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Gil Barr's Story*

Part 1†

I was born on the 21st of September, 1929, in a little country town, Kondinin, in the wheatbelt area. My father was a farm labourer, mine worker, main road worker, any type of labouring job. I have two elder brothers and another younger than myself. Unfortunately, my mother contracted tuberculosis and died. I'm not too sure how old I was - I think I would have been somewhere around four years of age when she passed away.

The only thing I can really remember of my mother. My father was working on a farm, my mother was out the back pegging out the clothes on the line. I was playing there out a bit further, and the pigs all got out of the sty. I remember pigs running towards the house and towards me. I really panicked, and went running over to Mother at the clothes line. She picked me up and did all the things a mother normally does, until I got over the fright and the pigs passed. I just remember another occasion, once - it's very hazy, I know we were in Bruce Rock once. Father took us up to see one of his sisters. I can remember my mother being there, but that's about all. There's nothing else I can really remember about her. After she died, I was handed around a bit, from one relative to another, until Father decided the best thing to do with us was to put us in the Swan Boys Home, until he could sort himself out and settled down later on. The younger brother didn't go into the home at all. He was farmed out to some people called Southall, but the older brothers, Murray and Kenneth, and myself went into the home. Murray, the eldest boy, only stayed there a short period of time then he was taken out by some people too. Ken and I were there for about three years or more.

There wasn't any money around at all. Father bought us all a grey suit, shoes and all that sort of thing, to make us neat and tidy. Yet, in the home, they took all those off us, and issued us with the regulation brown trousers, brown shirt, bare feet and fish-tail hat. The purpose of that was the children leaving the home were to go out neatly dressed, so the good clothes that the new kids were coming in were taken off and given to those going out. The others wore the regulation clothing that was there.

It was a very rough sort of existence in the home. We were all bullies if we could be. From memory, there were only three or four women looking after the kids, mainly male attendants. It was the survival of the fittest. I remember one thing that used to happen. There were smaller children, and two dormitories in the home. They had the smaller children down the bottom one and the big kids up the top. Sometimes the big kids would wet the bed, wake up early and carry the wet mattress down to the little kids room, get the little kids out of bed and put the wet mattress on our bed and take the dry one up to theirs. If you dare dink on a move like that, you got the usual treatment. That was never

* Gil Barr was for many years an official of the Australian Workers Union, being both WA State and Federal President before his retirement in 1988.

† This is part one of an edited version of the transcript of an interview with Gil Barr conducted by Stuart Reid as part of the TLC Oral History Project, 14 December 1988. Two more parts of this interview will be carried in subsequent numbers of Papers in Labour History.

as you went to open it, you lucky to get a mouthful. The rest went off.

I've got no real regrets about being there. I don't say my father should have tried to do anything else with us. It was depression days, and it was just impossible for him to do anything else. I really think he did his best by us. [He was] still working on farms or working on the Main Roads. He wasn't a skilled worker at all, that was his working capabilities. After we left the orphanage, Dad brought us out to Wickopin. There were some people called Halliday, we lived with them for a few weeks or several months, if I remember correctly. It was right opposite the school we used to go to. There was a Mrs. Schultz - she used to run a boarding house - like all country towns - an old tin place. It had an iron roof. Out the back there was a row of about six old shearers huts, like the ones I used to live in, in the North West. They were just rooms made out of corrugated iron. Dad had one of these, and us two brothers had another. The other two brothers were still farmed out living with other people. It was quite an experience living there. Dad was away, working on the main roads all week, and this old girl used to look after us. We thought we were better off in the orphanage than we were there, because she was pretty severe. That was one of the things that really started me off in life, thinking that things weren't right. I remember going to watch my father work on the main roads. In those days, when they were grading the road, they had a truck and they'd tow behind it a road grader that a man had to sit on, wind it up and down and so on. I could see my poor father sitting on this thing, there would be clouds of dust everywhere, no face mask or anything - he'd be covered in shit, dust and goodness knows what. All this stuck in my mind- that wasn't the right treatment of a person.

When we left there, we went out to a farm. There were some people named Walters on the farm. We used to go about seventeen mile then to school on a bus. Before we'd get up in the morning, Dad, he had no money of course, used to cook his own bread and all that jazz, and he'd make us a pretty rough looking sandwich to take to school. We'd get to school and other kids always would have a go at you, because we never had the flashiest clothes in the world. It was that again that made me look for something better in the future.

I'll never forget, my poor old father, one of those funny little incidents. Dad always tried to give us one good meal at the weekend. He went to town this time and he bought some steak. I'll never forget this as long as I live - I was only about nine years old at the time. We had this big kitchen with a big wooden table. Dad thought he had done everything right. - he had tomatoes and eggs done, potatoes, and he had cooked this steak. We used to have a bottle of keosene and a bottle of vinegar on this shelf against the wall. The poor old chap put all the meals on the table in front of us. Instead of picking up the vinegar to put on the tomatoes, he picked up the kerosene and poured it all over the steak and all. Dad never used to swear much, especially in front of us, even though he was a pretty rough old worker. I'll never forget this night, he smashed the plates and food all up against the wall. He was pretty good to us though.

When you worked on a farm in those days, you used to work Sundays. Even on a Sunday he would try to get off and have a game of cricket with us, which was good. Then he left that farm and he went

pub, we would follow on 40 to 50 yards behind him, so he couldn't see us. We lined up at the pub window and saw him. He never used to drink much - couldn't afford to. He went straight up to this bloke and said, "Hey, come on, you have been picking on my boys - outside." He took him out in the gutter, and gave him a going over. He said, "In future, any trouble between our boys, we'll put the boxing gloves on them. Don't touch them, or I'll do this to you again. Send them over to our place, and we'll put the boxing gloves on them and let them sort it out between themselves." That's the sort of bloke he was. Pretty rough old guy but he was very good.

The war came then and he got married again. He married a young girl. Dad was the first white baby to be born at Bruce Rock in 1900. When the war came he turned 39. He joined the army early 1940. He married a 21 year old girl, then went straight into the army. Left us. I was 10 by this time and the older brother was 12. She was off a farm. She had a couple of brothers and sisters. They were all a bit rough on us kids, the way they used to treat us. Ken only stayed two years, the day he turned 14 he immediately left school and went out working on a farm. The problem was, she made us work, couldn't wait to get away from the place. There were refugees that used to come up to Wickiepin, during the war, from Perth. They sent some people up to country towns. When I was 12 I really started working. They had 12 of them living in houses as a group. I used to cut all their firewood and stuff like that, for two shillings a week, then she reckoned I could always be earning my own pocket money. When I was 13, I used to work before school and when I got home after school as well. The dairy was about three quarters of a mile away from the house where we lived. She'd get me out of bed at 5:30 in the morning, and I'd go over and help milk the cows and all that sort of jazz, clean up the cow yard, or the dairy after they had finished milking. Then after school, I had to go over and cut chaff and prepare all the evening meal for the cows. After they'd call them in for feeding, I'd go home and chop the wood and water the gardens. No, I didn't get on with her particularly well, nor her brothers or sisters. I remember one stage. Her mother and father used to live on a farm about three and a half miles out of town. They took me out there for a while. They had a sulky in which the two girls used to drive to school. I wasn't allowed in the sulky, I had to walk to school. Sometimes, I'd sit up the hill a bit and wait around behind a bush, and then frighten shit out of the horse when it came around the corner. I'd get into trouble when I got home of course. That was the sort of background it was, but I don't think it did us any great harm. Mind you, the day I turned 14 I left. Much against the protests of the headmaster. I was in the 8th Grade and doing pretty good. I was that sick of home, so instead of staying till the end of the year and sitting for my Junior, I would have passed the exams there's no doubt about that, I just walked out of school the day I turned 14 years of age.

I took a little case belonging to her, and had a bit of a swag. I walked four and a half mile out to this farm and started working for the farmer. I had a lot of jobs when I was young, but I was never satisfied. I wanted something better than what I had. Even with this guy, it was at the end of September, he was cutting hay. I had to walk behind the binder and stack the hay. My hands weren't all that hard, picking up the binder twining around these green sheaths of hay and putting them into a heap. Blisters all over my hands. They were like that for a couple of days. It was just a nuisance though, the way they never used to look after the farm hands. The first day we were out cutting this

Bullfinch. Of course there were always funny incidents. We lobbed out there. He had these eight horses and this old wagon, the scoop, the plough and the feed drums for the horses - the chaff, oats and stuff like that. He also had a spare saddle horse he always took with him. Took us two or three days to get out there. We got out and set up the tent. There was only a sheep yard with about three feet of netting around it. We lit the fire outside the tent, we used to have a camp oven to put the tucker in. The wild donkeys were there so at night time we went to bed, both sound asleep, when all of a sudden we heard this "hee-haw". The donkeys had come in and saw the lights of the fire. They frightened hell out of the horses. The horses broke the yard down and bolted. We ran out of the tent to see the horses tearing through the moonlight - heading straight back from where they came. Horses are like that. Bert Beshman said next morning, "Well, I'll have to go off and get the horses." I was only 16 at the time. I had to camp out on my own in the tent. I'd go to bed at sundown and put the blanket over my head. I was two days and three nights on my own before Bert got back. There were a lot of emus out there, I used to see them. I had absolutely nothing to do. I used to lay under a tree and see these emus. I had a stick with a white rag tied to it, I would wave it back and forth, you'd see these emus hundreds of yards away, they would gradually come right up pretty close before they'd see me move, and away they'd go. Those are the sorts of things you would do to amuse yourself when you are stuck out in the bush by yourself. I worked with Beshman until sometime after Christmas.

Then I went down to these people named Smith for Christmas, they said I could have a job on the farm. The dam sinking guy was paying me two pound ten shillings a week. I thought that anything was better than the dam sinking business. I worked for this old cocky. He used to pay me six pound a month, along with my keep. Every fourth week he used to go to town, only went to town once a month. Every fourth Saturday he'd give me a cheque for six pounds. I stopped there for a number of months. That's where I actually became interested in shearing and the shearers because they used to come around the place. I thought this looks a pretty good job to me. They always looked rather independent sort of blokes.

I worked at this farm until August or September, then I got sick of that. I met an old uncle of mine, my mother's brother. I happened to go back into Westonia one weekend and saw him. I went back to the farm and put my notice in. I went up to Muntadgin, stopped with him and his wife for a while. I worked up there for three or four months. Here again, I was always having rows with the people I worked for. I was always dissatisfied with the conditions. I thought I was being worked pretty hard and not being paid too well. The conditions under which you were living were pretty awful. Buegge - the farmer - was a pretty arrogant sort of bloke. He had just cleared and burnt off a new paddock, to put a crop in. There were always a lot of stumps left. They'd get a lot of little suckers on them. He was always out telling you what to do. I'll never forget this day. He pulled up in his ute. We must have been two or three hundred yards away down this bit of a track through the paddock. I was up the side of a hill bashing these suckers off with a mattock. He stood in front of his ute and whistled. I thought, "Bugger you," and I just kept knocking these suckers off. He walked another twenty yards towards me and whistled again. I just never took any notice of him. In the finish I could see him walk another fifty or sixty yards, he whistled and yelled, "Hey you." I continued to ignore him. He came

with him. He knew my father and our background too. He used to run a bit of a Police Boys Club. I used to do a bit of boxing. So at 7:00 in the morning I went and knocked on Jim's back door. He said, "G'day, young Barr, what do you want?" I said, "I want a driver's licence for this job driving a one-ton ute in the maintenance gang with the Bruce Rock Roads Board." He asked how I had got here. I told him I had driven the ute that I drove at work. He was good, gave me the licence but told me if I ever did anything like that again, he'd kick my backside out of there.

This was about February. I worked there until May. Then I had my first trip to the North-West. I rode on the back of an old shearing truck. That was quite an experience too. Some of the old shearers, even before we had left Perth, would have had some booze. That's another thing that got me into the Union too. We used to leave from the Esplanade, twenty odd of us on the back of a truck. When we were leaving, the union organiser or the Union Secretary, would come down and see us all off in the truck, wishing us all the best. He gave us union tickets that we'd need when we got up there.

