**ASSLH SPECIAL GENERAL MEETING**

4.45pm, Friday 22 September 2017

Kurilpa Hall, 174 Boundary Street, West End, QLD

**MINUTES**

1. **Present**: Danny Blackman, Nikki Balnave, Frank Bongiorno, Peter Ellett, Diane Kirkby, Peter Love, Greg Mallory, Yasmin Rittau, Emma Robertson, Brian Smiddy, Ellen Smiddy, Martin Sullivan, Glenda Strachan, Lesley Synge, Rosemary Webb, Julie Kimber (chair), Carl Power (minutes)

**Apologies**: Cathy Brigden, Verity Burgmann, Phillip Deery, Nick Dyrenfurth, Jude Elton, David Faber, Rae Frances, Sarah Gregson, Ross Gwyther, Terry Irving, Julia Martínez, Anthony McLaughlin, Steven Miles, Melanie Nolan, Bobbie Oliver, Melanie Oppenheimer, David Palmer, Peter Sheldon, Kerry Taylor, Susan Tracey

1. **ASSLH’s Financial Situation**

JK reported that Monash University will not continue to help fund *Labour History* next year. This poses a significant challenge because the journal is currently running at a loss of around $20,000 per annum. The Society must decide swiftly on how best to publish and finance the journal. The Special General Meeting was called in order to canvass opinions on this and other related matters. The discussion was informal and wide-ranging. Below is a brief summary organised according to major topic.

1. **Commercial vs Independent Publishing**

JK reported that Taylor & Francis have offered a publishing contract for *Labour History*. Though the offer is a generous one, if we accept it, we will have to cut the hours of office staff substantially.

There was general agreement that ASSLH must maintain editorial control over the journal.

By itself, this does not rule out the T&F offer because it would leave all editorial decisions in ASSLH’s hands. According to FB, DK and JK (the sub-committee examining the *Labour History*’s options), the real problem with the proposal is that T&F would gain control of the journal’s production and distribution. It will decide how many issues of *Labour History* are published each year, whether it is available in hardcopy or only online, and what content, if any, will be open access. A commercial publisher like T&F is sure to lock up *Labour History* behind a paywall.

Most importantly, T&F’s proposal gives it the power to hike up our subscription rates, as it has done with other journals. *Labour History* may become too costly for many of our subscribers, both individuals and organisations. (According to DK, journal subscriptions are crippling university libraries.) Only by publishing the journal ourselves can we control subscription rates. For this reason, the sub-committee recommended that ASSLH reject the T&F offer. This recommendation gained unanimous support. However, the final decision will only be made at the AGM in December after additional options have been canvassed.

1. **Online Only**

There was lengthy discussion of whether or not *Labour History* should move to an online only model (ie no print copies). This would make publication somewhat cheaper. FB spoke of the tendency for academic journals to become e-only, especially when commercial publishers take them over.

MS, DB and several others said that they much prefer print copies of *Labour History*. ER pointed out that, reading articles online makes it difficult to get a sense of the publication as a whole. Many at the meeting thought that, if *Labour History* was e-only, we would lose a lot of our older subscribers.

LS and others suggested that we ask other publishers about how they had resolved the print/online question.

1. **Journal Ranking**

NB noted that, in academia, *Labour History*’s audience falls into two main camps: those in business schools and those in history departments. In reference to the first, she stressed the importance of *Labour History* maintaining its “A” ranking with the Australian Business Deans Council. This is something she and Greg Patmore have been looking into. PL, however, was critical of the ABDC and advised that we not try too hard to win its favour. The issue remained unresolved but led to broader discussion of the journal’s Impact Factor etc.

1. **The Creation of a Federal Newsletter**

JK proposed that the Federal Society produce a newsletter/magazine in order to help build ASSLH’s membership and provide members with value for money. The need for such a publication was generally acknowledged. DB reckoned that many people in the labour movement found *Labour History* too dense and academic for their liking. BS agreed, saying that he mostly reads the journal for its non-academic content – book reviews, historical notes, obituaries etc.

DK suggested that a newsletter include readable summaries of the main articles carried by *Labour History*. JK said that items of interest could also be drawn from ASSLH Branch publications. The need for more communication between Branches and the Federal Society was stressed by Rosemary.

ER noted that producing a newsletter on top of the journal would involve extra work and money. How would we manage it? In FB’s view, this is a separate issue to how we should publish *Labour History* since it is not a membership journal. CP warned that the cost of ASSLH membership is a token amount, not nearly enough by itself to fund a newsletter.

1. **Fundraising etc**

Several participants mentioned the need for ASSLH to raise funds, recruit new members, and renew its links to the labour movement.

1. **Close:** 6:00pm