

Keynote Addresses

The Pre-First World War British Women's Suffrage Revolt and Labour Unrest: Never the Twain Shall Meet?

Ralph Darlington

During the years immediately preceding the First World War Britain experienced social unrest on a scale beyond anything that had occurred since the first half of the nineteenth century. Despite their distinctive priorities of gender and class respectively, both the women's suffrage revolt for the vote (embracing suffragettes and suffragists) and the unprecedented labour unrest of 1910-14 (involving strikes in pursuit of higher wages, better working conditions and trade union recognition) utilised dramatic extra-parliamentary 'direct action' forms of militant struggle from below that represented a formidable challenge to the existing social and political order of Edwardian Britain. Although the two militant movements effectively co-existed side-by-side on parallel tracks, with a huge and frustrating gulf between them undermining the potential leverage and power of both, there were nonetheless some very important linkages between the struggles of women and labour that have often been missed or ignored by feminist and labour historians alike.

This presentation re-examines the historical record to deploy both new and previously utilised evidence to foreground neglected aspects of the subject, reveal fresh factual insights, and provide a more detailed than hitherto available assessment of the potential and limits of the interconnections between the women's and labour movements in this defining period of British history.

Ralph Darlington is Emeritus-elect Professor of Employment Relations at Salford Business School, University of Salford, UK. He is the author/editor of six books, including *The Dynamics of Workplace Unionism* (1991); *What's the Point of Industrial Relations? In Defence of Critical Social Science* (2009); and *Radical Unionism* (2013), as well as numerous journal articles on historical and contemporary features of industrial relations and trade unionism. He is currently researching and writing a book on *The Great Unrest 1910-1914* to be published by Pluto Press. Ralph is an editorial advisory board member of *Employee Relations*, executive board member of the International Association of Strikes and Social Conflicts, honorary member of the British Universities Industrial Relations Association, and council member of the Manchester Industrial Relations Society. His latest publication is 'The Leadership Component of Kelly's Mobilisation Theory: Contribution, Tensions, Limitations and Further Development', Profile: <https://www.salford.ac.uk/business-school/our-staff/business-academics/ralph-darlington>

Maritime Labour, Men of Power and the Dynamics of Activism

Diane Kirkby

In 1952 when the Menzies government introduced amendments to the Navigation Act 1912 the Labor Opposition argued strongly for recognition of the distinctiveness of maritime labour. That has also been a familiar theme for historians who have written of seafaring and port work as different from land-based labour, and in which (in Frank Broeze's words) 'militancy and political radicalism were inherently anchored.' This paper will assess the validity of this characterisation as it presents a labour history that integrates colonialism and imperialism, worker mobilities and unfree labour. In exploring themes of labouring and organising, masculinity and whiteness which have shaped much of Australia's labour history, the paper will consider how maritime labour brings them into a discussion of international and regional significance. It will highlight the importance of law, such as the Navigation Act, in shaping change and imposing limits on union activism.

Diane Kirkby FASSA, FAHA, is Professor of Law & Humanities, UTS, and Research Professor (Emeritus) at La Trobe University. She has written extensively on women's labour history in both the US and Australia, and has edited or authored nine books, including *Barmaids: A History of Women's Work in Pubs* (Cambridge, 1997) and most recently, *Labour History and the Coolie Question* with Sophie Loy Wilson. She won the W. K. Hancock Prize for her biography of Australia's first trained woman journalist *Alice Henry* (Cambridge, 1991) and was short-listed for the Frank Broeze Prize in Maritime History for her study of the Seamen's Union of Australia, *Voices from the Ships* (UNSW, 2008). She currently holds an Australian Research Council Linkage Project grant with the Maritime Union of Australia tracing their international connections with countries of the Asia-Pacific region, most notably India and Japan. And with Emma Robertson and Lee-Ann Monk is working on an Australian Research Council-funded project on women in non-traditional employment. Since 2016 she has been the editor of *Labour History*.

Peer Reviewed Abstracts

Safety First: The 1934 Ingham Weil's Disease Dispute

David Faber

The Weil's Disease Strikes of 1934-5 in tropical North Queensland were seminal health and safety industrial actions in the cane fields. Crowned after sustained struggle with success, they brought in the iconic practice of burning standing sugar cane to expunge vermin vectors of a debilitating and sometimes lethal disorder of human internal organs. Victory was the child of superior organization which saw dissident AWU members, many of them immigrant workers, join forces with 'British' workers and public sector medical professionals under the leadership of Communist and Anarchist activists. They have been hailed as among the great strikes of Queensland history. This paper will retrace the historiography of the dispute to discern why the strikes broke out and succeeded with the benefit of wide community support, crossing class, ethnic and gender lines, drawing lessons from the past for today's labour movement organisers. Lastly, we will explore the place of probability in historical enquiry alongside objective scientific certainty in searching after the likely role in the strike of the seminal Italian Australian Anarchist activist Francesco Giovanni Fantin (1901-42)

Keywords Strikes, North Queensland, Italian Australians, Immigrant workers, Class, Gender, Communism, Anarchism, Laborism, Racism, Medical Profession, Weil's Disease, AWU, Jean Devanny, Francesco Carmagnola, Francesco Fantin, Fred Paterson.

Safety First: The Weil's Disease Dispute, North Queensland 1934-5

"Not a struggle for wages but for life; for the living labor forces upon whose backs the tentacles of the giant sugar industry of the Northlands are fastened." (Jean Devanny, Dedication, Sugar Heaven, 1936)

Introduction

University of Adelaide historian Ron Norris¹ trained his students to begin their enquiries by reviewing the secondary literature. It was as well, he taught, to be orientated as to what researchers had previously made of the available evidence before diving into the primary sources and seeking to discover new ones. This paper is just such a review of the principal historiographical interpretations of the Weil's Disease health and safety dispute during the 1934 and 1935 cutting seasons on the tropical North Queensland Sugar Coast. The two scholars who most signally contributed to understanding of these strikes in the early 1980s were the late Diane Menghetti and Gerardo Papalia. Our method will be to construct an analytical narrative of the strikes based on their work, complemented by a diverse range of primary and secondary sources. This is a dialectical procedure which implies that the old methodological distinction between narrative and argument is unhelpful. In other words, it is contended that historians implicitly argue by narration and narrate by argument. It is a review designed to further future primary research and corroboration.

These 'Big Strikes' as they have been hailed involved a number of important practical organising precedents of contemporary significance for the challenging future which faces our national labour movement. The strikes were organised on a community wide, multicultural basis across gender lines. Indeed, North Queensland between the World Wars of the 20th century pioneered ethnic diversity in the white labour force and community. The Weil's Disease strikers drew crucially on political, literary, medical and legal expertise to sway public opinion to reinforce their industrial militancy. Industrial dissent within the AWU over the 'British Preference' race and work issue saw internationalist rank and file militants, most notably Communists and Anarchists, contest the racist tendencies of the Australian Laborism of the day, and indeed related tendencies within the CPA. Ultimately crowned after sustained struggle with success, they brought in the iconic practice of burning standing sugar cane to drive out the vermin vectors of a debilitating and all too often gruesomely lethal pathology in humans. Lastly, we will explore the place of probability in historical enquiry alongside objective scientific certainty in searching for the likely role in the strike of the seminal Italian Australian Anarchist activist Francesco Giovanni Fantin (1901-42).

As stated above, the Weil's Disease strikes have been treated of by a handful of monographs and extensively referred to by numerous general surveys of Queensland and Italian Australian history and political heterodoxy, with particular reference to Anarchism and Communism. The field was first specifically cultivated

¹ I had the good fortune in 1981 to be tutored by Norris, a craftsman-like Liverpool social democrat. Traces of his career can be consulted ab indice in Wilf Prest, ed., *Pasts Present: History at Australia's Third University* (Adelaide: Wakefield Press, 2014)

by Diane Menghetti in 1979 in the essay 'The North was Red: The CPA in North Queensland in the Era of the Common Front.' In 1981 Diane Menghetti's First Class Honours thesis *The Red North: The Popular Front in North Queensland* was also published by James Cook University, in its *Studies in North Queensland History*; it featured for our purposes chapters on the strike process, Weil's Disease and the politics on the Sugar Coast of the Popular Front political strategy on the Left. Menghetti followed these studies up in 1983 with a specific paper on 'The Weil's Disease Strike 1935', published by editor Denis Murphy in *The Big Strikes: Queensland 1889-1965* for the University of Queensland Press. Hard on the heels of her multiple contributions came Gerardo Papalia et al with the stimulating paper 'Peasant Rebels in the Canefields: Italian Migrant involvement in the 1934 and 1935 Weil's Disease Cane Cutters Strikes in Queensland', published by the Fitzroy Catholic Intercultural Resource Centre in 1985. It is submitted that the Menghetti and Papalia accounts are profitably capable of substantial reconciliation, which when enriched from a broad spectrum of other sources both primary and secondary, advance our contemporary understanding of these Depression era strikes and their significance for today and into the future. Exemplary amongst secondary sources is the evocative fictionalization of this industrial epopee by the feminist communist novelist Jean Devanny, one of the organisers of the strikes. Entitled *Sugar Heaven*, her 1936 'socialist realism'² novel, influenced by the reportage pioneered by the Czech journalist Egon Kisch, documented as 'fact in the form of fiction'³ the cross currents and elation of an 'historic'⁴ episode of mass mobilization and consensus for the Left on the Australian Sugar Coast. It was a seminal work, proudly proclaimed by Devanny with some justification in 1942 as 'the first really proletarian novel in Australia.'⁵ In addition, the riches of local history including the biographies of leftist activists are combed for primary details.