It took us four days to get from Perth up to Midalya Station. Of course the bitumen in those days finished just north of Northampton. The Murchison River was the end of the bitumen. From there on it was just all sand and red dust. So here again, when we got up to Midalya, I can clearly recall this, it really impressed me. I was around 18 by this time. We all got there in the truck and before anybody got off the truck, they said, "Right, the first thing to do is have a meeting and choose a union representative." They immediately held a meeting and elected Ernie Robers as the union rep. He said, "Right, now we'll all draw for huts." So we all drew, so there was no going and picking out the best beds or best huts or anything like that. We all just drew a number out of a hat and in there you went. We had an inspection of the shed and shearing floor. I thought this was pretty good stuff. Make sure everything was all right, it was pretty rough conditions, but for the standard of those days, at least all the gear was there.

We started work. We found we had eight shearers and seven shed hands. There should have been four seniors to three juniors. Instead of that they had only three senior shed hands and four juniors. So the shearers said, "Well, that's not good". They started me not as a board boy, but working at the tables. The shearers jacked up and said, "Right, they're not going to get away with paying three seniors and four juniors wage. They're going to pay one of these juniors a senior's wage. They can pay young Barr, he's working on the table." I shared it with the other kids. This sort of thing really impressed me. That's where I was first issued with a union ticket.

I only did a couple of sheds as a shed hand. Then I started learning to shear. From there on I started to develop as a shearer, which was pretty good. I went all that year, 1948, until the end of November. I'd turned 19 in the September. Then I went down to Goomalling. The fellow in charge of the shearing team, Jack Crawford, had a truck. I decided to go wheat carting with him. Something to do during the summer months. I lobbed into Goomalling on the 1st of December, 1948, went wheat carting with this Jack Crawford. That's where I first met my little wife, she was a local girl in

I contacted Wally Graylands again and went back and operated his wheat grader again at Goomalling, right through the summer months. All the farmers have their seed - wheat, oats barley and peas - though very seldom would you have to grade peas. Just ordinary bags of wheat they have stacked in their shed or out in the paddock. If you could do it in the paddock it was a lot faster. You had to get all the husks out, all the foreign seed out, and grade it into good seed wheat, ready for the farmer to use again the following year. The machine would do it all. We used to have copper sulphate, this pickled the wheat, stopped weevils from getting into the seed, until the farmer used it again in June, when they seeded it again. Same with the oats and barley. It was quite good. I was on contract. I used to get twopence a bag. Of course, we were working our butts off but making good money in the summer, as well as the shearing for the rest of the year. I was a bit of a larrikin in those days. I never used to save much money.

Then I went back up to the Kimberleys again, up to Liveringa with Drake-Brockman. I was a pretty militant bloke by then. Sick of the bosses telling me to do this and that, the rough conditions and so on. I went back up to Liveringa and we started up again in early April. Stinking hot. It was just after the wet season, you could only work half a day for a start, especially when you hadn't been shearing for several months. Some of them hadn't worked at all during the summer, they were pretty soft. It was that hot and humid still. The first day you would only work half a day, the second you'd work half a day, you'd try to get three runs, and perhaps a full day in on the Thursday or Friday. I'll never forget. Come Easter time again while we were there, a lot of hungry blokes wanted to work on the Good Friday and Easter Monday. You'd get double rates for it. I guess, stuck out in the middle of the bush, you may as well have worked. We took a vote on it first, and we shored on Good Friday. There was myself, a fellow Buster Lucas and another, Barry Boyd. We were really jacking up about this - it was holidays, why work? So on the Saturday night we had a little bit of rain. The sheep had the Sunday to dry out. Monday morning came, I said to Buster Lucas and Barry Boyd, and a couple of other blokes, "Blow this, lets make them wet." They were working on a public holiday - Easter Monday. So we sheared two sheep each, then we took a vote as to whether the sheep were dry enough to shear. I was 20 at the time, the elected union rep. So, we take this vote, up comes the wet vote 9 to 7. This one fellow, Reg Crane, raced down to see Brockman, "Ah, Mr. Brockman, these sheep aren't wet, they're dry. It's that Barr, Lucas and Boyd, they're carrying on, we should be shearing." We said, "That's the vote, that's it, finished." We all knocked off and went back to the hut for the day.

This Buster Lucas was a real character, a good black and white artist. He got a great lump of cardboard and drew all the shearer's stands, with blokes shearing on them. Pens full of sheep and board boys on the boards. He drew little pools of water with little kids pushing boats, frogs jumping out of the sheeps' necks, and ducks flying. He was a terrific guy. For something to put under the drawing, he wrote, "HUNGRY PEOPLE SUFFER FROM INDIGESTION. ASK REG CRANE AND OTHERS WHO WANT TO WORK ON PUBLIC HOLIDAYS." We took it and hung it in the mess. We all went for dinner that night, Reg Crane saw red. He was a crawler to the boss. He went straight round to Brockman and brought him in to look at the picture. Brockman said, "I won't

back. We took the whole team into Carnarvon, got some jobs in other teams. Myself and a fellow, Jack Kennedy, and one other all caught the plane back to Perth. They sent another team up. I know three or four scabbed on us and went back but at least we had made a stand. We didn't give in.

Old Charlie Golding was the Secretary of the Union at that time. Charlie wasn't much of a militant man, he was a consultant. Try and do something, but never able to get too far. The three of us got back to Perth. I said to Jack, "Come on, this is no good, we'll go and see the union about it." The union used to be in James Street then. Knocked on the front counter. Old Charlie came out saying, "You're young Barr, aren't you? You pulled a strike up there without my permission."

I said, "Hang on a minute, Charlie, you didn't expect us to stop and work at that place." I was only 22 at the time. He said, "What you should have done was stay there and contacted the Union, and we'd have got an official up there." I pointed out to him, that would have taken about two weeks, and what were we supposed to have done in the meantime. I had a row with old Charlie then. He said, "You don't strike without contacting the Union first." I said, "Well that's too bad."

Then we went outside. I said to the other guy, "Well just for fun, let's go back round to the Pastoral Labour Bureau and ask for another job." It was down in St George's Terrace at the time, so we walk in the place, asked to see Mr. Moore for some new jobs. He came out and said, "There's no work here for you three, there never ever will be again. You're black banned for life." We didn't give a damn. I was only a young bloke, 22 and just married. We told him where he could stick his jobs, we didn't want to work there anymore anyway. We had just gone there to see what they'd say.

It was getting pretty late by then, it was nearly time for shearing to start in the agricultural areas. I went back to Goomalling and shore again for Graylands. I shore all the year down there. Then I went back on the graders again that summer. Then I did crutching and autumn shearing. I didn't go up north in 1952. I did a fencing contract with a farmer at Goomalling. We got pretty good money, wasn't as good as shearing, but at least I didn't have to go up north away from Joy. I stayed home for that period ... We were living in Perth. We had rooms in Pier Street. No, I bought an ice round, that's right. It was 1951, we got married in 1950. This Jack Kennedy bought himself an ice round in South Perth. So, I bought an ice round, an old truck, and used to do around North Perth, Mt Lawley, all around that area towards Inglewood. It was pretty good brass. Joy had a little daughter in the meantime, born in the October.

Over the next year I didn't go to the North-West. When Lorna, our eldest daughter, was born, I had been shearing for Graylands, and everyone had finished. Lorna was born on the 15th October. Old Len Saltmarsh was finishing his run down in a shed at York. Joy was due to go into hospital on the Sunday. We'd worked down there the week before. Old Salty used to stay in the pub down there in Wellington Street - the Goldfields Pub. I was living in rooms in Pier Street. I saw him outside and told him that my wife was due to go to the hospital that day. I said "I won't be down the shed first thing Monday morning, I'll be down as soon as the event is over." He said, "You be down there to

my pen. It rained and we voted them wet. That really upset him. Something else happened, I just can't remember what we had a meeting about it anyway. I jacked up about it, whatever it was. So, I went back and started shearing. I walked into the shed at lunchtime, the wool classer said to me, "Oh, Gil, there's not enough room on this station for you, me and the manager. One's got to go, and it's got to be you. Put your hand piece in, you are finished." I said, "Alright, if that's how you feel." So, I went down to the mess hut, had my lunch, told the blokes they'd have to start without me at 1:00 pm, I'd had the tramp. They said, "Oh, have you, that's good - oh isn't it?" I told them I wouldn't be back in the shed, I'd go straight to my hut and collect my gear and start walking. It wasn't far from the main road, I'd get a lift into Port Hedland and then go home. Several of them said, "Like hell you will." They went back up to the shed. At 1:00 pm nobody moved. They said, "No Gil Barr on the board, no start." They jacked up. Old Frank Marks came up ranting his head off. A big fellow, Dave Marchant, and a few others, good cobbers, all refused to work. They got me back in the end. Then we all started work again.

We left there to go to another station. Frank Marks wasn't going to take me, the other blokes jacked up. If Gil doesn't go, they don't go. Frank Marks then said I could if I weren't the union rep. I went and wasn't elected as the union rep. for that shed, as that was the deal with the contractor. After that we finished. I saw old Frank, he was a very old fellow, this was a couple of years before. This was the sort of humorous thing he would do. I got into trouble with the Taxation Department, when I had my ice round. I wasn't putting in proper accounts and stuff like that. They woke up and finally sent me a big bill. I never had any money. I went up to Mandora, we came across the Koongan River, to come down to one of those sheds down near the Pilbara. When we came across the river, it rained cats and dogs, the river was running pretty high. We nearly lost the ute. We get down to the shed, old Frank went off somewhere else. He was a real character, a little bit later on down in another shed out of Meekatharra, old Frank pulls up in his ute. He was leaning on the back of the old Dodge ute. He said, "G'Day, Gil, you shear a couple of hundred sheep today?" I agreed. He said, "Good, that's the boy. It makes money for both of us." That's the way he would carry on. "Come here, I want to see you," he said, "You're in a bit of trouble with the Taxation people. I had a letter off them to garnishee your wages, but I didn't think you wanted that, so I threw it away." I told him he'd end up in trouble." Not me" he said, "It's all right, boy, don't worry. Remember when we were crossing that river? I told them I lost my case and all my private things."

That was 1956. In those days, when I finished shearing, I used to work in the brewery. Joy had two children by then, young Kerry was on the way, 1957 it was. I used to work in the brewery and be home with Joy and the children for about three months. I tried to get a job shearing. No way, no dice. All the contractors would say, "You're a good shearer, but we can't tolerate some of the antics you get up to." I'd point out to them that I was only looking after my own rights and the rights of my fellow workers. I used to start shearing no later than February, so I had to stay at the brewery. A mate of mine there, Ray Helwig, was going shearing with a bloke he used to be pally with. He finally conned this bloke into taking me, or signing me on the contract. I was to start on the 26th May, up at Brickhouse, out of Carnarvon. That was late for me, always had been shearing for three months by

all that sort of jazz, they'd do anything wrong. As soon as we saw one of these, we'd become very suspicious of them. We'd jack up on them straight away. Half of them wouldn't have a union ticket, you'd have to gang up on them and make them take one.

