

The Queensland Journal Of Labour History

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Editorial

Jeff Rickertt

As John Howard prepares to assume the leadership of world cricket, *The Queensland Journal of Labour History* continues to put runs on the board, achieving with this issue what Howard the cricket tragic never could: double figures. On the occasion of our 10th edition, we raise our bat to the many contributors and BLHA stalwarts who made this milestone possible.

Labour history is a broad field, encompassing all facets of working class experience, the economic and social relations which underscore that experience, and the industrial, political and cultural achievements of working people. This issue of the journal captures some of this diversity, while also highlighting the link between past and present. With tensions currently rising between unions and the ALP at both state and federal level, Danielle Miller offers a timely article on the relationship between Labor leaders and the Labor Party, using Queensland premiers Ryan and Gair as case studies. Readers can decide for themselves which of these giants of Queensland labour history represents the closest parallel to our current premier.

Moving to the industrial sphere, my article on the early unionising of Australia's telephonists draws attention to the particular difficulties confronting workers in service industries and Government employment. Long before the rise of call centres, these pioneers of telephony overcame bullying, sweatshop conditions and management use of sexism as a divide and rule strategy, to form a national union which was able to win significant and lasting improvements in working conditions.

If telephonists' employment relations often turned on the issue of gender, the story of Aboriginal labour in Queensland exposes some of the most vicious racism imaginable. Ros Kidd's article lays bare the decades of abuse, exploitation and theft perpetrated against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workers, often by the very authorities that were charged with responsibility for their welfare. The resulting deprivation continues to this day, for as Kidd reminds us, successive governments, including the current incumbents, have refused to repay what is lawfully owed.

In this issue we review two books, as well as the *Flames of Discontent*

segment at the Woodford Folk Festival and the recent Red Green Conference, convened jointly by the BLHA and Griffith University to examine how the labour movement can and should respond to the global climate emergency. We honour two tireless activists for peace and justice: Connie Healy and Joan Shears. And we say farewell to two comrades who died recently: Mt Isa's most famous Wobbly, Pat Mackie, and socialist and acclaimed folk singer-songwriter, Alistair Hulett.

News of the loss of two other comrades arrived as this issue went into production. Jeannie O'Connor,

communist, poet, matriarch and stalwart of the Seamen's Union of Australia Women's Committee, died in February. We are also deeply saddened by the death of Ross Laurie. A longstanding member and supporter of the BLHA, Ross was a gifted historian and teacher and a partisan of many progressive causes over the decades.

On a personal note, this is my first issue as journal co-editor with Dale Jacobsen. The journal is one of the BLHA's most important contributions to the study of labour history and I look forward to working with Dale and the BLHA community to build on what has been achieved already.

BLHA

President's Column

Greg Mallory

As I write this column full preparation is underway for the 'Red, Green and In-between conference'. I would like to thank the red-green committee (of which I am a member), Janis Bailey, Dale Jacobsen and Ross Gwyther, for all their hard work in organising what is shaping up to be a major event. I would also like to thank the sponsors

and speakers and presenters. A report of the conference is included in this issue..

AGM and BLHA Executive

A new Executive was elected at our AGM in December. We have a number of new members, a blend of youth