Conclusion

The struggle did indeed go on, as had been cannily predicted. The net result of these further developments was that a strike which had seen the workers forced back to work fought the forces arrayed against it to a standstill, with the objects of the industrial action being effectively obtained. The Weil's Disease dispute ultimately obtained its object latently. It had proved, as Orwell observed of the Spanish Civil War, one of those fights better lost than not fought at all. Just as the Iberian prelude to World War II was an early phase of what has been termed a global civil war, so the Weil's Disease dispute was a prelude to the cane farming practices successfully demanded by the strikers.

Dr David Faber, Adjunct Senior Lecturer Flinders University, Vice President SA Branch ASSLH

Email: davefabr@bigpond.net.au

² This variant of the term 'social realism' is employed by Carole Ferrier, perhaps to emphasise the 'ideological' or philosophical accent of the school, in her 'Jean Devanny 1894-1962' *Kotare 7 No.1 2007* p100. Drusilla Modjeska adopts the same terminology in respect of this movement in her *Exiles at Home: Australian Women Writers 1925-45* (Sydney: Sirius, 1981) p129. In fairness, it should be remarked that they appear to have adopted a term current at the time.

³ Jean Devanny *Point of Departure: The Autobiography of Jean Devanny* (St. Lucia, University of Queensland Press, 1986) p190

⁴ Devanny, *Point of Departure* ibid

⁵ Cited by Ferrier in 'Jean Devanny's Queensland Novels' *Literature in North Queensland* Vol.8 No.3 1980, p22. Ferrier dutifully observes that William Lane's *The Workingman's Paradise* might have been considered a precursor; but Devanny may well have thought that Lane's work didn't 'really' qualify in view of various limitations both political and literary.

Unauthorised stoppages in Victoria's power stations: regional labour's contribution to the Victorian Trades Hall Council Split of 1967

Naomi Farmer

Introduction

The labour history of Victoria's power producing region, the Latrobe Valley, has been understudied. In its heyday, the 1950s through to the early 1980s, the union movement in the Latrobe Valley was highly organised and assertive. The actions of Latrobe Valley unionists won rights and conditions for themselves which exceeded other workplaces and impacted labour movement campaigns and debates nationally. A 1966 strike in the region exemplifies this. Called by Latrobe Valley union officials and shop stewards, it brought them into conflict with the state-based leadership of the union movement, the Victorian Trades Hall Council (VTHC). At that time the VTHC was having increasing tensions, particularly over industrial strategy and challenges to its authority from the grassroots. The VTHC leadership were increasingly frustrated by industrial actions of shop stewards committees who operated independently of their leadership. The officials of the, soon to be expelled, rebel unions actively defended this independent organising and frequently encouraged it. Into this situation the defiance of the Latrobe Valley union bodies exacerbated these tensions and pushed the VTHC closer to its 1967 Split.

Literature Review

Studies of union actions in the Latrobe Valley are far too few. Some studies that do exist are overviews dealing with patterns of days lost to strikes, the best of which is Maxine Holden and Ricky Iverson's "Industrial Conflict: The Latrobe Valley 1960-1977". There is Benson's excellent snap shot of union members in "Shop Stewards in the Latrobe Valley" (1986). More recently Kathryn Steel has published on the Gippsland Trades and Labour Council (2007, 2012) as well as the 1977 maintenance workers strike (2011). Additionally, there is the unpublished memoir of a key Latrobe Valley union leader George Wragg.

Particularly lacking in the literature is how the actions and agitation of this regional power house impacted, and were impacted by, the broader labour movement. While the importance of the labour movement in the Latrobe Valley has been recognised, it has not been adequately examined. Strikes and agitations by power workers in the Latrobe Valley are frequently mentioned in studies of the national union movement. For example Tom Bramble's *Trade Unionism in Australia* references the Latrobe Valley workers in passing twice, once during the height of the trade union struggle against the penal powers and once as an example of key defeat in the lead up to the introduction of the Accord (Bramble 2008). By examining the history of the labour movement in the Latrobe Valley we can understand the dynamics of labour in an important regional centre, as well as the contribution made to the broader labour movement.

Method

This study will be informed by a Marxist theory of the trade union bureaucracy and the rank-and-file as outlined by Tom Bramble and Robert Bollard. I will use primary sources, the Gippsland Trades and Labour archives and the Victorian Trades Hall Council archives, as well as newspaper archives and an unpublished memoir.

Lead up the VTHC split

Cathy Brigden cast new light on the split in that council in 1967. Brigden examines the nature of/cause of the debates preceding the split between right-wing and left wing union officials, associated respectively with the Trades Hall Council leadership and the rebel unions, including the metal unions (the Amalgamated Engineering Union, Sheet Metal Workers Union, the Boilermakers and Blacksmiths and the Metal (Moulders) Union. Control over industrial disputes was one of the key, long debates: "Unable to assert control over shop committees, the THC leadership not only determined to increase the executive's capacity to intervene in and control all disputes, but also sought to absolve unions from supporting 'unauthorised' strikes.... With the largest turnout in two years, the debate took place at the 'wildest [THC] meeting in years' where, in a tight vote, the rule changes were carried by 141 votes for, to 121 against" (Brigden 2009, page 134).

This tension between what is legitimate union action, and who controls it, was the bone of contention leading to the suspension of 27 of the left wing unions from the council in 1967.

The context of the debate is the drawn out process of the Metal Trade Award Work Value Inquiry (Brigden 2009, page 168). The Latrobe Valley power stations are one of the biggest, by membership, worksites for the metal unions in the country. Union membership surpassed 90% of the workforce. (Holden 1982) Historically dominated by the Amalgamated Engineering Union (AEU) by the 1960s the power stations had long established shop stewards' committees. These organisations had a strong culture of independence. Particular tensions

existed between the Melbourne based union movement and the Latrobe Valley based union bodies, with relatively frequent disagreements arising between the two.¹

The Dispute

The dispute that will be the focus of this presentation is a strike in 1966 of power station workers and the relation this had to the VTHC.

As the THC leadership shifted to the right, the matter came to a head in 1966, with direct disobedience of the Disputes Committee during an SEC dispute... Unauthorised rank and file action took place during September 1966, prompting a letter from Secretary Jordan to unions advising that as 'any stoppage of work is contrary to the Disputes Committee decision and any action to stop work must be regarded as wilful disobedience of the Disputes Committee. (Brigden 2001, page 163-164)

In 1966 the Latrobe Valley power station workers, employees of the State Electricity Commission (SEC), were engaged in a lengthy dispute. Particularly contentious was a union demand for an increase in paid leave entitlements. The power station workers of the AEU went on strike for a week, despite the fact that the strike was not authorised by the VTHC. The VTHC directed the workers to return to work, but they refused. (GTLC archives) This 'unauthorised' industrial action exacerbated the tensions on the VTHC and contributed to the expulsion of the metal unions.

Beyond the split, the Clarrie O'Shea strikes

The workers of the Latrobe Valley continued to play a significant political and economic role during the historic nation-wide strike against the penal powers and the imprisonment of renowned unionist Clarrie O'Shea in 1969. (Wood 2013). Based as they are in strategically important industries the power strikes were an important part of bringing the state to a standstill. The day following O'Shea's imprisonment, Friday the 16th of May, power cuts started and Latrobe Valley unionists held solidarity mass meetings. These strike are also an example of high levels of solidarity in the Latrobe Valley, bringing SECV workers and contract labourers together in united action (Holden 1982, page 14).

Conclusion

The labour history of the Latrobe Valley is a history of strength and independence. What happened there had ramifications for the broader labour movement. The late 1960s were dynamic times for Australia's working class and by examining the industrial action that was happening in the Latrobe Valley and its relation to the broader labour movement this presentation will give more nuance to the important event of the Victorian Trades Hall Council split of 1967.