That year when we got to Jimba Jimba - they were the ones that weren't going to have me on the property - they had just built brand new quarters and a brand new shearing shed. We had finished at Brickhouse and Dorra Warra and we went by truck to Jimba Jimba. We all got off the truck outside these new quarters. All the blokes thinking to themselves how good it was. They were made out of asbestos. Perfectly clean, new beds and new mattresses. Bill Young, the contractor, said, "Before any of you men go into the quarters the owner wants to have a talk to you all." The owner lines us up and starts giving us a lecture about the cost of the new quarters, and how they were to be looked after and all this sort of nonsense. I'm standing at the back of the blokes. I couldn't put up with it any longer. I said, "Never mind you giving us a lecture about your new quarters. What about the awful conditions we had to live in for years." He spluttered, "I told Bill Young that I didn't want you here." I replied, "Well, I am here, and you can't do anything about it. We don't want to hear any more from you. You keep out of the shed, and keep away from us. We'll do the shearing." They had a brand new shearing shed built with movable wool bins installed. The shearing stands were on an open board and the wool bins were near the shearing boards. We were there one lunchtime, myself and a couple of other blokes. They were all asking me how I had been black banned. I'm laying down telling them what sort of fellow this Bob Vivash was. I hear this coughing and spluttering from the other side of the bin. The squatter was there listening to my every word. I yelled, "Well, Bob, every word is true, isn't it?" He stormed out. Every run then he'd find some complaint about my shearing. He'd come in and walk up and down the boards. I said to the blokes, "Listen, when we're shearing, it's our property. We don't want this guy in here checking up on us all the time." So we jacked up, wouldn't let him in his own shed. After that, when I went back to Jimba Jimba with Bill Young, everything was okay.

All those years I shore, I used to live in Perth. I'd work in the brewery in the summer months, until 1960. There was a good squatter at one of those places, Doora Warra. He said "Listen, Gil, we need a good shearer living in Carnarvon. A shearer who's work we can rely on. One who could come out and do our straggler shed." On a big station they'd muster 20-30,000 sheep, they would have a few thousand sheep that hadn't been mustered - stragglers. He said, "I'll arrange some other stations up here, you come and live in Carnarvon and when the main run is finished, I'll arrange for you to do them all. I'll pay you ten pound a hundred, and your petrol. We can rely on you and you don't hit the booze." I used to drink a bit but never during the working week. I liked Carnarvon and wanted to live there. I moved Joy and the family up there in 1960. It was good. Some of the squatters jacked up, every time one of them didn't want to pay the price. It was two pounds over the award. I told them to ring Miles Killicoat. I was shearing between one hundred and fifty and two hundred sheep a day, just on my own. Get the job over and done with. If I said I'd be there on Monday morning, I would be there.

eventually took the beer and put it in the fridge. That was their attitude. They ran the place and wrote their own laws. They didn't care about anybody else.

There were a lot of things like that, I suppose. I really enjoyed the shearing life. It was a great occupation. Even though you were working for a contractor, you were still pretty free in it. If you wanted to shear a hundred sheep a day you could, or if you wanted to shear two hundred a day you could. No whip on you. There was always pretty keen competition, shearing. You were always trying to beat the next guy shearing next to you.

We lived in Carnarvon till 1966, then I started shearing for Robbie Mitchell. He was the brother of Frank Mitchell, Branch Secretary of the West. Australian branch of the Union. We moved down to Northampton . All the years I was in Carnarvon, I might as well have been a union official as a shearer. Same at Northampton, because all the blokes in the P.W.D., or the Main Roads, all came to me with their problems to solve. I sold more union tickets than half the organisers. I went down to Northampton, lived there from 1966 until I became an official in 1968.

Efforts to get a job on a ship as a cook in Hull failed so he decided to quit his job and try his luck in Liverpool. It was quite a gamble as unemployment benefits were unheard of and jobs were not easy to get. Finally he was signed on as a steward on one of the big USA liners which took thousands of migrants to North America. His first trip was to Montreal and took three and a half weeks to complete. Harry continued to work on ships for several years visiting South America, China and Europe. Conditions were appalling but there were few alternatives available.

In 1898 Harry intended to spend Christmas with his family in Swindon. He had purchased gifts for his grandparents, parents, brothers and sisters at his last port of call. It was customary to allow crew members to take gifts off the ship without paying customs. As he was leaving the ship he was stopped by a Customs Officer who threatened to prosecute him unless he forfeited the presents. The thought of prosecution and the effect it would have on his mother and father made him handover his gifts. One can perhaps surmise that someone else received those gifts. He left the ship without anything, unable to return home to Swindon for Christmas, it was a heartbroken young sailor who wired his parents to say he was unable to come because his ship was sailing. Harry was never to return to Swindon and never saw his family again as his next trip was to eventually find him in Australia.

Desperate and penniless he signed on as second cook on a Blue Funnel line cargo ship bound for Hong Kong. The conditions were terrible and in his own words "the crew were thieves and vagabonds". When the ship arrived in Tangiers the officers wanted to give a party for fellow officers on a ship berthed alongside. Harry was sent for and asked if he could make pastry and cakes. The party was a huge success and the Chief Officer gave him a civilian suit as a reward for his labour, which was to last Harry for many years and was one of his few material possessions.

By the time Harry arrived in Singapore he was thoroughly "fed up" with the conditions and the thieving crew. He decided when the opportunity arose he would jump ship. Harry met a sympathetic English speaking Malay who agreed to take Harry's few possessions and limited money off the ship for him so that Harry could leave the ship unnoticed the night before it was due to sail. All this was done and as Harry left the ship he was arrested and charged with desertion. Of course he never saw his English speaking Malay friend again and spent the night in a cell in Singapore.

The next morning he was brought before the magistrate and found guilty of desertion. The usual practice was for lists of deserters' names to be published in the English press. Ever concerned for his parents he begged the magistrate to have his name suppressed, which he agreed to do. A minister from the British Sailors Society paid his fine and took him to the sailors home until he eventually sailed to Hong Kong to rejoin his ship. Harry always felt grateful to this minister and had a deep sense of obligation to this worldwide society.

Harry eventually rejoined his ship in Hong Kong and found a new attitude by his crew mates. They had suffered the cooking of the first cook on their trip from Singapore and they now looked with some appreciation to the young second cook. Harry was delighted to find the ship was sailing for Port Pirie

Harry immediately sought employment in a bakery but was appalled at the level of wages and the poor working conditions being offered. He decided to try his luck at the mines as a labourer. On approaching the company he was told to report the next morning, where he found at least 50 men in a line waiting to be picked up. Harry did not get a mine job but volunteered to work in the saw mills which prepared imported US oregon for shoring the mine shafts. He was paid seven shillings and six pence a shift. Finally Harry's boss, Owen O'Malley, organized a loan for Harry and his mate which enabled them to rent a small bakehouse. They had just enough money left over to buy a ton of flour. Harry made the bread cakes and pastries and his mate did the deliveries. Eventually his mate left the business and Harry struggled for some time to pay back the loan, but gradually the business prospered because Harry was a creative baker and pastrycook. During this period Harry came to see the trade union movement as the salvation of workers. He also joined the newly formed Socialist Party.

As his business prospered Harry was on the lookout for a shop more centrally located. Eventually a customer who was "well connected and had private property" agreed to build a shop and a bakehouse on a corner site in Argent Street. This proved to be a very good move for Harry for on the opposite corner was a dressmaking shop run by Fanny Munns a young widow with two small children. Fanny had lost her jockey husband in a riding accident. A romance blossomed and Harry and Fanny were married on the 5th June 1906 at Broken Hill. Harry was 30 years old. This was to be a long and successful marriage of 56 years. Fanny was a very capable business woman and cook and complimented Harry's ability in the bakehouse. They were to eventually employ five bakers and four breadcarters. Their first son Edmund Harry, to be called Ted, was born on the 13th March 1907.

All was going well for the Gray family; business was booming until November 1908 when the major mining company at Broken Hill announced they would reduce the minimum wage paid to miners. The unions refused to accept this action and the companies locked out the workers. Harry like most citizens of Broken Hill became active in this campaign and this is where his friendship and association with Tom Mann the British socialist began.

Tom Mann had arrived in Melbourne in 1902 and was appointed full time organizer for the Political Labour Council forerunner of the Australian Labor Party where he worked tirelessly to get worker representatives into Parliament. In 1905 he formed the Victorian Socialist Party and a "Socialist Sunday School" movement. Tom Mann came to Broken Hill as an organizer for the Amalgamated Miners Association and was to stay with Fanny and Harry for the duration of his involvement with the Broken Hill miners.

This was to be a violent and bitter dispute but was also remarkable for the unity of its workers and the support from its prominent citizens. Harry Gray's contribution to the strike effort was to provide the miners' families with bread at twopence a loaf, while the master bakers price was fourpence. Any miners who could not pay were given credit. Each day during the lockout pickets marched peacefully to the mine head accompanied by massed bands playing "Won't you come home Bill Bailey" and when the NSW government sent a contingent of 103 police by train from Sydney to control the strikers it

farming. He was to learn by trial and error. He was to supplement their meagre income by growing vegetables, planting fruit trees and raising chickens. Money was short but it was a happy home and their children were always to remember the joy of living on a farm in the country, not the hardships associated with it.

Ted and Francis, who renamed herself Billie, went to Toolbrunup School some 3 miles away by horse and sulky. It was a one teacher school typical of the hundreds of small schools that were scattered across Western Australia at that time. A trip to town meant a trip by horse and sulky to Tambellup some 12 miles away. Mail was always welcome, letters for Harry from Swindon, letters for Fanny from her sisters in the Eastern States and at Christmas time the excitement of mail catalogues from the big department stores in Perth.

When World War I broke out Harry was to find himself without labour as farm hands were called up or volunteered for War Service. It proved a difficult period. However the Gray family spirit was never dampened and they joined the community in fund raising for the War effort. Harry was particularly fond of Shakespeare and it was customary for the community to gather at the Gray's farm on a Sunday afternoon for play readings. It became a neighbourhood joke when a farmhand was heard to remark: "I think Harry Gray makes up all that stuff he reads to us".

The district had several poor seasons, rust got into the crops the price of wheat fell to 3 shillings a bushell. Things were looking financially grim. Harry hoped to save the situation by selling some of his pigs. Unfortunately swineherd fever had hit the piggeries in Perth and Harry had to sell his pigs at Katanning for a much lower price. It was during these tough times that their third child, a boy, Syd, was born, not exactly a robust child, just two and a half pounds in weight. The war ended, it was a happy time as the local boys returned home but for Harry and Fan it was time to make a decision about their future. In spite of their hard work their financial situation was disastrous. They conceded defeat and walked off the land to return practically penniless to Perth.

Employment was not easy to get in 1919, as there were large numbers of men returning from the war but Harry was to be employed as an organizer for the West Farmers Co-operative Society and the family moved into a house in Claremont, a Perth suburb. It was not long before Harry took his next significant step, a job on the waterfront at Fremantle.

Fremantle - Pathway to Parliament

In 1920 Harry Gray found employment as a Tallyclerk on the Fremantle wharves. There was still much bitterness felt by the Fremantle "wharfies" over the death of Tom Edwards the previous year during a confrontation with police over the use of non-union Labour. Harry soon established himself and his ability to speak for the workers was quickly recognized. He was appointed secretary of the Tallyclerk's union for which he was paid one pound a week. He also helped the Coastal Dock, River and Harbour Works Union who later bestowed life membership in recognition of this work.

Following the 1927 election the problem of making provision for Hospitals was addressed by the introduction of a Hospital Fund Bill which Harry Gray debated with some ferocity in view of his fund raising efforts through the Fremantle Ugly Mens Association for Fremantle Hospital. (Hansard, V.80, 1928) However, the Bill failed as it was interpreted as an attempt to establish a compulsory contributory Hospital Scheme. Nevertheless there were successful measures achieved in this session such as the establishment of the Town Planning Commission and the Heathcote Mental Reception Home. (Black, 1959: 62)

The Labor government lost the 1930 election by a slender margin. This could be attributed to two factors. Firstly redistribution took away several seats which previously Labor had no difficulty winning and, secondly, the onset of depression which was being keenly felt in a agricultural state, like Western Australia.

Harry beside his parliamentary duties was very involved in local affairs. He was elected to the East Fremantle Council in 1927 and was to remain a member until 1946 (Lee, 61) He was also appointed to the Fremantle Hospital Board of Management and was to be made Chairman in 1936, an office he was to hold for a decade.

