deprived of its rights to the deposits they'd discovered (McLeod:93ff). But that's another and a different story.

The End of the Strike

By mid-1947 the strike had settled down into a war of attrition. With shearing once again due to commence the pastoralists sent a delegation to the Minister for Native Affairs pointing out that without Aboriginal workers they would be unable to muster their sheep and thus would be prevented from shearing (McDonald,14/4/47). The Minister was also approached by a Roman Catholic missionary, Father Bryan, "in relation to certain influences amongst the strikers" (Letter,McDonald-Prendeville, 8/5/47). Bryan had already shown his colours in the strike when he spoke against Hodge at the public meeting in Port Hedland referred to above. Now he managed to so impress the Minister with his "wise and balanced appreciation of the situation" (*ibid.*), that he was sent along with the Acting Commissioner of Native Affairs to tour the Pilbara and compile a report on the strike.

One result was that the Government agreed to subsidise the establishment of the ironically named White Springs Mission, of which Bryan was to be the head (Native Affairs File No.1039/47). Peter Biskup has described the move as "an attempt to undermine McLeod's influence in the district" (Biskup:236) and there is little doubt that this was how both the church and the Government viewed it. In fact the Mission was part of a new wave of bureaucratic thought in regard to WA's "native problem". Riding the crest of the wave was the new Commissioner for Native Affairs, Middleton. He had been brought in from the colonial Administration of the Territory of Papua and New Guinea in the hope that WA's "natives" would prove amenable to the "benevolent paternalism" which was

considered a hallmark of Australia's control of TPNG. It was characteristic of this approach that while he was refusing to even consider the demands of the 12 Mile and Moolyella communities for grants of land to enable them to expand their self-supporting activities, Middleton organised the reservation of some 230,000 acres for the White Springs Mission (Native Affairs File No.1039/47). In keeping with the TPNG colonialist tradition the Mission would operate "along the lines of a pastoral concern to train boys in station work, and girls training to fit them for domestic work" (Letter, McBeath-Minister,12/10/48). Not surprisingly it failed to attract any converts but was nonetheless kept operating on Government subsidies until 1951.

Suddenly Government funds were also available for mission schools in other areas most affected by the "unrest". The Church of Christ received funding for a school at its Carnarvon Mission (Letter, Minister-Forrest,10/2/48). Father Bryan offered to set up a school adjacent to the 12 Mile community (Letter,Bryan-Minister for Education,25/2/48) and the Methodist Church was approached to "set up a school and work among the Moolyella natives" (Letter,Middleton-Taylor,20/5/48). Other offers of assistance were also made as the Department of Native Affairs tried to undermine the strike. One of the more incredible came from Karl Drake-Brockman, a major pastoralist, offering himself for the job of Commissioner for Native Affairs. "I have", he told the Minister without intended irony, "always been interested in our coloured people and their problems and claim to understand them" (Letter, Drake-Brockman-Minister,22/7/48). The claim would have perhaps had some credence had the Drake-Brockman properties been unaffected by the strike. They were not.

Two other pieces of correspondence in this period deserve mention for what they reveal about attitudes in the bureaucracy and the white community. The first involves a Department of Native Affairs Inspector, Mcgaffin by name, who was stationed at Derby. He complained that the Department was involved in "slavery" (Letter,Mcgaffin-Commissioner,29/3/48) and that, far from improving the situation of those they were supposed to protect, officials didn't even have the courage to enforce S.18 of the Native Affairs Act regarding terms and conditions of employment. They were much more intent on being friendly with the pastoralists (Memo,12/7/48). This division in the ranks was accompanied by a number of enquiries from other officers as to how Mcgaffin could be dismissed.

A less serious complaint, but one equally revealing of the relations between the white community and Aboriginies, came from R.Scott, a farmer of Watheroo, who was incensed at the ruling of the local football league that "no more than 8 natives be allowed in a football team" because of the impact this would have on his own team's performances (Letter,Scott-Commissioner,n.d.).

These were, however, very minor chinks in the armoury of control and the overwhelming impression is that throughout 1947 and 1948 the Department arrayed all its bureaucratic weaponry against the strikers. They were harrassed in their communities by hectoring Inspectors and armed police, they were arrested for speaking out in favour of the strike, their children were taken from them with the connivance of the Missions and so on. The cost of such activity to the taxpayer must have been considerable but at no stage was this considered. The communities' demands for land to facilitate their

self-supporting activities would certainly have cost much less. All the reports to the Minister for Native Affairs, including the lengthy Bateman Report of 1947, however, recommended that the "native problem" was best dealt with "professionally". In practice this meant the implementation of TPNG style paternalism under Middleton. The strikers wanted the freedom to work out their own futures, the Department was determined to reduce them to dependence.

When the 1949 shearing season began Mt.Edgar and Limestone stations agreed to pay the rates and provide the conditions demanded by the strikers. With all Pilbara wool being shipped from Port Hedland the workers appealed to the Seamen's Union to apply bans to wool shorn on other stations. Ron Hurd, a prominent member of the ACP, was then Secretary of the Fremantle Branch of the SUA and had no trouble in convincing his members to impose the ban. The issue came to a head when the crew of the *Kybra* refused to ship wool they believed came under the ban. Government officials and shipping agents tried various ruses to get the wool away. They claimed that it was only Mt.Edgar and Limestone wool that was banned and then that the shipment came only from those two stations. But the seamen were not to be easily fooled. Eventually the local Deputy Commissioner of Native Affairs, one Elliot-Smith, gave McLeod an assurance "that the wages and conditions we had negotiated on Mt.Edgar and Limestone stations would be applied throughout the Pilbara" (McLeod:64). The bans were lifted and workers returned to many stations. Weeks later, after shearing was completed and the clip had been shipped it emerged that the Department had no intention of honouring this undertaking (WA,Parliamentary Debates, 23/8/49).

Conclusion

For most this was the end of the strike. Many had gone to gaol and many had suffered considerable personal hardship but the strength of purpose demonstrated by the Aboriginal pastoral workers and their families had brought a new element into WA labour relations. On some stations the total demands of the strike had been gained. On others the improvements had been more minor. But the days of taking Aboriginal labour for granted were over.

The fortunes of the self-supporting communities which grew up in the wake of the strike have been mixed. That they still exist at all, however, is a testament to their ability to overcome difficulties, many created by Government policy, and to maintain their independence. That they came into existence a generation before the current land rights and out stations movements suggests that their pioneering role deserves greater recognition. Tom Wright's vision of "a new deal for Australia's Aborigines" (Wright,1939) had seen Government action as the lynch-pin of the move towards self-governing communities. The Pilbara pastoral workers' strike of 1946-49 shows that under certain conditions at least Aborigines were more than capable of initiating that action themselves. It also shows, however, the difficulties such demands face where Governments and their agents remain implacably opposed to granting this land's Beneficial Owners even the most basic of rights.

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Memories of My Life as a Trade Union Official *

Don Cooley†

Introduction

I lived the life of a Trade Union Secretary during the period 1954-1978. I hold no claim to fame but during the time of my activities as a paid Union official I rubbed shoulders with most dignitaries in the State of Western Australia. My duties also extended into the Federal and International industrial arena for a short time. The opportunity to meet people ranging from the Governor General (not Kerr thankfully) Prime Minister, State Governor, and Premier to miners on the coal and goldfields and waterside workers at Fremantle and other ports of Australia came to me as a consequence of my eleven years term as President of the Trades and Labour Council of WA.

My greatest love however was the brewing industry. I was happiest among these workers and still hold the highest regard for the Breweries and Bottleyard Employees' Union (BBU). My term as Union Secretary in this industry extended over the twenty two years of this record which contains some of my personal experiences and tales related to me by my contemporaries in the Labor movement. Those contemporaries were many and varied. Perhaps it is significant to say that when I resigned my post as a Trade Union official and became a Member of Parliament there was only one other official serving in a full time capacity who was in office when I became Secretary of the Breweries Union. The official mentioned was John Try, Secretary of the Shop Assistants' Union, who has since retired.

The stories are both sad and humorous. No doubt many have been missed because one's memory fades a little after seven years of retirement.

It is an indisputable fact however that Union officials particularly those in paid position are the most misunderstood people in the community despite that fact that in my experience they are almost without exception honest, dedicated hard working men and women whose sole aim in life is to advance the welfare of the people who place them in office. If critics of the Labour Movement would stop to think they would realise that nearly all the social advantages enjoyed by our community came about as a result of Labor Movement activity. The day the Trade Union movement is repressed or hampered in its work will be the day that our great Australian way of life will truly start to deteriorate.

Finally I hope that this work will pay a suitable tribute to those unsung heroes of the trade unions, the unpaid officials, who so unselfishly give their voluntary time to our great cause. Without these men and women the union movement's efforts would come to nought.

* Don describes this as his 'bicentennial contribution'.

† Don Cooley is a former Secretary of the Breweries and Bottleyards Employee's Union and President of the WA Trades and Labour Council. Don is the author of the history of the former organization. He now lives in retirement "far from the hurly burly" at Augusta.

Becoming an Activist During the Split

I have been a member and active supporter of the Australian Labor Party from the tender age of 19 years but the impact of the Trade Union administration did not come my way until 1951 when I was 33 years of age. I obtained membership of the party through my membership with the Breweries Union. In those days a union's affiliation gave its members automatic membership with the movements political wing.

Our union was administered in 1951 by Robert Scott Purves, a canny Scot and dedicated Labor Party supporter, whose principal interests were his members welfare. He became Secretary in 1941 a few days before the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbour. Perhaps I should relate a few instances of this genial fellow's frugality. He always insisted that telephonic communications should be initiated from the Brewery and so that boss should bear the cost of the call.

As payroll deductions had not been introduced at this time it was necessary to make weekly collections of contributions on pay-days. A book of account had to be kept of course. On one occasion after my ledger became full of entries I purchased a replacement for the sum of nine shillings and ten pence. Believing that the company should supply the stationary the Secretary reluctantly reimbursed me with a ten shilling note. When I took the note he immediately asked for the tuppence change.

It is said that he travelled between the Swan and Emu Breweries, three up in the front of Brewery trucks with the driver and offsider to spare the union the cost of a three pence tram or bus fare.

The annual picnic became very stereotype over the years but a progressive picnic committee decided in 1952 to reorganise the administration of the function. This involved the expenditure of additional funds, most of it derived from a levy paid on a compulsory basis by all members of the union. This new policy gave our thrifty secretary considerable cause for anxiety. The proposed venue for the outing was the Zoological Gardens South Perth and retired members were to be entertained at a luncheon. The members admission costs to the Zoo were to be met by the union. A considerable amount of fruit and sweets were to be purchased for family consumption and prizes for the sporting events upgraded. Bob reluctantly went along with these proposals. However when a committee member suggested that each child be given a bag of peanuts for the monkeys it was the last straw that broke the camels back so far as Bob was concerned. He literally exploded saying "I will be buggered if I will stand by and allow union funds to be used to feed bloody monkeys". Needless to say the suggestion did not come to fruition.

His thrift and diligence put the Union on a sound financial footing for the first time in many years and its present position can be attributed in many ways to Bob's prudence.

Approximately eighteen months before he retired Bob suggested to me that I should be his successor. He and a number of members of long standing union members worked for my election. I was subsequently elected to the position of Secretary of the Breweries and Bottleyards Industrial Union of

Workers of WA with an absolute majority over five other candidates who sought the position. I took office on Sunday 13 June 1954. My tribute to Robert Scott Purves can be found in my book "Leading the Way" which traces the history of this remarkable Union over its first 65 years of existence.

It seems that I was destined to be involved in the broad field of Trade Union activity almost from the time of my entry into the administrative responsibility of the Breweries Union. I was asked to be the chairman of a Labor Party election rally in Forrest place as a Trade Union representative only two short months after my election. This was quite an ordeal for one so inexperienced with Bert Evatt, Bert Hawke, John Tonkin and Joe Chamberlain on the platform. Not to mention the large audience who could become rather hostile in those times.

In 1956 I sought and obtained a position on the Executive of the Trade Union Industrial Council (TUIC), which was then the central union authority in WA.. This was at a time when the Labor movement was involved in the greatest split in its long history. The Democratic Labor Party with the assistance of its fellow travelers was endeavouring to white ant the ALP while industrial groups, which shared this aim, were super active in the Trade Unions.

The ALP Federal conference in Hobart, where a number of delegates defected to the forces of disunity had a sequel in Perth Trades Hall when three of these people were charged with disloyalty. A meeting of the state executive of the ALP was convened to give these defectors an opportunity to show cause they should not be expelled from the party for their transgression. The meeting concluded at 2.30 am with a penalty being imposed which denied the accused ALP endorsement for a period of three years. This decision had a serious effect on two of the rebels because they were Federal Parliamentarians. It also had a number of repercussions which will be dealt with later. The debate was very heated as one may well imagine. The secretary Joe Chamberlain was particularly critical of those who tried to torpedo the conference and give credence to the DLP and argued strongly that "they should be castigated".

The lovable John Moore an eighteen stone, six foot, veritable giant of a man, who was the treasurer of the Flour Millers' Union, obtained the call from the chairman. Being about five rows back from the podium and finding it difficult to extract himself from the centre of his row he decided to take the shortest course to the microphone over the back of the wooden seats that were joined together in sets of ten. The occupants of these seats made way for John whose foot with each step went through the five plywood seats. He spoke in support of the secretary's motion in his usual gruff and forthright manner and concluded by saying that he fully agreed with the General Secretary's suggestion that the offenders should thoroughly **castrated**. It was not said in jest but a slip of the tongue. John's contribution to the debate provided the only light spot in an extremely tense meeting.

To be a staunch Labor supporter at this time one ran the risk of being branded a communist or fellow traveler. The introduction of a Communist Party Dissolution Bill by the ultra conservative Menzies Government caused many people of the Roman Catholic faith to either defect or waiver from the cause of Labor when the Party decided to oppose the legislation when it came before the Federal Parliament.

Dr Bert Evatt, the Leader of the Opposition was a continual target for the anti-communist hysteria. The antagonism towards him increased considerably after his role in the Royal Commission that enquired into Petrov defection.

At this time Catholic political opinion was divided into three categories -

- (a) violently anti-communist, anti-ALP and pro-DLP;
- (b) fence sitters who favoured the DLP but stayed with our Party in an ever so half hearted manner
- (c) the loyal ALP supporters who loved their Church but could not be diverted from their dedication to the ideals and aspirations of the Labor Movement.

Some of those in group (b) started a campaign of denigration against the Federal Leader. When disciplined they either joined the DLP or withdrew their support at election time. Of the Federal MPs who publicly supported the DLP two were from WA: Victor Johnson - Kalgoorlie and Tom Burke - Perth. Johnson was denied pre-selection and Tom Burke lost his seat at the next election. Tom was an excellent member of Parliament. I have always regretted that he could not bring himself to conform with the disciplines required of all ALP members.

