

# The Queensland Journal Of Labour History

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### *Labour History*, 108, May 2015

This issue, Number 108, offers a pleasing mix of studies dealing with party political aspects of labour history, studies of work, occupations and labour markets, and studies that engage with another abiding theme in labour history — the gender division of paid labour in occupations, whether 'respectable', 'rough' or in transition between the two.

In the lead article, Jeannine Baker examines the role of women in Australian journalism in the first half of the twentieth century. Jackie Dickinson investigates the working lives of a group of female and male Left activists in the emerging Australian advertising industry between the 1930s and 1970s. Alana Piper has a piece on fortune-telling and clairvoyance; and Rowan Henderson a research note on a recent historical exhibition on sex work in the Australian Capital Territory.

Cameron Nunn re-examines the economic conceptualisation of juvenile male convict labour, questioning whether 'human capital' theory can be applied meaningfully to the juvenile convicts who were sent to New South Wales and Van Diemen's Land. Anthony O'Donnell investigates the construction and regulation of unemployment during the post-war boom and contends that new conceptions and metrics on unemployment are attributable primarily to changes in labour market structure.

There are also several solid pieces of scholarship on labour movement party politics and activism. For instance, Liam Byrne provides a revisionist interpretation of the Victorian Socialist Party's (VSP) contribution to the Australian labour's political culture in the first decades of the twentieth century.

The issue's two concluding articles return to a theme that has long been of central concern in labour history scholarship — that of racist ideology and racial oppression and exclusion. Phil Griffiths investigates the class and philosophical lineages of the 1888 compact by Australian colonial governments to prevent further Chinese immigration. Nick Scott examines the political ferment surrounding the 1971 Springbok rugby tour.

# Editorial

Glenda Strachan

The articles in this issue remind us of the struggles workers have faced in achieving decent wages and working conditions. We all know the importance of knowing our past and that it is only through struggles that better conditions have been won. A reminder of the suffering of workers and the illegal pay rates that some workers in Australia still receive was forcefully presented in August 2015 on the TV program 4 Corners which investigated the conditions of workers at the 7-Eleven convenience stores. Most if not all staff are international students and the exploitation revealed in the underpayment of wages was horrific (see <http://www.abc.net.au/4corners/stories/2015/08/30/4301164.htm>). A stark reminder to us all that worker struggles are still needed.

This issue presents an article by Carol Corliss which tells the story of how bakers changed their working hours from nights to the more sociable day work. They achieved this in 1915, and it is a pertinent struggle to remember today when the push to remove penalty rates for unsocial working hours has been revived in the national debate. Moving forward to the 1940s, the article by James Morris responds to

Hal Colebatch's book, *Australia's Secret War*, which is critical of the role of trade unions in World War II. Morris discusses wider issues with a detailed look at the actual levels of strikes on the waterfront during the course of the war, and debunks some of the myths about "treachery" of workers during the conflict.

The struggle by Indigenous workers to regain the wages stolen from them is also addressed in this issue with the story of Conrad Yeatman and the political campaigns waged by residents of the Yarrabah Reserve in Queensland against the forces of the State and the Anglican Church. Wages owed from the 1950s have still not been paid. This article by Bob Reed adds to the literature on the stolen wages stories.

The life of the late Eva Bacon, Queensland communist feminist, is outlined by Deborah Jordan. Now recognised with an entry in the *Australian Dictionary of Biography* and a street named after her in a new Canberra suburb, her story has not been told in detail. This reminds us of the necessity of her story, as history, especially labour history, has traditionally told the stories of

the valiant men. Feminist history has come a long way since the 1970s, but women's stories still remain largely untold. Deborah Jordan lays down the challenge for the story of Eva Bacon to be explored.

The site of struggle through politics is also a feature of this issue. Johannah Bevis discusses the life of labour leader Jack Egerton and his role in both the Queensland trade union movement and the Australian Labor Party. Using interviews from the oral history archive Queensland Speaks she has provided a rich picture of Egerton's political life, with comments from union and political colleagues who knew him well.

Roger Scott's article is an expansion of his Alex Macdonald lecture earlier

this year, and provides an insight into the union and community campaigns which were active in the leadup to the Qld State election in 2014.

Readers of this issue will also enjoy the short story about Old Wally and his work on the Suffolk Coast in England in the 1960s. Ted Riethmuller has evoked the hard work, the cold weather and the camaraderie of the workers in this bleak setting.

The articles in this issue, including Bevis' article on Egerton with its use of the oral history archive, and Jordan's article on Bacon which discusses the archival sources on her life, remind us of the richness in the archives just waiting for the labour historians to uncover and make accessible to the rest of us.

# **BLHA**

## **President's Column**

### **Greg Mallory**

The Association has run two successful events in the past six months. Firstly there was the annual Alex Macdonald Lecture held in May. The lecture was addressed by Professor Roger Scott who spoke on the community

campaigning in the then recent State election campaign organised by various unions and community groups. The lecture was well attended and generated good discussion. The second event was the 'Young Labour

Historians Symposium' which was held in August. The symposium was addressed by six students who were graduates of the summer school of the 'Queensland Speaks' Project of the University of Queensland. The papers presented covered a range of topics relevant to labour history in Queensland in the past 40 years. I would like to thank everyone who was involved in making these two events successful and particularly India Anderson and Johanna Bevis who organised the students. I would also like to thank the three chairs of the day, Ros McLennan from the QCU, Professor Roger Scott and Senator Claire Moore.

The Association helped sponsor the film 'Pig Iron Bob' film which was screened at the QCU Building in April. The MUA was the main organiser of this event. In September we are hosting with the CFMEU Mining and Energy Division and the law firm Maurice Blackburn the film 'Blood on the Coal'. I would like to thank Emma Thornton for organising this.

The National Conference Committee has been meeting regularly and is about to put forward a formal proposal to the

Federal Executive. The conference will be held in September 2017.

Recently a number of Executive members met with the outgoing Secretary Ron Monaghan of the QCU in order to strengthen our relationship with this body. The QCU have been very generous to us with providing free meeting space as well as significant funding each year. We will continue to work closely with the QCU and we were pleased the incoming secretary Ros McLennan was able to chair one of our sessions at the "Young Labour Historians Symposium".

A sub-committee has been set up to develop closer links between the BLHA and the trade union movement. The committee has met once and have had feedback from the Plumbers Union who are interested in meeting with us.

I would like to thank Executive members for their work during the year and particularly our Secretary Craig Buckley.

BLHA membership this year currently stands at 43 individual members, eight organisational memberships, and six life members.

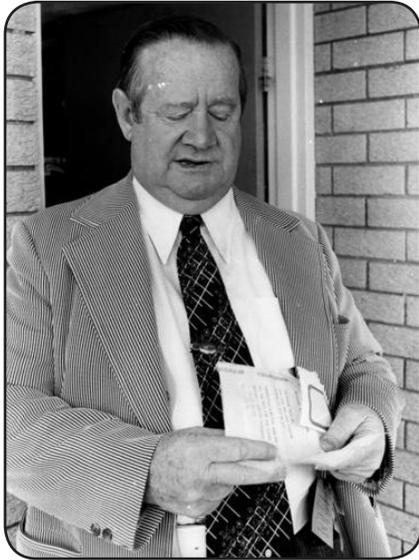
# **No More Labour for the Knight: An Overview of Sir Jack Egerton's Leadership**

**Johannah Bevis**

Sir John (Jack) Alfred Roy Egerton was a formidable figure within the Queensland Labour Movement from the 1950s through to the 1970s. Better known as Jack Egerton, he is described by political historian, Ross Fitzgerald, as 'one of the most colourful and influential characters in the history of the Labor Party in Queensland'.<sup>1</sup> Egerton was an active member of the Queensland and Australian trade union and labour movement in various capacities; he became State Secretary of the Boilermaker's Society in 1943, and then served in contemporaneous roles as President of the Trades and Labour Council Queensland (TLCQ) from 1967 to 1976 and as President of the ALP Queensland Central Executive (QCE) from 1968 to 1976.<sup>2</sup> Yet his leadership in these roles has largely been overshadowed by the knighthood he received in the latter part of his career. Through his dual positions, Egerton increased the influence of the TLCQ within the Queensland ALP, which gained him credibility and clout on a federal level as an ALP powerbroker. Over time he created a culture of leadership within the

Queensland ALP that seemed unable to relate to an increasing diversity within its membership. Further, his career raised doubts over how much control an individual should accrue through simultaneous political positions. This paper first covers Egerton's notorious ennoblement, before briefly detailing his background growing up in rural Queensland and his early career as a boilermaker. It will then describe Egerton's initial rise in political power through the expulsion of Gair and the TLCQ's power struggle with the Australian Worker's Union (AWU). The paper then discusses Egerton's involvement in federal politics through the ascent and decline of his relationship with Gough Whitlam. Finally, this paper analyses Egerton's leadership through interpretations of his colleagues as contained within the interviews on the Queensland Speaks website.

Jack Egerton remains infamous for the knighthood which he accepted in 1976. Obituaries published after his death in 1998 make little mention of his expansive career in the labour movement, instead choosing to focus on the controversy that surrounded his title.<sup>3</sup> In 1976, Egerton had long held powerful positions within the labour movement as Senior Vice-President of the ALP Federal Executive, as well as President of the TLCQ and the Queensland Labor Party's QCE. The honour was suggested by the Queensland conservative Bjelke-



*Sir Jack Egerton*

Petersen government in order to 'to manufacture problems within Labor ranks'.<sup>4</sup> It was later awarded by Liberal Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser 'in recognition of service to the government and trade unions'.<sup>5</sup> Fraser had only just been appointed Prime Minister at the end of 1975, following the dismissal of Whitlam, his ALP predecessor.<sup>6</sup> On 12 June 1976, the title was bestowed by Sir John Kerr, the Governor-General who had sacked Whitlam.<sup>7</sup> Whilst Bjelke-Petersen's motive may have been to destabilise the Queensland union movement, it seems that Fraser had chosen to twist the knife a little further by knighting Whitlam's once staunch ally.

Many within the ALP were stunned by Egerton's acceptance of the

knighthood, unable to understand why Egerton went against the rules of the Labor Party.<sup>8</sup> Three days after he received the honour, Egerton claimed that he was 'surprised' at the criticisms levelled against him, stating 'I know of no ALP rule I have broken — I don't know what I am being accused of'.<sup>9</sup> His acceptance of the honour had been perceived by those within the ALP and its affiliated unions as a betrayal in the wake of Whitlam's dismissal. Furthermore, the Knighthood was seen as an imperial legacy which had been replaced by Whitlam with the Order of Australia Medal. Whitlam, incensed by the matter, called it 'the most extraordinary ennoblement since Sir Toby Belch'.<sup>10</sup> Others called Egerton 'Jumping Jack' and a 'Labor Rat'.<sup>11</sup> Shortly after, Egerton was stripped of his leadership positions within the labour movement. He was banished from the ALP and his life membership cancelled. Egerton, still believing that he had 'broke no rules of either the trade union movement or the Labor Party', apparently fought to be reinstated to the party right up until his death in 1998.<sup>12</sup> Although his wife, Lady Moya Egerton, was later allowed to re-join, Egerton was unsuccessful in his campaign to return.<sup>13</sup> Despite its consequences, Egerton's knighthood demonstrated how far he had come from his origins within country Queensland.

Originally from a rural working-class background, Egerton later became an

embodiment of the close partnership that existed between the union movement and the ALP during his lifetime. Egerton was born in Rockhampton on 11 March, 1918. His father worked as a grazier up until the 1930s Depression, which forced Egerton's family to move from the farm.<sup>14</sup> Egerton then began working as a boilermaker, taking up his apprenticeship in the shipyards.<sup>15</sup> It was here that he became involved with unionism by taking up a position as Secretary of the Shipyard Shop Committee.<sup>16</sup> Egerton later progressed into the role of Queensland State Secretary of the Boilermaker's Society in 1943.<sup>17</sup> He worked up the ranks of the TLCQ and became its President in 1957. He also served as President of the ALP's controlling body, the QCE from 1968. Towards the peak of his career, Egerton served in concurrent executive positions within the TLCQ, the QCE of the ALP and also as Vice-President of the Federal ALP. These roles meant that Egerton wielded enormous influence over party direction within the ALP. It was in his earlier career that he established this ability, through the expulsion of the Queensland Labor Premier Vince Gair in 1957, and the factional disputes which followed Gair's removal.

Preceding Gair's expulsion, a campaign to introduce three weeks' annual leave entitlements for all Queensland workers had been a long running crusade for the Queensland union movement. The issue was first

mentioned at the 1953 Labor-in-Politics convention, yet it became more imperative to the Queensland labour movement in the lead-up to 1957.<sup>18</sup> In these four years, Gair was lobbied on multiple occasions to legislate for the entitlement, yet he remained reticent about whether he would introduce it in Parliament.<sup>19</sup> Finally, a motion was passed to legislate for the leave at the 1956 Labor-in-Politics convention, which was further amended to enforce enactment of the legislation by 1 January 1957.<sup>20</sup> Egerton remarked at the convention that 'the time for logic has passed', signifying the union movement's exasperation with Gair's refusal to act on the issue.<sup>21</sup> The motion was passed with 75 votes in its favour from the 134 delegates in attendance, which bound ALP members and electoral candidates to comply with the directive to support and introduce the leave entitlement.<sup>22</sup> Gair argued that his agreement to introduce the three weeks' leave had been made on the proviso that economic circumstances had to be stable within Queensland and that introducing the conditions would put jobs at risk.<sup>23</sup> When parliament reconvened, there was no mention of the leave provisions by Gair, which led to anger amongst the unions over his reluctance to adhere to the policy directive.

Whilst the disagreement over leave entitlement had not been the only factor causing tension between the unions and the Premier, the AWU and

TLCQ were bitterly disappointed that Gair had backed out. The AWU had been disaffiliated from the TLCQ since 1939, yet the encounter with Gair as antagonist and further industrial unrest as a result of the 1956 Shearer's Strike led Egerton to cautiously re-associate the TLCQ with the AWU, through an alliance brokered with Joe Bukowski, the AWU President.<sup>24</sup> This resulted in the AWU temporarily re-affiliating to the TLCQ in 1956.<sup>25</sup> Together, Egerton and Bukowski believed that by not implementing the leave conditions, Gair had betrayed the ALP's stance on the issue and this exacerbated the 'Gair must go' campaign being undertaken by the union movement.<sup>26</sup> Manfred Cross, ALP member for the federal seat of Brisbane 1961 to 1975, recounts that Egerton 'commanded the numbers' in Gair's expulsion, with Egerton claiming at a Trades Hall meeting that 'Gair was never a Labor man... Queensland was a Labor state and that we should get it over with'.<sup>27</sup> Similarly, when Egerton was warned over the possible consequences of moving to dismiss Gair, he stated: 'We haven't got a Labor government now. They are only masqueraders and the Tories couldn't be any worse'.<sup>28</sup> A vote was taken, and although it was narrow, Gair did not withstand the motion to dismiss him. Following his expulsion, Gair created what was known as the Queensland Labor Party (QLP). As a result of Gair's dismissal, some parliamentary members of the ALP joined Gair's QLP, whilst others stayed

as members of the ALP. The split left the ALP in ruins.

Although the AWU had re-affiliated to the TLCQ, this tentative treaty between them faltered after Gair was ousted. The AWU disaffiliated from the TLCQ in early 1958, and then from the ALP in 1959 after TLCQ aligned ALP members voted to remove Bukowski from his post as QCE President.<sup>29</sup> Historically, prior to Egerton's leadership, there had been TLCQ opposition to the alliance between the ALP and AWU, as unions who were represented by the TLCQ felt excluded from the partnership.<sup>30</sup> The AWU and TLCQ relationship has also been fraught due to their differing approach to industrial disputes, as well as their rivalry over membership and power within the ALP. In his honours thesis, Wayne Swan, ALP member for the federal seat of Lilley since the 1990s, describes the AWU as having a 'moderate' approach to industrial relations, preferring arbitration over the 'militant' approach of the TLCQ<sup>31</sup> which was supportive of direct industrial actions such as striking. This 'militant approach', as well as the TLCQ's tolerance of communist affiliations within the body and opposition to any external interference within union affairs, placed it on the 'left' end of the political spectrum in comparison with the AWU on the 'right'.<sup>32</sup> The differences between the AWU and TLCQ led to a long-held grudge: Egerton was still hostile towards the

AWU in his interview with Swan on 2 September 1975:

As far back as the 1890s, the AWU has played the role of the big arrogant union. It treated other unions with scant respect. They used to join the movement when it was advantageous and pull out when it wasn't.<sup>33</sup>

However, from the split and AWU rivalry, Egerton was able to gain a stronghold within the union movement and within the ALP itself. Describing Egerton's lack of 'political acumen' prior to the split, Bert Milliner, an ALP Senator and unionist, commented that 'the only weapon [Egerton] knew how to use was the blunt end of an axe and he used it'.<sup>34</sup> Whilst Egerton had been relatively inexperienced in political power brokerage prior to Gair's expulsion, he became known for his skills as a union organiser, 'negotiating deals with various regional and ideological groupings so as to secure majorities on key agenda items before party forums'.<sup>35</sup> The QCE itself was dominated by a faction of ALP-aligned members of the TLCQ known as the Old Guard, led by Egerton.<sup>36</sup> Mike Reynolds, ALP member for the state seat of Townsville 1998 to 2009, described Egerton leading the Old Guard 'alongside people like Bart Lorrigan, Fred Whitby, Neil Cane and other organisers within the ETU [Electrical Trades Union]... [They] were part of the old QCE mob, they

ruled the roost and they were a very strong group of people'.<sup>37</sup>

Yet, the power and influence of the 'Old Guard' within the party proved to be the ALP's political soft spot for the ruling Country Party throughout the 1960s. In 1963, Premier Frank Nicklin, leader of the Country Party, named Egerton 'the Big Boss, the would-be Kingmaker of Queensland Labor Politics'.<sup>38</sup> Colin Hughes, who discusses the ALP's struggle to rebuild its image following the 1957 split, points out that Egerton was disparaged as a powerbroker working behind the scenes of the parliamentary wing of the ALP and that by voting Labor, ALP supporters were voting for the leadership of the Trades Hall rather than for ALP representatives.<sup>39</sup> Egerton had become a leading figure within the party, revered for his ability to act as a powerbroker between different sections of the membership. Yet this was also a target for the ALP's political rivals as Egerton's dual executive positions within the TLCQ and QCE demonstrated union influence over the ALP.