Naomi Farmer is a PhD candidate at Federation University, Churchill.
naomi.farmer@gmail.com

¹ For example, in 1957 the (then named) Melbourne Trades Hall Council investigated the Central Gippsland Trades Hall Council (the umbrella body for Latrobe Valley unions) for independently meeting and negotiating with the Victorian Government, outside of their remit. In 1961 a VTHC union official was censored by the VTHC for disagreeing with a VTHC disputes committee decision when speaking to a members meeting in the Latrobe Valley. In 1962 the VTHC passes a motion condemning Latrobe Valley shop stewards for going outside of their agreement. Gippsland Trades and Labour Council archives, Federation University.

A Hive Turned Upside Down

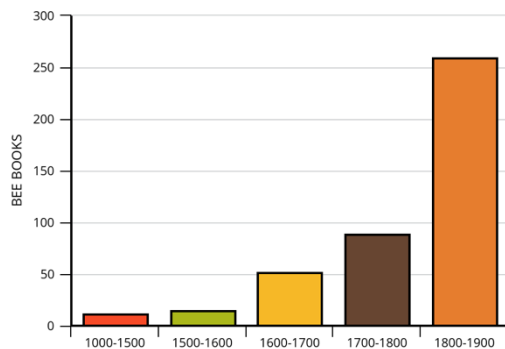
Christopher Harrington

During the Industrial Revolution the European honeybee (*Apis mellifera*) became a popular way of representing, thinking, speaking, and arguing about Britain's changing social, political and economic environment. The number of bee-books, works of natural history and entomology published on honeybees in this period quadrupled the entire body of literature on honeybees published over the previous millennia (figs.1 & 2), so that knowledge about honeybees became widely known by the commencement of the 19th century. Many of these books, such as the Society for The Diffusion of Useful Knowledge's *Insect Miscellanies* (1830), *Insect Transformations* (1830) and *Insect Architecture* (1832), and the Society for The Promotion of Christian Knowledge's *Insect Manufactures* (1847), were specifically aimed at an emerging industrial working-class readership. They came with analogies designed to naturalise the often dangerous, exploitative, and alienating working conditions in factories. Other texts, such as William Kirby and William Spence's *An Introduction to Entomology* (1816-1822) and James Duncan's *The Natural History of Bees* (1840), used the honeybee to impart paternalistic ideologies onto middle and upper-class readers while also turning to complex industrial processes to reduce the collective intelligence of honeybees to one predicated on mechanism and instinct. Lesser-studied bee-books, however, such as Robert Huish's *Treaties on the Nature, Economy, and Practical Management of Bees* (1815) and *The Natural History and General Management of Bees* (1844) came with radical allusions that spoke, I will suggest in this paper, to the honeybee's broader location in early working-class consciousness.

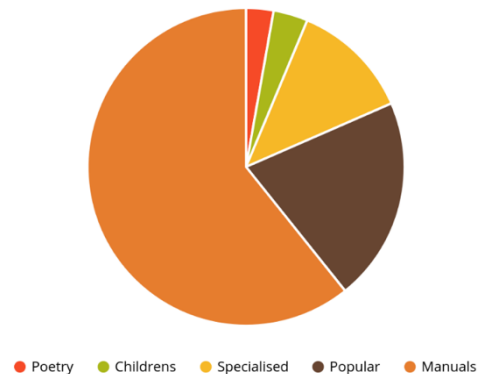
This paper, a small section from a chapter in my thesis "*Creatures Like the Bee*": *the social insect in the social problem novel (1832–1868)*, tells the story of how the popularisation of two aspects of honeybee natural history— firstly, knowledge about the working-bee's corbícula (fig.3) and, secondly, knowledge about the working-bee's coercive removal of the male drone bee before winter— fostered the establishment of an emancipatory narrative in the radical, working-class, Chartist imaginary. This narrative linked the drone bee's morphological uselessness and expulsion from the hive in nature to a demand throughout the first half of the 19th century that the human drones, Whig and Tory, be divested of parliamentary power and removed from the political hive. Closely reading the speeches, letters, cartoons, and articles composed by William Cobbett, Henry Hunt, Feargus O'Connor, Peter McDouall, "Waspy", and the "Working Bees" (fig.4), reveals the beauty, sweetness, organic solidarity, and sense of injustice the honeybee brought to early working-class consciousness. Cobbett and Hunt each used the beehive as a way of consolidating the inequalities of English society into the one derogatory image of the drone bee. The "drone" became a weapon used to attack a society built around insiderism and to defend the early participants in the Mass Platform movement from rebuke as the "mob", and "swinish multitude." The working bee became a way of transforming the working poor into the working bees, creatures whose labour was to be theatrically championed in dialogues designed to uplift, unite and foster swarm smarts. Chartist newspapers like *The Northern Star* continued the radicalisation of the beehive inaugurated by Cobbett and Hunt by situating the Charter within a "Northern Hive" in which mass meetings became "swarms", and pens signing petitions translated into "stings" designed to expel drones. The "drone" was also important in creating a figurative ambiguity that allowed physical force Chartists with a means of masking expressions of coercion and revolution. But humans, of course, are not bees. When the Charter collapsed, and infighting broke out, the bees started to sting each other while "the drones looked on and laughed at the shocking outrage."

The main theoretical sting in this paper, however, will concern asking listeners to entertain the idea of thinking about honeybees as liminal figures in the creation of modern, industrial labour identity. Honeybees, like many animals, and perhaps the category of "animality" itself, are important to the way labour identity is represented, conceptualised, debated, and canonised. This importance is borne out by jewel-beetle studies like John Bright's *Pit Ponies* (1986) as well as in Jason Hribal's strategic attempts to see animals, and particularly working animals, recognised as members of the working class. To be sure, animals can present a problem to the historical representation of labour identity in this latter respect, because an animal's lack of rights is often found to exist in dangerous proximity with the denial of a human worker's rights. But I argue that this is not only unfair to animals, it overlooks an inverse form of power that the early working class found in aligning their labour identity with that of the honeybee. While animals in general have long provided marginalised groups with a means—via the fabulist tradition— of speaking through animals to political power, honeybees have long been framed in Western culture as existing above human society. Honeybees possess a lore, a wisdom, what Charles Butler once dubbed a "common treasury." To be a bee, therefore, was not to be a small, insignificant creature but, as one anonymous Chartist claimed, it was to belong to a powerful movement intent on taking back the honey: "Yes, sir we would soon see the human hive purged of the drones that revel and fatten upon the labours of the working classes—the industrious bees, by whose assiduity and toil are filled and replenished, with honied stores of food, wealth and riches, all the various cells which constitute the great hive of human society."

Growth in English Honeybee Literature (c. 1000-1900)



Genres (1800-1900)



Figures 1 “Growth in English Honeybee Literature” & **2** “Genres (1800-1900).” These graphs are compiled from a tabulation of data found in the International Bee Research Association’s *British Bee Books: A Bibliography* (1979), Eva Crane’s *The World History of Beekeeping and Honey Hunting* (1999), and H.M Fraser’s *History of Beekeeping in Britain* (1958).

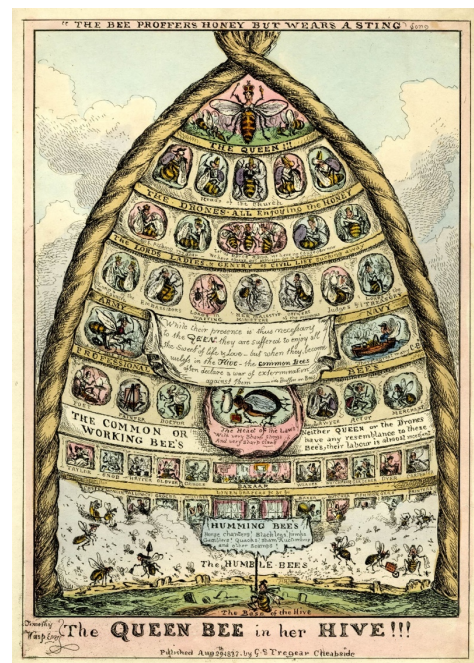
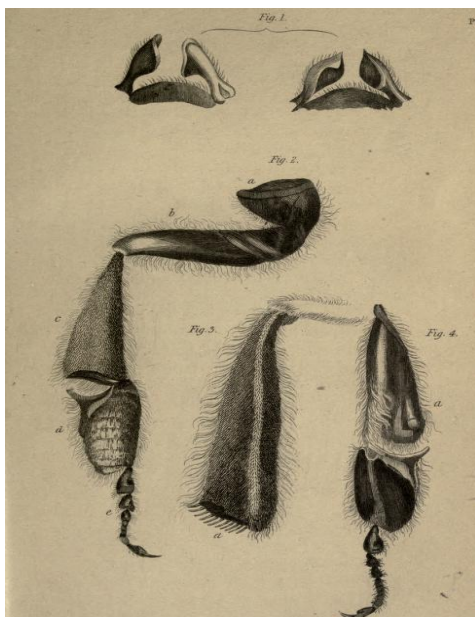


Figure 3: “Anatomic Structure of the Bee’s Leg” from James Duncan’s *Natural History of Bees* (1840). The corbicula, or pollen-basket, was one of the best-known features of honeybee morphology. Despite the limited space in works of “rational recreation,” publishers almost always made sure to include an image of it. Drone bees lack the articulated external anatomy (auricle, rastellum, dented tarsus) which constitutes the corbicula.