There was no television and with radio stations giving very little current affairs coverage, the monopoly controlled *West Australian* could virtually censor news material which it considered contrary to its viewpoint. Tom Burke was employed by *The West Australian* newspaper after his electoral defeat. It would be hard for readers today to imagine the distress that was felt throughout the Movement when an article written by Tom Burke attacking the Party generally and the leader in particular appeared in the left hand column of the front page of the *West Australian* with more on another page.

It was stated inter alia in this article that the majority of Union Secretaries employed at Trades Hall were in support of his beliefs. I joined 32 other secretaries by signing a letter addressed to the Editor of the newspaper which refuted this outrageous assertion. The letter was never printed. Such was the antagonism against the ALP in those days.

Tom stood outside the Party for a number of years. Despite his transgression most were of the belief that he was too valuable to be at odds with the administration and outside active membership. Finally it was decided to allow him to address a state congress. All was going well until question time when he was asked about his association with a person named Flanagan who was the President of the state branch of the DLP. After several minutes of verbal crossfire with those who were opposed to his re-entry to the party he replied by saying that Flanagan was a better Labor man than half the delegates present in the hall. This was after all the damage that had been done and was still being done to the Labor Movement by the DLP. The decision was a foregone conclusion after Tom's reply. He died without regaining his membership. His case was one of the great tragedies of the split because he had so much to offer.

The DLP continued to be the bane of the ALP for seventeen or eighteen years before was decimated at the 1972 Federal Election. In WA the story of the Split cannot be told without reference to Joe Chamberlain's magnificent fight against the re-actionary forces that tried to destroy our great party. He was a solid bulwark against them and the Labor Party as we know it today would not be in existence had it not been for his untiring efforts. The rules were there to be observed and he saw to it that they were carried out to the letter. When the history of the Labor Party is to be written his name should be cited as one of its greatest members.

The Formation of the WA Trades and Labour Council

It is said that "Governments may come and Governments may go but the trade union movement goes on forever". This was never before more graphically illustrated than in those barren years between 1949 and 1972 when the conservatives held the treasury benches in Canberra. During this period the Unions dug their toes in and obtained by consistent industrial action those vital benefits so essential to the people they represented. In WA the formation of a Trades and Labor Council independent of the ALP was a major step in furthering that industrial struggle. Every State of the Commonwealth including the Federal Territories had such an organisation operating under the auspices of the Australian Council of Trade Unions. (ACTU). In WA, however, the Trade Union Industrial Council, was virtually a branch of the Labor Party. Every union regardless of size was entitled to credential two delegates providing that it was affiliated with the ALP. The council was entitled to representation on the ACTU inter-state executive.

Those unions with Federal affiliation canvassed very strenuously at each state conference held in WA for the formation of a separate Trades and Labor Council. The State Unions in the main were reluctant to change the status quo but were resigned to the inevitability of a separate organisation. The decision to form such a council came at the 1962 state conference. After the die was cast Joe Chamberlain did everything in his power to bring about a smooth transition into the newly formed body. It was agreed at the conference that the council would be subject to a transitory period of three years before it gained its full independence. The principal condition to be applied during this period was that the affiliation fees paid to the ALP would be shared on an equal basis but the council would enjoy full autonomy over its affairs. It was to be non-political although it goes without saying that an overwhelming majority of delegates to council fully supported the Labor Party. Representation was based on the numerical strength of its affiliates with a ceiling of six delegates. An executive was elected and rules established. I served on the committee that constituted the rules and was a foundation member of the Executive. I maintained this position for the next thirteen years and became the Council's President on the 1st January, 1965 obtaining 80% of the votes cast in the ballot against too other candidates.

With the formation of the TLC, a restructuring of the State Branch of the ALP was necessary. The popular district councils were disbanded with automatic membership by affiliated unionists being replaced with direct membership. The method of selecting parliamentary candidates by rank and file ballot was discontinued. This duty became the responsibility of the State Executive which increased in

number from forty to over one hundred.

During my service as an officer of the TUIC Executive I was appointed the Council's acting secretary on a number of occasions when Joe Chamberlain was called away on Federal business or organizing an election campaign. It was suggested by some of my colleagues that I should nominate for the position of secretary of the newly formed council. This I declined because I had supported the retention of the TUIC out of loyalty to the Labor Party in general and my good friend Joe Chamberlain in particular.

The principal breakthrough obtained by the TUIC was the establishment of standard long service conditions for workers in private industry. I take pride in being a member of the negotiating committee that brought this reform for all workers in WA.

A unity conference was convened in the latter part of 1967 to take the decisions necessary to ensure the new industrial wing obtained its full independence and had the blessing of all sections of our great movement. All the leaders of the Federal and State political and industrial organisations were in attendance. The conference was a great success. So the industrial organisation was freed from its political ties and brought in line with the system that was common to our comrades in the Eastern States.

The Trades and Labour Council in Action

The doubts of those of us who were reluctant to see the old structure abolished were quickly dispelled as the organisation of the new council took shape. The personalities of the inaugural Executive should be recorded here. To say that it was left wing is a gross understatement. Joe Pereria a long time activist in the Labor Movement was President. The Secretaries of the Painters' Union and Electrical Trades Union Jim White and Bob Fletcher were the Senior and Junior Vice Presidents respectively. The pugnacious Gordon Harris (WWF Secretary) Gordon Dix (Seamens' Union) and Tom Henley, the quietly spoken Secretary of the Building Trades Union comprised the Committee men. Paddy Troy, who needs no introduction and myself were Trustees. Jim Coleman former AWU Organiser was Secretary. Jim carried his difficult task with credit to bring the Council into the public limelight. He was a marvelous negotiator and was principally responsible for many of the industrial advances made during his term of office. On reflection I believe he accepted such an high office in the Council as a means to an end. His personal aspirations seemed in the long run to override those of the council. This was borne out when he accepted the position as a Commissioner of the Federal Arbitration Court. His decisions in this position do not seem to be in line with his oft stated beliefs in the Labor movement. His determination in a garbage collectors dispute to give preference of employment to scabs over the Unionists involved in the dispute gave great offence to the local TLC.

The militancy of the Executive had strong support on the floor of the Council and it was not too long before conflicts occurred. The very first of the councils existence saw the introduction of a bill by a conservative Government which destroyed the industrial system as we had known it for many years.

This legislation replaced the Arbitration Court comprising a Supreme Court Judge as President and an employer and employee representative with four Industrial Commissioners. The old act allowed for one Commissioner whose decisions could be appealed against in the Arbitration Court. Fred Schnaars held this position. Fred was a former Union Secretary. The Government appointed him Chief Commissioner with Eric Kelly a Department of Labour Advocate, Don Cort an Employer's Federation Executive and Jack Flanagan a right wing Union Secretary as Commissioners. Appeals against a single Commissioner's decision could be heard by any three Commissioners sitting 'in court session'.

The main point in contention so far as the Unions were concerned was the abolition of the Arbitration Court. The President Justice (Spud) Neville was appointed by a previous Labor Government and had a compassionate understanding of working peoples' needs. Tom Davies a former ALP Branch secretary was an extremely popular worker's representative on the court. His position was made redundant under the new legislation.

On the day the Bill was before Parliament the TLC organised a six hour general strike and a rally was held in the grounds of Parliament House. Some 4 to 5,000 workers attended this rally. I organised the whole workforce of the Brewery to assemble in Kings Park for a march on Parliament House. We entered the ground to the resounding cheers of all workers who were at the rally.

Some sidelights of the dispute are worth recording:

Bill Hegney the Labor opposition Shadow Minister for Labour made a great speech that night. He taunted the Government to support the Bill but outside the Minister's second reading speech not one member either Liberal or Country Pparty made any contribution to the debate.

Paddy Troy organised a full compliment of Fremantle unionists and others to be present in the House and they draped a banner with appropriate wording over the balcony of the gallery. After this episode the gallery was cleared by the police but we were allowed to return on the understanding that there would be no further demonstrations.

Jim Coleman and I were seated in the Speaker's gallery after the demonstrators returned. We were requested by a Parliamentary Attendant to accompany him to the Speakers Chamber. From memory I think the Speaker's name was Hearman. We thought he might be inviting us for a cup of tea or hopefully a drink but he told us he had heard that someone was going to tip a tin of red paint on the Government members from the gallery and if this occurred - I will hold you two responsible. We had no knowledge of such a plot but very quickly attended the gallery to ensure that it was not put into effect.

On the morning after the strike a meeting of the TLC Executive was convened to review the previous days events and ensure that there had been no victimisation of those workers who participated. It was reported that several in-housemaids had been dismissed for misconduct at His Majesty's hotel Hay Street Perth, because they attended the rally. The Executive authorised me to investigate the matter by

seeking an interview with the Hotel's proprietor. I was chosen because of my position with the Brewery Union. The day was Wednesday. On the previous Saturday I had organised a black tie dinner at the establishment where I was called upon to defend the Barmaids industrial interests. This was a most amicable function with the licensees Mr and Mrs Stump excelling themselves as genial hosts. They were dumbfounded when I arrived presenting myself as the worker's representative. An Employers' Federation representative was in attendance and after learning the circumstances of the dispute I informed the employers that unless the girls were reinstated with no loss of privileges I would arrange for a black ban to be implemented against the Hotel. Knowing of my association with the Brewery workers this statement had a profound effect on the employers. An adjournment was sought by the Federation but on their return the employers caved in with the girls being restored to their former employment.

As we left the room Mrs Stump said to me "Mr Cooley, if I knew on Saturday that you would do this to Mr Stump and myself I would have burnt that excellent dinner we served you". I replied "come on now Mrs Stump you really don't mean that". She said "don't I! It would have been burnt to a cinder." She was genuinely embittered. This demonstrated one of the hazards in being a Trade Union official so far as friendships are concerned. Needless to say after that no more dinners were offered.

A sequel to this dispute was the charging of every member of the TLC Executive, on the complaint of the Employers Federation, for breaching the Arbitration Act by inciting workers to strike. Summonses were served on each individual and the threat of prosecution was held over our heads until minutes before we were due to appear before the President of the court. The feeling was such that many of us would have welcomed a goal term in order to emphasize our anger over the government's arrogant attitude. Some days previous to the issuing of the summons the Employers were proposing before the court that all the workers who participated in the strike should be charged and suffer a penalty. Justice Neville advised the Employers that if the fines were not paid and he was forced to imprison the offenders, the goals in WA would not be big enough to accommodate them. In any event the Prison Officers Union made it perfectly clear that its members would not process any prisoners who were gaoled for offences against the Arbitration Act.

The 1963 Federal election campaign was in progress during the dispute and Arthur Calwell our leader was so concerned over our behaviour that he sent a telegram to the TLC almost two feet six inches long complaining about how the strike was going to effect the Labor Party's candidates chances of success on election day. The outcome of the election was that the Conservatives increased their slender advantage of two seats in the House of Representatives to almost 30. In Western Australia, however, the seats Labor held increased from two to seven out of nine.

Another example of the character of events at this time was that a six shillings per week general increase in wages was being delayed by the local jurisdiction. Fred Schnaars confronted the new TLC Executive which as had been previously described as rather militant: Tom Henley, Paddy Troy, Gordon Harris, Jim Coleman and myself. Poor Fred copped a real roasting that day. He finally

pushed his chair back from the table and said "I'm retiring in eighteen months time and if you think that I'm a bastard you are going to get a worse bastard than me when I go".

A casualty of the change was T.G. (Tom) Davies. He was a gentleman in every respect. His counsel was sought by many union officials and access to his office in the old Supreme Court building was sadly missed for many years after his departure. He was a tower of strength to me in my early years as a Trade Union official. He was later employed by the Australian Workers Union and completed his working days with that organisation. Tom was a man of the highest integrity. I can still picture his reaction when I was walking with him from the old Arbitration Court to Trades Hall when a well known Union Secretary at that time stopped us and thanked Tom for a favourable decision and suggested a gift. My old friend was aghast at this offer and greatly offended. His reply is not printable. His principle in industrial relations was not the question of winning or losing but what was right and what was wrong.

People to Remember

In the early years, my neighbour at Trades Hall was a genial fellow named Tom Neilson, the Secretary of the Bakers and Pastrycooks Union. Like myself he was a cricket fanatic. Very frequently Tom Davies and my neighbour would come to my office and ask if we could spend a few hours at the WACA ground to watch an interstate or international cricket match. On one of these occasions the West Indies was playing an Australian XI. Wesley Hall was making his debut in this match. Colin McDonald was the opening batsman for Australia. Wesley thundered in bowling the first ball of the match which was a no ball and a bouncer flying over the batsman and wicketkeeper's head one bounce and into the fence for four byes. All this was accompanied by an equally thunderous call of NO BALL by umpire Alan Mackley. An identical incident occurred with the next ball. An old lady sitting behind the two Toms and myself was heard to remark "Mr Mackley should not call out so loud he is putting our batsmen off their game." I doubt whether McDonald saw either of the two balls let alone worry about the noise.

Robert Fletcher a long standing Secretary of the Electrical Trades Union and a close colleague during my TLC tenure of office is a wonderful raconteur in so far as industrial relations are concerned. Bob was an employee representative on a court which comprised in addition himself an employer's member and a stern old Supreme Court Judge who was known to be partly deaf. The case was concerned with non payment of wages by an employer. The decision ultimately favoured the Union with the employer being ordered to pay up. Before the Judge handed the penalty he asked the guilty employer if he had anything to say. "Fuck all" said the employer. "What did he say Mr Fletcher," asked the Judge. "He said 'fuck all' your honour," replied Bob. "No, no, Mr Fletcher," replied His Honour" he definitely said something because I saw his lips move".

There was a lot of coming and going between Trades Hall and the Court by Trade Union Officials in those days and we often met each other somewhere in Barrack Street. On this day after the tragic incident in the Court our Bob met Joe Quinn, a hard headed organiser for the Building Workers'

Union, in Barrack Street. In relating his awful experience to Joe Bob was obviously upset. Joe's reply was "isn't that typical of the bloody employing class, they will do anything to avoid giving to workers their just entitlements".