As his powerbase within the Queensland ALP grew, Egerton became more involved with federal politics. Egerton assisted in Whitlam's rise to power through supporting him at a time when he neared expulsion from the ALP. Whitlam had spoken in support of providing funding to Catholic Schools to 12 delegates at



*1975 Labour Day march in Brisbane, led by Clem Jones, Jack Egerton, Bob Hawke and Tom Burns*

an ALP Federal Executive meeting on 8 February 1966, a popular policy platform during the Liberal Party's electoral campaign in 1963, yet the Federal Executive did not agree with him, arguing that it contravened Section 116 of the Constitution of Australia.<sup>40</sup> In a television interview which followed, Whitlam stated that 'I can only say we've gotten rid of the 36 faceless men stigma to be faced with the 12 witless men'.<sup>41</sup> Joe Chamberlain, a member of the Federal Executive, sought to have him ousted from the ALP through an emergency meeting of the Executive.<sup>42</sup> Whitlam's

office caught word of the matter from a political ally and decided to call Egerton for support.<sup>43</sup> Egerton made it clear to the two Queensland delegates attending the meeting that they were not to vote in favour of expelling Whitlam and as a result, Whitlam narrowly endured the expulsion by one vote.<sup>44</sup> Mark Day, who interviewed Egerton, commented on their alliance as 'surprising, given the nature of the men... Egerton knew and understood the basic elements of power and believed that Whitlam was a man who could lead Labor into government'.<sup>45</sup> It

seemed that Egerton's intervention had encouraged trust between them.

After Gough Whitlam became Prime Minister in 1972, various newspapers reported on the friendship between the two men.<sup>46</sup> Hugh Lunn went so far as to call Egerton 'Whitlam's right-hand man in Queensland'. It can be conceded that his rapport with Whitlam had some perks for Egerton. Following Whitlam's federal victory for the ALP in 1972, Egerton famously exulted: 'And to the victors, the spoils', as he went on to serve on the board of directors for QANTAS, publicly owned at the time.<sup>47</sup> Manfred Cross described his role on the board as being enormously helpful to the Whitlam government in a time where there were a number of industrial disputes.<sup>48</sup> At the same time, it has been suggested that the position also provided Egerton with various perks, leading some commentators to question whether the appointment was an example of 'jobs for the boys'.<sup>49</sup> Despite this, it did not take Egerton long to raise doubts over Whitlam's leadership. Egerton seemed critical over Whitlam's ability to appeal to voters within Queensland. Whilst the ALP had been successful in returning to government following the May 1974 double-dissolution election, the vote had swung against the ALP by 3.4% in Queensland, whereas it had remained relatively stable throughout the rest of Australia. In September preceding the election, the Queensland state government, led by National Party

Premier Joh Bjelke-Petersen, had been critical of the Whitlam government over what had been perceived as 'centralist' policies originating from Canberra.<sup>50</sup> Egerton, commenting on the result of the election, explained 'A big percentage of Queensland voters have country origins, including myself, and Labor's policies were not going over very well with the country interests'.<sup>51</sup> Egerton reiterated his sentiment in a later interview, stating that 'One thing most Australians don't appreciate — and most certainly Federal politicians — is that Queensland is more agriculturally related than any other State'.<sup>52</sup> Given the tension between Whitlam and Bjelke-Petersen, it can be surmised that Whitlam probably did not appreciate Egerton echoing National Party sentiments.

Egerton's own leadership is not immune to criticism. Under TLCQ leadership of the QCE, many voiced concerns about representation within the ALP Queensland branch. Jim Fouras, ALP member for the state seat of South Brisbane from 1977 to 1986, recounts an incident where he raised concerns in a letter to the Federal Executive, stating that he and other members of the Garden City Branch felt that the ALP was not representative of enough groups in society. Fouras claimed that Egerton pulled him aside and told him that if he sent another letter like this he would be out of the Labor Party.<sup>53</sup> It seemed that the TLCQ led QCE were unable to accommodate

diversity within the ranks of the party. Wilf Ardill, an active unionist and member of the TLCQ Executive from 1982 to 1992, claimed it was very difficult to provide a different point of view to Egerton.<sup>54</sup> Peter Beattie, at the time a rank-and-file member of the ALP and later Premier of Queensland from 1998 to 2007, believed that the decreasing popularity of the ALP within Queensland in the lead up to the November 1977 federal election was due to the ‘small clique of ageing union bosses’ within the QCE, of which Egerton had been leading for a considerable period until his expulsion from the party.<sup>55</sup> The ALP had decreased its first preference vote in Queensland from 38.76% in 1975 to 37.70% in 1977.<sup>56</sup> Beattie felt that Queensland’s contribution to the defeat stemmed from the lack of representation and the unfriendly reception provided to newer groups joining the party such as ‘women, white-collar unionists, small businesspeople, lawyers and academics’.<sup>57</sup> Beattie believed these groups were becoming part of the ALP ‘at a faster rate than the blue-collar unionists and their representatives around which party administration had been centred’.<sup>58</sup> These views are echoed by Rob Whiddon, private secretary and policy advisor to various ALP ministers, himself a proponent of internal reform within the Queensland branch, who believed that the QCE had been ‘resistant to change’ in the membership and this became a leading factor in the call for reform

of the Queensland Branch.<sup>59</sup> Egerton had created a culture within the QCE that seemed unwilling to accept that the ALP was beginning to appeal to groups that were outside its traditional working class membership.

Furthermore, Egerton’s leadership also raised concerns about the amount of power an individual should accrue in party leadership positions. It was not in the interest of the party to have the same head of the party and the same head of the trade union movement. Mike Reynolds described Egerton as ‘the union and the labor stalwart, they were synonymous. To be a strong union leader, you were also the strong Labor leader’.<sup>60</sup> In a similar vein, Bill Hayden, ALP member for the federal seat of Oxley 1961 to 1988, commented that ‘Jack Egerton knew how to wield power because he was not only head of the party, but he was head of the Trades Union movement at the same time’.<sup>61</sup> Ian McLean, President of the Queensland Branch of the ALP from 1984 to 1994, described Egerton’s leadership as ‘strong. He had his friends... He was loyal to his own group and they were pretty effective... The security of the [ALP] was paramount to them’.<sup>62</sup> Yet it seems that Egerton would often tip the power balance too far in his favour. Reynolds further explained that Egerton ‘was seen as a real standover merchant... who would bully his way to what he thought was right for the party. What Jack Egerton said, what his ruling was,

was never really questioned until the intervention period<sup>63</sup>, which did not occur until 1979–80. Hughie Williams, retired Queensland Secretary of the Transport Workers' Union, thought

Jack was very autocratic about it all... He controlled the Party. He was the boss of the Party. He was everything within the Party. I think everybody else was extremely weak and I could use the term quite gutless. Jack Egerton was a very powerful person; extremely clever... he had absolute total control. In fact, he was a control freak. And not only was he a control freak but the people he had control over were just weak. Nobody stood up to Jack Egerton.<sup>64</sup>

Egerton was a powerful and persuasive personality within Queensland labour history. After receiving the Knighthood, it seems many within the ALP chose to devalue Egerton's role within state and federal politics. Why Egerton accepted to be knighted by the same Governor-General who dismissed Whitlam, and a year after this event, is bewildering. Yet, as controversial as the ennoblement was, Egerton remains an important figure within Queensland and Australian political history. His career provides an example of the historic association between ALP and the union movement. After the four years of frustration unions experienced under Gair in their endeavour to

introduce three weeks' leave for all Queensland workers, Egerton successfully negotiated an alliance with the TLCQ's historical nemesis, the AWU. Through this cooperation, Egerton was able to negotiate the numbers necessary to expel Gair from the ALP, which split the party. After the split, the TLCQ and AWU returned to their former relationship as rivals. As the TLCQ ascended in power with Egerton as its president, he was able to seize control of the QCE from the AWU and consolidate his power as a factional leader of the Old Guard. From this foundation, Egerton played a role in federal politics. Egerton was amicable with Gough Whitlam and rewarded for this friendship once Whitlam became Prime Minister. Yet, always outspoken, he began to criticise the Whitlam government due to a perception that its policies were ignoring Queensland's rural focus. At the same time, Egerton's own leadership of the Queensland branch of the ALP led to a culture that excluded minority groups from being adequately represented within the party. His leadership also raised concerns about the amount of power an individual should amass through multiple political roles, particularly as he has been described as having an autocratic style of management. Whilst his career has been obscured by his acceptance of the knighthood, Egerton's role within the labour movement was an interesting one as he played such a central role. His career provides an insight into the

overlap between unions and the ALP, as well as the wider political context of Queensland and Australia from the late 1950s to the mid-1970s. Yet, at the same time, Egerton's career also demonstrates the risk of putting too much control into the hands of one leader.

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## Notes

- 1 Gil Breikreutz, "Jumping Jack takes knighthood secret to the grave", *Australian Associated Press*, December 22, 1998, Factiva.
- 2 J. S. Legge, ed., *Who's Who in Australia* (Melbourne: The Herald and Weekly Times Ltd, 1971), 309.; Kerith Cadman, ed., *Who's Who in Australia* (Melbourne: The Herald and Weekly Times Ltd., 1988), 289.
- 3 Malcolm Farr, "Curse of a royal dalliance went to the grave," *Daily Telegraph* (Sydney), December 22, 1998, Factiva.; Breikreutz, "Jumping Jack takes knighthood secret to the grave," Factiva.
- 4 David Solomon, "Annual Release of Cabinet Minutes; Background to the 1976 Cabinet Minutes", 2012, <http://www.archives.qld.gov.au/Researchers/CommsDownloads/Documents/1976CabinetMinutesBackground.pdf>; Rob Chalmers, *Inside the Canberra Press Gallery : life in the wedding cake of Old Parliament House*, eds. Sam Vincent and John Wanna. (Canberra: ANU E Press, 2011), 102–3.
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  - 34 Murphy, ‘The 1957 Split: “A Drop in the Ocean in Political History,”’ 496.
  - 35 Fitzgerald and Thornton, “The House that Jack Built, 1957 to 1977,” 150.
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  - 37 ‘Mike Reynolds’, Centre for the Government of Queensland, <http://www.queenslandspeaks.com.au/mike-reynolds>, 1 August 2011.
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  - 39 Ibid., 40–57
  - 40 Chalmers, *Inside the Canberra Press Gallery: life in the wedding cake of Old Parliament House*, 102–3, 108–10.
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- 44 *Ibid.*, 102–3.
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# **The Trials of Conrad Yeatman**

## **A Stolen Wages Story**

**Bob Reed**

### **Introduction**

On 19 August 2009 Conrad Barry Yeatman, an Aborigine, commenced proceedings in the District Court of Queensland against the State of Queensland and the Aboriginal and Islander Affairs Corporation, asking the court to declare that the State of Queensland had breached its duties to him as a trustee or as a fiduciary in respect of monies held by the State on his behalf. This money was wages payable to him for employment during the period January 1954 to 10 February 1958 while he was a resident of the Mission Reserve at Yarrabah. He also asked for orders that the State pay him compensation for its failure to pay to him an amount of wages he had earned but which he said had been received and wrongfully retained by agents or employees of the State.

On 28 May 2014, Judge Andrews of the District Court granted an application by the State to permanently stay the proceedings. The court thus brought to an end a valiant attempt by Conrad to achieve a measure of justice in his individual stolen wages case. Conrad's story is but one of many stolen wages

stories. For a fuller history of the treatment of Queensland Aborigines over many decades under a series of Protection Acts, and the systematic acquisition by the State of wages earned by them in employment, one need look no further than the significant body of work on the subject by Dr Rosalind Kidd.

Conrad Yeatman's story is of course more than merely a story about an attempt to recover wages wrongfully withheld from him. It is a story of the conditions under which aboriginal people of his and earlier generations were forced to live in Queensland and of the political struggles waged by residents of the Yarrabah Reserve against the forces of the State and the Anglican Church.

### **Born under the Act**

Conrad Yeatman was born at Yarrabah on 3 January 1940, the sixth of seven children born to Philip Michael Yeatman and Wilma Margaret Yeatman. From birth, Conrad was subject to the controls exercised by the Director of Native Affairs (the Director) under the *Aboriginals Preservation & Protection Act 1939* (the 1939 Act) and, from 19 April 1945, the *Aboriginals Regulations of 1945* (the Regulations). The 1939 Act and the Regulations were the latest in a succession of legislative controls which had been exercised by the Queensland Government over Aborigines since 1897 when the

*Aboriginals Protection and Prevention of Sale of Opium Act* came into force. The controls extended to “half castes” and indeed each of Conrad’s parents was so classified. Available records, including those of the anthropologist Norman Tindale, were to the effect that Philip Yeatman was born in about 1904 at Yarrabah. His parents were William (Willie) Yeatman/Yetman, a “*European man*” and Annie, an Aboriginal woman from the Kokobujundji Tribe of Rossville, south of Cooktown. Wilma Costello was born in 1907. Her parents were Billie Costello a “*European man*” and Nellie, an Aboriginal woman. On 25 March 1929 the Chief Protector of Aboriginals issued a permit allowing Philip and Wilma to marry and that marriage took place on 1 April 1929.

The controls exercised by the Director under the 1939 Act included controls over the employment of Aborigines resident on Mission Reserves.<sup>1</sup> At the time of Conrad’s birth, Yarrabah was, subject to the legislative regime, managed by the Anglican Church. The “*Protector*” of Aborigines at Yarrabah was the Mission Superintendent<sup>2</sup>. That position was occupied from September 1953 to July 1957 by Captain Harry Edmead Cole and from 15 July 1957 to 1 July 1960 by Captain Joseph Wilcox. Each was an officer in the Anglican “*Church Army*”.

The 1939 Act required the Superintendent to undertake the protection and management of the

property of all Aboriginals in the district assigned to him, to exercise certain powers in respect of that property subject to the approval of the Director, and to keep proper records and accounts of all money and other property received or dealt with by him.<sup>3</sup>

Under the Regulations:

- (a) the Director was required to establish with the Commonwealth Savings Bank of Australia a Trust Fund into which was to be paid all monies being the wages, property or savings of Aboriginals with interest to be credited to the individual accounts in the Trust Fund;<sup>4</sup>
- (b) a complete record and account of all such monies deposited to the Trust Fund was to be kept and the monies were to be credited to the particular individual Aboriginals to whom they belonged;<sup>5</sup>
- (c) the Superintendent might require an Aborigine to perform work necessary for the development and maintenance of the Mission Reserve, provided that remuneration was to be provided if the Aborigine was called upon to work in excess of 32 hours in any week;<sup>6</sup>
- (d) employment of an Aborigine outside the Mission Reserve required the permission of the Superintendent and the employer had to enter into a prescribed written agreement with the Aborigine;<sup>7</sup>
- (e) Aborigines employed outside of the Mission Reserve were to be paid in

accordance with rates set out in the Schedule to 1939 Act.<sup>8</sup>

As a further measure of control, the 1939 Act allowed the Superintendent to direct an employer to pay the whole or any portion of the wages of Aboriginals to himself or some other person on his behalf.<sup>9</sup> In 1933 the Director had opened an account with the Commonwealth Bank for the stated purpose of receiving monies being wages, property or savings of Aboriginals.

### **The struggle for survival**

Conrad's mother died when he was 3 years old and his younger sister a few months later. As his father was often away from home working, the family was for a time cared for by Conrad's eldest sister Bessie who must have been about 13 or 14 at the time. It appears that after about a year, the older girls were removed to the Mission's dormitories and Conrad went to live with his Aunt Muriel Dabah. However, on occasions when Conrad's father would return to Yarrabah, Conrad would live with him. Conrad records occasions when his father would leave Yarrabah for work and he would be left to fend for himself in the family home, with his sisters preparing a store of food for him on the weekends when they were released from the dormitories.