During the 1920's Fremantle had experienced a decade of economic stability and prosperity. Work on the wharves had increased because of the dramatic increase in exports of primary products particularly from the South West and wheatbelt. With the advent of the depression this activity decreased dramatically and Fremantle saw large numbers of unemployed. (Reece & Pascoe, 1973: 104) (Harry Gray became the Hon. Secretary of the Fremantle Married Mens Relief Committee as Fremantle was hit hard by this major economic downturn.) Organizing relief was arduous work and took all of Harry's skills to make it successful. Later he was to chair the Western Australian Married Men's Relief Committee.

It was not all hard work during this period. Ted and Frances were both to marry. Frances married Bill Shea, a policeman and was to settle in the Fremantle area after a short stay in South Perth. Ted was to go north once again, this time with his new wife Doreen, as a mounted policeman to Derby in the Kimberleys. Harry's first grandson Edmund "Alan" Shea was born in 1933, the year the Labor government was re-elected once again under the leadership of Phillip Collier.

Phillip Collier was to lead the party until 1936, a leader who had been able to command the respect of both sides in politics. Collier was succeeded by John Willcock who promoted Harry Gray to Cabinet as a minister without portfolio in the upper house. This promotion increased dramatically Harry's workload in the council, and he was to speak on most Bills before the house. He was an articulate, confident speaker and was always well prepared. (It has been suggested that the Labor Government of 1933-46 was moderate and cautious in its approach, it certainly had the support of a large block of the Trade Union movement but the advent of war restricted great changes. (Pervan, 1979: 131)) To identify all subjects that Harry Gray debated in his parliamentary career would be an impossibility.

were being purchased at this time from the Eastern States. The free milk scheme for all students became effective some years later and was to provide free milk for Western Australian children up to the 1960's.

With his background as a Baker it was understandable that Harry debated issues on the industry with knowledge and enthusiasm. In 1925 a Bill to improve day baking in Western Australia was debated in the Council. Harry was accustomed in England to baking during daylight hours and although he acknowledged the difference in climatic conditions, he considered that it was inexperience that caused problems with yeast, rather than climate. Harry was keen to see workers working normal hours and debated with some enthusiasm and humour. An interjection during the debate by a Country Party member asking did this mean that hot bread would not be available at the start of the day. Harry replied "The man who likes hot bread has tastes such as the man who likes new wine" (*ibid.*: Vol 72)

This Bill was lost, but Harry Gray successfully introduced the "Bread Amendment Act" in 1937 in which a "dough" weight for bread was determined and an award for all workers within the industry was established. (*ibid.*: Vol 100) Harry remained a member of the Bakers Union all his life, and was awarded life membership of the Broken Hill Operative Bakers Union for services rendered. Harry Gray never lost his skill as a Baker and every Christmas, much to the delight of his grandchildren, he made his mouthwatering pastries.

Fremantle Hospital

No history of Harry Gray would be complete without identifying the contribution he made to the development of Fremantle Hospital. In the 1920's this Hospital had been developing rapidly. A new children's ward had been opened and a new surgical ward was needed. Harry organized a unique drive to raise funds for this project. He appealed to the community to donate goods of all kinds, which he sold for a shilling. Everyone got a prize which was valued at least at one shilling. Donations came from everywhere. An empty shop was loaned as headquarters, street collections were conducted and the community generally became enthusiastically involved. The night before the official laying of the stone, Harry read in the press that it was expected his committee would donate 2,000 pounds towards the project. Harry was 60 pounds short. Undeterred he asked one after another for a donation. Harry had his 2,000 pounds to present to the Chairman of the Board the next day, which was a sizeable contribution to the total cost of 10,000 pounds (Garrick & Jeffrey, 1979: 181).

Harry Gray joined the Board of Management in the early 30's. The members shared social and political interests, often having strong Labor ties. Several were representatives from local council. After appointment as Chairman in 1936, Harry was to steer the hospital through difficult financial times. Any extensions were only achieved through subscriptions or fund raising and Harry was the driving force behind these successes. Fan, his wife, supported him in these fund raising efforts.

The beginning of the second world war saw new difficulties, shortages of staff, little money for repairs and renovations and with the coming of a new Medical Superintendent in 1942 a very divided

The Stay of the SS Papachristidis Vassilios in Fremantle

W.S. Latter†

On Friday, July 23rd, 1948 the Fremantle Signal Station received a message that the 7,132 ton freighter Papachristidis Vassilios was adrift in the Indian Ocean more than 500 miles north-west of Fremantle.¹ The signal said that some days earlier she had experienced engine trouble and was making for Fremantle at reduced speed to effect repairs; now without engines, the generator had broken down, hence there were no lights or power. The passengers and crew were running low on food.

It was assumed that the ship was of Greek origin but in fact she was a Canadian vessel owned by the Dolphin Steamship Coy. Ltd. of Montreal, with a British crew. Originally built in Vancouver in 1943 she was one of a class of ships produced for the British war effort, all of which had the prefix Fort in the name. Launched as the Fort Esperance, later called the Green Gables Park, and now under the family name of the present owners she was on charter to the Australian Shipping Board.² The 34 year old port tug Uco was provisioned, bunkered, recrewed with 18 men, loaded with food for the stricken ship and despatched to find and tow her into Fremantle.³ Almost immediately upon leaving Port, heavy weather broke and the Uco was mercilessly buffeted by gale force winds, travelling only 200 miles in over two days during which the seas were so rough she was forced to heave to. Captain Hume decided that conditions made it impossible to continue the attempt to rescue the Papachristidis.⁴

The news of the Uco's inability to handle the weather was radioed to the master of the ship; he was asked for details of the food situation on board. If it was bad he was told that consideration would be given to an air-drop of food. Captain Thomas, master of the crippled vessel, radioed back that the position was urgent and that the crew and passengers were now dependent upon the ship's lifeboat emergency rations. The agents in consultation with maritime authorities forthwith decided to charter an aircraft to drop supplies in aluminium containers. At the same time the 858 ton State Ship Kybra was diverted onto Onslow to refuel and sail to Carnarvon where heavy towing gear and provisions would be transported by road to enable her to undertake the rescue.⁵

On Thursday, July 29th, an RAAF Catalina left on a food carrying mission from Pearce Air Base. The Kybra was due to arrive at Onslow the following day and was expected to embark on its mission that same afternoon. It was anticipated that she would make contact late on Monday. Captain Eggleston together with supernumerary Captain Richmond were flown to Carnarvon to take command and the supervise the tow. Such was the importance and the degree of difficulty of the operation that the State Shipping Service assigned two of its most experienced and capable masters to the task.⁶

† Bill Latter was formerly President of the Trades and Labour Council and a long serving official in a number of WA unions. In his 'retirement' he is a Fremantle City Councillor, researcher and writer.

had had an unlucky trip all the way from England; the start of the voyage had been delayed for two weeks and later she had been on fire for two weeks. After leaving Aden there had been boiler trouble then the generator broke down. Finally, she had been completely disabled by problems with the boilers and a fire in the coal bunkers and one of the crew had been scalded when repairs were being attempted.¹⁰ But this catalogue of the perils of the sea was not the only issue. The Papachristidis' voyage had also been scarred by a bitter conflict between the officers and men.

According to the accounts in the *Daily News*, Captain Richmond and the crew of the lifeboat were the heroes of the day. A salvage wire weighing over a ton had to be taken over to the Papachristidis and hauled aboard, passed through the anchor chain and back to the lifeboat where the two ends were joined together with a thirty-pound shackle. A further towing wire from the Kybra was inserted through the eye of the shackle creating a double bridle at each end of the tow. It was reported "Behind Captain Eggleston's simple radio message that the tow began at 11.00 am yesterday lay a great deal of organisation by Officers and sweat for the crew". Captain Richmond was congratulated on his fine seamanship.¹¹

The saga continued. The exhausted officers and crew of the Papachristidis were working day and night keeping up steam on the boilers to maintain steering way and assist the Kybra with the tow, at the same time putting out fires spontaneously erupting in the coal bunkers. At one stage the steering gear jammed and the bow of the Papachristidis was level with the stern of the Kybra, the tow line taut at right angles between them threatening to break under the strain. While the *Daily News* reported the struggle with the elements, its journalist did not miss the potential of an animal interest story,

at least one Kybra passenger was taking no chances with her offspring. She is a stowaway - 'Brandy' the cat who 'broke ship' from the M.V. Koolinda at Geraldton. Her offspring is 'Schnapps', her six week old litter of one. Brandy keeps Schnapps safely tucked away in the Kybra's lifeboat, brings food to her there and only lets her out for a daily constitutional on the deck.¹²

Some sixth sense told her where she and her kitten were safest.

When the Kybra dropped the tow in Gage Roads on Sunday August 8th the rescue had taken an incident packed week, testifying to the fine seamanship of the officers and crew of the ship which was never built to undertake a tow of almost six hundred miles under very difficult conditions. By this time, since leaving Aden, the last port of call, the Papachristidis had been at sea for 52 days without landfall. Captain Thomas had nothing but praise for his rescuers. He said that before the Newborough made contact the lifeboat emergency rations of biscuit and pemmican were the only food left in the ship and whilst water was in ample supply there was no tea or coffee. The spirits of everyone on board were getting rather low and they were wondering whether help would ever arrive.¹³

The Papachristidis was assigned to a berth at the North Wharf to undertake repairs. It was expected that they would take about six weeks and would be costly to the owners. It was not then known how long or costly the stay in Fremantle would be. The end of the tow was only the beginning of more

the repetition of the charge leads to a different conclusion, as does his sudden and unusual offer that, as an inducement to get the crew to do sea trials, he was prepared to hand over all cartridges in his possession to the customs officers.²⁷

After nine weeks in harbour lying alongside North Wharf, by October 18th it was anticipated that the ship would shortly be able to commence its sea trials when repairs were completed, which were expected to take another two days. The crew, however, had other ideas. They refused to put to sea with the Captain who it was again alleged had threatened them with a revolver in the focs'le, opening the breach and showing them the live cartridges in the gun. Once more Thomas denied the charge saying he and other officers had gone to the men's quarters to remonstrate with them after a brass fire extinguisher had been pushed down a ventilator and crashed on to the deck dangerously near an officer. Three sabotage fires had broken out, two in the crew's accommodation and one in the engine room. Men working on the steering gear had been pelted with bottles, doors to officers' cabins had been bashed in and other damage had been done to the ship.²⁸

Over one third of the crew had deserted, three were in prison, the ship was filthy and the lumpers had refused to work until it was cleaned up. Attempts to obtain shore labour were blocked when the Docky's Union resolved, in answer to a request from a contractor to supply men for a job on the Papachristidis, "In view of the circumstances which had arisen on board the said ship, that our members would not be available to do any work which would normally be done by members of the ship's crew". It was further decided "that the union refrains from giving assistance to the Papachristidis whilst the present trouble on board her remains unsettled."²⁹ Notwithstanding the crew shortage it was reported that the Master was determined to put to sea once the vessel's repairs had been finished. However, he was over-confident. Now the dispute spread to the wharf as the maritime unions came to the crew's assistance. On October 16th a deputation of seamen met with officials of the maritime unions in Fremantle. They told Ron Hurd of the Seamen's Union and Paddy Troy of the Docky's that they were refusing to put to sea with Captain Thomas in command. Hurd and Troy, both experienced militant union secretaries, referred the case to Captain Boulton, Deputy Director of Navigation, whilst at the same time pledging their support for the men. They advised them not to desert, to continue to take orders, but at the same time continue their resolve not to sail with Thomas.³⁰ Meanwhile the two unions declared the ship black, cautioned other seamen not to sign on the ship and advised the company's agents that the mooring gang and tugs would not be available to slip the ship from her berth or tow her out to sea.³¹

In this tense situation, Boulton conducted an official inquiry into the dispute but, after taking statements from the two sides, refused to reveal his findings to the press. Troy and Hurd had contacted the ship's agents and begun negotiations with the company superintendent, who, being notified of the crisis, had flown to Perth from Melbourne.