It was not long after I was domiciled at Trades Hall that my cricket ability and my love of the game became known. I was promptly recruited into the Trades Hall team which at that time played an annual match against the Employers' Federation and the State Governor's (Sir Charles Gairdner) XI. While we only had a limited success against the employers I believed it to be a wonderful exercise in industrial relations. Some firm friendships developed between a number of the Federation's staff and myself. It was always my responsibility to obtain the beer for the match from the Brewery. A pleasant lunch with appropriate speeches was held at the Cottesloe Civic Centre. The game was always played on the Cottesloe over looking the Indian Ocean. Tom Neilson was the organiser of the match and provided a lot of entertainment at the lunch with his inimical style of speaking. After Tom retired it became my lot to arrange the game with the Federation. Regretably it is not played in the day of this writing despite the perpetual trophy the Director of the Federation, Frank Cross and I donated prior to our retirement. It was titled 'the Cooley-Cross Trophy'. Frank would not agree to my suggestion that it be called the Cross-Cooley award because he asserted that Don Cooley never got cross. To the best of my knowledge the trophy resides in the TLC office that organisation being the winner of the last game played.

The Governor's match was a vastly different affair to the game with the employers. Where the Trades Hall and employers teams were selected from the staff of the respective offices the Governor's team included some state players with the remainder made up of first grade cricketers and ex-state players. A very formidable group. Accordingly we were required to match this talent. Former State and Test Cricketers were enlisted to provide us with suitable players. Keith Slater, Tony Lock, Rodney Marsh, Norman O'Neill, Rohan Kaghai and Bruce Buggins all turned out for the TLC at various times. Graham McKenzie was a regular player for the Governor's XI. His uncle the late Doug McKenzie was their Captain. They were delightful days of cricket. The Governor was a real man of the people despite his background. He had a full appreciation of the problems of the Trade Union Movement and often expressed his view in this regard. Tom Nielson's repartee at the luncheon and the Governor's reply was always a highlight of the day's proceedings.

Victories to the Trades Hall side were a rarity but on one memorable we were on the brink of success. The Governor's team had lost nine wickets and needed another 26 runs to win. The last man in was the Governor himself. He always played a very straight bat despite the handicap of a gamy leg, a World War 1 injury. On this day shortly after he came to the crease he played a ball into the covers and set off for a run only to find himself hopelessly stranded mid-wicket with the ball in the hand of one our fieldsmen. In the true spirit of Trades Hall sportsmanship our player threw the ball to the end where there was no danger of the Governor losing his wicket. We lived to regret our generosity because he held his end up while Murray Dawson the other batsman wiped off the deficit.

The Governor's aide de compe in those days was a most genial fellow named Jimmy Batten. He really took a great liking to the Trades Hall fraternity. Readers must appreciate that a large number of Labor people joined in the social activities of this match to intermingle with others on the industrial scene. Jim Batten was granted and accepted membership of the Australian Worker's Union. He socialised with our people to such an extent that the Governor's car was once reported to be outside the Court Hotel until 2 am. Sir Charles will long be remembered by Union people of that time along with thousands of other Western Australians. We were invited to Government House many times on appropriate occasions. Always when a visiting MCC team came to Perth.

Opponents

Like my old friend Tom Davies I never looked upon my adversaries on the industrial relations as sworn enemies. I made it a point not to gloat over any success I may have enjoyed at their expense. I am sure that this philosophy earned me friends on the other side of the fence. When I retired I liked to believe that I had not made a single enemy during my long term of office in the Trade Union Movement. Geoffrey Cohen, Percy Johnson, Jim Yeates and Lloyd Zampatti were the principal executives of the Swan Brewery who I dealt with during my 22 years as secretary of the Breweries Union.

Geoffrey Cohen came to Western Australia from Victoria in the early 1950's to succeed a managing director of long standing in the person of Arthur Jacoby. I was an employee of the Emu Brewery a subsidiary of Swan at that time. The company was putting into effect a comprehensive rationalisation plan and bringing about many technological changes in its wake.

My first meeting with the new Managing Director came about after my election as Union Secretary. He always had an open door approach to industrial relations and never once took advantage of my inexperience in my new position. He was a realist in our dealings never going too far beyond the principles governing his fellow employer's wage and conditions but always willing to maintain the above standard conditions that Brewery Workers traditionally enjoyed. He was a man of his word and in my experience never retreated from an undertaking given. I always regarded him as the last trump in the pack when negotiations failed on a lower level. Sometimes an approach to him succeeded other times failure resulted. It is a tribute to him however that only one matter was resolved before the industrial authorities and no strike occurred during his association with the Swan Brewery.

It was very close on one occasion when a worker was in our view unjustly dismissed at the Emu Brewery. The Emu workers had actually stopped and with me the senior officials of the Union were on their way to the Swan Division to extend the stoppage but did not get past the gate before being recalled to Emu at the request of the management. The member was reinstated but we know for a fact that it was Geoffrey Cohen's intervention that stopped the dispute from escalating.

I take tremendous pride in my relationship with Mr Cohen. During our terms of office the industry was allowed to proceed in peace but the members of my union made industrial gains which outstripped

by far those obtained by any other comparable union that had a membership of unskilled or semi-skilled workers. This culminated in a \$23 increase in wages from our 1973 annual negotiations. This sum may appear to be rather modest by today's standards but it was regarded as a substantial amount then, particularly when compared with average weekly earnings. Two reductions in the qualifying period for long service leave occurred while Mr Cohen held the position of Managing Director of the Swan Group. He maintained the above-standard long service leave conditions for brewery workers by agreeing to pay a bonus to recipients of the leave conditions as equal to two weeks wages for the worker and one week's wages for a spouse and dependant children under the age of eighteen years.

My employer-employee relationship was kept on the same high plane with **Lloyd Zampatti** after he replaced Mr. Cohen. Perhaps this resulted from his background which in many respects had a close affinity with my own, leaving aside our educational achievements. He was identified with the left wing of politics during his University days. He was a close friend of Bob Hawke whose philosophies in those days were similar to mine and his parents were working class people, who lived not far from my childhood environment. I also believed him to be a Labor supporter when I first met him. Perhaps most of all he was like myself an ardent supporter of the States number one football club, West Perth.

The Brewery advanced into automated technology under Lloyd's capable leadership. It was in my view almost a criminal act when he was disposed of after the Bond takeover. He had brought the company to a high plane of production at the new plant and ensured that the workers obtained a fair share of the advantages of the radical technological change. These included early retirement, more leisure by way of leave, a shorter working week combined with higher wages and most of all generous redundancy payments to those workers of long standing with the company who were affected by the change.

I should not depart from my account of the Brewery Executives without reference to my very good friend Don Watt. He was responsible for the first substantial change in our wage structure when he acted as the Brewery's General manager after the tragic demise of Geoffrey Walsh, a short term manager who shot himself. Don was a realist who fully understood our requirements. It was he who conceded the shorter working principle after productivity had increased on such a massive scale when the Brewery was fully automated in 1979-80. He was an intellectual in every sense of the word so far as Brewery management was concerned. His departure from the scene must have been a huge loss to the Bond Corporation.

John Darling was the assistant Director of the Employers' Federation in my embryonic days as a Trade Union official. He was known by friends and foes alike in the industrial scene as "The Black Prince". He was absolutely ruthless in his dealings with Trade Unions that opposed his beliefs making no apologies for his actions. Many of his juniors in the Federation tried to emulate him in later years without too much impact. Although he was diametrically opposed to our Movement he was always honest in his dealings with his opponents and never hid his true feelings. I well recall meeting

him in St George's Terrace on a Friday morning when he was engaged in a street collection for some well known charity. My remark to him was that he should do well with his collection because he was so well known among business men in the Terrace. "Don't you believe it, Don," he replied, "I get more from your people, my so called business friends cross to the other side of the street when they see me in this capacity." John was not content with a subordinate role at the Federation and so accepted the position of Director of the New South Wales Employers' Federation.

Frank Cross the Director of the Federation was in office when I became President of the TLC and he retired the same year that I stood down from office. We enjoyed a marvelous personal relationship that didn't interfere with our respective industrial objectives. He was an Employer representative to the backbone but firmly believed in the Trade Union Movement. It was far better in his view to deal with the workforce collectively than talk to individuals or groups. We established an agreement that held for a number of years on matters associated with long service leave, annual leave, hours and apprenticeships. The conditions applying to the aforementioned was that they would only be altered after an application was determined by the Arbitration Court on submission by either the TUIC (TLC) or the Federation.

Frank earned himself the reputation of being the chief protagonist of the Union hierarchy from the early 1950's until the day he retired. He was a man of impeccable and strict moral character whose sole aim was to advance the interest of the employing community in Western Australia to the highest possible level. He respected Unions for what they were but could abide under any circumstances actions that were designed to break down industrial principles so far as the people represented were concerned. This was apparent when a so called trouble shooter from the United States (I can't recall his name) was brought to WA to resolve a long standing industrial dispute concerning the employment of indentured labour on a dredge named "Alemeda" at Port Hedland. The details of the settlement had almost been finalised around the TLC's boardroom table when Jim Coleman submitted a substantial service pay proposal to the American. He saw some merit in the proposal and suggested that we should enter into negotiations with his Company. Frank blew his top and shouted at the American "if you agree to this garbage you are fucking mad and ought to have your bloody head read". He then promptly gathered up his papers and stormed out of the room. An agreement was reached on Jim's proposals with few amendments. I know for certain that the conditions for the Service Pay agreement were dreamt up a few short hours before the meeting. They probably set the standard for a number of industries in the North-West. This of course is what poor Frank was so upset about. He was undoubtedly right but these were heady days with an abundance of industrial prosperity.

Good Friends

Every Union has in its membership a few select people who are prepared to offer their services regardless of financial considerations or the disadvantages that occur from time to time as a consequence of their dedication to the cause of unionism. Such a man was **Frank Bennett**, who was an official of the Breweries Union 1951 to 1965. Frank was always a Labor man of the highest order. He experienced the Great Depression of the 1930's as a young man, worked as a camel driver,

a miner at Westonia and occupied a responsible position at the No. 7 Pumping Station on the Goldfields Water Supply Pipeline, Southern Cross. His last job before retirement was as a Brewery hand at the Emu Brewery. At each of these jobs he had a profound interest in the affairs of the Union that held coverage over his employment.

While working at Westonia he stood as a candidate for a seat in the State Parliament after obtaining joint selection with **Lionel Kelly**. Kelly won the seat by a handful of votes over Frank and went on to become a Minister of the Crown. Frank would have been an excellent member for the district he sought to represent. He once told me that a prominent person associated with the local ALP Branch advised him that he had no chance of winning the election if he was not a member of the Roman Catholic Church. My long association with Frank still lives in my memory and many of my successes can be directly attributed to his loyalty, comradeship and advice. He was respected by Employers and Union members alike. He certainly deserved better rewards in the Movement for the work he performed in the interest of his fellow workers.

My old friends **Arthur Liddle** and **Gordon Nairnewers** were a tower of strength to me. They had directly opposite personalities and methods but the friendship between them was of lasting benefit to workers in the Brewing industry. Arthur approached matters in a direct manner and sometimes preferred the physical solution to some problems. He held command of the union ranks at the Emu Brewery as well as any General in an army. My fifty odd years friendship with this great unionist is one of my most treasured possessions. Gordon applied his vigour in union matters in a more conciliatory manner than Arthur but his principles were just as firm. How well I remember the fate of an outside truck driver who one day said to Gordon "you union blokes are a bloody lot of communists" when he was prevented from doing duties which came within the precincts of our members. He never entered the Brewery again while Gordon was Shop Steward.

Although he had entirely different political views to mine, **Paddy Troy** was to me a true and loyal friend. We seemed to share a common belief in the advancement of the people we represented. Unlike me he suffered untold indignities during the depression and these left scars on his mind that never healed. I am positive that had he been a member of the Labor Party he would have been a Minister of the Crown of every Labor Government after the second world war. He never fully explained the reason to me why he preferred the communist philosophy to ours when he could have gained so much if his views were aligned to those of so many of his good friends. He was not the mad militant as he was so often depicted by those who did not know him but rather a most moderate person in his outlook. He very often would say to his comrades who wanted to go too far "there is a world of desire and a world of reality". These words frequently came back to me in my endeavours in the world of industrial conflict.

I have distinguished honour of being the foundation Chairman of Directors of the Trades and Labor Council Building Society and claim responsibility for obtaining its initial funds. This was attained through my friendship with the then Commissioner of the Rural and Industries Bank, **Henry**

Chessell. Being a mere Gunner in an Artillery Regiment during the Second World War, I was far removed from my Battery Commander Major C.H. Chessell . When I first became associated with him in our respective civilian vocations I found it difficult to address him as anything but Major. However it was not long after we renewed our acquaintance when he said "you know, Don, all my good friends call me Chess". That broke the ice and I believe our personal friendship started from that time. He agreed to loan us \$400,000 dollars to get the Building Society off the ground and together with a similar sum as a matching grant from the Commonwealth Government we were in business. Since that time many hundreds of low and middle income earners have gained considerable advantage from the low interest rates available for housing loans through our Society. By outward signs he always appeared strictly apolitical but I had a strong feeling that he had considerable sympathy for our cause. Although we did not meet on a large number of occasions towards the latter part of our working life I have missed his company since my retirement.

I had a close association with **Frank Bowler** who was President of the Metropolitan Transport Officers or should I say the Tramways Officers Union when I first knew him. Frank was cast in the same mould as Frank Bennett but my friendship with him was all too short because he died within a short time after I took office. His place was taken by a long time associate **Gil Currie** a long serving officer of the ALP. Gil rarely missed an ALP or TLC meeting for the best part of my term of office with his union which extended over fifteen years as its secretary. He also served as President of the MTTOU and carried his tasks with dedication and efficiency and no doubt when he succeeded me as Secretary he displayed the same attributes. However there are two matters that have bewildered me. Firstly, Gil accepted an award from Sir Charles Court that recognised his previous fifteen years of administration of the Union when in fact I was the custodian of that part of the union's affairs for the greatest part of that period. Secondly, I have always been puzzled as to why I have never been invited to any of the Union's functions since I resigned my position as Secretary almost thirteen years ago.

Despite his unforgivable action in accepting a Knighthood from the Frazer Government after the dismissal of Gough Whitlam, I must include **Jack Egerton** as a good friend. Jack gave me tremendous encouragement in my early years as President of the TLC. He came to WA in 1965 to canvas support for the workers engaged in the famous strike at Mt Isa in Queensland. Shortly afterwards he invited me to the Queensland Labor Day festivities which included a march through the streets of Brisbane on May Day, 1st May.

Trades Hall in Brisbane must surely occupy the highest position geographically in that city. When I was making my way to the hall to take part in the march I could see this blood red flag flying from its mast head and was a prominent sight from any part of the town. Another good friend **Alex McDonald**, the Secretary of the local TLC was a well known communist. When I arrived at my destination I told Alex that I thought it a little bit daring of him to fly the flag when there was so much obvious opposition to his cause. It was his view that Labor Day belonged to the Trade Union Movement and for his part we were entitled to fly the workers flag on our day. I must say that I could not help but agree with him.