Conrad records that he started attending school at Yarrabah at age 6 but that he missed out on significant

amounts of education "*as the teacher often made me leave the classroom to go and search for the boys who were truant*".<sup>10</sup> Conrad also reports being regularly caned by the Superintendent including a public flogging outside the Post Office when he was 13 years old.<sup>11</sup>

Conrad's schooling ceased in 1954 when he turned 14. The Yarrabah Superintendent then directed that he be put to work and he joined the carpenters' gang performing construction and maintenance work on the Yarrabah buildings. This employment lasted from January 1954 to January 1957. Conrad records that he worked 5 full days a week for which he was told that he was entitled to 1 shilling a week pocket money. Conrad collected his pocket money on one occasion but was ashamed to ask for it again. He was led to believe that the money would be kept in an account for him. Conrad recalls one occasion where he withdrew money from his savings account at Yarrabah to visit the Cairns Show and another occasion to see the doctor. He helped make ends meet by sneaking out of the Reserve on weekends and working as a labourer at a nearby cane farm for which he was paid cash in hand.

In March 1957 a position was obtained for Conrad as a houseboy at Waihaorunga Station at Whitewood on the Winton Line. The employers were the Station owners, Mr and Mrs Davis. In accordance with the

legislation, an agreement was entered into whereby the employer would pay wages of £4 per week for Conrad's work, the prescribed rate. Yarrabah's Superintendent Cole directed that £1 per week be paid to Conrad as pocket money and the remaining £3 per week be remitted to him as Superintendent.

Conrad undertook the long journey from Yarrabah to Waihaorunga Station by train. Some clothes were purchased for him in Cairns<sup>12</sup> and he was supplied with some food for the journey. Arrangements were made for Conrad to stay overnight in Townsville in the police compound.

Conrad worked continuously at Waihaorunga Station as a houseboy from 22 March 1957 to 13 December 1957. Surviving records show without doubt that in July 1957 Mr and Mrs Davis paid the Superintendent at Yarrabah, by then Captain Wilcox, the sum of \$43 in respect of Conrad's employment to 30 June 1957. Other records show with reasonable certainty that a further amount of £71 was paid to the Superintendent at Yarrabah in respect of the remainder of Conrad's employment. That payment was probably made in April 1958. There is also convincing evidence that the Superintendent received the sum of £1/4/6 in July 1957 by way of refund of taxation instalments which had been paid in respect of Conrad's employment in the 1957 financial year.

Conrad Yeatman returned to Yarrabah in late December 1957. His service at Waihaorunga Station must have been satisfactory as Mrs Davis wrote to the Superintendent on 15 December 1957 enclosing Conrad's "*pocket money book*" and saying that they would be pleased to have him if he wished to return in 1958.

Conrad did not return to Whitewood. Events for him took a dramatic turn and those events are best understood against a background of earlier events at Yarrabah.

### **A spirit of dissatisfaction**

There is a significant body of evidence that conditions at Yarrabah Mission in the 1950s were poor and the Reserve was ruled by the Church Army Superintendents with a hard disciplinarian hand characterised by a cruel punitive regime. So called "*privileges*" were frequently withdrawn for alleged misdemeanours.

As the decade progressed active dissent grew amongst the residents. In a report by the Director of Native Affairs on 28 April 1955, following several visits to Yarrabah in the preceding fortnight, the author noted that "*During the course of the visit it became very evident that amongst a section of the community a spirit of dissatisfaction and discontent existed but it was not possible to fully determine the reasons for that*

*discontent but it is certain that it was there.”*

In language unfortunately typical of the period, the report went on to say that *“There is on Yarrabah Mission .... a half-blood element that is inclined to influence a large section of the community. It is possible that some influences in Cairns are not beneficial to the Yarrabah people, and are likely to sway opinion against the Mission administration.”* There was talk of a petition in support of a *“Native Committee”* taking over the administration or that the Mission could be run on co-operative lines allowing the Mission residents to participate in profits which might arise from any industrial ventures undertaken. It was noted that *“The Natives ... were rather free in expressing their views ...”*. It appears clear that the Church did not share those views.

One of the *“influences”* in Cairns was undoubtedly the trade union movement. On 30 January 1956 a delegation from the Cairns and District Trades and Labour Council (TLC) visited Yarrabah, spoke to residents, and held an informal discussion with Acting Superintendent Pierce. In its subsequent report, the TLC delegation discussed inadequacies in sanitation, lighting, education, housing, provision of clothing, rations, wages and a host of other issues. The issue of access to wages held by the Superintendent was included in the report. As to the issue

of discipline, the report was of the opinion that *“Discipline at Yarrabah is in contradiction to all concepts of British Justice”*. Examples were given. It was noted that waterside workers in Cairns had intervened on behalf of one resident who had served one month’s gaol for assaulting a policeman and was then to be sent by the Director for further punishment at Woorabinda. The report concluded with a long list of improvements needed to the facilities at Yarrabah and vouched the opinion that *“The people are no better off than they were 30 years ago. They want to become independent and have full civil rights”*.

The TLC apparently wrote to the Director concerning matters at Yarrabah and on 13 June 1956 the Director responded with comments such as *“My information is that your enquiries were made from Aboriginals or cross-breeds, many of whom are totally ignorant of the subjects which you have listed for discussion”* and *“There are a few individuals who could if they had sufficient energy get off the Mission and compete with white labour under award conditions”*. The TLC was told that the *“Protection policy against exploitation of the people ... will not be deviated from despite any unfair criticisms that might emanate from any committee or organisation.”*

The TLC continued to agitate on behalf of the residents at Yarrabah and on 26 January 1958 its representatives met

with representatives of the Anglican Church in Townsville. Meeting notes compiled by the Church's stenographer indicate that the TLC representatives lobbied for the establishment of an Aboriginal Representative Council on the Mission. The size of the task with which the TLC was confronted is emphasised by the comments of Archdeacon Hohenhouse who is recorded as saying that "*The Aborigines were inclined to be a lazy race and by and large, a difficult race to contend with ... The natives did not use the opportunities afforded them, they let themselves down, the Church did not let them down.*"

### **Exemption from the Act**

Conrad Yeatman returned to a politically charged atmosphere at Yarrabah in December 1957. He returned to work in the carpentry gang which was being supervised by a newly recruited white carpenter, Mr Henderson. He quickly formed the view that the wages paid to the Aboriginal carpenters were less than those which would have been paid to white carpenters for equivalent work and were therefore inadequate. His views were at odds with those of Captain Wilcox, causing Mr Henderson to move from the Superintendent's Quarters and, in the words of a contemporary departmental report, he "*went to have his meals with the Aborigines.*" Henderson was no doubt seen by Wilcox as fanning the flames of discontent amongst the

Aboriginal workers and playing a part in a 24 hour stoppage which occurred on 12 December 1957. Henderson was dismissed from his position soon afterwards.

Conrad's father, Philip, and his brother, Charles, also worked in the carpentry gang at Yarrabah. In early January 1958, the three Yeatman men decided to approach Captain Wilcox with a view to withdrawing their savings held by the Superintendent in their accounts, possibly with a view to leaving the Mission. They were only allowed to enter the Superintendent's office one at a time and Charles was the first to enter. There are varying accounts of what then occurred. A TLC account records Charles' version that Wilcox refused his request to withdraw the funds and that, when Charles stated that he would not leave the office until those monies were paid to him, Wilcox struck him across the head with an axe handle causing him to collapse. The departmental report gives Wilcox's version that Charles became threatening and abusive after he "*demande*d" money from the Superintendent and that Wilcox hit Charles several times across the buttocks with the axe handle.

Wilcox's version of the assault could not be accepted on the basis of eyewitness accounts of the injuries to Charles, supported by the TLC report which stated that Charles was taken to Cairns in the police launch whereupon

he contacted representatives of the TLC who took him to see a doctor. Dr Westaway's report stated that Charles was suffering from concussion due to a blow to the face.

Each version of events records that Charles was asking for money which belonged to him and that Wilcox refused the request. A number of Yarrabah residents confronted Wilcox about the assault. Following the disturbance, Bishop Shevill, the Anglican Bishop of North Queensland, visited Yarrabah and told the gathered throng that *"If anybody didn't like the way Superintendent Wilcox was running the Mission, they should be off the Mission."*

The Yeatman men indeed decided that they wanted to be off the Mission and applied for exemptions from the provisions of the 1939 Act pursuant to the Director's power under s.5(3) of the Act. Conrad's Exemption Certificate was issued on 10 February 1958. A letter from the Director accompanying the Certificate notified the Superintendent that there were outstanding wages not yet received in connection with Conrad's employment by Mr and Mrs Davis and that he should receive the final balance to his credit in the savings account.

By that time, the Superintendent held £43 paid by Mr and Mrs Davis. From that amount, the Superintendent may have deducted the amount of \$11/3/-

for the clothing purchased in Cairns. There should also have been a sum representing the 1 shilling per week payable from January 1954 to January 1957 less any amounts which had been withdrawn. According to Conrad, the withdrawals were not great.

Departmental records indicate that Conrad was paid £32/16/- on 15 May 1958. In 1964, he was notified that there was a balance of £1/16/11 in his savings account and that amount was paid to him at the Protector's office. Taking into account the £71 paid by Mr and Mrs Davis in or about April 1958, Conrad firmly believed that he had not received all the monies which should have been credited to his savings account. The available evidence supports that belief and that the outstanding amount probably exceeded £70, a significant sum of money in 1958.

### **A debt not forgotten**

After leaving Yarrabah, Conrad retained his sense of injustice in what he believed to be the failure by the government to pay the outstanding balance of his wages earned in employment while resident at Yarrabah. Lacking the resources or knowledge to access the legal system, he got on with his life, marrying and raising a family.

The Anglican Church's control over Yarrabah ceased in 1960 and management of the Reserve returned

to the State. While the *Aboriginal Affairs Act 1965* (Qld) “ostensibly freed Aboriginal people from State controls”<sup>13</sup>, residents on Reserves were held to still require “assistance”.<sup>14</sup> Later, in 1986, community councils were established at Yarrabah and other reserves pursuant to the *Community Services (Aboriginal) Act 1984* (Qld).

Following the dismantling of the protection regime, Conrad returned to live at Yarrabah, working variously as a mechanic, ambulance driver and truck driver. He and his wife raised six children and he was ordained as an Anglican Priest. He remains an esteemed member of the community.

In 2002, the Beattie Government introduced the Indigenous Wages & Saving Reparations Scheme, offering a payment of \$4,000 to each aboriginal applicant who could demonstrate that they had had wages paid into the savings account operated pursuant to the various Protection Acts. Conrad learned of the scheme in late 2002 and, upon application, was deemed eligible. The \$4,000 payment, widely described as “tokenistic”<sup>15</sup>, was conditional on the recipient releasing the State from all legal claims to payment of outstanding wages. Conrad rejected the Scheme’s offer, and a further offer in January 2009, and resolved to pursue the fight through available legal channels. He set about recovering from the Yarrabah Council any existing records concerning his time at Yarrabah and his

employment. When he had exhausted the search, he began to consult local law firms. However, lack of funds and the complexities of the case led those firms to reject approaches to appear on his behalf. Conrad’s matter eventually came to the attention of the Queensland Council of Unions (QCU) which resolved to financially support Conrad and to instruct Hall Payne Lawyers to commence legal proceedings on his behalf.

### **The legal action**

The proceedings commenced in the District Court in August 2009 and effectively sought declarations that the State had been a trustee of funds on Conrad’s behalf and that the State, in failing to pay all the monies to him, had breached its duties as a trustee or as a fiduciary. Compensation was claimed, including amounts of interest accruing on the unpaid monies over the many intervening years. The lawyers’ calculations indicated an initial outstanding amount of about £77.

It is fair to say that the State of Queensland fought the case tenaciously. Senior Counsel was engaged from the outset. Technical arguments as to jurisdiction were raised. The State denied that it was or had been a trustee of any wages held on Conrad’s behalf, despite the 1939 Act and the Regulations being replete with references to the establishment and operation of “Trust funds .... for the

*control of the savings of Aboriginals ...*".<sup>16</sup> Delay in bringing the action was relied upon as a defence.

Ultimately, Conrad Yeatman's legal action foundered not because the court found that it lacked merit. The court permanently stayed the proceeding on the basis that there was insufficient evidence remaining to allow the State of Queensland to properly defend the claim. Nearly all of the relevant Superintendents at Yarrabah and the public servants who administered the trust funds were either dead or could not be located. Significant numbers of relevant documents, particularly the records of deposits and withdrawals to and from Conrad's savings account, had been destroyed in government-sanctioned processes in 1978 and 1979. Importantly, the Judge found that "*On the discrete issue of what amounts were paid for or on behalf of Mr Yeatman, there are no records or persons who can any longer give this evidence. The defendants cannot locate evidence as to what amounts were properly payable — or properly able .... to be set-off against the 70 pounds. There is a clear inference that some amounts were properly able to be set-off against that sum.*"<sup>17</sup>

## Conclusion

The court's judgment was an orthodox application of established legal principles, but the factual circumstances giving rise to the decision serve only to illustrate the moral bankruptcy

of successive State Governments in their treatment of Aboriginal wages throughout the period of Conrad's subjection to the 1939 Act and beyond.

Conrad Yeatman fought the good fight. This history records, as other histories should, that he is a man of great principle, courage and resilience. The lessons of history must be learned and Conrad is one of the teachers.

## Notes

- 1 Section 14 of the 1939 Act.
- 2 Section 9 of the 1939 Act constituted the Superintendent as a "Protector of Aboriginals".
- 3 Section 16 of the 1939 Act.
- 4 Regulation 12(1).
- 5 Regulation 12(2).
- 6 Regulation 28.
- 7 Section 14(1)–(4) of the 1939 Act.
- 8 Regulation 58.
- 9 Section 14(6) of the 1939 Act.
- 10 Affidavit of Conrad Yeatman sworn and filed in the District Court on 2 May 2014 (Yeatman affidavit) at para 14.
- 11 Annexure "CY-3" to the Yeatman affidavit.
- 12 A copy of the order remains in existence.
- 13 Dr Roslyn Kidd: "*Hard Labour, Stolen Wages — National Report on Stolen Wages*" 27 August 2007 (prepared for Australians for Native Title and Reconciliation) (ANTaR Report)
- 14 Ibid
- 15 Eg ANTaR Report, op cit
- 16 Section 12(10) of the 1939 Act; Regulation 12 of the Regulations.
- 17 District Court of Queensland, Matter No. 2309 of 2009, transcript of ex-tempore judgment of Judge Andrews SC, 28 May 2014, page 7 lines 8–13.

# Old Wally Nearly Gets his Cards and Coppers

From *Worklife Sketches*

**Ted Riethmuller**

It was May 1964 and the weather was still cold. I was one of the gang installing earthing bars around the outside of the main building. The site chosen for the nuclear power station was the little fishing village of Sizewell. It was on the coast of Suffolk separated from the North Sea by a shingle beach. The winds that came off the sea were cold and cruel and the driving sleet and icy mush meant misery for those of us working outside. The misery of being out in the open was made worse by the need to handle long lengths of 2 by 1/4 inch copper bar. To carry it was one thing but in order to place it in the bar-bender we had to twist it onto its edge and this could mean a flipping action that was agony for numb hands and fingers.

Old Wally was in this gang but Steve had taken pity on him and had given him a job inside until some of the lengths of bar were installed. Then Wally got the job of brazing the joints. This was a cushie job but a boring one and we were happy for Wally to have it. The earthing bar was mounted on cleats about two feet off the ground

*Ted Riethmuller  
in Glasgow,  
1960s*



which meant that Wally, sitting on his wooden tool box, had the joint straight in front of his face. He had a panel of asbestos sheeting that he placed behind the joint to protect the wall from the gas flame with which he heated up the copper to brazing temperature. So there he was as snug as could be. He had his cap pulled down. His muffler was around his neck and his overcoat reached down behind him to the ground. In front, the seductive warmth from the red-hot asbestos and copper was radiated back at him. This was very cosy but the consequence was that he could not stay awake. We would watch as his shoulders sagged and he began to sway back and forth until a forward movement brought him too close to the red-hot joint and he would jerk himself awake for a minute or two until the sequence was repeated.

When he finished one joint, with the gas-bottle in one hand and the rest of his gear in the other, he would go off for a walk to wake up before starting on the next one. Old Wally became a familiar sight, either nodding off in front of the joint he was brazing, or

plodding along, looking neither left or right, with a preoccupied puzzled look on his face. Providing he was on the move he was ok. No boss could say he was skiving. There were many such stories of how workers avoided work. For the office worker they would carry a sheet of paper from one office to another, up and down the corridors, seemingly with a destination in mind. In the factory, the maintenance fitter would walk purposely around the factory with nothing more than an oilcan and a rag in his back pocket.

The weather began to warm up. The sun came out and the cold winds off the sea no longer blew. The pebbles of the shingle beach were warmed up somewhat and Wally became a regular sun worshiper during the lunch break. Still in his overcoat he would lie flat-out on his back, with his eyes closed and allow his blood, turned viscous by the winter of old age, to soak up the warmth — like a lizard.

One day, about two in the afternoon, Steve came up to where a number of us were working and said, “Pack up. We’re not doing no more work today.”

“Why, what’s happened?”

“One of the bosses found Old Wally flat out on the beach asleep. He’s got ‘is marching orders. We’ll have to hit the cobbles.”

So we packed up, locked up our gear in the gang box and headed for the gate. Everyone was indignant, even those whose loyalty to union principles was usually less than their fear of losing pay. Old Wally was an institution and if his productivity was low, who cared? We were willing to carry him and what if he did oversleep during a lunch break? Where was the harm? In any case, being on the tools, we were confronted every day with waste and delay caused by managerial inefficiency. Apart from all that there had been no industrial disputation for some months and we needed to stretch our legs and flex our muscles. As we strolled along eagerly asking one another for details that were not forthcoming, we met other workers already coming back.