Captain Thomas, however, had other ideas about how to settle the dispute. In an act of plain provocation, he posted a notice of intention to sail on the gangway on October 19th and ordered a pilot for 8 am. The moorings gang were informed of the black ban and refused to cast off the ship's

mooring ropes. The crew were dressed in their shore clothes and stated their intention to walk ashore if any attempt was made to put to sea. Captain Thomas approached each member of the crew and one by one instructed them to prepare the vessel for sailing. All refused, stating they were prepared to do normal port ship-board duties, but would not sail under Thomas.³²

Only 16 of the original 36 men, employed on deck and in the engine room were now left on board. The rest had either deserted or were in jail. Men were being recruited in the Eastern States, but on arriving in Fremantle, and learning of the dispute, refused to sign on. In the face of the company's difficulty to obtain a crew, it was not surprising that a larger number of seamen than usual were appearing before the Fremantle Court. Charged with desertion, they were awarded the standard prison sentence, with the proviso that they were to be released if a ship was available which they could join. As the bench was often made up of local justices who were also engaged in the maritime industry, cynics linked the sentences with the requirements of the Papachristidis.

The law of the time required the master to notify the police if a seaman left his ship, in which case the seaman could be arrested and charged with desertion. Where the police were not so advised, and often they were not because the shipping company had to post a bond against the deserter's arrest, then, if the seaman was British, he was allowed to remain and reside in Australia without hindrance.³³ Often such men would work around the port until a good berth on another ship turned up and then go back to sea. Given all of the troubles on the Papachristidis and the reputation of the officers, there was no inducement for such seamen to sign on the ship, so the authorities' only alternative was to 'shanghai' those who were classed as deserters.

The company was by now convinced that it was going to be difficult to hire local seamen or get what was left of the original crew on board the ship to sail her back to Britain. Consequently, they made arrangements with the Commonwealth Immigration authorities to allow them to bring in a crew of 55 non-European seamen already recruited in Singapore.³⁴ These clandestine arrangements were undertaken even though negotiations were taking place with the unions and the men.

While these schemes were afoot, the Papachristidis was struck down by another in her long run of accidents. As repairs proceeded, the freighter had been loaded up with a full cargo of bagged flour. Two days after the sailing notice had been posted, the S.S. Cape Nelson, which was berthed astern of the Papachristidis, while pulling away from the wharf was caught by a gust of wind as she was passing, which drove her onto the other ship, brushing the forward starboard hull-plates, badly denting the side and springing rivets. Fortunately all of the damage was above the waterline but with a cargo of flour which can quickly deteriorate if it gets damp, yet more repairs had to be effected before she would again be fit to go to sea, and she would be held up for a further week before being ready for sea.³⁵

In fact the repairs were completed within the week and by Tuesday she was again ready to go to sea, but the crew still refused to sail. Engine trials at sea had not been done and overtures from the company to proceed with the tests under the command of a port pilot were refused.³⁶ The crew knew

ship when it sailed. The economy of the port, with its wool stores, sugar works, docks and other industry which depended on periodic casual workers, welcomed the labour of these itinerant seamen. Nonetheless, some of these seamen were vulnerable, particularly the foreign born who were not legal residents, and could be virtually 'shanghaied' on to any vessel in the port. There were also a number of Canadian seamen on shore who had taken part in the international strike called by their union earlier in the year. Some of the ships had been able to pick up strike-breakers and had sailed, leaving the strikers behind, hence they were illegal residents. The police were usually quite tolerant towards these people and only picked up those who were troublemakers. The problems of recruiting a crew for the Papachristidis dramatically changed this situation. The police were instructed to make mass raids and arrest whoever they could on suspicion of desertion.

A sympathetic police sergeant alerted the Secretary of the Seamen's Union of the raid to be undertaken the next day. Immediately, runners were sent out from the Union office, every pub was visited and the word spread around. Workers in the wool stores, sugar refinery, rigging lofts and construction jobs were told of the proposed raid and seafarers at risk were advised to 'go into smoke'. Friendly Yugoslav and Italian market gardeners in Hamilton Hill and Spearwood agreed to allow men to hide out on their properties.

The next day there was a noticeable absence of familiar faces in the port and many an absence from work was noted by employers. One of the places marked down for a visit by the police was the South Fremantle Power House, then under construction. When they arrived at the site they were met by a worried construction manager at a loss to understand why most of his riggers had not turned up for work. He had been forced to send other workers home because of the absenteeism. When he learned the reasons for the police presence he pleaded with them not to arrest his men as the job was already behind schedule and without his regular workers it would be even further delayed.⁴² The police were, however, able to pick up sufficient foreign seamen, mainly Scandinavians, who were given the option of going through the courts or joining the Papachristidis. They took the second choice. So on December 9th she sailed with a motley crew of first trippers and shanghaied deserters from a variety of nations.

The Papachristidis Vassillios finally left Fremantle after almost 18 weeks tied up against North Wharf, a somewhat inglorious, incident-packed stay in Australia. There was, however, one happy incident. Steward Herbert Jesercnik, who had been charged with being absent without leave, was married in Fremantle and with his bride, Estelle, had a brief honeymoon on board two days before sailing.⁴³

Despite the repairs made in Fremantle, the vessel still had significant problems, limping from break-down to break-down. With only one bunkering stop she took 66 days to complete the return voyage to Liverpool. Captain Thomas continued his erratic behaviour, striding the deck with revolver on hip, on one occasion firing into the air, at what, incredulous onlookers were unsure. On arrival at the English port he was dismissed from his command and replaced by the Master who had previously held the position.⁴⁴ Back in Fremantle, Paddy Troy reported to his union "on the victory achieved by

16. *Ibid* 18/10/1948, p.2
17. *Workers Star* 22/10/1948
18. *Workers Star* 12/11/1948 and interview with Herbert Jesercnik 25/7/1989.
19. *Ibid*.
20. *Ibid*.
21. Letter from Captain Boulton, Deputy Director of Navigation to Commonwealth Attorney General's Department dated 22/11/1948. Commonwealth Archives Acc No.PP482/1. File No. 48/11/2259.
22. *West Australian* 21/8/1948, p.12
23. *West Australian* 24/8/1948, p.8 and 12/10/1948, p.6
24. *West Australian* 28/8/1948, p.13 & *Daily News* 21/9/1948, p.4
25. *West Australian* 30/9/1948, p.10
26. *West Australian* 20/10/1948, p.6. When interviewed Jesercnik confirmed the story.
27. *Daily News* 20/10/1948, p.4
28. *West Australian*, 18/10/1948, p.2
29. Minutes of Special Committee Meeting of Coastal Docks, Rivers and Harbour Workers Union 18/10/1948.
30. *Daily News* 18/10/1948, p.5
31. *West Australian* 20/10/1948, p.3
32. *Ibid*
33. A letter from the Melbourne Steamship Coy., Agents for the Papachristidis to the Chief Migration Officer Perth dated 29/12/1948. Details those classed as deserters for whom a bond had been posted and those British seamen who would be allowed to remain in Australia. Op Cit Commonwealth Archives.
34. *Ibid*. Three telegrams, one dated 26th October, one undated, the third dated 1st November advised of authority to permit entrance to the men recruited in Singapore.
35. *West Australian* 22/10/1948, p.2
36. *West Australian* 21/10/1948, p.4
37. Boulton's role was a bit ambiguous; a Naval Captain of the old authoritarian mould, he was reporting direct to Security Intelligence. In a letter dated 22/11/1948 to the Director, Commonwealth Investigation Branch he repeated an allegation that someone had attempted sabotage by "placing carborundum powder in the cylinder and lubricating oil. This had scored the sylinders etc of the main engine and had caused damage to all auxiliaries". It is therefore not surprising that he believed the best solution was to separate the conflicting groups. Op Cit Commonwealth Archives.
38. *West Australian* 1/11/1948, p.6
39. *Ibid*, p.7
40. *West Australian* 12/11/1948, p.7 and 27/11/1948, p.12
41. *Daily News* 1/12/1948, p.8
42. The author was involved in these events and the information is based on recall and discussion with others who were similarly active at the time.
43. *Daily News* 7/12/1948, p.1 A photograph of Jesercnik and his bride looking out of a porthole accompanies the story.
44. Interviews with Jesercnik and Bruce James, a young engineering graduate from the University of WA who signed on as a galley boy so that he could get to Britain, join his parents and undertake his practice year.
45. Minutes of Committee Meeting of Coastal Docks, Rivers and Harbour Workers Union 6/12/1948. The mantel clock is in the possession of Dr John Troy occupying a prominent position in his Fremantle surgery.
46. Lloyd's Register 1943-1963
47. Op cit Captain Boulton's letter.
48. Op cit Commonwealth Archives
49. *Ibid*.

The steering committee meeting on March 25, 1979, elected Miller as president, Joe McKay from the South Fremantle Football Club was elected vice-president, and Leon Larkin was appointed as administrator. Miller stressed the need for a non-playing professional administrator. The meeting agreed that the administrator should receive an honorarium to be no more than 75% of the total sum of fees collected (Minutes, March 25, 1979). (The only record cited of the precise honorarium paid is \$500 for the 1981 season (Minutes, February, 19 1981). The steering committee decided that the players' association's committee of management would comprise the executive (the three office bearers) and a delegate from each of the eight clubs (Minutes, March 25, 1979).

At the Leederville Hotel meeting on March, 25 1979, Miller, with the assistance of other committee members, outlined the aims of the WAFLPA. Firstly, to have player representation in the decision-making process of the WAFL; secondly, to promote the game of Australian football in Western Australia; and thirdly, to establish policies which will advance the football employment opportunities, and the economic and general welfare of players (Minutes, March 25 1979).

The steering committee held a subsequent meeting at the East Perth Football Club on April 9, 1979. The eight club delegates and six club proxy delegates were formally elected (Minutes April 9 1979). The Swan Districts and Perth Football Clubs were to nominate their proxy delegate at a future time. However, it is unclear when this occurred.

During the steering committee meeting on April 9, 1979, a number of policies were formulated. The steering committee agreed that the WAFLPA should seek to improve player parking facilities, grandstand seating for players' wives and girlfriends at opposition grounds, a player insurance scheme, player injury compensation, club contracts for all 'training list' players, grand final entrance tickets for reserve players, minimum payment for reserve players, introduction of a ten year or two hundred games automatic clearance rule, WAFLPA representation on the WAFL clearance appeals board and periodical representation at WAFL directors' meetings. (Minutes, April 9, 1979) The attempt to introduce an automatic clearance rule after playing for ten years or two hundred games is interesting, because an attempt by the VFL to remove such a rule was a major influence in the formation of the VFLPA (Dabscheck, 1976). In deciding its policies, the steering committee also determined that the association's membership fees should, at the request of the players, be paid by the individual clubs, by deducting the appropriate amount from the players' payments. The fees were set at \$10 per year for league and reserve players, and \$5 per year for colt and student players (Minutes, April 9, 1979).

Prior to the first committee of management meeting on May 14, 1979, a delegation of three committee members including Miller held discussions with WAFL and club administrators (interview, Miller). With other attempts to form players' associations, opposition has occurred from the governing body of the relevant sport, and the clubs themselves (Dabscheck, 1976). The initial meeting and others held in 1979 with the WAFL, were not hostile but cordial. The WAFL were apprehensive about the players increasing their collective bargaining power (interview, Miller).

the AGM), and some new club delegates. Miller remained president but he was joined by a new vice-president, in Rawlinson, the association's legal adviser. Peter Rule took over the administrator's position. During 1980, the players' association managed to publish a newsletter on four occasions (Minutes, March 24, 1980, October 6, 1980), and produced an end-of-season magazine entitled High and Mighty (Minutes, July 11, 1980). The players' association also produced a tax guideline for players (Minutes, July 14, 1980) and set up a players' advisory sub-committee to assist players in their initial negotiations on clearances, contracts, etc. (Minutes, October 6, 1980).