There was a great political paradox in Queensland at that time. The Conservatives had taken the Government through the defection of the Labor Premier Vince Gair to the DLP but the Labor Party held twenty seven out of twenty eight seats on the Brisbane City Council. We had the Government in Queensland for around twenty five years prior to the defection but have been in opposition ever since.

Bob Hawke first came to WA as an industrial advocate for the ACTU in 1965 or 1966 and from that time until he came a member of Parliament I enjoyed his personal friendship. We seemed to have much in common apart of course from his exceptional interlectual capacity. He won the 1969 ballot for President of the ACTU by only 49 votes and I am sure that Paddy Troy and I were responsible for at least fifty percent of that number through our efforts in WA. He undoubtedly won the vote with left wing support so his attitude to the right wing today is of extreme surprise and disappointment to me. Don't let it be said that I ever belonged to an extreme left wing group at any time in my career but I have always maintained that the Labor Party is by nature a left wing organisation. In 1971 I sat on the 17 man ACIU Executive where the right had eight votes and the left nine. Bob's support at that time was well and truly with us on the left. His bitterest opponents were in NSW and included the Unsworths, McBeans, Duckers, and the like. Some of his Government's decision have been a disappointment particularly when they have an adverse effect on the people the Labour Party purports to represent but as I have often explained to many of our wavering supporters the worst type of Labor Government is 100 times better than the best of conservatives so far as working people are concerned.

Bill Latter came to Trades Hall from the Collie coalfields early in my career as an organiser with the Miscellaneous Workers Union. He had formerly served with distinction as the President of the Collie Miner's Union. I always regarded Bill as a loyal friend although his views were often in conflict with mine. He was an excellent source of advice and applied himself quite diligently to a study of the States Industrial laws. Both the TLC and many affiliated unions sought his assistance in presenting cases before the Industrial Commission. The incumbent Federal Secretary of the Australian Labour Party, **Bob McMullan** was a protege of Bills during the 1970's. He took a course at the University of WA in industrial law and became influence by the tutoring at this august establishment. For along time it appeared that Bill saw our salvation in the appointment of academics to prominent positions in our movement. I believed that a sprinkling of these people in our midst had some benefit but never considered that they were the panacea to our existence or wellbeing. After I retired from the position of President of the TLC Bill succeeded me for a period of three years, maintaining the dignity of the office in the same manner of which I was so proud.

Harry Bluck must rate a mention in this memoir because he was very much of the same background as myself. We enjoyed a most harmonious relationship during our association. The Musician's Union was Harry's life. I was ever willing to assist Harry with a threat of industrial action if any of his members were not given a fair go by their Hotel employers. Harry showed an abiding interest in the affairs of the TLC and held high office in that organisation for a large number of years. His work on the Arts Council is well known with that body prospering under his astute leadership. His

comradeship has been sadly missed since I severed my links with the active work of the union Movement.

Many other individuals also come into the category of my "good friends" from the Labour Movement. Frank Bastow, Jack Marks, John Try, Jim White, Tom Butler, Bob Fletcher are all mentioned elsewhere, but inevitably I will have left out some and I apologise for that.

Disputes

While I became involved in many disputes during my career they were not all of an industrial character. Many pressure groups looked to the TLC when they needed support for a particular cause. Industrial disputes usually came under the control of the TLC when all other efforts to reach a suitable settlement had failed. Some cynics have asserted that the central body of the trade union movement was the graveyard of all disputes. It is easy to persuade a group of workers to strike but when it comes to a return to work it is an entirely different matter. There is always someone who believes that the people responsible for the handling of the dispute has sold them out.

The following is a short digest of a few of the disputes that it became my lot to assist.

When the Federal Government of the day allowed the South African Rugby Team to tour Australia in 1971 I became involved in one of the most difficult disputes imaginable. I was a member of the ACTU executive in this year when a decision was taken to oppose the tour. Western Australia was the team's first port of call and it became the local TLC's responsibility to resist the tour by imposing as many sanctions as possible against the Employers who gave succour or shelter to any of the players. The principal problem connected with our efforts was that only a small section of our Unions was prepared to give wholehearted support to the bans.

If the firefighters at an airport are not available at an airport no plane can land. Therefore my first job was to endeavour to get this group at the Perth Airport to join our campaign and refuse service to the plane on which the team was travelling. While the Union was affiliated with the ACTU they had no allegiance to the TLC of WA. Unfortunately they refused to accede to our request after Jim Coleman and I addressed them at an airport meeting. We always found that it was extremely difficult to invoke strike action where there was not some financial gain for the workers concerned. The Transport Worker's Union were firmly in support of the boycott but their members at the airport were split on the implementations of it and this caused a number of other problems. The TWU was also having leadership difficulties at that time. I must say however that this union gave to me a lot of support during this dispute. The Breweries Union was one hundred percent behind the campaign and gave notice that it would withhold supplies of beer to any Hotel that gave food or shelter to the team. The Town House in Hay Street Perth accommodated the players and officials and was immediately subjected to the Breweries Union ban. The Bright Spot caterers who were customers of the Swan Brewery provided food and drink to those who attended the game. They were also denied beer supplies despite all kinds of threats of legal action against the Union from the aggrieved employers.

Despite all our efforts the side arrived and a game was played at Perry Lakes Stadium amid violent anti-apartheid demonstrations.

Because of my TLC position, it was not uncommon for me to receive all manner of letters, telephone calls and personal approaches. Some encouraging, some critical, some praiseworthy and others threatening. The threats were of course invariably anonymous by way of letter or phone call but never face to face. My most uncomfortable time came during this South African football team's tour. Phone calls were quite regular some times in the early hours of the morning. For a long time I disconnected my phone at home when I went to bed. It was a favourite caper of these misguided people to ring around 2:00a.m. and then hang up when you answered. One one occasion after a very trying day I was about to start my dinner when the phone rang and it was answered by my youngest son who was 18 years old. He hung up but was white in complexion. I asked him what the trouble was. It was an anonymous call so obscene in character that he has not repeated the text of the message to me to this day.

This particular caller was very persistent after this episode and we tried on several occasions with the help of Telecom to trace the call but without success. I did however eventually gain the confidence of the caller and feigned friendliness with him to a point where he disclosed that he was a friend of George Fogerty a prominent federal Department of Labour official. He also confided his name and that he was also an officer in George's department prior to his retirement. Not wishing to lay a charge against his friend before I informed him, I telephoned George and told him what had transpired and said that I intended to contact the Police and make a formal complaint. George was thunderstruck and said that the person concerned was a most mild-mannered individual and could not understand why he would behave in such a manner. Out of deference to George I did not proceed with my intention but he advised me that he would speak to his friend without delay. Less than an hour later the offender called again and said "you bastard you gained my confidence and then put me in to my friend George." He then discovered my true feelings when I told him that I had deliberately carried the deception and if I ever heard him on my phone again he would be facing a term of imprisonment. That was the last I heard from him but I am certain that he was slightly unbalanced. George Fogarty contacted me the next morning to thank me for my tolerance and to reaffirm his astonishment over the whole incident. Unless you have experienced threats of this nature you could not possibly comprehend the concern and emotional disturbance they create not only to yourself but to every member of your family.

The President of the ACTU, Bob Hawke, passed through the Perth airport on his way to Israel while the dispute was raging in WA. Prior to his arrival he was promised a hostile reception from the pro-apartheid section of the Western Australian community. Jim Coleman, Jack Marks and Bill Latter together with several husky-looking trade unionists whose names I cannot recall joined me to meet Bob at the aircraft to provide a bodyguard when he came through the airport lounge. The demonstrators did not disappoint us but there was no physical violence. While Jim Coleman came to the airport he preferred to stay with the car that was to transport Bob to his Perth hotel.

The team came and left and the bans were lifted, but I still feel a sense of pride in being a part of the start of enlightening the Australian community on the evils of apartheid. I am certain that a proposed cricket tour was postponed because of our efforts. The struggle still continues. It is to be hoped that reforms necessary to bring about change in South Africa are not long in coming.

The first major industrial dispute that I played some part in as President of the TLC after the general strike over the Arbitration Act amendments was at the time when the Conservative Government in WA combined with the Employer's Federation to introduce Japanese labour to work the dredge "Alemeda" at Port Hedland in 1963. This was a most provocative act by the Employers that inflamed the whole of the nation's unions. In essence some 30 Japanese Workers were imported to work the dredge to the exclusion of Australian unionists. They were not covered by an award, were not migrants in any sense of the word and their wage rates and working conditions were never disclosed. In any case the whole concept of Japanese labour being employed in Australia was reprehensible to any right thinking unionist or in fact Australian citizen. The whole workforce associated with the construction phase of the development of Port Hedland came to a halt as a protest over this controversial matter. Despite concerted efforts by our opposition even to the extent of introducing foreign scab labour into the dispute we won out in the end. To have stood idly by and allowed this nefarious scheme to proceed the floodgates would have opened for cheap Asian labour to be imported for the development of the North-West.

The dispute ended in the early hours of the morning in the hotel room of the 'trouble shooter' I have referred to previously. Three Japanese specialists were permitted to remain on the dredge until Australian workers learned the procedures when they then rejoined their comrades in Japan. It was certainly good riddance to a particularly obnoxious industrial practice. Stanley Carter, the present industrial officer employed by Western Mining Corporation, was the Employer's Federation mouthpiece in this dispute. I have never seen anyone more bitter over losing an argument than this man on the night in question. It did him no credit at all and he almost provoked a physical confrontation. From recent newspaper reports on a dispute in Kambalda it seems that his attitude to Trade Unionists and the Trade Union movement generally has not improved.

A dispute of different nature came my way which I believed to be more political than industrial when a body known as the save the Wooroloo Hospital Group asked me to attend a meeting in protest over the conservative government's action to convert the hospital to a low security prison. When I arrived at the entrance to the Hospital grounds the route was manned by hundreds of protesters. It was the first time that I had visited Wooroloo but I could not help being impressed by its magnificent environment. The hospital was being used as a 'C' class nursing home which provided intensive care for elderly citizens. During an inspection of the air conditioned wards and rooms the old folk pleaded with me to somehow stop the Government's proposal. I had never felt so inadequate. It seemed to me to be a crime of considerable magnitude to turn old people out of comfortable surroundings so that prisoners of the State should enjoy their comforts. I knew in my heart that protest was the only weapon I

possessed to combat this outrage.

Most of the permanent residents of Wooroloo were present at the meeting and the large hall was jam-packed with protesters to such an extent that I could not find a seat. An old friend Jim Deveraux who was the Secretary for Health was the self appointed Chairman of the meeting. He shared the platform with the Minister for Health whose name eludes me and the local member and Minister for Police, Jim Craig. When I pressed forward to claim the floor the Chairman ruled that I was not eligible to speak because I had not interest in the matter. This statement was greeted with so much jeering and foot stamping he was compelled to alter his decision. Unfortunately I knew that I was making no impact because by this time I was well aware that the Government's long standing attitude to people with little or no means. It would only be tolerated if it suited the Liberal Party's political ends.

The highlight of the meeting however was the speech of the wife of Dr Peter Chappell, the Hospital's Administrator. She spoke from the rear of the hall for some twenty minutes, then left her place and advanced to the raised platform and pointed directly at the member for the district Jim Craig and asked him "how many votes did you win by at the last election Mr Craig". He replied that it was not a very large number and she said "Mr Craig you are politically dead". She was not completely accurate because Jim retired before the next election but she could take some comfort from the fact that his seat was easily won by the Labor candidate Jim Moiler. Labor won that election but before they took office the damage was done and Wooroloo Hospital had become a prison, a situation that prevailed until this day. Peter Chappell became the administrator of Sunset Home and from personal knowledge I can assert that he carried his tasks at that institution with the same dedication and care that he displayed at Wooroloo.

Prior to his election as leader of the Australian Labor Party, Gough Whitlam featured in a number of controversial incidents. It was his nature to be forthcoming and prepared to speak his mind in a blunt and aggressive manner. I first met him when I was a delegate to a federal conference of the ALP convened to give a decision on his outburst against the so-called "twelve witless men" of the Federal Executive. He sat throughout the conference listening to trenchant criticism of his actions without saying a word in his defence. The conference excused his behaviour without taking any serious disciplinary measure. He was deputy to the then Leader Arthur Calwell. He was never content with being deputy, always asserting that he was destined to become Prime Minister of Australia. After attaining the leadership he set about reorganising the Party with a view to it becoming the government. It must be conceded that he performed this task very efficiently and effectively prior to his destiny being fulfilled in 1972.

However it was not long after his elevation to Leader in 1966 when he made a concerted attack on the Western Australian Branch of the Party saying among other things in an open letter to all affiliated unions that it was little wonder WA was in the political backwaters with a general secretary of the calibre of Joe Chamberlain. This incensed many people in the Party in our state but none more than

myself. I always deemed it an honour to be regarded as a personal friend of Joe's because in my view he was a saviour of the ALP in the turbulent 1950's. He was without peer in the matter of loyalty to our great cause. It should go without saying that I replied to the letter, as President of the TLC, in very strong terms. I told Whitlam that I could understand him throwing a glass of water over Hasluck on the spur of the moment but could not comprehend for the life of me how he could so irrational after due deliberation and make such outrageous allegations against one as dedicated as Chamberlain.

Gough Whitlam journeyed overseas after receipt of my letter and he was due to arrive back in WA the day before our State Congress was scheduled to commence. He invited me to his hotel room to discuss our differences. A more than frank discussion ensued but it was patently obvious that he wanted the meeting to devise a means of resolving the problems that existed between himself and Joe. It was equally obvious that he deeply regretted writing his infamous letter. We parted the best of friends and enjoyed a casual relationship from that time until he became Prime Minister.

Conference convened on the following day. To witness the antics between the protagonists was laughable if it wasn't so serious. Here we had two most prominent figures in the ALP not speaking to each other and worse still behaving like small boys. At the morning tea break I told Jim Coleman that if they continued in this way it was my intention to expose them to the whole of the Trade Union movement by way of a circular to each and every one of the unions affiliated with the TLC. After a short consultation with the President of the ALP Colin Jamieson, to inform him of my intentions a working lunch meeting in the Councils office was arranged. The meeting was attended by Gough and Joe and John Tonkin, Colin Jamieson, Herb Graham, Harry Webb, (Federal ALP Representative), Jim Coleman and myself.