“What’s happening? What about the meeting?”

“Old Wally’s got his job back, so it’s back to work!” The shop-committee, on obtaining an assurance from the management that Wally would be reinstated, made an executive decision and cancelled the meeting, no doubt afraid that hot-heads would not accept a simple back down by the employer, and instead demand apologies and undertakings that no employer could accept. Our response to this news was ambivalent. On the one hand we were pleased that the mere threat of industrial action was enough to achieve what we wanted, yet on the other hand we experienced an empty feeling of



*Electricians at work*

anti-climax, a disappointment. Perhaps we were annoyed at the employer for not allowing us the satisfaction of rattling our sabres. What Wally thought he didn't say but undoubtedly he knew thereafter he would be watched and he couldn't get caught a second time.

The job progressed. Cable tray was erected and cables laid and saddled to it; control cabinets were installed and the cables connected to them. Other tasks were set and completed. The individual pieces of the puzzle each of us were responsible for fitted in with the contributions of our fellow workers and the big picture began to emerge. As the days passed we could see the results of our labour and the

satisfaction gained was much more than the contents of our pay packets that we lined up for every Friday at knock-off time.

One afternoon I went to the gang-box to get some gear and Steve was there looking concerned. That was unusual for him. "What's the problem?"

"I'm a bit worried about Ol' Wally. E's not at 'is job. And I've 'ad a bit of a Captain Cook an' there ain't no sign of 'im or nuffick."

"Yeah, I haven't seen him since before lunch."

"Will you go down to the beach and see if 'e's still asleep?"

I reminded him that we were not to go down there during working hours.

“That’ll be ok. I can’t do it myself because if I see ‘im asleep I’ll have to give ‘im the big A.”

So I headed off, across the site and past the fringe of straggly grass onto the seafront. The breeze off the sea was a cool one but the sun was shining and the shingles had absorbed the warmth. I saw Wally close by. He was flat out on his back, dead to the world; his arms were outstretched as on a crucifix. His greatcoat, which I had never seen him without, was thrown open and so exposed his old grey cardigan. It too had been undone so as to allow the sun worshipper better access to the warming rays. As I drew closer I saw that his eyes were closed and the familiar resentful and defiant set of his mouth had relaxed to the extent that he appeared content with the world, even happy. It seemed a pity to disturb him. “Hey Wally, wakeup!” I picked up a pebble and threw it at him. It hit him on the head. It bounced off without him appearing to notice. I now stood

over him and kicked into the pebbles alongside his shoulder but still no response. I started to feel uneasy. I gave him a nudge with my boot. It was like nudging a bag of sand. I experienced a sudden chill and goose pimples rippled up my arms. I bent down to shake him by the shoulder. I was afraid that Old Wally had collected his cards and coppers and chucked in his job. But when I shook him roughly he moved his arms and said, “Ah wer err.”

“Listen mate, you better get moving. If they catch you here you’re a goner for sure.”

“Fuck ‘em,” he said and then sighed. Awkwardly he turned over on to his stomach and brought his legs up under him, and like a cow, struggled to his feet. I helped him up but left him standing there and quickly made my way back to the site. I turned around a couple of times to check on him. He was following, but slowly, plodding along to somehow get through the afternoon until the knockoff whistle, then front up in the morning and so on and so on.

# The Day Baking Dispute

Carol Corless

The condition of day baking was an important condition of employment was won for bakers in 1915 after a yearlong dispute. At this time bakers worked in bakehouses dotted around the suburbs in small non-mechanised family-run bakeries. Bakers suffered higher incidence of respiratory diseases than many other workers, did not have much social life and did not have time to educate themselves.

The dispute for day baking in the Brisbane Shops District officially began on 10 May 1914 following the issue of a hand-written ultimatum delivered to the employers in the Brisbane area the previous week. The letter outlined that the Brisbane members of the Operative Bakers Union had taken a vote that they would discontinue performing night work on Friday 8 May. They respectfully asked that the master bakers have the dough ready to work by 8 a.m. on Sunday 10 May. They outlined in the letter that lists of master bakers who observed the condition would be notified to the press.<sup>1</sup> The employer response was to bring the matter before the Industrial Court and ask that all members of the Master Bakers Association hold strong to the night baking position. The master bakers took time to let the public know



*Decorated bread delivery carts belonging to McDougall's Bakery, Rosalie, ca. 1915 (courtesy John Oxley Library)*

that there would not be a shortage of bread on the Monday.<sup>2</sup> On the Sunday morning the Operative Bakers Union members turned up to work and at some of the bakeries were told that the dough would not be ready until the night. Those bakers went away and did not return at night. The Operative Bakers Union reported that 12 out of 36 metropolitan bakeries were working to day baking conditions, with another to come on line the next day. The employers reported that there was practically no trouble and they were strengthened by the fact that some members of the Operative Bakers Union were not in agreement with day baking and had not stopped work.<sup>3</sup>

On 8 June 1914 the *Queensland Government Gazette* reported that there had been a directions hearing. Two master bakers, John Torrance and Joseph Fitzgibbon Bragg, had laid complaints against some of their operative bakers for taking part in a strike involving a public utility prior

(the supply of bread for domestic purposes) to the requirements of the *Industrial Peace Act of 1912* being met. The requirements that needed to be met before a Judge of the Industrial Court could call a compulsory conference were a secret ballot of members affected, notice given to the Registrar of the Industrial Court of a strike, and the strike being acted upon. Tom Norman Allen (Secretary of the Master Bakers Association, Queensland) also laid a complaint against the Baking Trades Employees' Federation of Australasia (Queensland Branch) for '...inciting said employees to strike before the said requirements of the Industrial Peace Act had been complied with.'<sup>4</sup> Reported in the *Government Gazette*, the complaints were all dated 21 May 1914 and all complaints stated that there was a strike taking place in contravention of Part V of the *Industrial Peace Act 1912*. In the Judge's opinion all of the complaints referred to the one strike which was about the substitution of day baking for night baking.<sup>5</sup>

Tom Allen's affidavit went into great detail about the recent hearing in the Commonwealth Arbitration Court regarding day baking. A case to substitute night baking for day baking had been brought to this Court by the Baking Trades Employees' Federation of Australasia and the case had been dismissed.<sup>6</sup> The judge in the Queensland case had decided on first reflection that he could not deal with the Queensland matter as it had

arisen out of the decision given in the Commonwealth Arbitration Court. He asked that the complainants, through their solicitors, resubmit the complaint under another section of the *Industrial Peace Act 1912* in order to allow him to call a special hearing under the Act. In his summation of the case he decided not to set any hearing dates as he still felt that the case was out of his jurisdiction. In addition he went through the differences between the Queensland Act and the Commonwealth Act where the inconsistencies led him to the understanding that the Commonwealth Act was the prevailing Act. Judge MacNaughton summed up the case with a statement that even if he started to hear the case that he was concerned that it would be taken out of his hands by the Commonwealth Court. He said that if the complainants wanted to take the matter further then they could do this in the Commonwealth Court.<sup>7</sup> The employers had tried to get a ruling that this was a strike under the *Industrial Peace Act 1912* while the workers were arguing that they were locked out.<sup>8</sup> Strike and lockout had significant meaning under the *Industrial Peace Act 1912* and both actions were prohibited under the Act.<sup>9</sup>

All of this action was played out in the newspapers of the day with both sides trying to get the community on side. One way that this happened was through verse explaining day baking to the community:

## J. H. McDougall

Fernberg  
Bread  
Factory

ROSALIE, Brisbane

Phone: Toowong 347



**T**HERE is nothing in which the exercise of the greatest care and scrupulous cleanliness is more essential than in the preparation of what has been aptly termed the "Staff of Life." Science plays a big part in practically every branch of industrial activity in these go-ahead times, and it certainly has almost revolutionised the methods of the Baker. Anyone desiring to see the lines upon which a thoroughly modernised Bakery is run could not do better than pay a visit to the FERNBERG BAKERY, ROSALIE. One of our largest Brisbane Bakeries, owned by Mr. J. H. McDOUGALL, it is a familiar firm to all Brisbane housekeepers.

Mr. McDougall first started in business, and established the Glasgow Bakery, at the popular seaside resort of Southport, where he was for many years the leading baker.

In 1906 he took over the Fernberg Bakery, and since then the continued growth of the business has necessitated the erection of larger ovens and more modern machinery to deal with the increased output of bread. Mr. McDougall pays strict attention to every detail in his endeavour to ensure the success of his business, and his practical working knowledge often stands him in good stead.

His speciality is Wholemeal Bread, and it can be safely said, without fear of contradiction, that the Wholemeal Bread to be obtained at this establishment is second to none in Brisbane, and this excellence is not obtained at the expense of the other departments; his White Bread, Brown Bread, Malt Bread, and Sultana Bread can hold their places as a first class article even in these days of keen competition.

### *Brisbane Courier Article 1920*

#### *'The Ballad of Day-Baked Bread*

"Tell me where is Fancy bred?"  
(It batches while you snore  
a-bed)

"Give it to us piping hot  
For breakfast." — (Stuff and  
tommyrot!)

Who don't know that new-  
baked bread

On the gizzard lies like lead?  
Sweeter and nutritious more  
The loaf that's baked the day  
before;

More responsive to the knife —  
You don't think so? Ask your  
wife.

Henceforth fire out the night-  
fired bread

Take the day-baked loaf instead.  
So no more, like blinking owls,  
Shall bakers hear the crowing  
fowls;

But spend the night-side of their  
lives

At home among their weans and  
wives.<sup>710</sup>

The dispute progressed and those workers who had been effectively locked out had to obtain other employment, either with day baking establishments or in other jobs. By 4 June 1914 there were 23 bakers

who were baking using day baking conditions of employment. Other unions were helping the members out by asking for their members to financially support the bakers. In particular, the Australian Plumbers and Gasfitters' Union had sent out subscription lists to their members and were encouraging their members to only buy bread from day baking bakers.<sup>11</sup>

Other areas in the South Eastern area of Queensland agitated for day baking with the operative bakers in Ipswich in July 1914 decided to ask their employers to begin day baking.<sup>12</sup> On 13 July 1914 Maryborough bakers demanded day baking conditions of employment with three bakeries deciding not to recognise the claim and therefore their employees had not resumed work. Those employers with the help of their sons were continuing to bake. Two other bakeries '...through force of circumstances...' had to adopt the new system and two others, who did not employ outside labour, were continuing with night baking.<sup>13</sup> At this time these bakers were covered by the South-Eastern Award which was separate from the award for Brisbane bakers.

In September 1914 the dispute for the Brisbane operative bakers was nearly at an end and the humane condition of employment of day baking was soon resolved with most bakers already working to those conditions. Workers who had been locked out

during the dispute had been found other employment or were reinstated with their former employer under day baking conditions. The Brisbane Bread and Pastrycooking Trade Wages Board had been reopened to consider the question of day baking to be made part of the award.<sup>14</sup>

In October 1914 several of the Ipswich Master Bakers reverted to night baking after a four month trial of day baking. E. A. Axelsen, Secretary of the Queensland Baking Trade Employees' Union, outlined that only one master baker had refused at the time when Ipswich moved to day baking. He was concerned that there was a move to discredit day baking as a system of work. The system appeared to be working well and in some cases it had been working better than the old system with an increase in trade.<sup>15</sup> In November 1914 a reactionary section of the Master Bakers was wanting to revert to night baking and the Operative Bakers appealed to the sympathetic public to continue supporting them in their fight for the humane reform of day baking as the fight was not yet won. The Operative Bakers embarked on a series of open air meetings to remind the public of the reasons why they needed to be freed from the '...slavery of night work.'<sup>16</sup> The November list of bakers that were continuing day baking included some Ipswich bakers and listed 21 day bakers in total.<sup>17</sup> In December 1914 the Operative Bakers Union asked

the Master Bakers Association for a conference to discuss day baking. This had been at the suggestion of the Brisbane Wages Board chairman.<sup>18</sup>

On the 8 April 1915 it was reported that the Brisbane Wages Board was taking evidence from the master bakers regarding day baking. The evidence was to be concluded on the following Tuesday and with that there was hope that a decision would be forthcoming.<sup>19</sup> On 22 April 1915 the Chairman of the Brisbane Wages Board, Mr A. J. Lamont, announced his intention to travel to Rockhampton to take further evidence regarding day baking, as day baking conditions of employment had been in place in Central Queensland for several years.<sup>20</sup>

The Chairman of the Brisbane Wages Board gave his decision on the 10 May 1915, exactly one year after the struggle began. The decision was that day baking was to be the way of working in Brisbane bakehouses with a start time between 5 a.m. and 10 a.m. and with a 6 p.m. finish.<sup>21</sup> This condition of employment was not written into the award until August 1915 and took effect in September 1915.<sup>22</sup> The Award included a section for pastry cooks and this section was under review with evidence for the pastry cooking section being taken. Until that review was finished day baking could not be formalised.<sup>23</sup> An appeal regarding the starting time was heard by Fred Dickson, Acting Judge

Industrial Court, in October 1915. Evidence was taken by the judge and from the information gathered it was established that most bakeries in Brisbane had registered their start time as 7 a.m. Bakeries at this time were required to register their start time with the Chief Inspectors of Factories as part of the Award.<sup>24</sup> The decision that the judge handed down was that the Award would be amended to have a start time of no earlier than 7 a.m. to take effect on 15 November 1915.<sup>25</sup>

## Notes

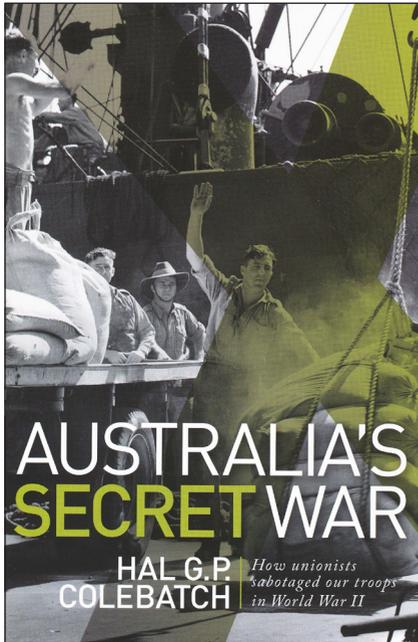
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- 3 Anon., 'Position In Brisbane', *Queensland Times*, 12 May 1914, p. 5.
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- 5 'The Industrial Peace Act of 1912, in the Industrial Court of Queensland', 1914, p. 1481.
- 6 *Ibid.*
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- 14 Anon., 'Baking Trade Employees', *Worker*; 17 September 1914, p. 11.
- 15 Anon., 'Day Baking Question', *Queensland Times*, 24 October 1914, p. 4.
- 16 Anon., 'Fight for Day Baking', *Worker*, 12 November 1914, p. 15.
- 17 Anon., 'Fight for a Humane Reform', *Worker*; 19 November 1914, p. 16.
- 18 Anon., 'World of Labour', *Worker*, 24 December 1914, p. 8, c. 3.
- 19 Anon., 'Baking Trade Union', *Worker*, 8 April 1915, p. 15.
- 20 Anon., 'Baking Trades Union', *Worker*, 22 April 1915, p. 5.
- 21 E. A. Axelsen, 'Day Baking Award', *Worker*; 13 May 1915, p. 16.
- 22 'Award of the Brisbane Bread and Pastry Cooking Trade Board', *Queensland Government Gazette*, Brisbane, Government Printer, 20 August 1915, p. 583.
- 23 Anon., 'Baking Trade Union', *Worker*, 3 June 1915, p. 16.
- 24 'Award of the Brisbane Bread and Pastry Cooking Trade Board', August 1915, p. 586.
- 25 'Brisbane Bread and Pastry Cooking Trade Board', *Queensland Government Gazette*, Brisbane, Government Printer, 26 November 1915, p. 1750.

## Review

### *Froth From the Right — Not Serious History*

by James Morris



Hal Colebatch's book "*Australia's Secret War: how trade unions sabotaged Australian Military Forces in World War II*"<sup>1</sup> was a stimulus for some right-wingers to send a froth of abuse against Australian workers.

David Flint, the monarchist, in the right-wing magazine *Quadran*, advocated that martial law should have been used on the wharves to stop the campaign of "treachery".

Miranda Devine in the Murdoch press condemned "union bastardry" and said that any reader "will read this book with mounting fury". Alan Jones and Andrew Bolt aped the sentiments. Keith Windshuttle, the current editor of *Quadrant* and author of the major study *The Fabrication of Aboriginal History*, wrote he was pleased to have published the book.

I am sure that they were all happy that Colebatch shared the first prize of \$80,000 at the Prime Minister's Prize for Australian History in 2014. Others might find this decision not all that surprising as the judging panel included Gerard Henderson of the right-wing Sydney Institute and Peter Coleman a former Liberal Party MP and *Quadrant* editor. Ann Moyal, who has since resigned, and Professor Ross Fitzgerald were also on the panel. The Prime Minister had the final say.

It did not take long for the critics to find the errors of bias, poor methodology and reliance on limited sources of which the veracity was not checked. This is surprising as Windshuttle, as an historian, in accepting to publish the book, should be aware of accounts recounted as historical fact that, when properly examined, reveal a different story.

