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### The latest issue of *Labour History* (May 2013)

This issue includes a thematic section on Labour Women and Leadership, guest edited by Jackie Dickenson, Sean Scalmer and Patricia Grimshaw. The thematic will include articles on the following topics, as well as on a number of cognate themes:

- 'A Fine and Self-Reliant Group of Women': Women's Leadership in the Female Confectioner's Union
- Authentic Leaders: Women and Leadership in Australian Unions before World War II
- Edna Ryan and Leadership in the Labour Movement: The Case of the Women's Trade Union Commission, 1976
- Ellen Mulcahy: Labour Woman Activist of a Century Ago
- Those Knights of the Pen and Pencil: Women Journalists and the Work of Cultural Leadership
- Women's Leadership in War and Reconstruction
- Zelda D'Aprano and the Politics of Gender in the Australian Labour Movement

Given the headline topic, this issue is guaranteed to have an impact well beyond the immediate field of Australian labour history.

In addition, Issue 104 includes articles and research reports on a variety of topics, including an historical study of occupational health and safety regulation and a study of Professor Joe Isaac's contribution to Australian industrial relations scholarship and policy development.

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# Editorial

Howard Guille, Ross Gwyther and Bob Russell

This issue of the journal continues to publish papers that were presented at last year's BLHA symposium, the theme of which explored living under conservative governments – the implications for trade unions, working people and the labour movement. The first paper in this issue, by Howard Guille provides an excellent overview of 1980's era Queensland, focusing on the labour legislation that was introduced by the Bjelke-Petersen governments and the effects that it had on wages and labour income. Far from being an atavistic relic from an earlier period, Guille shows how the labour legislation of this period actually prefigured aspects of the Coalition's later *Work Choices* laws.

Strikes may be made illegal and workers may be subjected to punitive fines and legal harassment, but as Barbara Webster documents, in her study of the Gladstone power station workers during the 1985 dispute, this may only drive resistance into new covert and imaginative directions. Webster's paper unearths the rich history of underground, community and symbolic resistance that accompanied the Gladstone powerhouse operatives support for and solidarity with sacked

utility workers. While Guille's paper makes reference to the importance of the SEQEB dispute and Webster's contribution examines a particular aspect of it, Ted Riethmuller provides a personal account of what it was like to be an electrical apprentice coming of age working in a Queensland power station. As in his previous contributions, Ted brings social analysis, politics and art together in a powerful short story.

We also continue our new series of contemporary interviews with union leaders on topics of current interest. In this issue, Ross Gwyther and Howard Guille interview Beth Mohle, Secretary of the Queensland Nurses Union. This union is bucking trends in membership attrition and declining sectorial density. As such it provides an instructive case study into how unions can prosper in tough political times.