Figure 4: Timothy Wasp or “Waspy’s” “The Queen Bee in her Hive” (1837). Wasp’s cartoon would have most likely hung on display in the windows of G.S Tregear’s printshop on Cheapside street in London. A riot occurred outside Tregear’s shop earlier in the decade when a policeman tried to disperse a crowd of onlookers. The central banner of Waspy’s cartoon warns of the possibility of such an event (drone exterminations) occurring again on a grander scale in the future.

Christopher Harrington is a PhD candidate in the department of English at La Trobe University. His thesis is titled “*Creatures Like The Bee*”: the social insect in the social problem novel. He became interested in labour history while working in factories and studying history and literature at Victoria University in Footscray.
Email: c.harrington2@latrobe.edu.au

Unofficial Requestioning: Squatting's Place in Emergency Housing, 1946-48

Iain McIntyre

Australia suffered a housing crisis of record proportions in the years following World War Two. Brought on by a halt in dwelling construction during the peak years of the Depression and war, the problem was accelerated by military demobilisation and a spike in births. In 1944 the Australian government estimated a shortage of 200 000 dwellings, with another 82 000 considered unfit for habitation and 155 000 to be of poor quality. By the following year the deficit, not counting substandard housing, had risen to around 300 000.¹

As part of federally driven reconstruction efforts the key response was to institute a massive program of public housing development. The ability for this to meet demand in the short to medium term was hampered by the sheer scale of the shortage as well as issues related to the transition to a peacetime economy and the sourcing of materials and skilled labour. Despite concerted warnings and lobbying around the issue from veterans' groups and others, authorities were slow to respond to immediate need and reluctant to invest scant resources in providing temporary housing.²

Facing homelessness, many Australians adopted ad hoc solutions. From 1945 onwards stories emerged of families spread across separate quarters or forced to sleep in the open, live in tents and leaky shacks, and crowd ten or more into small flats and houses.³ Faced with rising public anger, authorities responded in three main ways. Wartime powers regarding the requisitioning of empty private properties were expanded and tightened by the federal Labor government and some state Labor governments also introduced new legislation.⁴ A second means was to construct prefabricated houses on government and private land. A third was to repurpose military barracks and government property.⁵

These solutions sheltered upwards of 180 000 Australian citizens, mainly during the mid to late-1940s, but in some cases up until 1960.⁶ Despite this, the history of emergency housing responses remains largely unwritten. As part of broader research concerning the topic, this paper will focus on one factor which shifted government policy whilst directly meeting need: the unofficial requisitioning of empty properties in the form of squatting. Although privately owned properties were squatted it will primarily consider a series of occupations of disused military and government properties, many of which were originally planned to be sold or used for non-housing purposes. In detailing the events of 1946 and 1947, and the context in which they took place, the paper will consider the role of communists and others linked to the labour movement.

Due to its often covert nature, the exact level of squatting is impossible to ascertain, but media reports would suggest upwards of 1000 people took part in occupations during 1946 and 1947.⁷ Although constituting a tiny proportion of the overall housing mix, squatting commanded widespread attention, with the spectre of the public taking matters into their own hands exercising much angst on the part of newspaper editors, politicians and military and housing authorities. Although the first Australian occupations began before a major wave of squatting took place in the UK, the occupation of disused military camps there by more than 45 000 people from mid-1946 onwards likely spurred the practice in Australia and concentrated efforts in response to it.⁸ At its height, federal regulations regarding requisitioning were changed to exclude military properties, orders were given to post guards at empty military properties around the country, and a special police squad was assembled

¹ Annette Saunders, *Housing the People : Victoria Park Camps 1945 to 1960* (Brisbane: Applied History Centre, Dept. of History, University of Queensland, 1999), 10-11; Rae Dufty-Jones, "A Historical Geography of Housing Crisis in Australia," *Australian Geographer* 49, no. 1 (2018): 6.

² Michael Hogan, "Postwar Emergency Housing in Sydney--the Camps That Never Were," *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society* 97, no. 1 (2011): 6-11.

³ For example see: "Family Must Live in Tent When Evicted," *Newcastle Morning Herald and Miners' Advocate*, 15 February 1945, 3; John Yeoman, "This Is Where We Found the Homeless Adrift around Sydney at Night," *Sun*, 3 March 1946, 5; "Hopeless Desperation in State's House Shortage," *Mercury*, 10 May 1946, 1.

⁴ "Owners Expected to Let Holiday Homes," *Herald*, 10 May 1946, 6; "House Law Altered to Stop 'Dummies'," *Herald*, 13 May 1946, 5; "Emergency Housing Bill Passes Assembly," *Examiner*, 16 May 1946, 5.

⁵ Hogan, "Postwar Emergency Housing in Sydney--the Camps That Never Were," 8; "Steel Houses Plan Sabotage," *Tribune*, 30 July 1946, 7.

⁶ This figure is based on combined estimates by Saunders and Hogan regarding Queensland and NSW as well as figures quoted by Saunders regarding the number of families housed in temporary quarters in Victoria. "Postwar Emergency Housing in Sydney--the Camps That Never Were," 8; Saunders, *Housing the People : Victoria Park Camps 1945 to 1960*, 20-22.

⁷ This is based on the numbers mentioned in more than 100 articles from the period. See for instance: "37 'Squatters' to Keep Homes," *Tribune*, 30 July 1946, 1; "Stowell Squatters See Deadlock," *Mercury*, 14 August 1946, 1; "Brisbane 'Squatters' Will Resist Eviction," *Daily News*, 19 September 1946, 1.

⁸ Don Watson, *Squatting in Britain 1945-1955* (London: Merlin Press, 2016), 53-73; "Sydney 'Squatters' Greet 'Squatters' in Britain," *Tribune*, 27 September 1946, 7.

in Tasmania to immediately respond to instances of squatting.⁹ Despite evictions and measures such as cutting off or denying water, power and gas being employed, authorities often rehoused squatters or legalised occupations. This eventually led to some of the properties involved being used for decades for housing.¹⁰

In addition to discussing how squatting directly resulted in specific properties being repurposed, the paper will consider the degree to which the perceived threat of informal requisitioning caused authorities to shift their overall attitude and approach towards homelessness.

Dr Iain McIntyre is the author and editor of books such as *On The Fly!: Hobo Literature and Songs, 1879-1840* (2018) and *How To Make Trouble and Influence People: Pranks, Protests, Graffiti & Political Mischief-Making from across Australia* (2009/2013). His work primarily focuses on the evolution, use and diffusion of repertoires of contention in environmental, community and labour movements as well as the role of music and other forms of culture within them. Alongside this he is currently researching the history of responses to the 1940s housing crisis in Australia.

iain.mcintyre@unimelb.edu.au

⁹ "Forte Aids 'Squatters'," *Sydney Morning Herald*, 12 September 1946, 1; "Squatters Activities Restricted," *Northern Star*, 27 July 1946, 1; "Keep Off Hint to 'Squatters'," *Sun*, 2 April 1946, 2; "Gaol Home May Get Tenant," *Daily News* 1946, 20.

¹⁰ "Moore Park Squatters Move to New Homes," *Tribune*, 6 September 1946, 7; "Squatters to Leave Stowell," *Examiner*, 10 June 1947, 5; Saunders, *Housing the People : Victoria Park Camps 1945 to 1960*, 18-22.

Rethinking the Robe River dispute

Alexis Vassiley

Introduction

In June 1986 the Robe River workforce was the most militant of the four Pilbara iron ore companies. By January 1987 union power was decimated, and hundreds of unionists had left. Work practices ensuring safety, and reduced work intensity were taken away. How did this happen?

Literature review

The Robe River dispute does not suffer from a lack of academic attention. Yet the two main pro-union accounts, by industrial relations scholar Bradon Ellem (2015a, 2015b 2015c; 2017) and economist Herb Thompson¹ (1987) inadequately explore union strategy. Ellem does not evaluate the official union or the alternative industrial strategy advocated by a minority of the workforce. Ellem also elides the distinction between union officials and the rank-and-file, grouping them together in one union “side” (2017, 88). Pilbara convenors and shop stewards’ militancy and power are recognised as an important feature of the region’s industrial relations, but this is not integrated into the account. Thompson mentions union strategy only briefly (Thompson and Smith 1987, 90). While correctly characterising the union strategy as an “out of character” “passive resistance”, he argues that unions took this course due to fear of the New Right’s legal sanctions. Thompson does not evaluate an alternative strategy and doesn’t adequately explore intra-union relations.