His first story was punctured with ease. Mike Carlton, the journalist, in a Criekey article *Mike Carlton: the shoddy, anti-union fiction that wrote*

the *PM's top history award* easily showed that the three day "strike" by wharf labourers in Sydney in October 1945 did not take place.<sup>2</sup> The former prisoners of the Japanese on board the *HMS Speaker* were not delayed from meeting their loved ones. This did not stop the letter-writer on page 47 stating that some of the union leaders should have been executed as the strike confirmed all the stories about their "disgusting behaviour ... when the Japs were at our doorstep."

The second story he gives, this time of sabotage, is the crashing of 16 American Vultee Vengeance dive bombers returning after a raid on Rabaul Papua New Guinea (PNG) due to a radar station not working as valves were stolen by wharfies in Australia. Carlton points out that the US never flew this aircraft in combat and that no records exist of the flights. Colebatch relied on a letter by a serviceman who got the radar unit number wrong and rewrote the account given by a Hubert Tolhurst in *Radar Yarns* who, although blaming the wharfies, said

that it was impossible to name, with any certainty, the culprits. Colebatch has no uncertainty though. The book as indicated is made up of stories and incidents in war service. It is unclear whether the editor sought to verify the details of the yarns. Carlton thinks that the account has confused the bombers with fighters that belonged to New Zealand which crashed when they ran out of fuel in 1945.

Peter Stanley, former historian at the Australian War Memorial, the National Museum of Australia and now at the University of New South Wales, in an article "Who are the liars? Response to Colebatch"<sup>3</sup> deals with a case when Colebatch claimed that wharfies refused to load 155 mm guns destined for Milne Bay, PNG that could have destroyed the Japanese landing forces before they got ashore. However, Colebatch fails to point out that this was two days before the end of fighting at Milne Bay and so would not have arrived in time anyway. In his book *Tarakan: An Australian Tragedy*,<sup>4</sup> Stanley relates his own story when researching his book that he had

Number of waterfront strikes from Colebatch

	1941	1942	1943	1944	1945	Total
Qld.	-	11	2	2	3	18
SA	-	3		-	-	3
WA	-	-	-	1	-	1
Vic.	1	4	-	-	-	5
NSW	1	4	6	3	3	17
Total	2	22	8	6	6	44

veterans of the campaign tell him of the wharfies impeding the loading of their ships. However he established from other sources that none took place.

As another way of looking at whether Colebatch makes his case, I have compared the number of strikes he claims in his book with the statistics in the *Official Year Book of the Commonwealth of Australia*. Based on the information provided in his book I have compiled the following table of strikes for each state.<sup>5</sup> He does not nominate any strikes in 1939 or 1940. Colebatch does not produce a tally of strikes in his book but does use Year Book statistics for the number of working days lost.

Colebatch refers to eight more strikes giving the location but no date and one instance of a year but no location. Thus, the total of strikes Colebatch maintains affected wartime shipping was 52. He also gives nine instances of sabotage/theft, six of theft and 10 instances of troop violence and intimidation.

In Queensland he identified 19 strikes, with 11 in 1942, two in 1943, two in 1944 and three in 1945 and one strike in Brisbane but no date given. Most of the strikes were due to the loading and unloading of munitions, heavy guns and supplies. However, he only gives the reason for the strike in a few cases; for example the desire for extra pay as danger money or working extra hours. For Queensland, he provides seven

cases of sabotage/theft included the missing radar valves and accumulators, gun mountings, damage to P-38 planes, vehicles and missing tripwires. Similarly, six cases of theft included cigarettes, potatoes, meat, comfort box contents and other small items and six instances of troop violence or intimidation including the drawing of bayonets and throwing wharfies into the water.

On the following page is the number of days lost during the war years in shipping and wharf labour strikes officially recorded in the relevant Year Book and also the actual number of strikes. I have included the number of strikes for Queensland and corrected the number of days lost for 1941 from that given in his book.

Looking at Colebatch's number of identified strikes that affected the loading or unloading of ships involved in the war effort it is useful to consider that the Year Book statistics are for all shipping not just war-related shipping.



*Humping bagged flour for the ships hold, Sydney waterfront, circa 1940 (photographer not known) Waterside Workers' Federation of Australia, Z248-82*

Statistics on Strikes affecting shipping*			
Year	Number of days lost	Strikes in Aust.	Strikes In Qld
1939	30,318	3	-
1940	7,364	5	1
1941	7,091	6	2
1942	3,325	7	1
1943	68,324	11	1
1944	35,178	16	-
1945	77,969	43	3

\* Source; Commonwealth Yearbook specified years

One can easily see that his number of strikes is nothing like that officially recorded in particular for Queensland 1942. In South Australia, Western Australia and Victoria even using his numbers it is hard to maintain that there was an active policy of sabotage of the war effort. His use primarily of letters and interviews is not adequate to establish the number of war-related strikes.

One can speculate why he did not include the Year Book record of strikes. If he had done a tally of his own records he too may have come to doubt all of his sources. Instead, Colebatch on page 228 seems bewildered by all of this and seeks to rationalise his assertions by writing that “I do not believe these figures to be completely reliable, and some, such as the different number of days lost to wharf strikes in 1942 and 1943, appear bizarre.” He blames war time censorship for the lower figures but then accepts that they may “be

taken as providing an approximate indication of affairs”.

Yet, he accepts the Commonwealth figures for strike action in, for example, the coal industry.

Analysing his sources, the majority of strikes were due to workers being unwilling to load or unload munitions on to a particular ship unless they received extra pay as a form of danger money. Rather than settling the worker grievances, the letters show a quick willingness not to resolve the issue with the men and instead load the ships anyway as soon as possible sometimes using soldier initiated violence. The violence included throwing wharfies into the water, drawing bayonets, firing shots over their heads, using grenades on them, and stripping them naked and plastering them with molasses. Sometimes it was US rather than Australian troops involved. Notably, Colebatch never criticises this violence.



*Demonstration of wharfies and women of the Womens Auxilliary of the T.L.C. (Trades and Labour Council) marching to the wharf to unload apples and pears during the double-dump lock-out in 1946. The Women's Auxilliary supplied smokoes to the wharfies while they worked.*

The instances of sabotage/theft could as much as anything be due to unfamiliarity with the unloading of parts or planes or the use of unsuitable equipment rather than sabotage or malice. It is not sufficient to allege some of the thefts as sabotage by wharfies and not anyone else without adequate evidence. Theft on the waterfront was a continuing problem — not only in wartime and unions and other parties sought to address this. The union rightly pointed out that many hands were involved on the waterfront and in the transporting of goods and wharfies should not be singled out.

The reader will also see that the letters sourced in the book overwhelmingly show dislike and even hatred of the workers and use words such as traitors, mongrels, scum and thieves; they also show the use of violence was acceptable to the soldiers. The author substantially relies on letters written in the 1990s about 50 years after the event. He also

relies on interviews, a few diaries and some books by ex-servicemen. He does not provide any indication that he consulted union records or newspapers of the day to confirm that the strikes or sabotage even took place.

For this article I limited my research of alternate sources to those on Queensland but in part it was appropriate to consider other states for a more complete picture and I have used other resources as indicated. I used Queensland Waterside Workers Federation records, the *Courier Mail* and *Townsville Daily Bulletin*. None of the sources provide any corroboration for any strike in Queensland claimed by Colebatch's sources during the war. It is possible that official records, newspapers and union records I examined cannot be relied on but should we instead rely on hostile letters and interviews provided up to 50 years after the event and then put into a book another 15 years later?

I think any historian has to be cautious and conclude that some of the accounts may be true to some extent as the writer claims to be a participant or observer but certainly in Queensland there is no evidence from other possible sources to support them. Censorship did apply in the newspapers of the day but in the papers viewed there was coverage of strikes occurring in other industries and even of court cases dealing with theft on the wharves but no strikes on the wharves as described.

Looking at Queensland, Colebatch's historical method is lacking and instead has relied on accounts which do not appear to have been checked for their truth or accuracy. Colebatch had an opportunity to do this before publishing his book as a number of letters were sent to the press in the mid 1990s denying the accuracy of some of the claims. No mention is made of these responses in his book. An example is a letter written to the "Australian" published on 21 April 1996 written by Col Davies of the Maritime Union of Australia (MUA) who wrote that the Townsville wharries had no recollection of men being forced to work under arms. If such took place it would have caused an Australia-wide dispute and would not have happened without massive publicity.

Certainly senior officers and others blamed wharries for strikes, sabotage and theft at the time. This may be down to the influence of the class attitude of the officers who did not want to see wharries win their demands or for them to hold up their ship from movement. Another issue is that those officers sought to draw attention away from their poor planning and provisioning of their troops. A good example of this is controversy over the adequate provisioning of troops in the Wewak area of PNG in October 1945 where troops were reduced to half their rations because it was said striking workers in Sydney delayed their ships. Colebatch uses more than one reference

to starving troops in his book (pages 113–115). But is this the real story? In the *Sydney Morning Herald* (SMH) of October 12, 1945 the Minister for Supply, Senator Ashley did not think so and said that the senior officers in the field had lied deliberately, if as the troops' letters suggested, they told the men that strikes in Sydney were holding up supplies.

The journal of the WWF the *Maritime Worker* and its leader Jim Healy felt pressed to address the issue. A lead article in the *Maritime Worker* of October 1945 entitled *Federation Refutes Slanders* dealt with the complaints by soldiers and their families in the Sydney press. To correct the slur the union listed three ships, the *Helga Meller* in July, the *Andrew Briscoe* in August and the *Sansfoyle* in September and claimed that there were no delays in loading and the army appreciated the quick loading of the *Sansfoyle*.

In regard to the *Helga Meller* the paper printed in full a letter from Major J Purdue OC 9<sup>th</sup> Australian Port Operational Company, AATNC (AIF) at Wewak who wrote that :

*I would be pleased if you would pass on to the Australian Stevedoring Coy. and their men concerned in the loading of SS Helga Meller in Sydney for the port of Wewak, our thanks for the good stow and the fact that*

*no cargo was pilfered during loading operations at Sydney.*

*Although the type of cargo was difficult to stow, cases being stowed in and under army vehicles, etc. and the ship being loaded to full capacity with supplies urgently required by forward troops, the discharging was greatly expedited by the splendid efforts of the Sydney stevedores.*

*As there were thousands of cases of canteen goods, including beer, spirits and tobacco included in the shipment; it was pleasing to note these goods were checked off 100 per cent at port of discharge.*

*I would like to offer my thanks for the Sydney papers left in the vehicles. This action was very much appreciated by the troops.*

*I was prompted to write this letter of appreciation in view of the fact that the Sydney stevedores has had to shoulder the blame for the large amount of pilfering on the waterfront.*

The calumnies spread by soldiers and others at the time worried the unions. This is evident by the creation of a fund for soldier amenities of £10,000 relief and the following notes from a speech

by Healy to the Townsville branch on 3 April 1944.

*He pointed out that soldier-worker unity was an essential if we were to go forward to progress in the post war world. He said that the enemies of the workers and the trade unions were doing their best to divide the workers in uniform from workers in the factories and wharves, etc., and if we did not look to our laurels now they would succeed. He continued that we must all admire the deeds of our fellow workers in uniform and the deeds that they had performed against great odds to keep our shores safe from the dreaded scourge of fascism.*

And

*They, the soldiers were of the opinion that the workers and the trade unions had forgotten him because it was the people that handled the funds subscribed by the trade unionists in the past who got the credit. The time had arrived for the soldier to know from whence the funds came and the only way to do that was for the trade union movement to establish its own fund.*

There was unanimous support for the fund and each member was to provide

10/- to the fund. The meeting then stood in respect at the deaths of two men, one being a union member in Japanese POW camps.

In conclusion, to my mind Colebatch has a shared political view with these other anti-union, anti-worker types who seek to portray workers as somehow un-Australian I think he has used sources to support his view rather than form a view based on all of the available evidence. He has left the reader ignorant whether he has sought to verify his source accounts, whether he has viewed other sources and has decided them unnecessary to mention or has simply ignored them. His reference to official statistics is muddled. He does not make a tally of strikes, sabotage/theft, theft or military action. His sources are so poor in part that he accepts a significant number of strikes took place but does not nominate when they took place during the war. When dealing with cases of sabotage or theft he does not consider other causes than deliberate malice and does not consider whether others may have been responsible in some cases. Troop violence and intimidation including that done by US troops is left uncriticised.

Colebatch's book is shallow, biased and shows poor historical methodology. It is a contribution to the study of the waterfront during World War II but it is a poor contribution to a greater understanding of events. It is a crude

attempt to smear a section of the Australian working class that did its part in supporting the war effort against Japanese militarism.

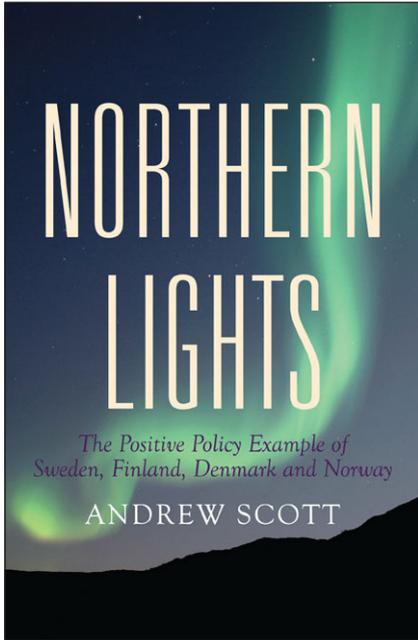
## Notes

- 1 Hal G.P. Colebatch, *Australia's secret war: how trade unions sabotaged Australian Military Forces in World War II*, Balmain, N.S.W. Quadrant Books, 2013.
- 2 Mike Carlton: the shoddy, anti-union fiction that won the PM's top history award, *Crikey*, 9 December 2014, <http://www.crikey.com.au/2014/12/09/mike-carlton-the-shoddy-anti-union-fiction-that-won-the-pms-top-history-award/>
- 3 Peter Stanley, Australia's Secret (And Unhistorical) War, *The Drum*, 11 December 2014, <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2014-12-11/stanley-australias-secret-and-unhistorical-war/5960090>
- 4 Peter Stanley, *Tarakan: an Australian tragedy*, St Leonards, Allen & Unwin, 1997
- 5 This is done by identifying and counting the incidents as described in his book of an identifiable strike, sabotage/theft, theft or troop violence for each state and year.

## Review

### *A Way to Travel? — Andrew Scott's Northern Lights*<sup>1</sup>

by Howard Guille



The electoral, ideological and cultural meltdown of European social democracy has become a common prophecy. The term '*PASOKisation*' entered the political argot when the Greek socialist party went from being a governing party to an also-ran with only 5 per cent of the vote. According to Nigel Lawson, chair of the UK soft left political group 'Compass', '*PASOKisation* is the ghost on the

shoulder of every social democratic party across the continent'.

The ALP might not be at the PASOK stage, but the Greens are taking its space on the left as well as some of its votes and inner metropolitan seats. Unions are a structural part of ALP but union membership is under 20 per cent of the work force yet union leaders are increasing their influence within party forums. Labor, at best, is 'fairer' than the Coalition but still little more than neo-liberalism with a limited safety net where equal opportunity has taken over from equality of outcome.

Andrew Scott's book '*Northern Lights*' is a very welcome essay in two senses of the word. It is a generous and careful piece of writing, and a serious and careful attempt to promote a different direction for the ALP. He shows that advocating reform is not a foolhardy exercise and that there are places where the centre-left is doing better than in Australia. In a striking phrase 'The Nordic countries are real places' where 'they are doing things differently and more successfully' (p187). Interest in the Nordic countries 'needs to be reactivated' and 'Policy makers need to overcome irrational fears which prevent them from talking about places where taxes are higher and where workers' right are better protected' (p187).

Scott's documentation and discussion is impressive and detailed. It is easy to

read and nuanced to convey the Nordic context. He is not a 'policy tourist' bringing back a cargo of impressions. Nor is he advocating the unquestioning application of these policies in Australia. In that, he is different to the economic neo-liberals to whom a market is a market and to the global super-architects bringing post whatever facades to Sydney and glittering towers to the Gold Coast.

The main four Nordic countries are Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden, to put them alphabetically. They are all among the most economically prosperous and 'still rate as the most equitable nations in terms of income distribution'; this economic and social achievement is maintained by social democratic policies (p2).

In the early 1960s, British and American conservatives demonised Sweden while Finland was hardly mentioned since it was, with Austria, betwixt and between the camps of the Cold War. Denmark and Norway were perhaps more tolerable because they belonged to NATO. All four countries remain ahead of Australia and the other English-speaking countries. Union membership, albeit falling to just below 70 per cent, is way in front of Australia at 17 per cent and US at 11 per cent. There is less inequality in income and wealth, and there are universal welfare benefits and services funded from higher levels of public revenues.

There is higher gender equality, free schools and tertiary education and well functioning preventative and primary health care. The towns and cities 'work'; high quality public and private design is available to all along with accessible 'arts and culture'. All four countries have industries and companies that are globally successful despite high wages and shorter working hours; they provide a high level of development assistance and have strong policies on climate change and renewable energy.

They are not nirvanas; Swedish and Finnish communist parties were savagely suppressed and right-wing populist parties have gained ground especially in Denmark and Finland. The governments of the three countries who are members of the European Union, the Danes, Finns and Swedes, support the German-led austerity policies.