The ramification of the 'Adamson Case' (op.cit.) continued into 1980. In an attempt to allow football clubs to retain their monopsonistic controls over player movement, the Federal Government removed sporting clubs from the Trade Practices Act, 1974 (Cth) (Minutes, April 28, 1980). The WAFLPA sent a letter to the Federal Government opposing this amendment to the Act (*ibid*, April 28, 1980). However, the Federal Government was not persuaded and considered that the common law doctrine of restraint of trade offered sufficient freedom for players to move from club to club (Letter, Garland, Minister for Business and Consumer Affairs, July 10, 1980). The 1980 season also saw unsuccessful attempts by the players' association to meet the WAFL directors (Minutes, October 6, 1980), to obtain injury compensation for player A J Hall from the Subiaco Football Club (*ibid*, July 11, 1980; July 14, 1980; October 6, 1980), and to establish a medical benefit fund for players (Minutes, October 6, 1980). In addition, four clubs (East Fremantle, Swan Districts, West Perth and South Fremantle) still refused to deduct membership fees from players' payments (Minutes, October 6, 1980).

Whilst the 1980 season had seen some unsuccessful efforts by the players' association, the association's profile among players was very good. Nearly all WAFL players (exact number unknown) were members (interview, Miller, March 10, 1989).

In concluding the 'Miller Era' (1979-80), it would be fair to say that success had been achieved in recruiting members, formulating policies, improving players' welfare and interests in some areas (ie. car parking provisions, tax guidelines, establishing player awards). However, the players' association had failed in its attempt to meet the WAFL directors, which frustrated their aim of improving the players' employment and economic opportunities. In addition, the players' association's aim of promoting the game of Australian football in Western Australia appears not to have been achieved in any significant way during the 'Miller Era'. The WAFL did express concern at the lack of player response to requests for promotion of the local football competition (Minutes, April 28, 1980).

The Low Profile Era, 1981-83

The period from 1981 through to 1983, was a time when the WAFLPA's financial position, profile among members, and activity level, slowly deteriorated. This impression is reinforced by the paucity of WAFLPA correspondence with the WAFL during the 1981 to 1983 period (which is held on file at the headquarters of the WAFL). However, association membership numbers did not appear to decrease significantly during this period (interview, Fuller).

this era were the election of Michalczyk and Vasoli to office bearers positions. This was to enhance the work of the WAFLPA during the 'Fuller Era', which commenced in 1984.

The Fuller Era, 1983-86

The 'Fuller Era' was marked by an improved financial position and increased profile of the players' association among its members (interview, Fuller, Michalczyk).

Commencing in 1984, and increasing in 1985 and 1986, Fuller was able to obtain sponsorship support from companies such as Carlton United Brewery and Toyota for the players' association (The Western Player, 1985; interview, Fuller). The sponsorship support was used to provide monetary and trophy awards for the fairest and best players, both weekly and annually, state representatives and players reaching milestones such as 150 league games (The Western Player, 1985; Fuller). Fuller remarked that the high profile of Michalczyk and Vasoli within and outside the players' association was of tremendous assistance in attracting sponsorship to the WAFLPA (ibid).

Fuller also improved the financial position of the WAFLPA by persuading all clubs except the Perth Football Club, to deduct players' association fees from player payment, on receipt of a request form from the players. Fuller was probably successful in his endeavours because he had a good rapport with the various club managers, developed from his fourteen years as club manager for the Subiaco Football Club during the 1970's and early 1980's. Fuller's view is that there were no ideological reasons why the clubs had, in the past, been reluctant to deduct fees from players payments, rather the reason was the club managers' perception that it involved too much work (Interview, Fuller).

In 1984, besides improving their financial position, the players' association was active in examining the proposed WAFL player contracts. The WAFL wanted all players to sign a standard contract with them before they would issue permits to play in the WAFL competition (Memorandum, April 1984). In the memorandum, the WAFL stated that the player contracts were a necessity, following the court decision in the Adamson Case (op.cit.). The WAFL added that it would be extremely difficult for them to argue that restraint of players' movements was reasonable, if the players had to abide by rules they were not party to. The WAFL communicated via the memorandum that they welcomed submissions from players through the WAFLPA. The players' association opposed the draft players contract for two main reasons: an increased interference with the players freedom of choice to transfer employment, and an erosion in the players bargaining power because all players would be subjected to the same conditions and employed by the one employer, the WAFL (Letter, Fuller, September 12, 1984).

During 1984, the players' association offered ex WAFLPA member, Phillip Kelly, financial assistance in his court case against the Taxation Department. The players' association gave \$2,000 in assistance, but were unsuccessful in their attempts to gain financial assistance from the WAFL (Letters, Fuller, WAFLPA, October 3, 1984; WAFL November 21, 1984). The case was finally heard in mid-1985. It was held by the court that Kelly was a part-time employee of the East Perth Football Club at the time

as administrator (interview, Lamb, April 19, 1989).

The 1986 season saw the implementation of the new WAFL player contracts. The contracts had not been significantly modified from the draft contract, first proposed in 1984. There still remained clauses which restricted the freedom of players to transfer from one club to another, and also a limit on the total club payments to players (The West Australian, March 21, 1986); April 10, 1986). The players' association through their new president, expressed some reservations about not being consulted when the final draft of the contract was being prepared (The West Australian, March 21, 1986). However, the players' association agreed that the contracts should be signed by players because: "...where else could the players go if they wanted to play top football in W.A..... The WAFL had a monopoly on our services in this state" (Interview, Lamb).

The association was in conflict with the league during 1986, over the issue of remuneration for players involved in the 1985 finals promotional activities, the long-kicking and sprinting competitions. Fuller had sent two letters to the WAFL, criticizing the league in its delay in paying the players involved in the 1985 finals promotions (Letters, Fuller, January 3, 1986; March 10, 1986). In the letter dated March 10, 1986, Fuller wrote:

This matter (delay in payment) now becomes unacceptable to the point where the organizing body of football in this state is treating our association in an unprofessional manner and failing to honour commitments made with the participants of the game they administer.

It was not until towards the end of the 1986 season that the players' association received a cheque for the promotional work (Letter, Evans, August 25, 1986).

During the 1986 season, tribunal and umpiring matters played an important part in the players' association's activities. The players' association had asked the WAFL to review the five-game suspension imposed on East Fremantle player David Bushell, after his altercation with a trainer during a game (Letter, Fuller, May 30, 1986; The West Australian, May 31, 1986). The players' association did not condone the action of Bushell but did think a fine would have been a more appropriate penalty (Letter, Fuller, May 30, 1986; The West Australian, May 31, 1986). However, the request for a review of the suspension was refused by the WAFL (Letter, Evans, June 3, 1986).

The players' association also requested that an umpire adviser attend one of their meetings to clarify the 'ducking the head' rule (Letters, Fuller, June 5, 1986). The umpires' coach, Bob Phillips, attended one of the players' association's meetings and clarified the rule for the players (interview, Fuller, March 10, 1989).

The end of the 1986 season also brought an end to the 'Fuller Era'. This era was marked by a significant improvement in the WAFLPA's financial position and profile among its membership.

CONCLUSION

At the time the WAFLPA formed in 1979, the players in the WAFL competition were subjected to

be influenced by the fact that their members are only part-time sportspeople, who have other employment outside football. By comparison, overseas players' associations such as the PFA are made up of members who receive their total income from sports employment. It is interesting to note that the VFLPA which is predominantly made up of part-time football employees, has also been unable to remove monopsonistic employment controls in the VFL competition.

In concluding, a final comment about the inability of the WAFLPA to have official discussions with the WAFL seems warranted. In addition to not being able to meet the WAFL directors, the players' association has been unsuccessful in having a regular WAFL representative at their meetings. In fact, the only record of this occurring was in April 1986 when WAFL football manager Peter Evans, attended a meeting of the players' association to discuss matters of concern over the proposed expanded VFL national competition for the 1987 season (Letter, Fuller, April 23, 1986). It is ironic that the introduction of a Western Australian-based team into the expanded VFL competition in 1987 has coincided with the demise of the WAFLPA.

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that their workshops should be no different to any other workplaces i.e. they should have union representation. The disabled workers requested that an Action Group be formed and on September 24, 1981 under the leadership of Gloria Cassidy the Disabled Workers' Action Group was formed.

The Group at that stage was not a registered organisation and as a consequence did not approach problems in an industrial manner such as a union might. The group had to use a slower process to resolve problems for members by using legislation such as the Factories and Shops Act and various other Acts, By-laws and Regulations which existed and which applied to the sheltered workshops.

I asked Gloria what effect if any the fact that 1981 was the 'Year of the Disabled' had on the formation of the Action Group. She said that the Year of the Disabled had helped to 'break down barriers' and that people generally had indicated that they felt the disabled should have a voice of their own. She felt that they had not made any political gains out of the event. Instead their political victories were brought about in the main by good ground work and getting their facts together before approaching the Government.

In 1982 the Disabled Workers' Action Group challenged the termination of a disabled worker. The case eventually went before the Western Australian Industrial Commission as an unfair dismissal claim pursuant to Section 29(b) of the Industrial Relations Act 1979. Although the employee's claim was dismissed (the Commission found that the employee had not been dismissed) the employee was able to re-apply for entry to the workshop which ultimately resulted in his re-employment. Gloria points out that to the best of her knowledge this was the first occasion that a disabled worker had taken a claim with a sheltered workshop into the Industrial Relations Commission.

For some time the TLC and its affiliate unions continued to provide support and assistance for the Disabled Workers' Action Group. If there were particular problems with a sheltered workshop the Action Group would approach the TLC and the TLC would organise for a delegation to go to the workshop. It became clear however that this process was stretching the unions' resources. As Gloria puts it - "the unions were very good but we were taking up their time which they could have been putting into their own membership". (Interview 1 - Gloria Cassidy). In July of 1985 a meeting of affiliated unions was arranged by the Trades and Labour Council to consider the future of the Action Group. The outcome of that meeting was a decision to make a formal application to the Western Australian Industrial Relations Commission for registration as a union of workers.

Registration

The unions which had become involved with the Disabled Workers Action Group recommended that it seek registration for the following reasons:

1. If coverage of disabled workers was awarded to existing unions then disabled workers would become lost in the mainstream of the membership.
2. Existing unions did not have the expertise or the resources to give the workers proper support.
3. A specific union was considered more appropriate because the area of sheltered workshops

be covered in the constitution of the new union. One union (the Clothing and Allied Trades Industrial Union) openly admitted that it's time was more than taken up with 'able-bodied' members.

One further factor which frustrated coverage from traditional unions was the fact that workers frequently moved between the various sections within the workshops i.e. they moved from the printing area to the sewing area to the woodcraft area and to the cardboard box making area and in so doing moved across three or four traditional union boundaries or demarcation lines.

An interesting feature of the registration proceedings was that one of the employers gave evidence in support of the registration. Mr Walton, the General Manager of FCB Industries when asked what his attitude was to the formation of the union said that he was happy that it was happening. He went on to say:

I think that since Gloria's operation has been operating - has been formed - I have seen a difference in their attitude they have somewhere to go Sure they lay complaints and I get Gloria ringing me up it gives me the opportunity of looking into it. (Transcript 1, p 172).

He went on to explain that most of the complaints had been minor ones and all had been settled happily.

Out of the few unions which opposed the registration it was the HSOA which stated an intention of pursuing the matter with some strength. It indicated to the Commission that it had constitutional coverage of workers employed at the Spastic Welfare Association, the Paraplegic Quadriplegic Association of WA (Para-Quad), Good Samaritan Industries and FCB Industries. It had already in existence an award for the Spastic Welfare Association and had an application for an award for Para-Quad.