My approach: theory and methodology

This paper will reassess the Robe River dispute by evaluating the dominant union strategy as well as a potential alternative industrial strategy, applying an *alterfactual* approach outlined by labour historian and industrial relations scholar Ralph Darlington. This explores “... the potential for alternative courses of action taken by actors which genuinely seemed possible at the time...” (2014). The paper will be informed by the Marxist theory of the trade union bureaucracy and rank-and-file outlined by Tom Bramble (1993, 2005), Robert Tierney (2017), Robert Bollard (2007, 2010) Martin Upchurch and Ralph Darlington (2012). It contextualises the dispute in previous phases of Pilbara industrial relations, specifically the grassroots-led, localised “union power” from the mid-seventies to the time of the dispute. Drawing on industrial relations scholar John Kelly’s mobilisation theory (1998, 2018), it modifies this theory by using its framework to explain how union officials *demobilised* workers in this dispute. I use primary sources including union archives, interviews conducted during the dispute, my own interviews, and newspaper articles as well as secondary sources.

TABLE: Phases of Robe River dispute

Phase	Dates	Situation
1	31 July – 11 August	New management takes over, unilaterally abolishes long-standing agreements with unions. Workers at work. 60 workers sacked.
2	11 August – 2 September	Company locks out 1160 workers.
3	3 September – 9 December	Workers back at work. Bitter stand-off.
4	10 December 1986 – 25 January 1987.	First FEDFA and then all workers strike. Deal struck by ACTU accepted by workers on Jan 25. Union power defeated.

The dominant union strategy

The dominant union strategy centred around three poles: applications to the Industrial Commission; a public relations campaign; and governmental lobbying. Strike action was to be avoided at all costs. The aim was to portray the unions as reasonable and restrained, in contrast with the extreme actions and ideology of Peko Wallsend/Robe River and its CEO Charles Copeman. The strategy failed miserably. The Industrial Commission issued an order on only seven of the more than 200 so-called restricted work practices the company sought to remove. Appealing to the public² could not impact the company’s bottom line, nor could it install a more union-friendly government, as Labor was already in power at a State and Federal level. While these governments publically criticised the company, sometimes sharply (Taylor and Hewett 1986, 1), they never used their power to stop Robe River from operating. Taking such action would have allowed them to be portrayed as anti-business. The union bureaucracy’s no-strike at all costs policy was intimately woven into its lobbying strategy. Strikes would have undermined the Accord and strained relations between union officials and Labor ministers.

¹ With research assistant Howard Smith.

² Australian Manufacturing Workers and Shipwrights’ Union. 1986. “Notes.” File 2, ‘1985 - 1986 File Robe River Iron Associates includes correspondence, documents’ Folder 2/2, ACC 7746a/45, August 14. State Library of Western Australia: Perth.

The Accord is crucial for understanding the dynamics of this dispute. Anti-union attacks by the New Right, while outside the Accord process, cannot be separated from the Accord *context*, which undermined solidarity and prevented strikes.

The union strategy adopted is congruent with the “contingent conservatism” of the union bureaucracy (Bramble 1993, 24, 36, 39). As with the demands sought, it was in line with the union bureaucracy’s role as negotiators between capital and labour. While there was some mood to strike among Pilbara workers (Metcalf 1986, Box 1986, Haynes 2017), the rank-and-file (as organised through the Combined Union Committees) did not place enough pressure on the union bureaucracy to achieve this. The specific Pilbara industrial relations context also played a part in determining the union bureaucracy’s strategy, as the dispute provided a potential opportunity for the bureaucracy to re-assert its control of an unruly section of the union membership.

An alternative strategy

An alternative strategy would have looked to the industrial power of iron-ore workers – at Robe River and other companies. Even hostile observers offer evidence of potential support for this strategy. Hewett (1986a) wrote that “...shutting down the Pilbara would gain everybody’s attention...”, acknowledging that industrial action across the Pilbara was possible. On August 14 NSW coalminers, themselves a militant workforce and employed by Peko Wallsend, offered support to their comrades at Robe River.³ Employer groups initially viewed Peko’s tactics as risky and counter-intuitive, as did industry analysts (Smith 1986, 26). An industrial strategy may have left Peko isolated, and abandoned by other corporations. In August, Japanese shareholders made extraordinary public criticisms of the handling of the dispute (Hewett 1986b, 1). This pressure could only have intensified had indefinite interruption to supply through industrial action been a real threat.

Conclusion

The dominant narrative of the Robe River dispute is of hapless unionists at the mercy of a vicious New Right attack. Yet a close look at the evidence from the time reveals the situation was more open, with the company vulnerable and workers powerful should they have chosen to unleash the traditional Pilbara weapon of choice: the strike. The use of theories around intra-union relations and worker mobilisation helps to explain why union power was defeated, a defeat which paved the way for later de-unionisation at other iron-ore companies.

Alexis Vassiley is a PhD candidate at Curtin University, Perth. He is the co-editor of *Radical Perth, Militant Fremantle* (2nd ed, 2019, forthcoming), and has published in *Labour History* on trade union support for Aboriginal rights, and establishing trade unionism in WA’s Pilbara mining region.
alexis.vassiley@postgrad.curtin.edu.au

³ Coal Mine Workers of Pelton, Ellalong and Gretley Collieries. 1986. “Telegram to AMWSU members at Robe Robe River.” File 2, ‘1985 - 1986 File Robe River Iron Associates includes correspondence, documents’ Folder 2/2, ACC 7746a/45, August 14. State Library of Western Australia: Perth.

Non-Peer Reviewed Abstracts

Stirrers and galley slaves: the mobilisation of women working in Australian and New Zealand broadcasting in the 1970s

Jeannine Baker

This paper examines the mobilisation of women working in public service broadcasting in Australia and New Zealand in the 1970s. Two strikes instigated by women employees will be discussed – the 1973 strike by ABC television script assistants, and the 1977 strike by production secretaries at TV2 in New Zealand. The actions challenged the low status and limited career opportunities of women working in production support roles, and resulted in improved wages and conditions. They also tested the predominantly masculine culture and gender discrimination within the unions representing public broadcasting staff, which did little to support women workers. The industrial disputes are little known today, despite their significance in the history of women's labour in the media, and their impact on entrenched structural discrimination and the sexual division of labour. This paper analyses these two strikes and their ramifications for the status of women working in television production, within the context of gendered labour in public broadcasting more broadly. It argues that although the strikes resulted in short term gains, production support roles continued to be undervalued as long as positions remained feminised.

Dr Jeannine Baker is a postdoctoral research fellow in the Department of Media, Music, Communication and Cultural Studies at Macquarie University. She researches the history of women's labour in the Australian media industries. Jeannine is the author of *Australian Women War Reporters: Boer War to Vietnam* (2015). With Kate Murphy and Kristin Skoog, she co-edited the 'Transnational Broadcasting' issue of *Feminist Media Histories* (2019), and in 2018 she co-edited (with Kate Murphy) the '100 Voices that Made the BBC: Pioneering Women' website for the BBC and the University of Sussex.

Email: jeannine.baker@mq.edu.au

Leveraged networking: case study of a Labor woman in a challenging social, economic and political environment

Terence W Beed

In the turbulent years between 1924 and 1935 a humble nurse became an important figure in the labour movement of inner Sydney. Olive Angermunde overcame personal adversity to perform an outstanding organizing role in political, justice and pacifist causes of the day. In this capacity she mingled with and befriended many leading ALP politicians of the day, including Federal Treasurer Ted Theodore, Senators Arthur Rae and John B Dooley and Joseph Lamaro, MLA. She built high value networks through these endeavours and turned them into fund-raising platforms for benevolent causes. Her untiring commitment to these causes attracted much public attention and resulted in a trail of press citations that testify to this woman's mastery of leveraged networking and communication. A content analysis based on over 200 citations sheds some light on her achievements as an agent of change in a critical era of Australia's economic and social history. She served as an organizer for Workers International Relief; became a Justice of the Peace in 1927 and lobbied Labor politicians for admission of women to juries in New South Wales; and was at the centre of women's committees in the inner city branches of the ALP. She ran her own program on Radio 2KY, penned a number of articles for the *Labor Daily* and addressed ANZAC Day rallies in support of those opposed to war and fascism. In the years of the Great Depression, her merciful support of women and young mothers left destitute with infant families and out-of-work husbands earned her the accolade "Newtown's Noble Woman".

Terence Beed is Senior Research Fellow at the Law and Justice Foundation of New South Wales, a former Associate Dean of the University of Sydney Faculty of Economics and a member of the academic staff of the University of Sydney Business School where he was most recently an Honorary Associate Professor until April 2019.

terry.beed@gmail.com

'Our Side of the Story': The Political Memoirs of the Rudd - Gillard Labor Cabinet.