I indicated to those present my intentions if our leaders differences could not be resolved. I reminded them that they were representatives of the masses of our country's working people and their actions were doing a great disservice to these people. John Tonkin was also critical as was Jim Coleman and Colin Jamieson. The meeting was reported to conference after the recess by President Jamieson with a handshake between Gough and Joe to seal the deal. It was one of my proudest moments because I believed it played some part in the Party's ultimate resurgence at the polls both Federally and in WA. Without unity the Labor Party can't ever hope to enjoy the fruits of success at the polls.

The conference referred to above did not conclude on the Friday as was the usual custom. A motion to adjourn until the following Monday was passed. When the meeting opened Colin Jamieson advised the delegates that one of our number in the person of Jim Kelly had passed away during the week-end. He called on all present to stand in two minutes silence as a mark of respect to our former comrade. Jim worked for the Municipal Worker's union as an Organiser. His union's office was directly opposite mine at Trades Hall. He was a huge man of some seventeen or eighteen stone who walked with a pronounced lumbering stride. It was his custom to walk past my office every day to join a group of card players during the lunch break. His footsteps were unmistakeable. After paying our respects to Jim at the conference the outstanding business was completed rather speedily and we

returned to our offices to catch up with the work that had been neglected during the course of the conference.

I thought my ears were playing tricks with me when I heard Jim's lumbering steps outside my office at lunchtime. Going outside I saw him entering the card players room. I looked in the door and saw the four players staring aghast at poor old Jim. One of them said to him "where the hell have you been we thought that you were bloody well dead." Jim was of course just as dumbfounded as all were. The Jim Kelly we stood for in the conference had no connection at all with the Labor Party and Colin Jamieson had naturally been misinformed. On the following day when Jim attended the card playing session one of those present said to him "how are you today Jim?" He replied " a bloody sight better than I was yesterday".

Emotions and sentiments do not play a very active role in industrial relations but I have in my moments of solitude shed many a tear for workers who have become involved in strikes, have lost the main objective but continued their struggle on matters of principle. Untold thousands of unskilled and semi-skilled members of unions have never had anything to sell other than their labour. The only weapon they have at their disposal to defend their occupational interests is to withdraw their labour on the advice of the Trade Union that has industrial cover of the industry in which they are employed.

Such was the position of the workers involved in the 1970 meat industry dispute which resulted in an extended strike to last over eight weeks. The strike was at its worst stage when it was decided to place it in the hands of the TLC disputes committee. The meat workers had lost the dispute. All of them had been sacked and had lost their entitlements to accrued long service and annual leave. The other difficulty was that they belonged to a Union that did not have the industrial strength to call its members out. The workers on strike were employed by the industries abattoirs. Other members were employed in the retail trade and were not supporting their fellow workers.

As a counter to an adverse press it was decided to bar the attendance of all reporters at the numerous meetings that were held. The day this decision was taken I was asked to see all the reporters off the grounds at Perth Oval. They all left except one Sally Squires, a less than five foot, five stone industrial rounds woman for the Daily News. How could a six feet two inch President of the TLC forcibly eject such a small and delightful person. It took all my powers of persuasion to convince her to leave, including the threat to have one of the slaughtermen to carry her out bodily. To digress, Sally often appeared in the Industrial Commission to report proceedings. It was the day of the mini-skirt and as she sat in the court with her legs crossed while writing, I sometimes wondered whether the Commissioners were fully concentrating on the matters before them.

It was alleged by the pickets at Williams Wooroloo abattoir that a security guard had threatened them with a revolver at the works gate. That same evening on Channel Seven a news reporter named Bob Cribb described the events at Wooroloo and concluded by saying the revolver produced was this - and he exhibited an ordinary bolt. This enraged the meat workers particularly the slaughtermen to such an

extent that when the Channel Seven news team arrived at Perth Oval for the next morning's meeting they were ordered to leave. Brian Burke who eventually became the State's Premier was the news reporter. He appealed to me to save a \$5,000 camera that some of the hotheads had threatened to drop over the back of the grandstand onto the concrete below. It took a lot of talking to prevent the destruction of this valuable equipment.

During the course of the dispute the Chief Industrial Commissioner Bernie Sullivan threatened to cancel the meatworker's award and deregister their union if a return to work was not effected. Ultimately a hearing date was set to implement this draconian measure. It was listed for a Monday morning. On the preceding Friday I had met with the Union's Executive and Shop Stewards and worked out a return to work proposal. I was confident that it would be accepted by a mass meeting of workers convened for the following Tuesday or Wednesday. I advised Commissioner O'Sullivan of the progress I had made in my efforts to resolve the dispute and asked for a deferment of the Monday hearing. He refused stating that he was determined to carry his threat. No argument I presented for a deferment would be accepted. The court convened on the Monday with both parties represented by senior counsel. Howard Olney, a present Supreme Court judge, appeared for the Union with Ian Viner for the employers seeking the cancellation of the award and deregistration of the Union.

"Justice should not only be done but should be seen to be done" is a popular maxim in legal circles but this was anything but the case so far as Commissioner O'Sullivan was concerned on this Monday morning. He was on the edge of his seat condemning everything Howard Olney had to say and accepting the employer's counsel's submissions without reservation. Many times since that day I have regretted that I did not intervene and raise an objection. Perhaps I had too much respect for the so called process of law and the institution of the Industrial Commission. The decision was a foregone conclusion. However I must say that the two other Commissioners Kelly and Cort were not as biased as O'Sullivan. I do not say that the decision was wrong at law but the attitude of the Chief Commissioner should have been fairer in dealing with the problem.

These developments did not deter the workers on strike. My eternal admiration goes out to them for their resolution and unity when all was going against them. In my view two events broke the back of the strike. The first was a march by all the workers concerned from Perth Oval to Parliament House for a deputation to meet the Minister for Agriculture Nalder. He along with other conservative members refused to meet a Union delegation. The Leader of the opposition John Tonkin addressed the meeting and pledged his support. At the same time as the workers were assembling the Premier of the State Sir David Brand was scheduled to arrive at Parliament House to meet Officers of a visiting British Warship. The unionists decided to form a narrow aisle so that the Premier and his visitors would have to squeeze past to enter the building. Being forewarned the Premier decided to use another entrance. The British sailors however had to pass through the aisle. It was summertime and they were immaculate in their vivid white dress. As each one emerged from the crowd to run up the steps of Parliament House he was given a rouse cheer. One wag in the assembly called out as one high ranking Officer survived the ordeal "guess whose mum's got a whirlpool (a TV commercial of that time

advertising a washing machine). Amid the laughter accompanying this remark even the Officer acknowledged the wit by smiling and waving back to the unionists. After we had made our point the workers dispersed in an orderly manner without any violence or bad feeling occurring. A Superintendent of Police who was present with a large contingent was lavish in his praise of the behaviour of all present. I was proud of them because even though they had experienced a very rough deal over a number of weeks they did great credit to the Trade Union Movement by their moderation.

As in all protracted disputes the employers and conservative politicians said that it was the Leaders who were keeping the man on strike. If a secret ballot was held the men would return to work. Taking up this challenge we agreed to such a ballot being held among all the workers concerned. The Industrial Commission's Registrar was appointed Returning Officer. The result was an overwhelming 80% in favour of the strike continuing. The dispute was settled after this result was conveyed to the Employers and the Government. All former rights and privileges were restored to the workers but the initial claim was not agreed to. A subsequent Commission hearing gave some redress to the Meat Workers.

International Experiences

In 1969 I was afforded the opportunity of attending the ILO Conference at Geneva and much to my surprise an official invitation to visit the Soviet Union to witness that country's May Day celebrations came from their Trade Union Organisation. The invitation included my wife. It was a lifetime desire to be in Moscow on May Day. We departed Perth on Anzac Day of that memorable year and journeyed directly to Moscow via Singapore, Bombay and New Delhi. Our overnight stay in Bombay gave us a brief glimpse of that tragic place with all its poverty. The memory of little children asleep on the airport steps in the early hours of the morning while their parents begged for money has never left our thoughts after all these years. To see homeless people sleeping on the side of the road with vehicles passing within a few feet of them was equally distressing.

I discovered a great affinity with the trade unionists and workers I met in the Soviet Union during this visit and I must say that this attachment to these people has remained with me over the years. I am more than convinced that Russian people generally never want to go to war again after their experience during 1931 to 1945. There is no doubt that the kindness we experienced was intended to create a good impression of their system but human emotions cannot be manufactured. The tears they shed on our departure were truly reciprocated by us and this in my view went far beyond our friends' duty to their system of Government. I exchanged fraternal greeting and gifts with our hosts for many years after our return to Australia. My principal regret is that I did not resist more strongly those narrow minded right wing people in our movement who were opposed to any contact with these good people because of ideological differences. However I broke the ground for reciprocal visits with the Trade Unions in Estonia by visiting that Republic at the request of the Soviet Union's central body, with my wife Elsie. I take enormous pride in this achievement and I hope the regular visits will continue into the future. It is only by dialogue with these will we be able to establish goodwill and an understanding of each others problems. The Trade Union Movements of our respective countries are by far the best

vehicles to bring this about. In war the people who make the greatest sacrifice are the workers.

A visit to the war cemetery in Leningrad is a stark reminder of the suffering endured by the courageous citizens of this city during the 900 day siege during the last war. It was our privilege to be there on the anniversary of the day Germany surrendered, 8th May 1945. Although 25 years had passed since that day the people who visited the cemetery were overcome by their emotions. I must confess that I was equally affected in this regard. I still recall the answer one of the veterans of the siege gave me when I said "you must have a great hatred of Germans". He replied "we don't hate Germans only Nazis".

The ILO conference is an overwhelming experience with some 120 countries represented by their Government, Union and Employers attending. We were broken up into various committees that were required to report to the plenary session of the conference. I was appointed to a committee that dealt with unemployment in the developing countries. The conference ultimately decides whether its decisions are forwarded to the respective countries as recommendations or conventions which if adopted by the countries concerned ultimately become a law of the land. Some nations do adopt the conventions but fail to put them into effect. For example the conservative Government of Australia consistently voted in favour of the convention that gave women equal pay but never passed the necessary legislation to bring this about.

During the period of the conference Clarrie O'Shea was gaoled in Australia for failing to pay a fine on behalf of his Union under the penal provisions of the Federal Arbitration Act and the ACTU had called a twenty four hour stoppage in protest over his gaoling. Every few days during the conference the respective parties convene meetings to hear reports from the committees. I requested the Australian Union delegation to call on all the Union representatives from the member countries to walk out of the main plenary session when the conservative Australian Minister for Labour (Bury) addressed the conference in protest over the Australian Government's action in gaoling a Trade Unionist under the penal provisions of its Arbitration Act. Our leader and the president of the ACTU refused to bring this matter before the worker group. I then volunteered to perform this task. Monk told me that if I did he would repudiate my actions and vote against my motion. The other members of our delegation supported him. Finding myself without support in this matter I withdrew. I must say here, however, that my fellow delegates displayed a spineless attitude. There were other matters of less significance that were acted upon by the worker group. Fortunately Bob Hawke was elected to the top job in the ACTU in this year and decisions taken by this organisation at his suggestion ensure that no other unionist was treated in the same manner as O'Shea again for defying the penal provisions. I very much doubt that we would get the same militancy from Bob today.

Due to Albert Monk's intransigent manner the conference was not as rewarding as I expected but four years later I attended again under Bob Hawke's leadership and found much more satisfaction. In this year 1973 I was invited to West Germany to study the Union Movements involvement in banking, insurance and housing. It was a large enterprise that was started after the defeat of Hitler's Germany. We were interested in these matters in Australia at that time but lack of funds and support from

individual Unions destroyed any hope of developing similar enterprises within our movement in Australia. As an example one of the Germans said to me that we had no chance of beating the system in our country because the large enterprises would cut the ground from underneath us within two years by using their huge resources to discount any prices that we may advance. They had succeeded in Germany with the help of the allies after the war by starting from scratch with their main competitors in similar circumstances. I believe the philosophy behind the allies action was to develop a strong Trade Union organisation that could not be destroyed in the same manner as Hitler's regime had done.

Bob Hawke was imbued with the idea of starting something similar to the German operation in Australia but his efforts fell through because of lack of support from the conservative minded Trade Union Movement. He involved the ACTU in a partnership with the Burkes store in Melbourne but this also failed in the long run. During this year I was also hosted by the Unions in the Scandinavian countries of Sweden and Denmark and gained an insight into the political and industrial structure of these nations. The Socialist Movement was at the height of its popularity in this region at this time and I was told by the Union leaders I met that their Government sometimes became a source of embarrassment through their generosity to the workers. Apparently the Prime Minister of Denmark was a former leader of the Trade Unions in that country. In my long experience with the political wing of our movement in Australia none of our Labor Governments have had the courage to bring about this kind of situation in our work force. I suppose Whitlam came the closest to our dream or the light on the hill and we all know what happened to him. The conservatives have no compunction in handing out favours to the people who place them in office from time to time. Our people always offer the excuse that they are elected to serve all the people. No doubt they are but in the process of advancing this policy they have a tendency to forget their background.

Conclusion

After all my years in the Labour Movement there are many pleasant memories to look back on. I treasure them and I hope those who read this will gain something from them. But one great disappointment remains. This is that despite the fact that we have had a predominance of Labor Governments for a long time now Chifley's "Light on the Hill" doesn't appear to be any closer.

Chifley said "if a thing is worth fighting for, fight for the right and no matter what the penalty, truth and justice will prevail". That's what the Labour Movement has to do - keep fighting.

The Trades and Labour Council's Oral History Project*

Stuart Reid†

First of all, the aim of the project was to document the stories of people who made significant contributions to the political, industrial and social history of Western Australia. I took it very literally as "the stories of people". I worked on the basis that the significant contributions would probably be recorded in things like the transcripts of Industrial Commission hearings, the Minutes of Union meetings and so on. So what I wanted to do in the oral histories was to get supporting material that would give an idea of what kind of people it was that made these contributions, what kind of background they had, what kind of families they came from, what kind of upbringing and schooling they had, what kind of work they'd done before they'd got involved in the Union movement, why they got involved in the Union movement. How they felt about the things they had done in the Union movement and what kinds of ideas and philosophies drove them through the time that they were working with the Union movement. Sometimes I was more successful in achieving that than others. But I was more interested in that kind of thing than in getting a sort of consecutive, chronologically correct account of events and that's not to say that I wasn't interested in 'the truth'. I was very much interested in getting to the core of the story and I would chase people up if I thought their story was vague or had internal contradictions.

But the aim of the project was to give people an opportunity to tell of their experiences in an environment that wasn't alien to them, that wasn't threatening in any way. So I didn't take an approach like a journalist coming along with the microphone thrust in the face and asking "What do you mean by holding the country to ransom in the 1952 Metal Workers' strike?" I didn't take anything like that approach at all. In fact, a good deal of the time was spent very much coaxing people to talk. A lot of people they don't get asked to talk about their work or their life, very often. They may tell stories from their life from time to time, but when you sit down with someone for an hour or two hours, they get to a stage where they start to think "Well you couldn't possibly be interested in any more of this", but of course, you are. You want to know it all, and so you have to coax people to go on talking.