It was not unusual that this union particularly should be the strongest voice opposing the registration for it is true to say that it was the only union with any significant coverage in the area sought to be covered by the new body and it was the only the only union which could foreseeably be damaged in any significant way by the registration. The HSOA argued that the registration of the union would create an overlap and would duplicate its constitutional coverage.

The actions of the HSOA in objecting to the registration appeared in part at least to have been motivated by a desire to correct what they described as a "history of misrepresentation and misinterpretation. between the Association and the applicant society." (ibid p.180). This appeared to be in response to some adverse publicity on local TV and radio. The HSOA expressed concern over the financial position of the proposed organisation. It indicated to the Commission that at best the union could hope to raise \$4,000.00 a year and realistically the figure could be expected to be \$2,000.00 which would mean that the organisation would have to rely on grants from various government agencies together with assistance from the TLC.

The objections of the FCU and ADSTE were less vigorous. The concerns of the FCU in objecting to

registration Beech represented the Union. Mrs P E Bentley of the Confederation of WA Industry appeared for the majority of respondents and Mr J D Kirwan appeared for the HSOA and the FCU.

The situation was a unique one. Not only would both the union and the award be unusual in the group of workers they sought to protect but the employers were most co-operative. Beech pointed out that after "very fruitful and extremely friendly negotiation" an agreement had been reached based on a "document....drawn up by the employers not by the union" (*ibid*). He went on to state that "the reason why consent has been able to be achieved with the employers in this matter is that to a very great extent the conditions that are prescribed are the conditions which are already being observed." (*ibid*). The only exception to that was the change in the basis for accrual of long service leave from a 15 year to a 10 year basis. This, Beech explained, was in part a reflection of the fact that the respondent organisations were almost entirely government funded.

In relation to the intervening unions it was pointed out that the area and scope clauses of the award had been deliberately structured so as to honor the undertakings given during the registration proceedings as to the exclusion of those areas traditionally covered by the existing unions. This satisfied the unions' objections. Finally with the withdrawal of the Industrial Rehabilitation Division of Mental Health Services (the only government respondent) from the list of respondents all objections had been dealt with and Commissioner Negus proceeded to issue the award, indicating that it was in his view 'an historic occasion.' (*ibid*, P8).

The award which issued is at first glance none too different from any industrial award which one might expect to find covering a group of employees in industry. It prescribes working hours for employees, penalties for overtime, annual, sick, long service, maternity and compassionate leave most of which complies with state standards previously set by the Commission. The feature which most distinguishes this award from the mainstream of industrial awards is the lack of a wages clause.

As Beech put it in the award proceedings "The question of wage rates is a very vexed question and one which admits to many competing points of view. Accordingly that is a matter that if the union wishes to address it will do in some other way." (*ibid*, p. 3).

The reasons for this, if one is familiar with the operation of sheltered workshops and disabled workers is obvious. The incomes of disabled workers comprise a number of components. Disabled workers in receipt of the Sheltered Employment Allowance (SEA) are paid an amount equivalent to the invalid pension, by the Department of Social Security. They are also paid by the Department an allowance of \$15.00 per week on top of this sum as an incentive to gain employment in a sheltered workshop. On top of the payment by Social Security is the 'wage' paid by the sheltered workshop. A single employee can earn up to \$40.00 per week (\$70.00 per week for a married person) without it affecting their social security payment. Their payments are reduced by fifty cents in the dollar for every dollar they earn over this limit. As a consequence the 'wages' paid to disabled workers tend to average around these maximums. Workers may also be eligible for disability fringe benefits such as public

says she has never seen a strike that has achieved anything. She points out that it may take workers up to three years to make up in wages what they lose during a strike. She adds that "dealing with disabled employees is a complex area and you can do a lot of damage if you don't know what you are doing". (Interview Cassidy). Hence the need for a specialised union made up of people who are familiar with the complex area of sheltered workshops and in particular the needs of the disabled.

Gloria maintains that traditional unions had failed to represent disabled workers satisfactorily. The Disabled Workers' Union she says has time to do things which other unions don't have time to do. By this she means providing services such as counseling, looking for accommodation, arranging for legal advice etc. Gloria says she is available for member even if they just want to come in and talk about their personal problems.

Attendance at monthly meetings she says is good at between 130 and 140 or over 10% at membership. At the meetings the disabled workers have their say and indicate to the union what issues they want pursued. Ms Cassidy refers to it as 'real grass roots' unionism. Wages she says are not a big issue "our guys are quite happy with what they are getting" (ibid). The big issues she says are working conditions and safety. "Our workers are very safety conscious" (ibid).

After the Award

Since the award has issued Gloria indicates that management has accepted the existence of the union as part of their work environment. She indicated that she perceives a greater willingness to communicate and co-operate with union officials.

Management attitudes have become positive and attempts to do the right thing are evident. Management will contact the union for advice and is willing to act on advice from the union. Where disagreement exists, negotiations take place rather than confrontations.

Some degree of worker participation is in place by way of Sheltered Employment Workers' committees. These committees consist of one employee from each 'trade' or type of work. These employees discuss any problems and elect a delegate to meet with the management to resolve the problem and report back.

The introduction of the award has standardised the employment conditions across the industry. This in turn has improved the self esteem of employees. Gloria indicates that the award has imposed a sense of security for employees. They are able to retain their dignity and not be exploited or unfairly treated at work. Also the Award employees are able to attend Occupational Health and Safety Training Courses, TUTA courses and other training schemes which will provide assistance for integrating them into the open workforce.

The union has also been able to arrange for young disabled workers to be placed on apprenticeships in the sheltered workshops in the printing, metal work, cabinet making and upholstery trades. The union firmly believes that
the advances made for the protection and furtherance of the industrial interests and well being

personal counseling and held with legal advice and accommodation.

In part these differences can be attributed to the fact that these workers do have particular problems associated with working with their disabilities. One example of the type of issue that these workers face, that is not so readily faced by other workers, is the concern over employers keeping jobs open whilst workers are spending extended periods in hospital.

The Union sees itself as a 'voice' for disabled workers in Western Australia. The formation of the union, it would say, has prevented disabled workers from becoming 'lost in the mainstream of unionism'. Disabled workers whilst sharing many problems in common with other unionists also experience problems that are unique as a result of working with their disabilities. It is important that they have representation from people who understand their particular problems and the complex area of sheltered workshops. The Union would argue that, unlike existing unions, it is responsive to the needs of disabled workers.

The answer to the question of why this is the only union of disabled workers in Australia lies in the dedication of Gloria Cassidy and others and because it has had the support of the TLC and the union movement in general within Western Australia.

In its relatively short history the union has achieved a great deal for disabled workers. It has gained registration as a union and negotiated and registered its first award. In so doing it has standardised employment conditions across the workshops where its members are employed. This award will serve as a base from which the union can build and further improve conditions of employment. Finally and perhaps more importantly the union has given disabled workers a 'voice' so that they can be heard on issues that affect them

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 Transcript (2) Before the Western Australian Industrial Relations Commission constituted by Negus C. - Disabled Workers' Union of W.A. and Paraplegic Quadruplegic Association of WA Incorporated (trading as Para-Quad Industries) and others - Application for first award, 22 March, 1988.
 Reasons for Decision (1) Application No. 442 of 1986 (OB CIT) 67 WAIG 345-6.
 Reasons for Decision (2) No. 799 of 1982 - William Alfred Connolly and the Paraplegic - Quadruplegic Association of WA (Inc) trading as "Para-Quad Industries". Before Mr Commission G J Martin, 31 December, 1982.
 Supported Employees Industrial Award No. A1 of 1988 - Delivered 22 March, 1988.
 Webb, Sidney and Beatrice. A History of Trade Unionism. Chiswick Press, London 1902 ed.

In this case the union sought to have the St John Ambulance Association prosecuted for breaching an industrial agreement (No 65 of 1925) for failing to pay correct wages. It was established that Caddy was an employee who drove ambulances and conveyed sick and/or injured people to hospital. The union argued that because sick and/or injured persons would be charged for this service, the ambulance car was no different to a taxi-car of char-a-banc. As all employers in the Taxi-car and char-a-banc industry were covered by the registered agreement the Ambulance Association was therefore also a respondent.

The magistrate was unable to determine the matter due to the unresolved question of whether or not Caddy was a taxi-car driver within the meaning of this agreement. He referred the matter to the Court of Arbitration for a decision.

By majority decision, the Court on 23 June, 1926, found that a motor ambulance van was not in fact either a taxi-car or a char-a-blanc, and as such the driver of the ambulance could not therefore be a taxi-driver. Having had this interpretation sent back to his court, the learned magistrate dismissed the charges and awarded costs against the union.

It is unfortunate that records relating to this matter, and the reasons why this union chose to take the action it did, are not available. The mystery remains as to whether the ambulance employees sought union assistance, or whether the union had hoped to pick up additional members by having a success in the Magistrate's Court. What is clear, is that ambulance motor drivers were not covered by an award or industrial agreement and were paid a weekly wage of four pounds as compared to a taxi-car driver who was paid four pounds twelve shillings and six pence.⁵

One might observe that the role and responsibility of an ambulance officer compared to a taxi driver might have been such to suggest the former be paid the higher wage. The difference in transporting a sick or badly injured person from an accident scene to hospital, and a passenger from the shops to home for example, seem fairly obvious. Not so obvious to the employer of the day it would seem!

In 1955, a young Commonwealth public servant signed up as a volunteer Ambulance Officer at the Serpentine depot south-east of Perth. Five years later in 1960, Murray Allum began work as a paid officer at Headquarters in Perth, which by this time had been relocated from Murray to Wellington Street.

Allum recalls the dramatic increase in his weekly hours from a public servant at 40 per week to an Ambulance Driver at 72 per week. Similarly his pay dropped considerably compared to what he had been earning.⁶

At the time he joined the paid staff, Allum was one of 9 officers employed at Headquarters, and there

Miscellaneous Workers' Union. Allum recalls they did this in early 1964. Lippiatt, like Dennis, was very helpful, and was more than willing to give advice and assistance. The two officers also approached the Transport Workers' Union, but as Allum remembers it, both he and Brown were not particularly keen on the prospect of joining that Union. His reasons for this related to the fact that the Ambulance Association management viewed the officers as little more than truck drivers, to the extent that their pay was based on truck driver rates, with a small margin for their first aid skills. To formally join the Transport Workers' Union would firmly cement this position, at the very time the officers were attempting to improve their conditions by making an appeal to their skill level.

Numerous meetings were held between Allum, Brown and Dennis and throughout 1964 they reported to meetings of Ambulance Officers on their deliberations. Eventually Allum and Brown came to the view that they should recommend to Ambulance Officers that they ought to form their own Union. This decision was very much dependent upon the availability and willingness of Dennis to be seconded to the position of Honorary Secretary. Dennis agreed.¹¹

At 7.30 pm on 7 October, 1964, at Dennis' home at 130 Lawrence Street Bedford, the inaugural meeting of The Ambulance Services Union of Workers Western Australia, was held.¹² There were six members present, being all those officers not on duty at the time, with one sick officer unable to attend.

Following a report by Allum, Mick Brown who was in the Chair, called for a vote on the following resolution - '... that a Union be formed and named The Ambulance Services Union of Workers, Western Australia'. The minutes record that the motion was carried unanimously.

Other administrative resolutions were put to the meeting and all were carried. These included the election of office bearers; a President, Vice President, Secretary and Treasurer and three committee members. Jack Dennis was elected Honorary Secretary. Wigley had transferred from Bunbury to Perth in 1964 and attended the meeting. Both he and Allum became office bearers.

A joining fee of two shillings sixpence, and a quarterly membership fee of ten shillings was struck by the meeting. The newly elected Treasurer reported that collections amounted to ten pounds, twelve shillings and sixpence, of which five pounds eleven shillings had been expended on stationery, postage, advertisements of meetings, a copy of the Industrial Arbitration Act and Regulations. The account balance stood at five pounds one shilling, and the Treasurer reported further funds would be needed in order to cover the expenses involved in initial fees and costs of registration.