Joshua Black

Though commercially prolific, political memoirs and diaries are often quickly dismissed as an exercise in personal profiteering or egotism. Such dismissals are problematic because they do not recognise the broader spectrum of authorial intent motivating former Cabinet ministers, nor do they consider the importance of political and historical context. This paper examines the historiographical efforts of Rudd – Gillard Labor ex-Ministers, who have used political memoirs and diaries to tackle the hostile narratives that abound about their government. In it, I consider the political and historical context in which these ministers governed, a context chiefly characterised by a hostile media environment and a dominant anti-Labor discourse. I then examine the ways that these political memoirs “set the record straight”, including: (1) exposing media bias; (2) challenging the public’s pro-Howard nostalgia; (3) educating the readership about government and cabinet; (4) and repackaging their origin stories to connect with the reader. This paper, though briefly dealing with the commercial and critical success of these texts, is predominantly focussed on examining the purpose and intentionality behind these memoirs, and their implications for labour history.

Joshua Black is a postgraduate student in political history at the National Centre of Biography at ANU. Hailing from Sydney’s southwest, he completed his B.A. at the University of Wollongong on the New South Wales coast (2015 – 2017). His Honours thesis (2018), entitled ‘For What Purpose?: The Political Memoirs and Diaries of the Rudd – Gillard Labor Cabinet’, investigated the relatively unexplored field of political memoirs and their position in Australian political historiography. He has also worked in the field of Higher Education equity and support, with experience in advocating for the diversification of student populations, and the progressive nature of technology use in pedagogical practice.

Joshua.Black@anu.edu.au

The Labour Movement and the Struggle for Justice Against Aboriginal Deaths in Custody

Ethan Blue

This paper draws on the archives of the Deaths in Custody Watch Committee of Western Australia to argue that in the late-20th and early- 21st century, members of Perth’s globally-conscious, and locally-active trade union movement were crucial allies in the struggle for justice against Aboriginal Deaths in Custody. Working at the intersection of labor history and Indigenous histories, the paper analyses the radical imagination and the means of political praxis in challenging racial capitalism and settler colonialism’s deadly systems of punishment as inflicted—though quite differently—on Western Australia’s Indigenous peoples (who are also workers) as well as its exploited settler working classes.

Ethan Blue, Senior Lecturer in History at the University of Western Australia, is the author of *Doing Time in the Depression: Everyday Life in Texas and California Prisons* (2012) and co-author of *Engineering and War: Militarism, Ethics, Institutions, Alternatives* (2013). His work has appeared in *Pacific Historical Review*, *Journal of Social History*, *Radical History Review*, *National Identities*, and *Law, Culture and the Humanities*, among other venues. His research focuses on critical prison studies, broadly conceived, in settler-colonial societies. He is currently pursuing two major research projects. One is on US deportation trains and the origins of American mass deportation; the other is a history of the First Nations Deaths in Custody Watch Committee of Western Australia.

ethan.blue@uwa.edu.au

Sir John Crawford and the Transformation of Australian Political Economy

Frank Bongiorno

The 1970s are now widely treated a critical decade in the decline of the 'Deakinite' or 'Australian' Settlement, as many of the forms of state intervention that had underpinned twentieth-century political economy came under attack. The period also saw the end of the long boom, the emergence of stagflation, and the decline of Keynesian economic policy. This paper will explore the role of Sir John Crawford to these changes. Educated as an agricultural economist in the 1930s and first making his national mark in the era of war and post-war reconstruction, Crawford was one of Australia's leading public servants in the 1950s before moving to the Australian National University. But in the 1970s, he led, or was substantially involved in, a number of

government enquiries into various aspects of Australian labour and industry. This paper will trace his responses to the challenges posed by troubled times, a study that has the potential to contribute nuance to our understanding of the decline of the old order and the rise of the so-called economic rationalism of the 1980s.

Frank Bongiorno teaches history at the Australian National University where he is Head of the School of History. He is President of the Canberra Region Branch of the Australian Society for the Study of Labour History.

frank.bongiorno@anu.edu.au

Theatre, Culture and Activism at Perth Trades Hall.

Grace Brooks

Whilst there does currently exist a small amount of literature relating to the ownership and initial use of Perth Trades Hall, there remains little writing in the areas where Trades Hall contributed both to radical culture and activism within the Perth labour movement between the years 1912-1985. My paper will be exploring the role of culture and theatre at Perth Trades Hall, given the considerable evidence that the building (and Unity Theatre in particular) was a hub for entertainment purposes and hosted singers, magicians and show pictures. This would be a consistent trend, as into the 1960s and 1970s the Trades Hall Social Club arranged for union members to see a variety of musicals and movies, often with left-wing themes. Trades Hall would also play a considerable role as a centre for political organising and activism, particularly regarding the women's movement, anti-conscription movement and Indigenous land rights movements. This paper will be drawing on a combination of archival sources, oral histories and existing literature. Overall, there are many aspects regarding the history of Perth Trades Hall, and its contribution to radical culture and activism, that are worth exploring and discussing in the present day, given that the building is once again serving the Perth labour movement.

Grace Brooks is a third year History student at Curtin University, with an interest in labour history. She has previously been published in Cactus Journal, a periodic art and visual culture journal based in Perth.

grace.brooks81@gmail.com

'Turtles and Teamsters Together? Trade Unions and the Anti-Corporate Globalization Movement'

Verity Burgmann

In recent years, far-right populist demagogues have attempted to exploit legitimate working-class discontent with neoliberal globalization with xenophobic, racist scapegoating of other victims of neoliberal globalization. In stark contrast, only two decades ago, a vibrant, left-wing movement (known as the anti-capitalist, anti-corporate, global justice or simply anti-globalization movement) was seriously challenging globalization with a critique consistent with internationalism and working-class solidarity across national borders. Where was labour in this important *fin de siècle* movement? Did unions participate in its blockades of the citadels of corporate power, such as meetings of the World Trade Organization? Evidence from case-studies of four anti-corporate mobilizations (Seattle, November-December 1999; Melbourne, September 2000; Québec City, April 2001; and Genoa, July 2001) suggests strong working-class involvement, especially of white-collar workers from the public sector, and important contributions from union activists and particular radical unions as organizations. However, union officials often preferred union contingents keep a safe distance from centres of action. Significant conflicts were apparent within unions between class-conscious activists, who wished to embrace the impressive anti-corporate movement, and more conservative officials. This ambivalence confirms the truism of union movement scholarship delineated by Richard Hyman, Perry Anderson, Ralph Darlington, and others: the existence of the "universal tension" between the contradictory elements of "movement" and "organization." Such prevarication did not present the union movement in the best possible light to workers aggrieved at the effects of globalization. Did the hesitant role played by unions in anti-corporate campaigns contribute to union decline and prepare the ground for right-wing populist opposition to globalization? Was this a lost moment for labour?

Verity Burgmann is Adjunct Professor of Political Science in the School of Social Sciences at Monash University and Honorary Fellow in the eScholarship Research Centre at the University of Melbourne, where she is Director of the Reason in Revolt project (www.reasoninrevolt.net.au) currently supported by the Melbourne Branch of the ASSLH.

vnb@unimelb.edu.au

“Let’s leave pessimism for better times”: Amedeo Bertolo’s anarchism and some notes for a history of the Italian anarchist movement since WWII.

Fausto Butta

In September 1962, 21-year old Amedeo Bertolo was one of the three Italian anarchists who kidnapped the Spanish vice-console in Milan. Their deed was a political retaliation against the death penalty imposed on a Spanish anarchist by Franco’s fascist dictatorship. Two months later, the trial against Bertolo and his comrades attracted much publicity, bringing international attention to the issue of political repression in Franco’s Spain. The Italian anarchists received the minimum sentence, as the judge acknowledged they had acted for reasons of “high moral and social value”. Eventually, the death penalty for the Spanish anarchist was turned into a life sentence. This episode became a turning point for Bertolo, whose activism as an anarchist thinker and publisher spanned for over 50 years, until he died in 2016. This paper explores his life and, particularly, his political thought. Bertolo published extensively and was at the centre of an international anarchist network of publishing houses, journals, and groups. This paper will shed light on Bertolo’s main ideas and activities, and by doing so it will present an overview of the Italian anarchist movement after World War Two, as his public life intertwined with the history of the Italian anarchist movement in the second half of the 20th century.

Dr Fausto Butta is an Honorary Research Fellow at The University of Western Australia where he teaches Italian and History. Fausto also teaches History at Curtin University. He has published books (2015 and 2016) and articles (2008-2017) on the history and philosophy of Italian and Milanese anarchism before Fascism. Fausto is now researching the Italian anarchist movement, particularly its publishing activities, in the second post-war period.

fausto.butta@uwa.edu.au

The 100th Anniversary of the Limerick Soviet: National Struggle and Class War.