That brings me to a point about oral history generally. You're looking for three things. You're looking for people who were involved in interesting events or interesting times, people who remember those times and people who are good story tellers about those times. But in this project it was a little different from that because we were really interested in the first thing. We wanted a record of those people, whether they were good story tellers or not. What counted was the fact that they made a direct contribution. This was a union project and we wanted to show that the Union movement cares about the contribution that people have made. We wanted to show that the retired people have been and still are valued.

* This paper was first given at a meeting of the Perth Branch of the Australian Society for the Study of Labour History on 10 March 1989.

† Stuart Reid is an oral historian who was employed by the TLC to undertake this project.

The other thing about the project was that we were trying to get stories that we could re-tell and write up as articles in Union papers, so we were looking for popular stories, the kind of things that would make a good read or a good radio programme or whatever. And we got some beauties, I think. We've got some very good stories that go a lot further than just Union articles. There's one story in this lot which I think would make a feature film or a television mini-series. It's the story of the Kalgoorlie race riots in the 1930s. And there are plenty of other stories, just heaps of them.

That's the general background to the project. First of all, we only had a few names given to us by Unions, but we also had a fairly good list of names from the previous project, "Organise - Visual History of the Labor Movement." So I had plenty of names to start with and my approach was just to go through the list. But before I did that, I went and spoke to Bill Latter whom I knew had an interest in Labor History and he very generously gave me a half a day of his time and orientated me to the whole project. I also spoke to Lenore Layman and Michael Hess about the academic questions that were of interest and the sorts of things that they would like me to get answers to and I got a few hints from that as well. So I started ringing people up and I would introduce myself, tell them a little bit about the project in a few sentences and then ask them if they were interested in going on discussing it over the phone. If they were and most were, then I would start to ask them some questions about their contribution to the Union movement, the sorts of positions they'd held and that discussion would just give me a bit of an idea as to whether or not this was someone that we should follow up and interview. And in almost every case it was. One or two people ruled themselves out as we were going through it, but for the most part there was a good reason for interviewing everyone I rang.

I'd set up interviews for the next couple of weeks, three weeks ahead and that, I realized looking back on it, had some problems, because there were some key people that I missed out on interviewing because they weren't available at the time that I sat down to make my phone calls for the next three weeks. Jack Marks is one that I tried a number of times to get onto and couldn't interview, but I hope there'll be an opportunity to do that sometime in the future.

So the interviews were then done in people's homes and the range of homes is amazing. You could do a study just on that! But one thing that was the same from all the people that I went to was the hospitality in their homes. It was tremendous. It really was great and I'd just like to record my thanks to them for looking after me while we were there.

The first half hour or so was spent on what you might call, loosely, 'research', just getting a general outline of their careers, the interesting points, what was of interest to them, the milestones in the Union history and orienting myself so that I knew what specific questions to ask of them. Then it was onto the interview and the interview and these ranged in length from about one hour up to seven hours or eight hours. And that's actually at a stage now. We've done the interviews and now we're getting transcripts made and considering what can be published. Here are some extracts from the interviews, which will give you an idea of the material we've collected.

Rosa Townsend

The first group of extracts are from the Rosa Townsend interview. Rosa Townsend was the organiser for the Hotel Club Caterer's Union for seventeen years up to I think about 1982. The reason I'm starting with that interview is because she's talking about one of the people who was in a previous generation of unionism, someone who's no longer with us, but who had a very interesting career in the Trade Union movement and that's Cecilia Shelley, who was the Secretary of that Union for 47 years.

"She had a great record in those days and she was a real firecracker! She had the Albany Bell girls from the tea rooms out on strike, first when they had their premises in Forrest Place and she had them picketed. She had the Explanade Hotel in Perth, which was THE big hotel in Perth, where Bob Menzies stayed and all those people stayed, you know, the Joan Fontaine and all those people stayed and she had that picketed. I believe she had them on strike for months there and she was very well known. She was known as the Tigress of Trades' Hall to all the unionists and everyone was frightened of her."

Rosa has a particularly good story about Miss Shelley which I won't actually play for you just now - but it's a story from Rosa's very early working life when she was probably fifteen and this was in the '30's. She'd been working for a year, at 7/6 a week in a house in Peppermint Grove and working very, very long hours, day and night, seven days a week. She heard about milk bars opening up in Fremantle and went down there and got a job at 15/- a week. She was there for two weeks and still hadn't been paid and at the end of the second week when everyone else got their money, she went and asked to be paid and the response was, "you don't ask me for money. You're sacked!" And that was it, she was out. So as a fifteen year old she went crying home to her mother and her mother said, "We'll see Miss Shelley about this." Miss Shelley went down there and put the fear of God into this woman and got her back pay for both weeks, also got her five pounds for the uniform that she was supposed to have, which had been given to her by a friend. Rosa recalls that she went away from the experience feeling very wealthy and with a respect for unionism, which has stayed with her in one way or another, throughout her life.

It must have been about thirty years later when Rosa Townsend met Miss Shelley again and the circumstances were very different then. Rosa had taken some friends from the cafeteria that she worked in to the Union meeting over some grievance they had and found that there was an Organiser position being advertised and the women that Rosa worked with, talked her into applying for this Organiser position.

"In those days, you had to go to a general meeting and be voted in by the floor of the meeting and I grabbed the girls up and said, "You talked me into this, you'd better come and vote for me," which they did. We stacked the meeting and Miss Shelley had stacked it too because she wanted her niece at that time to be the Organiser I won by 28 votes. She didn't remember who I was. It was years later I mean I was fifteen, sixteen when she'd got that money for me and I was Rosa Foster then and

when I got the job of course, it was Rosa Townsend and all those years later and she didn't realise that I was one and the same person. She was always worried about the DLP and one day when we'd been out together looking at some books or something and we were coming over the horse-shoe bridge and she stopped in the middle of it, this day. She'd been pretty hard on me for about three months and she said, "tell me, are you a plant from the DLP.?" And I looked at her and I laughed and said - "Is that why you've been giving me an awful time?" She was, she would hardly speak to me, and she was real rough. "I thought you were planted from the DLP", she said and I said, "Don't you know who I am?" I knew who she was and she said, "No". And I said, "I'm Fossie's daughter", that's what they used to call my Mum. She said, "You're not Fossie's daughter". And I said, "I am". She said, "but " and I said "yes, the name's Townsend now but it was Foster.". Oh, she put her arms around me and said, "Oh , my darling, I am sorry," she said, "I didn't know" and I said, "Yes," and she said, "Why didn't you tell me?" And I said, "I naturally thought you knew but I thought, when you were giving me a hell of a time, I thought you probably didn't like my mum."

She said, "I adored your Mum, she was a real battler, she worked so hard for the Union, for the movement, for everybody". And I said, "I know, that's why I couldn't understand it." So from then on, I could do no wrong. I was okay and she treated me very well."

While Miss Shelley's worries about the DLP were misplaced as far as Rosa Townsend was concerned, the Union did have their problems with the DLP later on and in fact, her worst fears were realised when Michael Yakitch won the Secretary's position from her and there was a series of Court cases and meetings and changing the padlocks on the doors and freezing the bank accounts, the whole bit, a great deal of acrimony there for months and months and months. It's a very convoluted story so I won't play you all the details of that just now, although quite a lot of it is on the tape. But one of the more humorous aspects of that relates to an article that appeared in Smith's Weekly at the time.

Rosa Townsend recalls that "We had this story that Jan Mayman wrote, she was a journalist and they wouldn't print it, so she got it printed in the Smith's Weekly. And the Smith's Weekly had great big headlines: **HITLER'S COOK SACKS UNION ORGANISER** because he was a cook for Hitler during the war. He boasted this, that he was his chef. "**HITLER'S COOK SACKS VIETNAM MUM - A MOTHER WHOSE CHILD, WHOSE ONLY CHILD, ONLY SON WAS FIGHTING IN VIETNAM**, was sacked by this Hitler's cook". Oh it would make you cry, great big screed, we were on television, reporters came to see us and we were on television and some of my friends said, "Gee I heard that voice and then ' that's Rosa' How we'd been sacked by Hitler's cook. And they went on and on and on."

That's just a few extracts from the interview with Rosa Townsend. The rest of the interview has stories about her childhood on a group settlement scheme, visits of John Curtin to her father's house and all sorts of incidents in her 17 years as an Organiser. Stories she refers to as "oh another funny thing happened", turned out to be classic cases of sexual harassment, but anyway, it's a very interesting interview. Rose also talks about her visit to the USSR.

MARY PISONI

Another woman that I interviewed, Mary Pisoni, she may be known to some of you as Mary Falk, had a very different role in the Union movement. For 42 years she worked in the office of the Plumbers' Union. I felt and so did, Wendy Wise and Robyn Ho, who were co-ordinating the project with me, that it was important not to just interview Organisers and Officials, but also the staff, because they had a particular insight and had made an important contribution as well. And she saw a lot of changes in that time and she was there, brought in some herself, a new book-keeping system for the Plumber's Union, things like that. She talks about the various secretaries and organisers and the amalgamations, the Trade's Hall picnics, all sorts of things like that, as well as the type of work that she was doing and there was an enormous amount of typing in those days, because there were no photocopiers and it was even some time before duplicating machines came into the office.

But one of the things she talks about which I would like to play you, it's not in the same category as sort of funny stories or gripping exciting bits, but indicates something that came though a lot of these interviews and that is, the social and welfare role of the Union office.

Mary recalls, "Sending out the accounts oh anything that people, members brought in, their wives brought in. I even remember filling out some forms for somebody who didn't understand what they had to do for their children to go to different schools. On at least two occasions that I can remember I helped people make out their wills. We did a lot of things for people that way. You had time to talk to them, let them talk and we listened and probably helped them. We organised the Christmas trees and we had a Christmas tree every year for the children of the members. We sent out a form for listing the children and the ages and then we bought, sometimes with the help of the Committee, we'd buy presents or we'd go and buy the presents and then the Committee would come and help us to wrap all the presents and mark them with the children's names."

The Union office also used to help people find work. Mary recalls that "we did it all actually for many, many years. So much so, that the Social Security or the Unemployment Office as it was in those days, said to us, "Well we're not getting any plumbers, only the ones that aren't much good." Well, there was a reason for that because those people, we found them hard to place and of course, they'd go down there as a last resort. We had an unemployment register on the counter, people used to come in, we'd send out telegrams or phone if we could or quite often I used to go round, past them on the way home from work and tell people to report at a certain place the next day, or the Secretary would do that too."

The Kalgoorlie Riots: TED THOMPSON, JACK COLEMAN, BOB FLETCHER

Ted Thompson was an Organiser with the Bricklayers' Union and also later the Building Workers' Industrial Union, and his recollections go back to the days of driving a team of driving a team of horses in the twenties on dam building projects in Victoria and right up to the big construction projects in Kwinana and Pinjarra. He talks about carrying a swag around WA, about Kalgoorlie in the thirties, Boulder in the thirties, his war experiences and then his retraining as a bricklayer when he came back.

He's also a pretty good story teller and his descriptions of the Kalgoorlie race riots are especially vivid in extracts.

Two other people who talked about those riots as well - there were actually several - but two that I've chosen today are Jack Coleman who was a Communist on the Fields and Bob Fletcher who was with the AWU on the Goldfields and also the ALP. For those of you who are not familiar with them, it might be quite an eye-opener to hear some of the things that went on in Kalgoorlie in 1934.

Ted Thompson recalls that, "it started off with an Italian man had a fight with an Aussie bloke and he pushed him over or something like that thd he hit his head on the pavement and died. And of course that started - it was at a place called the "Home From Home Hotel' - and that started all the Aussies and the Brits who went down to see what was going on and the Italians was there. They set fire to the Hotel and one thing from the other and they went round from hotel to hotel to hotel and set fire to wherever the Italians were and poor little Greek people, they had little shops there and pushed them out of the shops."

"It was racial and it shouldn't have been, because these fellows were pretty fair sorts of fellows the Italians, the Slavs, good workers and fairly good mates, but it just got incensed at killing an Aussie bloke and that wasn't on as far as we were concerned. I think we had Martial Law up there and we all had to stop in at a certain time. We got to throwing jam tin bombs at one another and all kinds of things like that. But it should never have been but that's just how it turned up like that. Sometimes we thought the Italians were getting like, in some places there you could earn better money, perhaps in a drive or a rise or in a stope or whatever you were in there. Perhaps you thought, well perhaps that bloke is getting better money or he's giving a bit of a kick back to the shift boss and there was a bit of that in it too."

Jack Coleman had a different view of the riots. He recalls that, "It was Australia Day weekend and this chap, popular footballer bloke by the name of Jordan, that was his name, he had to be advised to go home and put up a bit of a scuffle and he fell over and cracked his head. He had a very thin skull. So next day was Australia Day holiday and the word went round the town that Jordan had been bashed on the head with a bottle, he'd been kicked to death by Italian barmen because there was an Italian licensee at the hotel, the old Home From Home."

"So by Monday night when everybody had had the chance to get full of steam they turned up in the evening, at the "Home From Home", put on a show, set it alight, completely wrecked it, gutted it. Even to the extent there were people running around still up on the second storey, I believe, and trying to get down. The Fire Brigade came along and they chopped the hoses. Then they went over the road and burnt the Kalgoorlie Wine Saloon and all All Nations Boarding House next door. Then they surged up Hannan Street and wrecked every foreign-owned buildings premises, fish shops and what not and they really made a mess of it."

"Then they turned their attention to Boulder and they went out to Boulder and burnt down the Main Reef and Osmeti's Cornwall Hotel, Mrs. Fury's out in Boulder. Well that was the Monday night and next day there was ferment. The miners had a meeting at the shaft head and decided not to work and carried resolutions that they weren't going to work with foreigners, really took fire you know. The noisiest, loudest, less thinking ones led it all."

Ted Thompspon remembers that "It was Italians versus the Aussies and the British. A lot of them had tarpouline tents on what the call Fly Flats and a lot of them camped there - good blokes they were, too - we got a bit silly and went out getting into them there, fighting with them there, trying to burn the tents down and this and that. Then we got on one side of the Fly Flat and they got on the other and we started putting fracture, gelignite, in jam tins and throwing it at one another. And one day the policeman come along and he was a good old bloke too and said, "Hey you boys, cut it out" he said, "You'll get into real trouble if you don't stop fighting". And one of the blokes threw a jam tin at old Sam and Sam shot for his life and we didn't see him for a couple of days after that, but by that time the Militia had come and the game got quite serious. But eventually it ended there."