The book has five main chapters; the first of these brings back memories of industrial democracy in the 1960s-80s and of *Australia Reconstructed* endorsed by the ACTU Congress in 1987. The latter 'remains the most comprehensive policy manifesto ever published by the mainstream left in Australia' (p50). Scott acknowledges the contribution made by Olle and Ruth Hammarstrom, Clyde Cameron, Bill Ford, Laurie Carmichael, Ted Wilshire, Winton Higgins and Geoff Dow,

among others, to opening up Nordic ideas to Australians.

The four chapters on specific policy areas are a major contribution to what the ALP (and the Greens) ought to be doing. The first examines Swedish policies for reducing child poverty and improving children's wellbeing through 'comprehensive, affordable and high quality Early Childhood Care and Education', measures for gender equality and 16 months parental leave including a minimum of 60 days for each parent. Perhaps the biggest difference with Australia is that childcare in the Nordic countries is public and not a market commodity.

Education is the second policy area with the focus on Finland. There is 'genuinely comprehensive public school system with a high value put on the profession of teaching' and encouragement of individual learning (p191-2). It is possible to establish a non-state school in Finland but not possible to charge fees. Hence, there are some community Steiner schools but no elite GPS. At the upper secondary level, vocational programmes and general education get equal support and both give access to higher education. Notably, there is no testing regime like NAPLAN to create destructive competition and score cards between schools.

Skills development, active labour market programmes and handling

structural change is the third policy area and focuses on Denmark. The key is adequate unemployment benefits tied to long-term training; Denmark spends eight times the amount that Australia does on labour market programmes for the unemployed. The Australian approach, especially since the John Howard years, has had two elements. One is the neo-liberal logic of reducing wages and unemployment benefit to 'clear the market'; the other to treat the unemployed as a commodity out of which 'Jobs Network providers can make money.

The final policy area is the comprehensive taxation and regulation of natural resource wealth; the focus is on Norway. Not only is there a clear Parliamentary declaration that the Norwegian oil industry must protect nature and the environment (p164) but also the establishment of the Oil Fund or 'sovereign wealth fund' that now stands at 5,000 billion Norwegian kroner (\$A 800 billion). There is significant public ownership through Statoil and Norsk Hydro and public intervention to develop the capability and capacity of Norwegian firms to supply equipment and services to the oil and gas industry.

The Australian inadequacies are well known. Mining and gas are enclave industries with almost all equipment imported, and few links to the rest of the economy except massive environmental damage. Rinehart

and Forrest standing on the back of a truck in Perth seemingly defeated the resources super profits tax. The rampant exchange rate of the resources boom caused 'Dutch disease' that clobbered manufacturing, agriculture, education and tourism.

The critical debate for Australia is what kind of politics and institutions will lead to policies that are more positive. Important as they are, Gonski and the National Disability Scheme, both of which Scott sees appropriately as a move towards the Nordic model, are not a political ideology or a unifying idea. It is harder in Australia to advance a coherent ideology. While the Nordic bourgeois parties have generally accepted the social democratic measures that Scott describes, the Australian left faces implacable right-wing parties, interests and media. The Liberal Party in Australia has consistently tried to repeal any such advances and, indeed, with *Work Choices* returned workers' rights to the 'freedom of contract' of the nineteenth century.

Walter Korpi has been one of the most eminent Nordic social democratic analysts for more than forty years. As recently as 2003, he showed that in the OECD countries, class is still the most important factor explaining well-being. He defined class by position in the production process making this crucial to the ideas and programmes of political parties and movements. Paradoxically

perhaps, by turning away from class, Australian unions and the Labor Party have allowed an opening for at least the 'urban' Greens. It will not be an easy road back but we should be grateful to Andrew Scott for his assistance.

### Note

- 1 Andrew Scott, *Northern Lights; the Positive Policy Example of Sweden, Finland, Denmark and Norway*, Monash University Publishing, Clayton Vic, 2014, 205p, \$39.95

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# **Mobilising Dissidence: The Relationship Between Labor, Labour and the Wider Community in the 2015 Queensland State Election**

**Roger Scott**

## **Introduction**

In the 1960s, Alexander Macdonald forged links between the labour movement and radical students at the University of Queensland because of a common commitment to civil liberties.<sup>1</sup> In doing this, Alex was breaking new ground for the Trades and Labour Council in an era when most unionists had little time for ‘effete intellectuals’ but the relationship proved difficult to maintain after his death.

This lecture deals with another initiative where the labour movement, through some major individual unions and the Queensland Council of Unions (QCU), moved outside what had become a traditional exclusive identification with the policies and values of the Australian Labor Party (ALP). These organisations forged their own links with wider community groups and participated independently in the 2015 election campaign as a result of events dating back to the era of Anna Bligh.

Several explanations have been offered for the defeat of the Bligh government in 2012 but all agree on the significance of the hostility among union leaders towards the sale of public assets by that government. This includes Bligh herself in her recently published biography.<sup>2</sup> After Bligh’s successor disowned this policy, unions made common cause against privatisation with the tiny numbers on the Palaszczuk opposition benches. They did however disagree on tactics with dissident groups supporting minor parties and independents.

The 2015 election campaign was notable for the emergence of community-based, non-party organisations sponsored or assisted by elements in the trade union movement. It will be seen that the final election result was shaped by the key divergence between the ALP and the various union-supported organisations about advice on “how-to-vote” under the prevailing optional preference electoral mechanism.

While the ALP urged voters to express a single preference, these organisations urged voters to *‘fill in all squares and put the LNP last’*. This resulted in a range of non-ALP dissidents expressing a broader preference in favour of a change of government rather than wasting (‘exhausting’) their votes after making a symbolic gesture.

The lecture discusses in more detail than is currently in the public arena

the origins and operation of these non-party non-union organisations. I will concentrate my remarks on just one of them — ‘Working for Queenslanders’ (W4Q), created by the Together Union, including its relationship with the national non-partisan organisation GetUp.<sup>3</sup> I note also ‘Stand for Queensland’ (SfQ) sponsored by the QCU and “Not4Sale” linked to the Electrical Trade Union (ETU).

### **Skirmish between unions and ALP government**

The starting point for this narrative is the election of Anna Bligh in 2009 to succeed Peter Beattie’s as Premier. This was a somewhat surprising result because it sustained in office an ALP regime whose longevity was, for many observers, making it an impediment to progress.

In the soul-searching which followed on both sides, the conservative opposition recognised the need for a unified approach to replace the old National and Liberal parties. Changing demographics meant that the newly-minted LNP needed to select a leader with urban appeal rather than someone like Lawrence Springborg<sup>4</sup> who was strongly identified with the rural heartland he had represented since the age of 21. This led at first to the appointment of John Paul Langbroek from the Gold Coast and then, in the light of unfavourable opinion polls, to Campbell Newman, the Lord Mayor

of Brisbane, who was ‘parachuted’ into the seat of Ashgrove.<sup>5</sup>

Before the 2006 election, Anna Bligh had been cornered by Springborg’s embrace of an economic rationalist agenda of “small government” into making an unequivocal commitment to resist any pressure to privatise public assets. Under the stress of the global financial crisis of 2007–8, Premier Bligh broke this electoral promise, fully aware that the unions would feel betrayed, particularly unions with large public service membership otherwise sympathetic to her general “leftist” orientation. As a result, the union movement as a whole sat on its hands in the 2012 campaign and adopted a studiously non-partisan posture towards Newman who made well-publicised promises that the public service had nothing to fear from a Newman-led LNP government.<sup>6</sup> In retrospect, Bligh believes that her asset decision caused an ongoing ‘terrible, heartbreaking wrench that tore an irreparable hole in the fragile relationship between the labour movement and the Labor Party in Queensland’ and the relationship now needed to be ‘rethought and remade’.<sup>7</sup>

To exploit this alienation, Newman encouraged the public sector unions to remain quiescent during the election campaign by reinforcing statements made by the LNP in Parliament. Before the election, the Public Sector Union, rechristened ‘Together’, invited each of

the party leaders to tell members what to expect from a government each might lead. Their responses were recorded and posted on the union website. In his interview Newman reassured the union movement that public servants had ‘nothing to fear’ from a change of government, and that there would be no further privatisation of assets without the Government seeking a new electoral mandate specifically for this purpose.

After the Newman Government was elected, it appointed a Commission chaired by former federal Liberal Treasurer Peter Costello to conduct an audit into the state’s finances. This report<sup>8</sup> was used to justify imposing massive budget cuts across all government departments. The new Government reversed its pre-election commitment that public sector workers had nothing to fear, by announcing it intended to sack 14,000 public servants.<sup>9</sup>

The anonymous *Brisbane Times* correspondent ‘The Watcher’ provided contemporary insights into how badly the cuts were handled and the distress

within the public service, reminding readers of the human cost when 14,000 people’s jobs were under threat, and the flow-on impact on small businesses (particularly noticeable in the Brisbane CBD).<sup>10</sup>

After Newman’s pre-election promises, union leaders felt betrayed and were supported by massive protests about the scale of the job cuts. Conflict over the cuts dominated state political media coverage for months. The day after the first Newman budget, in September 2012, a crowd of between 8,000 and 10,000 people marched to Queensland Parliament to voice their anger.<sup>11</sup>

After this, the Newman government started to take punitive action against the unions. First of all, the government rushed through a new law to strip away employment security and limit outsourcing protections from existing public service pay deals. The measure, passed in the name of reforming the public service, stirred controversy but a union challenge against the law was thrown out by the Court of Appeal.

Then the government passed a series of Bills designed to prevent workers from speaking out against government decisions. The axing of public service positions was matched by cuts to services. When the Government started putting these services out to tender, it also required community organisations to agree, through a clause in their contracts, that they would not speak



publicly against these government decisions.<sup>12</sup>

On Wednesday 5 June 2013, the government went further, to stop any union activity defined as ‘political’. Legislation was introduced into Parliament which overrode existing agreements and imposed significant and costly red tape on union operations, including requirements to disclose the material interests and remuneration of officials and amounts of money spent on ‘political’ campaigning. Unions lost the right to use payroll deductions for fund raising; delegates were no longer allowed to use work time and facilities for union activities; and members were prevented from talking to union officials during work time.

The government’s transparency laws prohibited unions from running political campaigns costing more than \$10,000 without first balloting their members. Under the law, for the ballot to be valid, at least half of the union’s total membership must vote yes.

### **Together starts ‘Working for Queenslanders’ (W4Q)**

One union was quicker on its feet than others in response to the punitive legislation. There is a time lapse between the introduction of legislation into Parliament and its passing into law, even under the super-streamlined processes used by the LNP to exploit its overwhelming numerical superiority

and a compliant Speaker. There is always a gap of a few days between the First Reading of a bill in Parliament and its passing into legislation by being signed by the Governor. The union leadership acted to take advantage of this window of opportunity.

The *Brisbane Times* reported that, in a widely publicised move and in order to circumvent the June legislation, the Together Union, after talking with members, transferred \$7.5 million it had raised from a public sector defence fund to the Working for Queenslanders trust corporation.

Together Union secretary Alex Scott stated to the *Brisbane Times* that his organisation had done nothing wrong and each step along the way had been made public.<sup>13</sup> The Newman Government acted swiftly with additional legislation to close the perceived loophole after the Together horse had bolted through the rapidly closing stable door. Attorney-General Jarrod Bleijie amended the transparency laws in August to include ‘anti-avoidance’ provisions ‘to cover entities associated with an industrial organisation’ so that any corporations or companies established by the unions will be subject to the same rules and laws as the union itself. The QCU advised its members that it was now illegal to seek to imitate the Together union. The QCU and Together joined in challenging the validity of the new legislation on the grounds that

it contravened the rights to free association implied in the national constitution.

The response of the Newman government to the High Court challenge was to seek to maximise delay, to prolong the operation of the restrictions for as long as possible, given that general legal opinion suggested they would lose. The rational basis for this wasteful strategy crumbled in December 2013 when the High Court gave a ruling favourable to unions facing a similar situation in New South Wales.<sup>14</sup>

Before then, W4Q had made its presence felt throughout Queensland with general meetings in regional centres and intense door-knocking campaigns in carefully selected constituencies seen 'to be in play' in the forthcoming election still a year away. The two major themes in their advice to constituents were the potential reductions in services as a result of cut-backs in the public service, and the lack of public accountability caused by the range of policies pursued by the Newman government. The protection of the environment was identified as one of these policies, with conservative governments at both levels cutting back on protection.

### **What W4Q actually did to mobilise dissidence**

By election time, W4Q had been trying to mobilise opposition to the Newman government for eighteen months. One of the important characteristics that made it distinctive was its distance from the ALP and thus its willingness to offer sympathy and support for a variety of alternative organisations and ideologies.

Whereas the QCU and its major affiliates had leaders who had continued as ALP figures, the most prominent leaders of the Together Union had broken with the party in protest against what they viewed as Bligh's betrayal over privatisation and had not rejoined. Working through W4Q, they could thus maintain cordial relationships with the leadership of the Greens, the Katter Party, the Palmer party and key independents — for example, when the massive sackings were announced by Newman, his arch-enemy Clive Palmer provided a significant grant to the Together union for the purposes of easing the financial burdens on suddenly-unemployed workers.

There were three stages in the process of mobilisation. The first was to establish a presence in the wider community in the Brisbane area. This involved engaging in debates on issues such as public accountability, environmental protection and wider economic policies. The second stage was to move

outside Brisbane and focus on specific local issues. Regional public meetings and campaigns focused on issues such as penalty rates relevant to workers in the tourist industries of Cairns and Townsville or the impact of specific service cuts in regional transport and health. The third stage was to seek to build on this recognition as a basis for giving advice to its supporters on how to exercise electoral choices to advance their interests.

Mass media engagement started in August 2014, with Together sponsorship of newspaper advertisements asking ‘*Are Queenslanders worse off under Campbell Newman?*’. This appeared above a photograph of Newman and his \$98,000 pay rise alongside public servant ‘Rachel — \$4,690 worse off’.

This was followed ten days later with a *Sunday Mail* advertisement on a similar theme headlining “Broken Promises” connected in the text to public service cuts. The same theme continued with a letter drop in October to 20,000 addresses in Ashgrove, backed up by a ‘*To the Resident*’ mail-out in early November. A month later a similar letter was sent to 28,000 Cairns residents, 17,000 in Mansfield, 21,000 in Mount Cootha, 19,000 in Mundingburra, and 24,000 in Pumicestone. Candidate-specific material was produced for letter-boxing and door-knocking in Mansfield and Mount Cootha and further newspaper advertisements on December 15 in Brisbane, Cairns and

ADVERTISEMENT

## Are Queenslanders worse off under Campbell Newman?




**Campbell Newman:**  
**\$98,000 a year pay rise.**

**Rachel:**  
**\$4960 worse off.<sup>1</sup>**

Before the last election Campbell Newman promised, “Public servants who work hard are entitled to have their wages at least keep pace with inflation.”<sup>2</sup> But now public servants like those who investigate abuse of children or maintain the grounds at our schools are worse off because of Campbell Newman.

**Tell Campbell Newman to stop breaking his promises.**

<sup>1</sup> Worse off based on the fact Core public service wages have not kept pace with inflation since 1 August 2012.  
<sup>2</sup> SOURCE: ABC News 612 Brisbane March 22, 2012

Authorised Alex Scott Together Secretary 27 Peel Street South Brisbane 4101



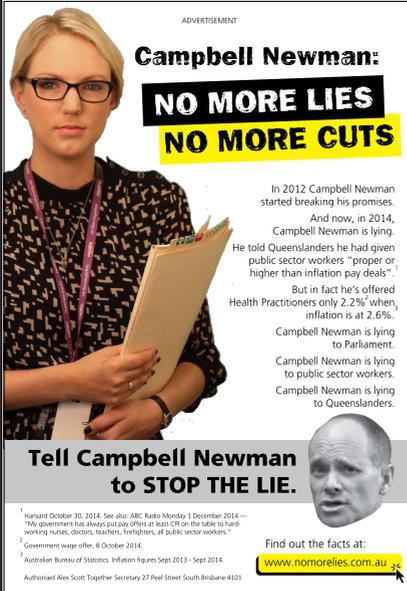
\*Rachel worse off\*\* Full page newspaper ad.  
Courier-Mail  
20 August, 2014

Townsville. The common theme was ‘*No more cuts, no more lies*’.

From 6 January onwards, during the election campaign itself, the attacks continued to focus primarily on the Newman government’s dishonesty, but a second message focussed specifically on cuts in health care and hospital services and the on-going dispute with doctors. A further 175,000 ‘*To the Resident*’ letters were sent to addresses in Barron River, Pine Rivers, Cairns, Kallangur, Mount Cootha, Sunnybank, Mt Ommaney, Thuringowa and Murrumba. There was also publicity in advertisements and mass media identified with a new web address simply called “*nomorelies*”.

ADVERTISEMENT

**Campbell Newman:**  
**NO MORE LIES**  
**NO MORE CUTS**



In 2012 Campbell Newman started breaking his promises.  
 And now, in 2014, Campbell Newman is lying. He told Queenslanders he had given public sector workers "proper or higher than inflation pay deals".<sup>1</sup>  
 But in fact he's offered Health Practitioners only 2.2% when inflation is at 2.6%.  
 Campbell Newman is lying to Parliament.  
 Campbell Newman is lying to public sector workers.  
 Campbell Newman is lying to Queenslanders.