Phil Chilton

In April 1919 a general strike was called in Limerick City. The strike was in response to the imposition of martial law by the British military authorities. Ireland’s war of independence was escalating and workers in Limerick were determined to challenge British control. The workers quickly established committees to oversee food supplies, gas, electricity, finance and propaganda. The Limerick Trades Council began to be referred to as the ‘Soviet’, a term willingly adopted by the workers. The history of the Limerick Soviet, if it is not ignored, is sometimes subsumed into the national struggle that took place in Ireland in the years 1919 to 1921. While the ‘Soviet’ was part of that effort it also represented a radical alternative to the Ireland that was being proposed by the leaders of Sinn Féin. Instead of a bourgeois democratic Ireland the spectre of James Connolly’s workers’ republic loomed. The Limerick Soviet should be understood not just in terms of the nationalist struggle but also in terms of the underlying class antagonisms that existed in Ireland. The proposed presentation will explore the events surrounding the Limerick Soviet and, one hundred years on, it will examine the legacies left behind for contemporary labour history scholars and movement activists.

Dr Phil Chilton is an historian teaching at Curtin University. He completed a Doctor of Philosophy at the University of Western Australia in 2014. The thesis was entitled, *Claiming Connolly: the legacy of James Connolly and Irish Republicanism, 1966-2005*. He is the author of “Armed Struggle, Peace Process and Parliamentarism: James Connolly and the Changing Politics of Provisional Republicanism”, *Australian Journal of Politics & History*, December 2015, Vol.61 (4). Phil is also active in the Australian Trade Union Movement.

philip.chilton@curtin.edu.au

“Show-and-tell”: A short history of the ACT Left Caucus

Osmond Chiu

It is an oft-repeated claim that factions are running the Australian Labor Party but there is little understanding of how these factions developed despite their pivotal role in the operation of the party. The federal nature of the Labor Party means power lies in the state branches and that the national factions are in fact heterogeneous alliances of state-based Labor factions. Even the different histories of state-based factions that form part of the same national faction are not well understood by those within the party. This paper will examine the origins and history of the ACT Left Caucus. Understanding the rationale for formation of the ACT Left Caucus and its

history of ACT Labor will show how that state-based Labor factions, that are aligned nationally, are primarily shaped by local factors and individuals.

Osmond Chiu is Senior Policy and Research Officer at the Community and Public Sector Union (PSU Group). He has been an editor of the ALP Left magazine *Challenge* and Secretary of the New South Wales Fabians. He is currently a member of the NSW Socialist Left and was previously a member of the ACT Left Caucus.
o.f.chiu@gmail.com

A Tale of Two Shop Committees: the Newport Railway Workshops and the Williamstown Naval Dockyard

Llanon Davis

Inter-union shop committees were a vital source of organisation on the shop floor in the metal manufacturing workshops throughout much of the twentieth century. This paper takes a comparative view of the inter-union shop committees at the Newport Railway Workshops and the Williamstown Naval Dockyard. It examines the formation of each, the principle actors and the struggles it took to establish them. In the railway workshops, the Communist Party (CPA) played a central role in building these committees during the 1930s. The process involved an internal struggle within the Australian Railways Union (ARU), with a left-wing challenge from below that ultimately transformed the ARU. These struggles established the shop committees as independent sources of militant leadership and a base for the radical left. They played a critical role in key union battles during the post-World War II strike wave of 1945-47. In comparison, the Williamstown Naval Dockyard inter-union shop committee formed under less combative circumstances and was not involved in the post-war strikes. Consequently, it was organisationally weaker and briefly fell under Grouper control. The situation changed when CPA militants regained leadership of the committee and mobilised dockyard workers in a campaign over their log of claims, culminating in a two month strike in 1955.

Llanon Davis is a PhD candidate in History at La Trobe University. His research examines the shop committee movement within the metal trades unions in Victoria, with special focus on the combined unions shop committees in the railway workshops and the Williamstown Naval Dockyard.
llanon.davis@gmail.com

International activism and the struggle to save the Rosenbergs

Phillip Deery

Charged with conspiracy to commit espionage, Julius and Ethel Rosenberg were arrested in mid-1950 and electrocuted in mid-1953. Before their executions, a major international campaign to save the Rosenbergs was waged throughout 1952 and 1953. Transnational solidarity had been expressed before and would be again, but not with such raw passion. If it were simply directives from Moscow or expressions of support between Anglophone communist parties, this solidarity might be less remarkable. Although communist parties in all countries played a significant, if belated, role in mobilising support in each country, it was in fact a non-communist Left organisation, the National Committee to Secure Justice in the Rosenberg Case (NCSJRC), that spearheaded the protest movement and generated international solidarity. After examining the NCSJRC, the paper will focus on transatlantic and transpacific exchanges: the French protest movement and, more fully, the Australian clemency campaign. It will argue that the various “Save the Rosenbergs” committees, triggered by the NCSJRC, arose prior to and largely independent from official Communist Party involvement or Moscow’s influence, instead communicating directly with New York. Such international solidarity by the Left failed in its ultimate objectives – clemency or a retrial – but revealed the scope and potential of global mobilisation by the Left outside the Cold War straitjacket of the early 1950s.

Phillip Deery is Emeritus Professor of History at Victoria University, where he was Director of Research and Research Training in the College of Arts. He is an internationally recognised scholar in the field of Cold War studies, specialising in the social and political impact of the Cold War in Australia, Great Britain and the United States. He is also a specialist in Australian communist and labour history. His books examining the Cold War are *Red Apple: Communism and McCarthyism in Cold War New York* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2014, 2016), *The Age of McCarthyism: A Brief History with Documents, Third Edition* (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin’s, 2016) with Ellen Schrecker, and *Espionage and Betrayal: Behind the Scenes of the Cold War* (Milan: Feltrinelli Press, 2011) with Mario Del Pero. His books examining Australian labour history include *Labour in Conflict: the 1949 Coal Strike* (Sydney, 1978), and the co-edited (with Julie Kimber) *Fighting Against War:*

Peace Activism in the Twentieth Century (Melbourne, 2015). He has also published over 100 articles and book chapters in the fields of communism, espionage and the Cold War.

Phillip.Deery@vu.edu.au

The trauma and tragedy of a Cold War defection: Evdokia Petrov

Julie Kimber and Phillip Deery

In both popular memory and historiographical emphasis, Evdokia Petrov has been regarded as less important than her husband. Notwithstanding the global spotlight focusing on dramatic scenes at Mascot airport where, minus her shoe, Evdokia was forcibly escorted across the tarmac by two burly Soviet couriers, Vladimir Petrov is customarily cast as the principal player. He decided to defect; she dutifully followed. He was a KGB colonel and *rezident*; she was a secretary and cipher clerk. His testimony before the Royal Commission on Espionage confirmed Venona's evidence of spies within Dr Evatt's Department of External Affairs; her testimony was reported in terms of her attractive appearance and her emotional responses. This paper – a work in progress – seeks to restore Evdokia's agency and her historical significance. It suggests that, ultimately, ASIO and MI6 valued the intelligence she provided as more reliable and more vital than that of her husband. Despite this, her post-defection life was fraught and full of regret. She was estranged from her beloved Russia, fearful for her family and targeted for assassination.

Julie Kimber teaches history and politics at Swinburne University. She is the federal secretary of the Australia Society for the Study of Labour History and the co-editor of the *Journal of Australian Studies*.

Phillip.Deery@vu.edu.au

Jkimber@swin.edu.au

'Time is Money' vs 'The Right to be Lazy'

Tim Dymond

The earliest slogan of the labour movement was 'eight hours work, eight hours pay, eight hours sleep'. Reducing work hours in the day, the week, and the year was once considered as important as increasing pay for those hours. However, the 'common sense' perception of the working week has appeared to settle at around 38-40 hours for five days, with a two day weekend. Australia's underemployment crisis is framed as people saying they would prefer to work 'more hours', when it is really a crisis of people not being paid sufficiently for the work they do. While we joke that nobody dies saying 'I wish I had spent more time at the office' - political debates valorise work for its own sake in slogans such as, 'the right to work', or 'a fair go for those who have a go'. This paper examines the history of advocacy for reduced working hours by the labour movement - a long term goal that keeps slipping from its immediate agenda. A key reason is unionism's focus on organising at the point of production - which makes it hard to 'see' the world beyond work.