The draft rules of the newly-formed organisation were not finalized for the inaugural meeting, and the meeting was adjourned to a date to be fixed, at which time the rules would be presented. A special general meeting was convened on 2nd November 1964 where the rules were read out. They were then accepted by the meeting. At this same meeting it was resolved that the Secretary be directed to seek

Australia, was officially registered in March 1965. Its membership of 24¹⁹ represented all Ambulance Officers employed by the Association.

Even before the Commission had formally registered the Union, the Union Committee commenced work on an award. Up until this time, ambulance drivers were not covered by any formal agreement or award. At its meeting on 4 March, 1986, the Union Committee authorised the Secretary to request a conference with the Ambulance Association to discuss an award. The Committee had already studied various information from other States.²⁰

By June, 1965, a log of claims had been lodged in the Commission, and discussion was underway with the Association. Formal hearing of the matter commenced on 2 August 1965 before Commissioner Kelly; Dennis appeared for the Union. The hearing took three days, and the decision was handed down on 27 August, 1965.

The most significant gain in the conditions of work was the reduction in hours worked. From the shift which had comprised 4 x 10 hour day shifts (8.00 am to 6.00 pm), followed immediately by 3 x 14 hour night shifts (6.00pm to 8.00 am), followed by one day off, (then back to the 4 day shifts, etc. which averaged out over eight weeks at 72 hours per week), the award provided for an average 56 hour week.²¹

The union also won an increase in wages, in particular in the margins component, margins of four pounds five shilling, five pounds and six pounds, in the first, second and third years respectively, were awarded. Whilst these were not as great as the Union wanted, they were higher than that which the employer had offered. The basic wage was set at fifteen pounds, seventeen shillings and ten pence. The award became operative from the first pay period commencing after 8 September, 1965, and was to remain in force for a period of three years.²²

In the space of only a few months since formal registration, the Union had demonstrated its worth by achieving the ambulance industry's first award. As important as the pay increases and reduced hours were, the workers had also won what they considered another significant victory; that being the title "Ambulance Officer". No longer were they classed as either drivers or attendants.

In the quarterly review of the Union in September, 1965, the first point mentioned in the award conditions gained was the designation of "Ambulance Officer". Following this was hours, margins, rates of pay and compulsory union membership. Uniforms, sick leave, long service leave and annual leave completed the report. Mainly the ambulance officers considered that their re-classification recognized both their skills and the importance of their work.²³

On 9 December, 1965, the Union held its second annual general meeting and office bearers for 1966 were elected as follows:

Secretary of the Ambulance Services Union.²⁸ This was done and on 14 August, 1967, at the Miscellaneous Workers' Union State Council meeting, Lippiatt reported he would be holding meetings with Jim Coleman, Secretary of the Trades and Labor Council, and J. Bowyer, the Industrial Registrar, in an effort to expedite the amalgamation.²⁹

A special general meeting of the Miscellaneous Workers' Union was held on 11 September, 1967 to consider amending Rule 3 of the Miscellaneous Workers' union Constitution in the following terms - 'a new subrule (k) to read:

As paid part-time or full-time employees of the St. John Ambulance Association, or any other organisation whose main purpose is the operation of mobile and/or fixed first aid and ambulance services rendering aid to the sick and injured, and who holds a first aid certificate as a necessary part of the conditions of such employment.'

The proposition was carried unanimously,³⁰ and the Miscellaneous Workers' Union then applied to the Industrial Commission for permission to take the Ambulance Officers under its wing. This was finally achieved in January, 1968.³¹

The Ambulance Services Union held a special Executive Meeting on 1 February, 1968, and disbursed its assets, allocating equal amounts to all 31 members, which were paid direct to the Miscellaneous Workers' Union as advance contributions. An amount of \$10.09 was paid to Wigley in appreciation for the valuable work he had done in his capacity as Honorary Secretary.

All that was left to be done was to formally de-register the Ambulance Services Union. This occurred on 29 August, 1969, when the Commission cancelled its registration.³²

By this time the ambulance industry was being serviced by the Miscellaneous Workers' Union. An Ambulance Services Section was immediately established and held its first meeting on 29 February, 1968, only a few weeks after the disbursement of funds from the old Union. Lippiatt attended this meeting and had clearly already established himself as a dedicated union official in the eyes of his new members.³³

Whilst the Ambulance Services Union of Workers, Western Australia had only a short life span, its history is important in the unionisation of workers in this State. A small number of workers (13 in all) saw a need to form an organisation in order to protect their jobs and improve their wages and conditions. That they managed to achieve so much in such a short space of time is really quite remarkable.

It is also important to the history of the Miscellaneous Workers' Union. At the time of the amalgamation in 1968, the Miscellaneous Workers' Union was in the process of building itself into a more effective and larger Union. It was about this time that the Chemical Workers' Union amalgamated with the Miscellaneous Workers' Union, and the Union was also pursuing the possibility

BOOK REVIEWS

Penelope Hetherington (ed), Childhood and Society in Western Australia, Perth, UWA Press.

"Children are elusive figures in historical accounts of the Australian past. Male adults are the major actors in the historical drama, moving about apparently unencumbered by women and children" is one of the opening statements in Pen Hetherington's new book, Childhood and Society in Western Australia."

This wonderful collection of thirteen papers reflects a wide range of styles and approaches. The chapters are organised into three sections. One considers the reconstruction of childhood, the second section focuses on school and neighbourhood while the final chapters examine philanthropy, ideology and the state. The editor, in her introduction provides an excellent overview of the content of each chapter and I am certain that even a quick glance at that would provide sufficient interest to stimulate the reader to read further. While each chapter has sufficient merit to stand alone, Pen Hetherington identifies a number of particular themes which link the different contributions. Two which recur in a number of the papers are the inadequacies in government spending on services for children and the intervention of middle-class "do-gooders" in the lives of working class parents and children.

As someone born and raised in Melbourne, the collection provided some answers to gaps in my knowledge of Western Australian history. For example, I had often wondered why so many prominent people had apparently attended the same high school. Jenny Gregory's chapter provided the answer that until the late 1930's, the Perth Modern School was the only Government school where it was possible to complete five years of secondary education. My historical education continued with the discovery of the people behind the names of, for example, Cyril Jackson High School and the Roberta Jull Child Care Association.

Childhood and Society in Western Australia also provides a useful historical perspective on some existing community organisations. The Children's Protection Society is identified by Annette Davis as one of four organisations that played a prominent role in the early 1900's and yet today, while it still operates a day nursery which was first established in 1908, it plays no role in the current policy debates concerning the care of young children. By contrast, the Lady Gowrie Centre, which was established as a "model centre" with Commonwealth funds has continued to pioneer some important developments in the modern era of children's services.

On the other hand, I shared the frustrations of a number of the authors about the lack of information that is available and the intensity of the effort that will be required to bring it to light. Phyllis

who resorted to intimidation and fraud to that end until they were ultimately exposed by the Court of Disputed Returns in the contest for the Kimberley seat in 1977, yet little was done by previous Labor MPs against racist disfranchisement.

Bickerton professes general support for the benefits bestowed upon the Pilbara by the advent of the great mining consortia, nevertheless another anecdote tells how the Mount Goldsworthy Group ignored his advice and sited Goldsworthy town in the worst possible location for the health and comfort of its future citizens. This story is eloquent of the corporate heartlessness which has provoked so much of the industrial strife now endemic in the Pilbara.

The author makes some surprising comments upon the behaviour of the trade union leadership in the Pilbara during his period of office which call for some quotes:

For example, in New South Wales up to the year 1958, as I knew from being a manager of a large open cut coal mine....the only way a person could enjoy employment...was by way of being a member of a union. In the north-west of Western Australia up to the year 1958, the best chance a person had of obtaining employment was not being a member of a union.... At this time the Australian Workers' Union was the only one interested in representing the north-west members and....only then, with any degree of enthusiasm, if they were engaged in the shearing industry. Wittenoom Gorge was the exception. The A.W.U. was active there on the mining side

Until the early sixties most trade unions showed about as much interest in north-west membership as a rabbi would in operating a piggery [I] can remember bringing complaints down to Perth or suggestions from individuals to be passed on to their union headquarters from fitters and turners, welders, carpenters... Sometimes one would be thanked for the effort, but rarely. Mostly...the reply would be something like "What the bloody hell does he expect us to do? Fly up there? If he wants to work in those bloody ungodly places that's his bloody fault. Anyway, if there's anything he wants to say, it's union business not yours..."

In Bickerton's opinion the failure of the craft unions to get into the Pilbara and organise the workforce at the outset of the iron boom entrenched management in rigid anti-union positions which has resulted in much of the industrial unrest which has plagued the area ever since.

The most puzzling omission from the book is any account of the disastrous Labor defeat throughout the whole of the North West in the 1974 elections - other than a euphemism in the publisher's dust-jacket blurb which talks of Bickerton's "retirement in 1974". If readers want a Bickerton explanation of this event they should refer to his wife's book *Dust Over The Pilbara* published by Artlook Books in 1980. In her final chapter Marjorie Bickerton lists the following causes:

Disenchantment in the rural areas with the Whitlam Federal Government's policies on agriculture and its restrictions on foreign investment in mining.
 Dirty tricks by the conservative parties - particularly their sneering references to the fact that Arthur was sick throughout most of his election campaign.
 Apathy on behalf of ALP supporters in the area.

To assess the validity of Majorie's analysis it should be remembered that, in that election, State Labor actually increased its percentage of votes in urban electorates. It lost office because of an entrenched

are the historical facts of the era, which combined with the theme, make this book a valuable sociological resource. It is meticulously researched and clearly referenced, according it a place as a document of historical and educational worth.

We learn right from the first page that early women faced a harsh, unrelenting environment deprivation, isolation and an every present, dangerous shortage of basic needs such as fresh water, with the accompanying threat of disease. Yet the wives, mothers and sweethearts who battled against the odds, were no shrinking violets, but strong, resourceful and often as adventurous as the men they followed. The stark reality for most of them was that they had no choice. Left behind with families in the care of relatives their lot was often just as difficult.

Professional women were among those early pioneers ... nurses being the first to provide a buffer against the ravages of typhoid and shocking mining accidents.

Norma looks at all the women whose roles (so clearly defined) brought - one way and another - 'civilisation' to the Goldfields. Among these were the prostitutes - tolerated then as now - so that the wives and daughters of miners were not subject to the uncivilised attentions of men not in possession of wives of their own.

While such attitudes were commonplace, Norma with a keen eye for injustice, prejudice and downright exploitation, makes the point that women's roles were undoubtedly subservient - in all but a few notable instances. Aboriginal women fared worst of all, as the few scant records indicate.

To me, the spirit of those early Goldfields women, who unlike their granddaughters, did not know the word 'feminism' - is epitomised by Norma's account of 14 year old Clara Saunders, who, against advice on the grounds that 'it was no place for a girl', went to the infant settlement of Coolgardie early in 1893, just months after gold was discovered. Offered a job as a domestic help to one of the town's few women, Clara jumped at the chance. The 160 mile trek by horse-drawn coach from Southern Cross would have discouraged a less spirited lass. It would have been easy to paint a picture of a rip-roaring, exciting adventure, with fade-outs of colourful sunsets and romantic vistas. Norma does no such thing. Instead we learn of the heat, the track through stretches of heavy sand, when passengers had to walk, the stench of camels and the abundance of ticks. Clara, clad in the garb of the day, would have been dusty, hot, sweaty and uncomfortable. To add to these she was bitten by a fly and suffered a 'bung' eye. Half-way there she was offered a ride back to her family and the comparative comfort of Southern Cross. She refused. Years later she recalled her arrival at Wisdom's Exchange hotel in Coolgardie and how she stepped down amid cheers from the all-male crowd awaiting the arrival of the coach. Another of that oh-so-rare species - a lady - had arrived to do her bit to civilise the Goldfields.

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