**Tell Campbell Newman to STOP THE LIE.**

1 Harcourt October 30, 2014. See also: ABC Radio Morned 1 December 2014 — "My government has always put pay offers at least CPI on the table to hard-working nurses, doctors, teachers, firefighters, all public sector workers."  
2 Government wage offer, 8 October 2014.  
3 Australian Bureau of Statistics, Inflation Figures Sept 2013 - Sept 2014.  
 Authorised Alex Scott Together Secretary 27 Peel Street South Brisbane 4101

Find out the facts at:  
[www.nomorelies.com.au](http://www.nomorelies.com.au)

\*Stop the lie" Full page newspaper ad.  
 Courier-Mail, Townsville Bulletin and Cairns Post.  
 Week of December 15, 2014

Responses to opinion polls being regularly conducted by Reachtel for the union were identifying honesty as the main concern across the community in general. Perceived government dishonesty ranked above public service cuts and the ALP scare campaign on privatisation although the latter had particular salience for unionists.

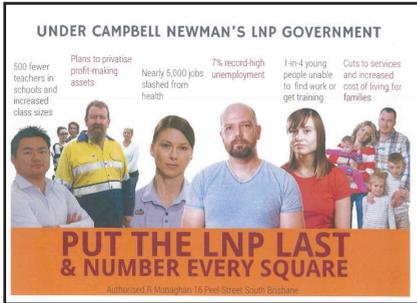
Meanwhile, the *'Working for Queenslanders'* nomenclature was appended to a series of direct mailings of material signed by Dr Chris Davis to specific Brisbane western suburbs electorates. Davis was elected as LNP member for Stafford in 2012 but dismissed as Assistant Health Minister for speaking out against contracts for

doctors and changes to the Crime and Misconduct Commission. He resigned from Parliament in late May 2014, triggering the Stafford by-election.<sup>15</sup> Queensland lawyers and doctors received similar letters (5,000 letters to each group). All of these addressed the single issue of honesty, but the two-page letter to doctors dwelt at length on the contract disputes and the dangers of privatisation of the health service.

During the same period that the western suburbs were hearing from Chris Davis, the 'Alan Jones postcard' was sent to 100,000 addresses in Pine Rivers, Bundaberg, Toowoomba North and Mount Ommaney.

During this period, the QCU 'Stand for Queensland' campaign was ramping up its own television and newspaper advertising and printed election day handouts with the same message of numbering all the squares and putting the LNP last.

The top half of the QCU handout identified key issues relevant to particular unions — teachers, electricity workers, nurses — as well as the general issues of unemployment, living costs and cuts to services. Together's material tended to offer fewer and simpler slogans than the QCU, returning to the issue of broken promises about job cuts. But it also targeted particular electorates and the demographics within electorates, such as this letter to voters of Ashgrove.



Note the new website address: *'http://www.howcanwetrustyou.org.au'*.

These messages — reminders of a dark but not distant past — were reinforced by video on YouTube, television and cinemas and emails.

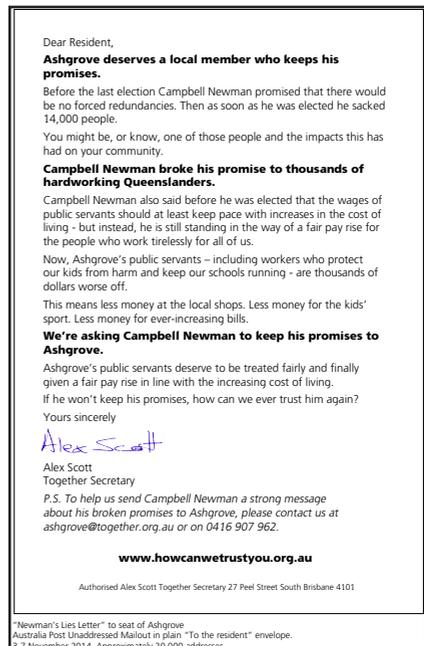
In separate videos, Chris Davis talked on health and privatisation, as did a doctor, a preventive health specialist, and a physiotherapist. There were also videos which adapted the template of a general video on dishonest job cuts to identify Newman meeting specific candidates across a range of constituencies outside Brisbane.

The digital campaign was organised by a specialist firm called 'Gamechanger Media'. The campaign was divided into two types: 'long lead' and 'reactive' (in their jargon). They engaged with a wide variety of social media and, using Facebook and YouTube, targeted localised messages to key electorates identified by the union's polling, electorates which subsequently experienced large swings to the ALP. In a total budget of \$459,518,

the agency identified as getting best value from cinema advertising in regional Queensland (\$8,800) and Crikey (\$3,000). The best performing advertisement, and the one which sticks in most memories, was the spoof of an NLP team in a life boat. The most interesting use of social media came with the geographical targeting of social media to the audience at a specific event, the leaders debate at the Broncos Leagues Club at Red Hill.

### Non-union Organisations and Preferences : GetUp and the Greens

The question needs to be asked about the effectiveness of this campaign by W4Q and the role of other organisations



in the ‘batteground of ideas’ which confronted the various opponents of the LNP. The military metaphor of targets, campaigns and battlegrounds has been developed at length in our monograph, written in late 2014 and published at the start of the 2015 campaign.<sup>16</sup>

The online organisation, GetUp, was the most prominent and wide-ranging of these organisations. It became strongly involved in Queensland politics after the election of the Newman government, particularly campaigning on environmental issues and the government’s failures on public accountability and its weakening of anti-corruption bodies inside and outside Parliament. GetUp established and maintained close personal links with the leadership of the Together union, which also provided access to office accommodation when GetUp raised its profile during the election campaign.

GetUp also provided an organizational link with the Greens, one of three minor parties contesting the election (alongside teams led by Palmer, Katter and — an unanticipated late entrant — Pauline Hanson). *Vote Compass Queensland*<sup>17</sup> polling identified environmental issues and public accountability as significant, even though both the LNP and the ALP focussed on asset sales/leases and general economic management. The ALP trod carefully on environmental issues, particular the impact of mining

in the Galilee Basin on the Great Barrier Reef, because of the problems of rising unemployment and the potential for job creation in the coal mining industry.

The Greens had created some disarray for those seeking to maximise opposition to the LNP. This was the outcome of its hyper-democratic mechanism of empowering each constituency branch to offer ‘how-to-vote’ advice to its members. This brought to the surface the underlying universal tension which challenges Greens and the ALP — should the Greens be regarded as the natural ally of the ALP against conservative forces, or the natural enemy of the ALP in the competition for the same progressive voters not rusted on to the ALP by union or class affiliation?

This tension played out in some personality conflicts at the local level. Sympathisers relying on the how-to-vote card handed out during the election campaign were advised in some key constituencies to only ‘Vote 1’, rather than follow the advice from the central party structure and from GetUp to number all the preference boxes on the ballot paper and put the LNP last. It has been argued that this affected the outcome in the key constituency of Mt Ommaney and that the failure to win this seat cost the ALP the chance of a working majority.

Elsewhere during the vote-casting days, GetUp activists were literally

singing off the same hymn sheet as both the union-supported community organisations and the Greens with everyone handing out cards advising voters to fill in all the squares and ‘put the LNP last’. The ALP also varied its single-number advice by local negotiation, particularly in those seats in which the preferences of other parties might determine the outcome. Where this occurred, such as in key Brisbane electorates like Mount Cootha and Ashgrove, the uncommitted voter was being handed three or four cards with identical advice about how to exercise their democratic right to the maximum.

### **Election outcomes—What happened and what might have been**

Evidence suggests that the collective effect of the non-party groups was to materially influence the final result. This shows in the striking change in voter willingness to move beyond expressing a single preference for a minor party unlikely to win (‘exhausting’ their vote) to expressing a full range of preferences.

The key general statistic is that the number of voters who allowed their preferences to be exhausted without expressing a choice between the winner and the major rival fell dramatically between 2012 and 2015. In his address to the Together State Conference in February, General Secretary Alex Scott offered a more authoritative analysis of the “put the LNP last” strategy:

The ‘Put the LNP Last’ strategy delivered at least four additional seats to the ALP and assisted the ALP to come from behind and win in a further five seats. In 2012 the ALP did not win a single seat where they were behind in the primary vote but the preference strategy delivered increased margins of between 1% and 3.5% in every seat the ALP gained by reducing the exhaustion rate and increasing preference flows.”

What he did not say was that there is also some evidence to suggest that, had the ALP been offering the same advice on its how-to-vote card — fill in all the squares putting the LNP last — they would have secured a working majority rather than be heading a minority government.

### **Conclusions — community engagement and policy outcomes**

There is an extensive evidence of widespread disengagement and disillusionment with the current political system and the politicians who operate within it. The Queensland election of 2015 ought to have provided a ‘perfect storm’ for social disengagement:

- (a) a lop-sided parliamentary minority perceived to be unable to return to government in the short term;
- (b) parliamentary procedures operated to minimise publicity of comments

from this minority or any other dissenters;

- (c) media publicity for corrupt or distasteful behavior by members of parliament bringing the institution and all politicians into disrepute;
- (d) accusations against both the Premier and the former Premier of broken electoral promises;
- (e) an electoral system which:
  - allows the incumbent to choose a minimum length of campaign to discuss policies;
  - allows the incumbent to choose to time the election over an extended holiday period;
  - operates under a voting system which combines:
    - compulsory attendance,
    - a new system of voter identification; but
    - no requirement to express a preference beyond marking the ballot paper once.

In a post-election review of 2014 Scott and I identified the multiplicity of grievances generated by the behaviour of the Newman government.<sup>18</sup> These affected a disparate range of community groups, from motorcycle riders to high court judges, from farmers affected by coal seam gas to users of public health services, from doctors to prison workers and inmates to fishermen. Left to their own devices, each of these groups might have been content to vote for a party specific to their interests or not to vote meaningfully at all.

In the Australian Senate or in upper houses, preference wranglers might have gained representation for some of these parties. But state elections in Queensland do not provide for proportional representation. The achievement of the labour movement was to develop organisations which acted as a catalyst in the context of its optional preference system to ensure that votes which might otherwise have been exhausted counted towards the final result.

‘Working for Queenslanders’ was created out of the need identified by the Together Union for an organisation to act to represent the interests of its members. It was the monster created by Mr Bleijie’s Frankenstein. Because it was given access by union members to funds for in-depth polling and long-term advertising campaigns, it generated community engagement outside the union ranks and mobilised dissent. Voters who were unlikely to support the ALP came to agree that the ALP represented a lesser evil when they were encouraged to choose who should form government. W4Q came to life to nullify the original intention of repressive legislation; in 2015 it unexpectedly achieved this objective by ejecting from office the authors of that legislation.

The ALP failed to follow a similar line for maximising preference flows, perhaps driven in part by its fear of the growing appeal of environmental

issues, and thus of the Greens. If the ALP had promoted the same policy of putting the LNP last, it would almost certainly now hold power with a clear majority. Only time will judge whether this was a lost opportunity or whether its long-term fears were justified about the ALP being undermined by progressive forces inside and outside the labour movement.

The primary reason why the labour movement was able to mould the preferences from so many dissident groups was historical. For my own generation and that of our children, there was perhaps initial tolerance of the idea that twenty years of almost uninterrupted ALP government could be ended by an exercise of electoral will in 2012. But this tolerance quickly evaporated with the behavior of the Newman regime, exercising power with a ruthless disregard for accountability which alienated a wide range of social groups well beyond the normal orbit of the labour movement. There was widespread concern that Queensland was returning rapidly to excesses of the Bjelke-Petersen era which most Queenslanders, until 2012, regarded as a closed book.<sup>19</sup>

One local commentator sympathetic to the LNP, Graham Young, provided an electoral analysis which has become part of the rhetoric sustaining the Opposition's morale post-Newman:

As the Queensland election showed, a weaker opponent can do a judo throw, using your strength against you to score an unheralded win... electors were cranky with Newman, and he ran a campaign based not on his achievements and Labor's past performance, but on spending promises funded by a massive privatisation campaign... our qualitative polling of swinging voters showed the loss was due to three factors — dislike of asset sales (14%), dislike of Newman or the style of his government (34%) and a protest vote cast to send the government a message in the 'knowledge' that they were certain to be returned (34%).<sup>20</sup>

However dubious the specific figures, there is bi-partisan recognition here of the "judo throw" but perhaps there is less awareness of the union muscle behind the throw.

David Peetz has noted 'the need to develop an alternative vision is greater now than ever before' and asked whether unions can engage in this 'big conversation'. He says that they could be 'central to the solution' as 'probably the only group in Australia with the resources, the breadth of membership, and the organising capability'. However, this requires much change within unions and in the way they operate.<sup>21</sup>

I have presented a case study here of how one union in one election has led the way in mobilising dissent, reinforcing and expanding on an election message controversially adopted by the QCU against the preferences of the ALP. The General Secretary of Together concluded his conference address with the following challenge:

‘We need to examine how the skills and programs we used to change the election can be deployed for other purposes: driving up our membership, supporting the issues they care about, and changing not just the government — but changing Queensland.

### Notes. This is an edited text of the 2015 Alex McDonald Lecture

- 1 Peter Cross, ‘A Pillar of Support from Beginning to End’ Alexander Macdonald, FOCO, and the Student-Worker Solidarity’ *Centre for the Government of Queensland Summer Scholar Journal*, 3, 2012–13. [http://www.queenslandspeaks.com.au/sites/default/files/Alexander\\_Macdonald.pdf](http://www.queenslandspeaks.com.au/sites/default/files/Alexander_Macdonald.pdf).
- 2 Anna Bligh, *Through the Wall, Reflections on Leadership, Love and Survival*, Harper Row, 2015.
- 3 ‘GetUp! is an independent movement to build a progressive Australia and bring participation back into our democracy’, <https://www.getup.org.au>.
- 4 As Leader of the Queensland branch of the National Party, Springborg had led the National-Liberal coalition to defeats in both 2004 and 2006. He resigned as leader of the Nationals after his second election defeat, and was replaced by his former deputy, Jeff Seeney. However, after only 16 months as leader and facing

poor opinion polling Seeney was replaced by Springborg. Following the 2006 defeat Springborg played a leading role in the creation of a unified Liberal National Party (LNP) becoming the party’s first leader but resigning again after he led it to defeat in 2009.

- 5 Roger Scott and John Ford, *Queensland parties: the right in turmoil 1987–2007*. St. Lucia, QLD, Australia: Centre for the Government of Queensland, The University of Queensland, 2014. (iBook)
- 6 Anna Bligh, op cit.
- 7 Madonna King, ‘Annastacia Palaszczuk must tread carefully with unions’, *Brisbane Times*, 26 March 2015: <http://www.brisbanetimes.com.au/comment/that-thinking-feeling/annastacia-palaszczuk-must-tread-carefully-with-unions-20150325-1m7uf2.html>.
- 8 See Commission of Audit: <http://www.commissionofaudit.qld.gov>.
- 9 Newman claimed there were no ‘sackings’: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2012-09-14/no-qld-public-servants-sacked-newman-says/4261346>.
- 10 See Ann Scott, ‘The wisdom of “The Watcher”’: Lest we forget’, TJRyan Foundation, [http://www.tjryanfoundation.org.au/\\_dbase\\_up1/Wisdom\\_of\\_the\\_Watcher.pdf](http://www.tjryanfoundation.org.au/_dbase_up1/Wisdom_of_the_Watcher.pdf).
- 11 See *Brisbane Times* coverage at: <http://www.brisbanetimes.com.au/queensland/thousands-march-against-newman-budget-20120911-25qd8.html>.
- 12 See Daniel Hurst, *The Brisbane Times*, 21 August, 2012: <http://www.brisbanetimes.com.au/queensland/ngos-told-they-are-right-to-remain-silent-to-keep-funding-20120820-24iib.html>.
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- 15 Chris Davis quits as MP, Brisbane Times 23 May 2014, <http://www.brisbanetimes.com.au/queensland/chris-davis-quits-as-mp-20140523-zrm46.html>
- 16 Scott R and Scott A, *Queensland 2014: Political Battleground*, TJRFoundation Report No 14: [http://www.tjryanfoundation.org.au/\\_dbase\\_upl/Qld\\_2014\\_Political\\_Battleground\\_with\\_Epilogue.pdf](http://www.tjryanfoundation.org.au/_dbase_upl/Qld_2014_Political_Battleground_with_Epilogue.pdf)
- 17 The Australian Broadcasting Commission ran *Vote Compass Queensland* throughout the election campaign. See the results at: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/qld-election-2015/vote-compass/results/>
- 18 [http://www.tjryanfoundation.org.au/\\_dbase\\_upl/Qld\\_2014\\_Political\\_Battleground\\_with\\_Epilogue.pdf](http://www.tjryanfoundation.org.au/_dbase_upl/Qld_2014_Political_Battleground_with_Epilogue.pdf)
- 19 One aged observer who joined the ALP in response to the Newman excesses noted that the surge in new members in her branch comprised people who, like her, had worked through the implementation of the Fitzgerald reforms, or very young members who were freshly politicised.
- 20 <http://whatthepeoplewant.net/polls-blog/march-2115/foley-can-undo-baird.html> .
- 21 David Peetz, 'Are Australian trade unions part of the solution, or part of the problem?' February 2015 : <http://www.australianreview.net/digest/2015/02/peetz.html>.and also The Conversation, February 23 2015.