"When it got quite serious, the militia come up and the Mayor of Boulder got everybody assembled to the corner of Bourke Street in Boulder there and told everybody that they had to go home by eight o'clock or ten o'clock, I've forgotten what it was now, and stop home. But anyway, we didn't take much notice of that and they started burning the hotels and they burned a hotel near where I lived and somebody rolled out some great big barrels of wine and then they opened the casks to let them run on the ground just to spill and desecrate everything, I thought well I'll catch some. So I got a big jug, and filled this jug with wine."

Jack Coleman's recollections are more of an analysis of what the nature of the events. "The word went round they were going "to clean the Dings out, burn them out", you know and they did try to that night. That night there was a big meeting called down in the Richardson Street Reserve alongside the bowling green and all the politicians were there, a lot of them you know, rushed to the scene and Union Officials - the greatest lot of cowards out. This mob in front of them, the best part of the mob, the rat bags were elsewhere, I'll tell you in a minute. And they were up there rubbing their hands and they were saying "Alright men, you won't have to work instead of standing up and saying "working men unite". That's what you've got to do, work with your fellow worker. Anyway, prior to this meeting, that's what I want to tell you, Bronc Finlay and a few of us, we produced a leaflet, I've still got a copy of the leaflet we produced. We were giving it out to the mob as they surged along Lane Street and as they got off the trams. They weren't interested in it. And we called upon them to fight for conditions, shorter hours and so on and that sort of thing."

"Anyway, this meeting was in progress and all of a sudden it starts. Be about three or four hundred yards away, just over the other side of the railway line, along Powell Street. Gelignite bombs started to go off, rifle fire and everything. I, with a couple of others, we walked around up Bourke Street, up on to the Boulder Station and looked across and all along a great row of houses, about one hundred

and seventy houses were burned. Strangely enough, only two people died in the battle, a Slav was shot and an Australian. All Australians for that matter - but you know, a foreign born Australian was stabbed. Stokes and Katich, they were the only casualties, and there was this awful burning you know and the police were absolutely useless. We didn't know what to do, we didn't expect that, us lefties, party blokes and so on. We didn't know what the heck to do, the best we could do was the leaflet. the next day was a Wednesday and town sobered up a lot. There were attempts next day I believe, to made trouble, some boarding house in Wilson Street in Kalgoorlie and by Thursday Phil Collier's train load of Specials had arrived and just to show you what a fraud, what a rotten world it is and how they used slander. Collier's statement was, "it was caused by local Communists". Yes, and we were the only ones trying to stop it."

"They held a meeting on the Thursday night in the Boulder Town Hall, and said yes they can go back to work but they had to learn English. What a silly thing. Of course they went back to work and it didn't take long to get back to the old good feeling, it wasn't ever a bad feeling really. It's the same as it is here today for the Vietnamese and so on, not so sharp as that perhaps."

BOB FLETCHER

Bob Fletcher has a different set of recollections again. He says, "...I'll never forget those riots. I was the Chairman of the AWU and the position was that a Member of Parliament came up and he said "what are you going to do Bob?" He said "how are we going to get these fixed?" And I said "look, Charlie (Charlie Williams it was, he was in the Upper House), the only way I can think of getting them fixed is by enforcing the Act and the Act says that you've got to be able to speak English and understand English." And so I said, "That's the only way I can see." And so he said "Do you think it will work?" And I said, "I don't know, we can try it". And so we decided to call a meeting in the park on this day and it was advertised in the paper and everyone was there that worked in the mines whether they were shift bosses or just truckers or I don't know what they were. There was hundreds there."

"And Charlie Williams - they used to call him Shitty Williams because he had worked in the mines and I believe he used to be in charge of the toilets before he got into Parliament. Anyhow he was a good old worker as far as that went, in Parliament he said, "Look Bob," he said, "I'll open the meeting for you and tell them that you want to address them because of all this trouble." Because a whole lot of Special Police had been sent up by the Premier of Western Australia to stop the riots. I saw a piano tipped out of the first floor on to the ground in Hannan Street, through windows, smashed windows and they tipped the piano out. It was someone's piano. BANG."

"Anyhow, I got up there and Charlie introduced me and I said, "Now look you chaps, the first thing you've got to do, we've got to get back to work" - Oh what a reception I got! "You bloody twister! You bloody twister! What are you coming at?!" Charlie Williams said, "Now shut up you and give him a go, give him a go. He hasn't finished. You wait". So they gave me a go and I said, "Under the Act you know, you must be able to talk English and understand it properly and know what

you're talking about and be approved of as an English-speaking person in order to work underground. Now then. Now's your opportunity. Let's enforce the Act!" "Oh bloody good job! Oh yeah!!" And so I'd say at least five hundred jokers were there in this big park, you see. Anyhow they agreed and so we went back and everything went alright. A lot of them could talk English whether they were Italians or anything. But we got back, and we'd been out for quite a while."

There's three different perspectives on the riots, one from one of a participants, one from one of the Communists there who were very critical of the rioters, very critical of the politicians and of the Union Officials, and a view from one of the Union Officials who was involved in the final meeting. I chose those extracts because they show the way that oral history can be used to cast different lights on a story. I mean, if we only had one of those sources, or if we only had the documentary sources, we would get a very different perspective on what had happened. I'm sure if you'd read what was in the papers at that time, it would be quite a lot different. You certainly wouldn't hear any mention of Communists producing pamphlets saying it was a bad thing. So here we have an example of the value of oral history and also the way in which it can be put together. There's a good deal of work that would need to be done on that to make it into an exciting radio presentation but you get the idea, that's the raw material that would be used to make up such a presentation.

Now I'd like to run through eight or nine minutes of short extracts from a whole lot of different interviews just to give you an idea of the variety of information we've been gathering.

BOB HARTLEY, Secretary Metropolitan Council of the ALP and the Trades Hall Incorporated, 1943-63. "I was born in a village called Bamber Bridge in Lancashire in England in 1897. My Father and Mother were both weavers. We were very poor people at that time. Later on my Father did take on selling insurance although he didn't do very good. He wasn't a very good salesman. But because of his activities at night after work was over, he was charitable enough to be reading the daily newspaper for a blind man. And this blind man and he became very good friends. One evening he said to my Father, "Jack, do you bet on horses?" My Father said, "no." He said, "Well you'd better begin because the English Derby is going to be run shortly and there's a horse I know. I've been studying the form and it's a very good price and this horse will win it. Now you put all the money you've got on Santoy in the English Derby." My Father thought the matter over and discussed it with my Mother and he put the money in, as much as he had. Risked the lot. And it won at 40 to 1!! I just forget the year, but I think it must have been about 1900 or 1901. And that was the beginning of my Father's career as a licensed Public House owner."

BRONC FINLAY

"And one of our chaps took a holiday to Sydney once, to Melbourne and his relation was working for the Nobels the explosives people. And he asked this chap, Do you people in Kalgoorlie get rebates? What do you call rebates? The Company gets a rebate on the explosives they use and do the miners get it? No! It's not passed on to miners. So he came back to Kalgoorlie and he told us about this and I'm going to campaign about this. So we took it to the Company and said, look, we think we're

entitled to a rebate on the fracture our men buy and you should give us this rebate. They refused though. We went to Kalgoorlie, we lost in Kalgoorlie. We won in Perth, went to Melbourne, and went to the High Court of Australia. It involved thousands of pounds in those days. The average man got about sixty or seventy pounds rebates you know, and there were hundreds of cases, hundreds! That was started by the Communist Party Branch in Kalgoorlie!"

BILL WOODS Snr, Seamen's Union, Miscellaneous Workers' Union.

"I got to know Albert Monk, the former President of the ACTU very well through Joe Pereira. Albert when he was over, he used to come over and have a drink with me. He didn't come over very often, but when he did, you know. So we were on first name terms, old Albert and I. I gave him a nice old cooking one time when we were trying to get the Trades and Labor Council formed here and he wouldn't speak to me for a while but he took the bat out on Jim Healey who I knew very well and he knew I knew Jim Healey very well. We were both Party members. And Jim Healey wrote over and asked me to write a letter of apology to Monk, because Monk was giving him a hard time because Jim was on the Interstate Executive in the ACTU at the time. But I wouldn't write an apology to him. Bugger him! What I told him was the truth. Because I was ostracised by all the Trade Union Officials because Albert was like Hirohito, you know, they used to bow and scrape to them in those days. He was a very important figure."

JIM MUTTON, AMWU

"They never had two bloody bob to scratch themselves with right from the start. But I mentioned to you a little while ago about some of the loyal blokes from the A.S.E. many years ago, unfortunately most of them have passed away. They only stayed in the A.S.E. for one particular reason, as they said themselves and that is, they were in for the death benefit fund. They said, at least we'll get something out of it!"

JIM DIX, Waterside Workers Federation

"My Dad was a coalminer and he started in the mines when he was fifteen and became President of Collie Coalminers' Union later in his life. During the Depression of course they closed the mines down and he did a lot of ancilliary work on the dole. One of those jobs, interestingly, was when he worked as a powder monkey on the building of the Wellington Dam just out of Collie and that's where the Bell Brothers started. Old Bell had two or three horses and drays, which was the transport in those days and one of his famous statements was: give me the unemployed Collie Coalminers, they'll shovel all day without straightening their bloody backs!"

"...His fighting name (he used to fight in the boxing rings around Fremantle years and years ago) was Bull McCoy a real old time fighter but he had a heart of gold. And he used to do the welfare work for the waterside workers, the sick waterside workers. He'd visit them in hospital, he would organize collections on the waterfront for them and then he passed away in 1964, then I took the job on. The Union asked me would I take the job on and I did, I was there for about five years. I thoroughly enjoyed the work and I learnt quite a lot to do with it. First of all, the sick members on the waterfront,

and I've already spoken about the collections that we started, the welfare fund that we started for them because I realized that something had to be organized about them having to go on the pay lines every week to collect it and with that welfare scheme, of course, it was a shilling a week taken out of everybody's pay. That was only one little portion. The rest of the welfare work meant that you had to visit whenever our members were sick and in hospital. Every weekend, Saturday, Sunday and Monday, all the hospitals around Fremantle and Perth metropolitan area, I would visit..."

FRED HAGGER, Secretary, BWIU

"The last one that happened was when they built the new cricket stand down at the WACA as to who was going to fix and secure the seats. The BWIU won that. I'm not crowing about that. It's nothing to crow about. The fact of the matter is it should never have got to that stage. I mean what are the important issues - wages, conditions and keeping your eye on the boss! Not your fellow work mate and I want to see the day where in the lunch sheds, we sit together as building workers. We changed our name to the Building Workers' Industrial Union, not carpenters, not bricklayers, not plasterers; building workers. And there are different categories - there's labourers, there's plasterers, there's bricklayers. So we sit together as a building worker and one day it may well be that the General Secretary of the organization will be a labourer, as I became the General Secretary as a bricklayer."

BARNEY O'CONNER, Federated Moulders Union

"The chain broke, down came the block and tackle and hit the board between, right where the man was hoisting it. It didn't hit him but it smashed the board right in two and the mould came bank on to the ground. But as it was up on there the moulder who was alongside of me put his head under to have a look to see if it was alright there. He was in a hurry doing that. I said, 'Get your head away from there. Something will happen.' I'd no sooner said those words - and being an apprentice, you're not supposed to give any cheek in those days to the tradesman - and he pulled his head away and down came the mould. Incidentally, I wasn't chastised then."

SENATOR PAT GILES, Hospital Employees Union

"Dinnertable diplomacy it's called. I mean you've just got to hang around until they accept your bona fides. The first few meetings of the Trades and Labor Executive that I attended I found that it didn't matter what I said, no-one was hearing me or seeing me. After that, if I contributed anything I'd be jumped on, right, whatever I was saying would be denied. The blue collar Union fellows found it very difficult in those days to understand that occupational health for example, was an enormous issue in hospitals. They assumed hospitals were healthy places. So that would be the sort of thing where they would deny whatever I was saying. But I suppose after about three months, I was beginning to hear them say things that I had been saying when they hadn't been listening to me or when they'd been telling me I'd been wrong, and as I described it, it's exactly like a marriage except that there are eighteen of the blighters."

Recollections of the Union of Australian Women in Western Australia*

Madge Cope†

The Union of Australian Women was formed about 1950 or '51. I wasn't in it then right from the beginning but I recall that it was an expansion of the New Housewives Association. Now there was an old Housewives' Association which was just worried about household things and then some of the women got a bit more progressive and they thought they'd form a body and call it the New Housewives Organization. But some of the people thought that wasn't progressive enough so they formed the Union of Australian Women. It was already established in the Eastern States so they followed on and actually it also followed on in Perth from the Modern Women's Club which folded about that time. The Modern Women's Club was started by Katherine Suzzanah Pritchard and that carried on for about ten years I suppose.

In fact, our initial meeting was down in the old rooms of the Modern Women's Club but two women came along from the old Housewives' Organization and their question was, Why was it necessary to have another body when they were already there? So one of the questions we asked them was, what is your attitude to the forty hour week? And they said we wouldn't be in that, it would be disastrous for Australia to have a forty hour week. They'd never heard of such a thing. It was just ridiculous to even think of it. So we pointed out there that that was the difference between them and us and we went on from there. But the reason we changed was because housewives were much too restrictive. We really wanted an organisation for women in general, not just housewives.

So the UAW became the only progressive Organization of Women in Perth at the time. We had many interrelated aims. Peace was one of the main ones as well as women's rights and children's rights. We took direct action to achieve these objectives. We used to have petitions, peace petitions. We took part in the Stockholm appeal when it first came out for banning the bomb tests and we were always going out collecting signatures for petitions. We always took part in the May Day and Labour Day marches, in fact we always had a float with a peace slogans on the side and we carried as many children as we could because we were concerned with any of the aspects that related to women and children.

Price control also concerned us and we used to have petitions for that. One petition about the quality of goods was about stockings. They were always laddering and we thought they weren't good enough for the price we were paying for them. Another time we decided to boycott buying bacon because bacon had gone up to an awful price and everyone always had bacon and eggs for breakfast in

* This paper was first given as a talk to a meeting of the Perth Branch of the Australian Society for the Study of Labour History on 12 May 1989. It has been edited here to condense the information in both the talk and the question and answer session which followed.

† Madge Cope was for many years a UAW activist and is still an active campaigner on issues of social and political concern.

those days. So we did those sort of things. We were always out in the streets doing something like that.