## National Recognition for Queensland Communist Feminist, Eva Bacon (1909–1994)

**Deborah Jordan**

Eva Bacon, Queensland’s communist and feminist activist and women’s leader, is to be honoured with a street in her name in a new Canberra suburb in the ACT, and with an entry in the *Australian Dictionary of Biography*.

Eva’s is an archetypal story. It is a story about revolutionary passion, political principles and personal risk and courage. It is about facing fears, escape from a repressive regime, separation from love and emigration, and then the new immigrant’s beginning in Australia, committed to the cause of human rights and justice for both men and women — finding love, taking on the full force of Queensland’s notorious police state and impressive to those of us who lived through those days, having the capacity to embrace women’s liberation. Eva was only 152 cm tall and nicknamed, no wonder, ‘Mighty Mouse’.<sup>1</sup> And for those of us who delve in women’s history in Queensland and have learned to respect historian Pam Young’s findings, we can readily believe her conclusion and take on board every word:



*Eva Bacon in 1985*

Eva Bacon was admired for her ‘warmth’, her ‘sharp political mind, remarkable vitality and fighting spirit’.<sup>2</sup>

Denman Prospect, the new suburb in Canberra, is to be named on the theme ‘Activism and Reform’. A brief biography of Eva has been compiled and Bacon Street will be along side roads commemorating such women such as Ellen Cashman and Kondela Elliot. Of the twenty-four men and women selected, Eva Bacon appears to be the only Queenslander. And their biographies tend to read a little like a summary of significant achievements — that is, in comparison to Connie Healy’s framing of how an individual’s life and politics are shaped by the historical times in which they participate and in which they can take agency.<sup>3</sup> The details are important, of course, and each generation must re-figure the image.

Recently a senior Griffith academic, however, said she discouraged potential PhD theses on Queensland topics, as there are apparently few career

prospects in the area. A study of Eva Bacon would make a glorious thesis. Eva Bacon née Goldner, born in Vienna, Austria, in 1909, was not only a ‘sharp’ politically feminist and women’s leader of ‘extraordinary influence’, she was also a paid up member and employee of the Communist Party of Australia (CPA); she was not only a Jewish refugee, she was a ‘remarkably vital’ Queenslander. Even more, her life partner, Ted Bacon, was also a paid organiser for the CPA. Queensland’s women’s history, Queensland’s women’s labour history and the history of the CPA in Queensland seems to be a largely undeveloped field, poorly funded, that is apart from the stories of a few individuals and a few key texts. Her ‘fighting spirit’ meant she had a certain notoriety, (and as a communist she was an easy target for the premier Joh Belke Petersen and the right wing press). Eva’s significance was recognised by the early feminist historians of the 1970s and an entry on her included in *200 Australian Women*. An entry was included for her in the Australian Women’s Registrar;<sup>4</sup> Heather Grant included her in the book on *Queensland Women*; and some one has kept the Wikipedia site very well informed.<sup>5</sup>

Biography can offer a way into wider questions about the role of history. Why is it that Eva, for instance, not Ted, the full-time communist, became nominated for an entry for the *Australian Dictionary of Biography*?

Was she really the significant member of the partnership? Or is it that she has been more written about than him? Clearly as state secretary to the Queensland branch of the CPA he was a person of immense significance frequently traveling to meet with other communists, in Moscow, in Indonesia, in China, shaping decisions and challenging—Eva, at least! How much did her leadership of women stem from the mentorship/directives of the CPA? How was it she has become visible among the large number of extraordinary but now largely invisible women active in that inspiring organisation, the Union of Australian Women?

Easy enough, to map most of Eva’s important work, especially given the large archives available of both the Queensland branches of the UAW and the CPA, and Ted and Eva’s own collection, accessible to any reader in the Fryer Library, University of Queensland. Eva herself wrote very well about her early life in Vienna and the influence of her mother, Camilla Goldner, in instilling the importance of independent moral and intellectual values. Eva was highly educated, especially in the liberal arts in Vienna and came to terms with her Jewishness when learning of what other Jews such as Freud, Brecht and Einstein could achieve. Prepared for university, Heinrich and Camilla could not afford to send their daughter there, so instead Eva underwent a rigorous training



*Eva Bacon in 1944*

in dress making, design and cutting. After a further three years working in various jobs as required in Austria, she then passed the examinations to enable her to set up her own business, from a room in her parents' flat. Building up the business she employed two apprentices, and began to design as well as make clothes achieving some kind of independence — shades of that earlier feisty labour woman, Emma Miller who sewed gentleman's shirts.

Economic depression, anti-Semitism, fascism and the rise of the Nazis ineluctably had to be faced. Eva joined the Social-Democrat Party.<sup>6</sup> After the 1934 attempted coup, Eva groomed immaculately in her designer clothes would carry concealed messages into the barricaded inner city during the state of emergency. She was terrified. So she tells her own story, and this part is also well documented, apart from a few important details that autobiographies from this era do not often tell. We do not get the full name of her influential lover. When the Social Democratic Party was declared illegal, she also became involved with

Red Aid, an international organisation assisting victims of fascism. She lived in terror. Her father had died before Hitler's invasion of Austria; she and her mother were living in a Jewish quarter where amongst 'enormous acts of cruelty', the uncertainty drove them to 'despair'. Eva ran classes on simple dressmaking for her Jewish clients preparing for voluntary exile.

Thirty-year old Eva and her mother did manage to escape to London, where they found a ship to Australia arriving in January 1939. Eva was entitled to emigrate as a near relative, because her younger brother had emigrated a year earlier. She signed a statement to the effect that she was not a member of the CP, and presumably she was not at this stage. Her revolutionary boyfriend was unable to find a ship, and his application to emigrate was rejected; the lovers were separated. In Brisbane, soon after she arrived, invited by Marjorie Purreger, founder of the Forum clubs and wife of another Austrian refugee, she attended an International Women's Day celebration, where she was invited to speak. Terrified, yet again typical of her kind of courage, she got up to recall the horrors of Nazism as she knew them. Eva continued to work as a dressmaker, working at Pauls, then later Penneys Emporium. She organised a women's fitness group and Connie Healy, who was to become a life-long friend, joined.<sup>7</sup> Through her involvement in the Unity Theatre, she was introduced to CP classes, where

she met Ted Bacon, the teacher. As an immigrant, Eva sought to repay Australians for the haven they had provided, by working for democratic freedoms.

During World War 2, Eva was listed as an 'enemy alien', fingerprinted, put under curfew, and had to report fortnightly to the Security Department; her home was raided and searched. The paperwork is held in the National Archives.<sup>8</sup> Forming warm friendships with a number of communists, when the CPA was declared illegal in Australia, only then the rebel Eva joined them. Until late 1943 when her 'alien' status was corrected to that of 'refugee alien', her involvement with party affairs could only be limited. On the 3<sup>rd</sup> May 1944, she married then Lieutenant Edwin (Ted) Bacon, when he was on leave from service in New Guinea. She became a British subject by marriage.

Eva began work for the Welfare Committee of the CPA which was 'all out for the war effort'.<sup>9</sup> Their role was to sustain 'morale' of communists in the armed services, to provide both personal and material support and the first point of contact as a transition centre in Brisbane. Again this section of her life is well recorded both, and something of her excitement comes through of those heady days. Eva went on 'nerve-wracking' organising trips by train, stopping along the way to meet with groups of men who expected

her to solve local issues. She was billed at a big meeting in Charters Towers, for instance, and learnt that, when she had no answer, to suggest they discuss the problems then and there. She facilitated the resolution of conflict. When Eva recalled how she was rapidly replaced at the end of the war with the return of male comrades from the war, she added how she was never elected to a Congress of the CPA, given her husband was employed by the Party, and it was not 'done' that husbands and wives were both elected. She was told her 'job' in the Party was to keep Ted 'happy'.<sup>10</sup>

A branch of the CP was set up in Enoggera where the Bacons and their daughter, born in 1945, lived. Their house was nearly back to back with Connie and Mick Healy (Waterside worker and Trades & Labor council Secretary for ten years) who had a son Jim. She and Connie held forums, meetings and distributed communist material. Eva immediately set herself the task of getting to know the neighbourhood and to get insight into its 'industrial contradictions', and the coming 'dictatorship of the proletariat'. After a meeting at Trades Hall to form the Union of Australian Women, Eva, despite thinking initially 'It's not for me',<sup>11</sup> <sup>12</sup>went on to form a local branch in Enoggera. An Australian wide union, UAW state branches addressed issues unique to their state. It was a 'very happy time' for the mostly young mothers with their children, meeting



*UAW march with Alice Hughes, Eva Bacon and one other holding the banner 1962*

for crafts activities, and discussion of social issues. Eva reluctance to work with women stemmed from the belief that women's interests could be addressed only when socialism was in place, but she watched with awe as women were empowered through membership of the UAW. When numbers were too large to squeeze into the Bacon home, they hired the local RSL hall. Members practised teaching by running classes for the group. The Cold War at its height, there was a plant, a Mrs Allen. The day the *Courier Mail* accused the UAW of being controlled by the CPA, the group told Eva how they were 'here' and they 'had all read it'. Eva was, as Young finds, 'completely involved and eventually became a high profile member'.<sup>13</sup>

Nearly twenty years ago historian Stuart Macintyre warned that 'the older way of writing communist history, as a story of virtue rewarded, error punished and paradise postponed clearly will not do', given that that the communist project itself was deeply flawed.<sup>14</sup> How are we to tell the story of Eva

and other communists of this period of decline after a time of unprecedented prestige and influence? Eva became a powerful advocate for women's right to work, equal pay and conditions affordable childcare and Indigenous rights. Her life and thinking itself provides a critique of the communist project; 'Does the Women's Liberation movement make the CP unnecessary for women?' the Women's Collective of the CPA asked themselves.<sup>15</sup>

What would it take for a full biography of Eva? Eva and the CPA and the UAW? And to track the finer details of her work in other progressive, radical, peace, international socialist and feminist organisations? What would it take for a young PhD student, or even a senior scholar to explore her life in a substantial way and ask the important questions about the gendered nature of power, about the intersection of Marxism and feminism, and communism and women's liberation? Funding, a scholarship, a foundation? More than this is the task of sorting through already well written, substantially funded national narratives, of the CPA, of the UAW, that overlook, or assume, or fail to merely mention where the Queensland branch took off on its own direction, where it resolved issues differently or achieved different outcomes.

Let us leave Eva's story as a story of a life waiting to be told, and not only told but also studied for its insights

and achievements, for its greatness. Just as Emma Miller was president of a formidable body of women, the Women's Equal Franchise Association, Eva fashioned a committee that built from the grassroots an extraordinary celebratory day, International Women's Day, a committee which was ready to embrace the Women's Liberation movement when it erupted onto the streets. Now Eva is on the national map, let us not lose sight of her, but also make sure other significant Queensland women can be seen to be walking alongside.

## Notes

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- 2 Pam Young, Obituary, *Age*, 30 August 1994, p. 16, Biographical Cuttings on Eva Bacon, founding member and leader of the Union of Australian Women, containing one or more cuttings from newspapers or journals, National Library of Australia.
- 3 Connie Healy, 'Eva's Story', *The Queensland Journal of Labour History*, No. 8, March 2009, p. 15.
- 4 'Eva Bacon', <http://www.womenaustralia.info/biogs/AWE0098b.htm> Accessed 01/06/2015.
- 5 'Eva Bacon', [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eva\\_Bacon](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eva_Bacon) Accessed 01/06/2015.
- 6 Eva Bacon, Autobiographical, Bacon Collection, 241, Box 8.
- 7 Healy, 'Eva's Story', *The Queensland Journal of Labour History*, p. 15.
- 8 'Goldner Eva — Nationality: German, arrived Brisbane on Largo Bay 10 February 1939', NAA: BP25/1, National Archives of Australia, Canberra.
- 9 Eva Bacon, Interview [Susan Yarrow] 13/10/1992, 'Autobiographical', Bacon Collection, 241, Box 8.
- 10 Eva Bacon, Autobiographical, Bacon Collection, 241, Box 8.
- 11 Pam Young, *Daring to Take a Stand: the story of the Union of Australian Women in Queensland*, Wavell Heights, Qld: Pam Young, 1998, p. 11.
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# Contributors

## **Johannah Bevis**

Johannah graduated from The University of Queensland with a Bachelor of Arts and a Diploma of Global Issues in 2014. In 2012, she participated in a Summer Research Scholarship with the Centre for the Government of Queensland where she contributed to the Queensland Speaks oral history project. At the time, Queensland Speaks had entered into a new phase examining the history of the trade union movement in Queensland. Having noticed a common name throughout the literature documenting Queensland Politics from the 1960s through to the 2000s, Johannah decided to research the life and times of Sir Jack Egerton. From this research, she produced a paper titled ‘No more labour for the knight: An overview of Sir Jack Egerton’s leadership’, for the Queensland Speaks Summer Research Scholar Journal.

## **Carol Corless**

Carol is a Quality Technician for Graincorp Foods which is based in Brisbane and has worked there since 1988. She graduated in 1985 from Queensland Agricultural College (UQ) with an Assoc Dip in Food Processing. Carol is a shop floor union delegate for United Voice which is the union that has coverage of the majority of workers on the site and she is the current elected President of United Voice in Qld. Carol has been on the State council of United Voice (and previous namesakes) since 1990. She has been on the United Voice National Council since 1994. Carol has nearly completed study for her Bachelor Degree in Historical Inquiry and Practice from UNE.

## **Howard Guille**

Howard worked and taught in Europe and New Zealand before coming to Australia in the mid-1970s. He was the foundation appointment in industrial relations at what became Brisbane CAE. He worked at the Trades and Labour Council of Queensland from 1988 to 1992. He was involved in major projects in restructuring, award restructuring, industrial policy and in trying to combat corporatisation, privatisation and national competition policy.

Howard was the Queensland Secretary of the National Tertiary Education Union from 1994 to 2006. This became increasingly complex with enterprise bargaining and the assault of the Coalition Government on the NTEU.

He was a member of the TLC Executive from 1996 to 2006. He is currently the QCU representative on the Queensland Heritage Council. In 2000 and in 2008 Howard assisted the Papua New Guinea Trade Union Congress with research and submissions to the National Minimum Wage Boards of those years.

He retired from the paid workforce in 2008 after two years as Associate Professor in Humanities at Queensland University of Technology. He has undertaken research and written on a wide range of topics including industrial relations theory and policy, labour market policy, globalisation, industry, housing and social policy.

### **Deborah Jordan**

Deborah, a Senior Research Fellow (adj) National Centre for Australian Studies, Monash University, works as a historian, writer and skipper. Based in Queensland, she is particularly interested in women's history, feminism and gender relations, and also some of the broader repercussions of male female binaries for human relationships with nature. Her report *Climate Narratives in Australian Literature* was published last year.

### **James Morris**

James has been retired for a number of years after working in the public service. He has always had an interest in labour history, and in particular a strong interest in the use of primary sources for a better historical understanding.

### **Bob Reed**

Bob was called to the bar in 1999 and has since then practised as a barrister in Brisbane, principally in the areas of industrial and employment law, human rights law and worker's compensation. Bob also worked as a solicitor from 1992 — 1995 and from 1995 — 1999 as a research officer for the Liquor Hospitality and Miscellaneous Workers' Union.

Along with Madeline Brennan of counsel and Warren Friend QC, Bob was part of the legal team assembled by Hall Payne Lawyers to represent Uncle Conrad Yeatman in his stolen wages case against the State of Queensland.

### **Ted Riethmuller**

Ted was born in Kingaroy. The year was 1939 and so he was an observer of the tumultuous events that shaped the second part of the 20th Century. He is optimistic about the future but agrees that such hope is hard to justify.

He served his time as an electrician in Bundaberg and Brisbane. During his apprenticeship he joined the ETU and became interested in politics. In the early sixties, like many other young Australians he travelled to the UK and it was there that the class nature of society could not be ignored and it hastened his move to the left. Although the radicalism of his youth has been tempered by age and experience he still embraces the ideals of universal peace, fraternity and the emancipation of the down trodden.

His interest in social history and labour history comes with a strong belief that the experiences of the common people deserve to be documented. In particular he wants to see the struggles and sacrifices of activists of the past acknowledged, honoured and their successes and failures learned from.

In his retirement, Ted is writing a collection of *Workplace Sketches* as an exercise in autobiography and a contribution to social and workplace history. He invites others to do the same.

### **Roger Scott**

Roger's academic career began in 1962 when he was appointed Rhodes Scholar at the University of Oxford. The fieldwork for his doctoral thesis on the development of trade unions in Uganda was completed while he was a Rockefeller Teaching Fellow at the University of East Africa, Kampala. From 1965-1977 he held teaching appointments at the University of Sydney, the Queen's University of Belfast, and the Canberra College of Advanced Education.

In 1977 he was appointed J.D. Story Professor of Public Administration, University of Queensland. He was responsible for introducing the Master of Public Policy Course. He served as President of the Academic Board, 1986-1987. In 1987 he became Principal of the Canberra CAE, then became Foundation Vice-Chancellor when the CCAE became the University of Canberra.

From 1990-1994 he served as Director General of Education, Queensland.

In 1994 Professor Scott was Dean of Arts, Queensland University of Technology and subsequently Professor of Public Management, Faculty of Business, QUT. Between 2009 and 2013 he was Project Director on an oral history project "Queensland Speaks" in the Centre for the Government of Queensland within the School of History, Philosophy, Religion and Classics.