Then there was the petition about King's Park. They wanted to put a swimming pool in King's Park and it would take up an awful lot of the Park. We thought that wasn't the right thing for King's Park, because its object was really to be a natural park. So we boycotted that. We had petitions against that and deputations of different sorts. We also took up an issue at King Edward Memorial Hospital. It was a very hot summer, the mothers in there were suffering badly and we thought they should have airconditioning. Airconditioning had only just come in then and some of our members were heavily pregnant and they went on a deputation to King Edward Memorial Hospital and pointed out the need for airconditioning. They went up to Parliament as well to complain and they got the airconditioning.

Then there was the aprons parade. This was a peace issue. As banners and posters were banned from the streets at the time, we decided we would go out with calico aprons and scarves with ban all bombs and all those sorts of slogans written on them. So about five or six of us went each week. We used to have lunch every week, we'd meet in our rooms in Stirling Street and after lunch we would go around in the lunch hour, walk around the streets, over the Barrack Street bridge and along Barrack Street in the lunch hour with these slogans on. We felt a bit silly at first but when we heard someone say "good on you", an old man said "good on you" and someone said "I wish I had the courage" we felt a bit better then. We'd been out about five times when the police caught up with us. They came up on motor bikes and we were up on top of Barrack Street bridge when they caught up with us. We were only on the footpath too. They said "Hand over you're slogans". And we said "but this is wearing apparel". "Never mind, they're illegal", they said. So we handed them over and they took us to court and fined us two pounds each. We appealed, we found a good lawyer in Lloyd Davies, who found a loophole somewhere. He acted for us for nothing and he got us off. Now that was really a win. So we went on a bit longer with that until it sort of died out.

We always took a great interest in Aboriginal rights. We sponsored a scholarship and used to hold a Christmas Tree for children each year and a picnic and that sort of thing. Of course Aborigines weren't standing on their own feet then like they are now. They relied on us to put a little bit of brightness into their lives. At that time they were all camped on the Sanitary Tip. It was a place about where Lockeridge is now. Of course there wasn't very much sewerage then. It was mostly just pans in the lavatories and they were buried there. It wasn't a very savoury place to live, but that's the only place they had. They had huts made out of cardboard, flattened out kerosene tins, bits of iron, anything they could find to make huts and that's how they lived before they went to Allawa Grove. They were a little bit better off there, that was an old airforce base and they were huts there, which was at least some sort of improvement. Anyway when we were looking after them they were at this Sanitary dump and one of our members, Amy Barrett, used to take on one girl and have her come home after school and change, because they had no where clean to keep their clothes very good and this girl used to go Amy Barrett's place and Amy would keep clean clothes for her there and she'd change into her school clothes to go to school and come back to Amy and change back to her camp

clothes. There was a woman called Daisy Bimby who came down from the North to visit us and tell us about their conditions up there.

In the 1956 State election we sent questionnaires to the candidates. I think that might've been on equal pay because we attended the first equal pay meeting. It was to be held in the supper room of the Perth Town Hall. It was so crowded they had to go into the big hall. Well the speakers there were very pessimistic about women ever getting equal pay. The men were worried about it because they said the women would all want to go out to work and wouldn't be home to cook the tea. The women that were working were afraid that they would lose their jobs because they said that if the employers had to pay them equal to the men they'd put the women off. Well of course, you all know how that's developed.

We were very concerned about the environment then, we were always looking at the smoke stacks we thought were polluting the city. We also knew that Wittenoom was poisonous then, and this was in 1950. I remember I went to Wittenoom for a holiday and I remember saying to a woman in the street "does your husband work at the mill?" and she said "yes". I said "aren't you worried about the dust?" And she said "Oh no, they test them every year, and if they show any signs of disease they put them off and we go back to Perth". That's all she was worried about but we were worried about the effect on the health of the workers then.

Of course we were always looking to making money, trying to raise money because none of us had any money - we were only housewives in those days. We tried to interest working women but it was very hard to get working women organised then, they weren't in the unions much. Also most of them had their extra work to do when they went home. They had to cook tea and do all the housework as well because there was no women's liberation then and the man hadn't started to help much. So we didn't manage to get the working women into the UAW much. We used to have cake stalls and apron stalls and we had a library too. We finished up not having any rooms in Perth and I think the last place we had was at Roma Gilchrist's house. The reason for this was that renting was very costly and in the end we weren't doing anything as far as the work we wanted to do was concerned. We were just running around trying to raise money to pay the rent and it became like a dog chasing its tail. We weren't fulfilling the purpose we set out too. Then we tried meeting in various places but we just disintegrated partly because we weren't getting enough young people and the older ones could no longer carry on.

Women's liberation as well had come along by that time and they were taking up the issues that we had started and the young women were naturally more drawn to women's liberation and these other organizations. They had victories on issues like abortion, which we had argued about in the very backward times, but we hadn't been able to make advances on many of those issues.

I can remember if you remember going out to the factories with our women, a paper was put out, a very interesting paper by the group in the east and they sent us 800 copies and we went into all the suburbs and into the factories and sold these copies. In the factories on this question of equal pay the

girls would say "but we are losing our femininity if we have equal pay". This was a big argument against equal pay. There were really some astounding attitudes in those days. It really was an education to go out and speak to people at grass roots and find out how they felt. It wasn't a matter of every body supporting equal pay automatically, they had to be educated to it.

We also had a magazine ourselves. Some of us used to write short stories and letters and anything like that and it was brought out three times a year. It was printed in Sydney. Lindel Haddow was the editor for a long time, and then I did it for a while. That was really good that magazine. I have still got a few copies and I believe the whole set of copies is in the Battye Library.

Roma Gilchrist actually wrote the whole history of the UAW here, hoping to get it published. They may have handed it over to the Battye Library by now.

After we gave up our room we used to meet at Roma's place for quite a long time and we had our library there. We also used to meet in town when we had a special speaker. The R and I Bank had a lovely room they used to let out for a small fee to such organisations, and we also met upstairs in Boans. We had speakers on all the issues of the day, some very prominent people came along and we managed to have some very good speakers come.

We often had visitors from branches in the East come over. Freda Brown, who was the national Secretary was also very involved in world peace. She used to go to Europe quite often for Peace Conferences and if she was coming through Perth she'd give us an address. She always came back with some very good material and because she traveled through other countries she brought back some really startling stories about the conditions of women in different situations around the world.

As well as Perth we also had branches out in various suburbs. We had branches in Applecross, Tuart Hill, Leederville and in the country area. There were quite a number of branches and this newsletter that we brought out we sent out, we sent out to all these branches and to the country areas. Another thing we used to do is have those craft classes. That's how we tried to start branches, we used to get..... I started at my place inviting neighbours around to learn craft work. We were doing basket making and patterned blouses and people were interested in that. They wanted to come to our housewives but we thought it would be a means of recruiting people and gradually get them interested the other activities but they did manage to do their craft.

We had about 200 members at one stage and it was a struggle to keep that number. It wasn't a large organisation but even 200 people working hard on an issue can make a difference.

Book Reviews

Victoria Hobbs, But Westward Look! Nursing in Western Australia 1829-1979, Perth, UWA Press, 1980, Reprinted 1989.

It is no easy task to put together the history of a professional group over a 150 year period. Vicki Hobbs in her retirement years undertook this mammoth task and provided a very readable book on the History of Nursing in Western Australia.

This book is not just a History of Nursing but a history of the State of Western Australia. Every development undertaken was followed by the need for health care. Nurses were to provide this service and were found wherever new developments were taking place.

The difficulties experienced by our early settlers are chronicled in this history and Vicki Hobbs' graphic description of such events as the setting up of the first tent hospital in Coolgardie to cope with the typhoid epidemic being experienced by the miners and the establishment of a hospital at Guildford to cope with injuries suffered by workers on the Goldfields Water Scheme are just two notable examples. National events that were important to all Australians such as the Boer war and the two World wars are also reflected in her history.

It could also be said that this book is a history of women and reflects the development of women at work in this State.

For the Nursing profession Vicki chronicles the changes in nursing responsibilities; the dramatic changes in Nursing education and the key people involved and of course the nursing leaders and personalities who took the profession to where it is today. People like Olive Anstey who became president of the International Council of Nursing and Kath Reidy the R.A.N.F. Secretary who worked tirelessly to improve the working conditions of nurses.

If a criticism could be raised it is that many interesting aspects like the development of Community Nursing, the involvement of the Royal Flying Doctor service could only be briefly documented. Perhaps greater investigation of such areas is the task for future historians.

This book has been put together by careful and painstaking research of official documentation and personal interviews and has made a significant contribution to the documented History of Nursing in this State. Its republication after almost a decade shows what a great contribution Hobbs has made.

Doreen McCarthy, Fremantle.

Lenore Layman and Julian Goddard, Organise! Labour: A Visual Record, Perth, T.L.C., 1988.

No praise could be too high for the efforts of the authors of this record of the memorabilia of the working class movement in W.A. and the detail about individuals who have contributed to the production of the artifacts and symbols of our institutions of labour. The achievement is all the more remarkable in the light of the paucity and fragmentary nature of labour history in Western Australia, the consequence of which would make the research task of the authors even more difficult.

The layout of the chapters and the detail about characters who contributed to the production was not only interesting but to many younger people in the union movement would have been a revelation, whilst to older persons would have been a reintroduction to their colleagues of the past. The brief mention of Alan Bond's role in Fremantle's May Day is an indication of the variety of the contributors, most of whom achieved fame in their art and respect for their views.

One of the conclusions forced upon the reader is the vast array of talent, skill and ability which the movement has been able to call upon, over the years, to produce works of art which have stood the test of time. The banners, certificates, badges and trophies testify to the artistry and knowledge of the creators, the more modern artists do not suffer by comparison. The section on cartoons whilst revealing some of the ideological weaknesses of the early period of the movement, which was of course common in Australia, shows the value of political comment using ridicule and satire as the medium.

It was pleasing to see that the theatre was included because it has always been a means of conveying the social and political message of workers and is often neglected in most of the treatment of working class and union activities. A review of the book would not be complete without some conclusions. It is a pity the book was not longer, it is abundantly clear that the subject matter is considerably more extensive than that which is revealed, the surface has been skimmed through no fault of the authors, both time and money were short.

Organise highlights two needs, the first a comprehensive history of the W.A. labour movement is essential particularly if the mistakes of the past are to be avoided in the present and future, and planning of the form and style of the publication should start now so should the garnering of funds for the project. It is not beyond the capacity of the unions and political parties to fund on an annual basis the necessary research. The second need is a register of the memorabilia, where it is retained, who is in ownership ensuring that additions are regularly recorded in order that it is not lost to the future. This may be a project that the museum would be willing to undertake.

In conclusion, many thanks Lenore and Julian for a job well done.

W.S. Latter, Fremantle.

Vic Williams (ed), Eureka and Beyond: Monty Miller, his own story, Perth, Lone Hand Press, 1988.

Vic Williams must have got considerable satisfaction from putting together this selection of articles and handbills concerned with the life of Monty Miller, for we see in Monty Miller's struggle a parallel with events in Vic's life. Both had a period in agriculture, both were at one time involved in the gold mining industry and both certainly spent the greater part of their life in the bitter struggle against injustice and oppression.

The handbill distributed at the book's launching concluded rather modestly with the remark "the book is a little gold mine for historians." This of course is very true, but it is also much more than that. It is essential reading for those who would set out on the hard and rocky road of the revolutionary or the reformer and Monty at differing times was both of these.

The reader will find that although times and technology have changed, the struggle remains. Monty fought his battles with the simple tools of oratory, handbills and humour. His opponents were the establishment such as military, police and employers whose weapons were bullets and batons plus long periods of incarceration.

Some will shrug off Monty's struggles as being inappropriate in today's environment, that the worker has so much more than in Monty Miller's day. Perhaps it isn't realised that the cake is much larger while the individual's share is the same if not smaller.

Money and materials are wasted on an ever increasing armaments race while poverty expands world wide, even in our own lucky country. Lately at home we face the unpleasant fact of a national Human Rights Commission report stating there could be as many as 50,000 homeless children in Australia.

Torture and repression are the methods used in many countries to control those who would seek change and a more democratic way of life. We are slightly more fortunate although we also have our special squads and riot squads with the military always in the background just in case any Monty Millers appear on the scene.

One of the many tools not available to Monty Miller was the mass media. We are inundated with endless torrents of words and instant information on every subject under the sun. Lies and half truths, innuendo, words out of context, misinformation and infiltration of workers' organisations. All with the sole purpose of destabilisation and confusion.

As mentioned earlier, one of the tools used by Monty Miller was humour. Chapter nine "Six Months Hard" gives the reader an idea of what it was like in those times. The bumbblings of an inept police force were no match for Monty's wit and mental agility. The chapter is real Gilbert and Sullivan.

Any review of this book would not be complete without reference to Vic Williams' poem "Are you Ready Monty Miller?" I have read most of Vic's published poetry and regard this as one of his best. I will use the final verse with its overtones of "Joe Hill":

I will give the youth my courage,
I bequeath the old my cause,
but it needs the many millions
to put down their many wars
When you need a new Eureka
and my voice to crush their lies,
Monty Miller will be with you
when you march and organise.

It is a very readable and well put together account of a most remarkable character.

Duncan Cameron, Maylands

RESEARCH NOTES

The 1911 Miners Strike at Collie Burn

W.S.Latter

The detailed study of this dispute currently in progress is the first that has been undertaken at any depth, yet it was a significant event in labour and union history in W.A.

The strike commenced because a miner was dismissed for a minor offence and his colleagues came out on strike in solidarity with him. From a simple issue it escalated into a major event lasting eighteen weeks with all the drama of some of the largest industrial actions - blacklegs introduced to the pit, police spies, revolvers issued to the scabs, a number of confrontations between the miners and the scabs, miners' wives taking sides with their men and harassing the scabs, numerous prosecutions of strikers and the union, six prosecutions for assault and one for causing an explosion with the alleged offender being sentenced to three years hard labour. All this whilst a State election was in progress and the Scaddan Labor Government was elected with the largest parliamentary majority of any government in Western Australia - thirty four to sixteen seats.

The miners finally were victorious winning compulsory unionism, reinstatement of all miners in order of seniority, elimination of a penalty clause in their agreement and a number of other concessions. One of the highlights of the dispute was the solidarity of the union movement led by the Australian Labour Federaton. Financial support came in from most of the unions and the Lumpers declared black coal which had been produced by the scabs. In postscript to the story was the release of the miner who was convicted for causing the explosion after serving only three months of his sentence, the refusal of soccer players to play against the Collie Burn because there were strike breakers in the team, and a number of additional court cases arising from abuse of erstwhile blacklegs. The ripples extended to the rest of the union movement in the form of similar gains of compulsory unionism and the virtual end of unions being prosecuted for taking part in a strike. The study should be completed by the end of March.