Dr Tim Dymond is the Organising and Strategic Research Officer at UnionsWA, the peak union body for Western Australia, a position he has held for eight years. In this role, Tim composes submissions for various enquiries, including the productivity inquiry and prepares the State wage case. He is a member of the Australians Services Union. He has PhD in History from the University of WA. His views are his own

[timdy @hotmail.com](mailto:timdy@hotmail.com)

Geographies of Labour History

Bradon Ellem

Historians understand very well that 'regions' and, more generally, places do not stay the same over time. Similarly, it is well understood that the meanings attached to a place can be contested not just over time but at any one time. In labour history, the 'union town' and the 'company town' are only the most obvious of such competing meanings. For all this, in much historical writing, regions or towns are dealt with as merely the stage on which the real historical action unfolds. In contrast, for economic geographers, this separation of the social and the spatial makes no sense. They see all social structures and relationships as being necessarily spatial too. Drawing on economic geography helps us to understand the history of regions in fresh ways, thinking about: how capital has transformed places through sites of production; why supposedly 'peripheries' have been central to globalisation; how labour has remade the landscape of capitalism. The focus of this paper is on explaining

how these conceptual approaches bear on labour history in general terms but I also illustrate them with reference to the struggles of trade unionism over 50 years of mining iron ore for export in the Pilbara.

Bradon Ellem is a Professor of Employment Relations at the University of Sydney and Co-Editor of the *Journal of Industrial Relations*. His most recent book is a history of industrial relations in iron ore, *The Pilbara: From the Deserts Profits Come* (UWA Publishing, 2017)
bradon.ellem@sydney.edu.au

Footy and the Long 1960s

Alex Ettling

Australian Rules football has been historically portrayed as apolitical. Whilst recent forays into progressive issues by league's head office has marked a shift in managerial attitudes, football has always been a site of class antagonism. In recent times figures like American footballer Colin Kaepernick have played a prominent role in transnational social movements. The celebrity of athletes in the entertainment market provides an opening for sports stars to make impactful contributions to political campaigns. Contemporary examples of this phenomena in Australia are relatively minor, a situation perhaps explained by the prolonged period of low class struggle. But this then raises the question of how one of the country's most popular sports was impacted during the last great upsurge in Australian society?

Currently, I'm researching the relationship between Australian Rules football and the political left, particularly between 1956 and 1996. This paper will document some of my research findings around the period of the sixties upsurge. This encompasses the politicisation of footy players, examples of athlete's participation in activism and the rise of the VFL Players Association. I will also present a case study of when an activist attempted to engage an athlete in opposing the Vietnam War, and some other curious instances when the worlds of footy and activism collided. This paper will touch on the role of football in the lives of some notable sixties activists, and provide examples of the ways that football culture intersected with social change of the Long 1960s, contributing to the re-shaping of the Australia we live in today.

Alex Ettling is an activist and researcher whose current work is focused on the interaction between culture and the organised Left. His particular interests in this area include booze, stand-up comedy, footy, and graphic design.
alexettling@gmail.com

The Campaign to Defend Native Rights, 1946-1949

Nick Everett

Launched on May Day, 1946, the Pilbara Strike was the longest recorded strike in Australian history, lasting three years. The strikers' demands were straightforward: a 30 shilling per week minimum wage, the right to elect their own representatives and freedom of movement. However, Pilbara's Aboriginal workforce defied not only the pastoral station owners by demanding better wages and conditions, but directly challenged laws that controlled every aspect of Aboriginal people's lives. The Pilbara station hands' struggle inspired a national campaign for Aboriginal rights, spearheaded in Perth by the Committee for the Defence of Native Rights (CDNR). Initiated by the Australian Communist Party, the CDNR involved ALP members, trade unionists, Noongar activists, Quakers and many others. The CDNR mounted a legal defence of gaoled strikers and their supporters, appealed for support from international human rights organisations and raised funds to help sustain the strike. Perhaps most significantly, the CDNR attained support from the Seamen's Union, which imposed industrial bans on wool exports from Port Hedland to apply pressure on station owners. This paper will argue that the CDNR's strong relationship with Communist-led West Australian trades unions assisted the Pilbara station hands win not only industrial gains, but political and civil rights.

Nick Everett is a learning advisor and sessional academic at Murdoch University. In 2016, Nick completed a Masters of Human Rights at Curtin University with a research focus on the Pilbara Strike, the Communist Party and the struggle for Aboriginal rights.
nick.everett@murdoch.edu.au

Violence on the waterfront: Chinese seamen at Fremantle during World War 2.

Charlie Fox

Within the space of one month in early 1942, four Chinese seamen were killed on the Fremantle waterfront, two by Australian troops stationed on the wharf and two by Dutch troops from a nearby minesweeper. Their crimes were to take part in industrial action on their ships, which had sought refuge in Fremantle from attacks by Japanese warships. The killings were kept from the public by a heavy veil of wartime censorship, although details of an inquest into the first two deaths were released to the press.

This paper will discuss the historiographical contexts of the killings, the competing accounts of immediate causes, the short-term consequences for relations between Australia and China, and the implication of the killings for changes to Australian laws affecting Chinese seamen.

Charlie Fox taught Australian history at both the University of Melbourne and the University of Western Australia before retiring in 2011. His major historical interests have been in the history of work, unemployment, intellectual disability and Australian radicalism. His latest publication is *Radical Perth, Militant Fremantle*, (2017, reprinted 2019) which he put together with Bobbie Oliver and Lenore Layman. Still teaching from time to time, he now takes occasional radical Perth and Radical Fremantle walking tours. charlie.fox@uwa.edu.au

“Smash the fash!”: Fascism and anti-fascism in Melbourne in the 1990s

Vashti Fox

There was an upsurge of fascist and anti-fascist activity in Australia in the early part of the twentieth century and such movements have received sustained historical attention. Yet one could be forgiven for concluding that such phenomena disappeared in the post war period. Scholarly historical coverage of the fascisms and anti-fascisms of the latter part of the twentieth century have been minimal and this paper seeks to explore this lacunae. I will focus on the anti-fascist activism in Melbourne in the 1990s directed against the fascist group National Action (NA). I will introduce two coalitions of far left and anti-racist activists that coalesced during this period and explore, through interviews conducted and an examination of their newspapers and internal discussion bulletins, their politics, their strategies and tactics. Such an exploration will seek to reveal the continuities from a pre-war anti-fascist tradition and the post war context.

Vashti Fox is currently enrolled in a PhD at The University of Western Australia in the History Department. She is writing on anti-fascism in Australia from the 1970s onwards. She is also an antifascist activist (formerly from Melbourne). vashtijane@gmail.com

Sex trafficking, labour migration and the state'

Rae Frances

In 2014 the Commonwealth of Australia finalised a National Action Plan to Combat Human Trafficking and Slavery. This was the outcome of a project to join a whole-of-Commonwealth Government response together with close coordination with State governments, NGO's and sex worker organisations. This paper examines the evolution of this approach in the first decades of the twenty-first century and places these developments in the context of the longer history of sex trafficking and labour migration in Australia. It also examines the theoretical/political assumptions that underpinned this approach and contrasts the Australian approach with that adopted in the United States, where the moral basis of the campaign against trafficking was firmly linked with the 'war on terror'.

Professor Rae Frances FASSA is Dean and Professor of History in the College of Arts and Social Sciences at the Australian National University, Canberra. rae.frances@anu.edu.au

The socialist harmonies of Robert Owen and the Owenites

Rhianne Grieve

The ideal of harmony was critical to socialist thinkers in eighteenth and nineteenth-century Britain. Socialists of this era drew upon classical, theological, and scientific precedents in their attempts to create and define 'new moral worlds'. This paper will explore how Robert Owen and the Owenites incorporated various conceptions of harmony into the social, political, and theological dimensions of their proposed societies.

While it is long established that Owen and his followers shared concerns about the fragmented and self-interested nature of commercial activities, this paper seeks to demonstrate that their model societies contained significant and underexplored differences. By interrogating how they aimed at the attainment of harmony, I will shed new light on the divergent aesthetic, spiritual, and social dimensions of the Owenite communities, and in turn, examine what these divisions meant for principles of equality, co-operation, and community during this early period of British socialism.

Rhianne Grieve holds a BA/LLB (Hons) from the University of Technology, Sydney and an MPhil in Political Thought and Intellectual History at the University of Cambridge. She is undertaking her PhD in History at the Australian National University and researching conceptions of harmony in late eighteenth and early nineteenth century British socialist thought.

rhianne.grieve@anu.edu.au

Finding Freedom, Refusing to Forget: Nitty Scott and a New Black Feminism

Fran Haynes

Since 2016, New York-based rap artist Nitty Scott has explored the concept of liberation in her musical productions. Scott's conceptualisations of liberation, communicated through her music, are frequently addressed in relation to her multiple identities as a queer, feminist, Afro-Latinx woman, and member of the Puerto Rican diaspora in the US. Her music productions convey her desire for personal and political liberation in relation to notions of culture, identity and history, with an emphasis on the decolonisation of diasporas from the Global South.

This paper will explore the results of the application of Joan Morgan's "politics of pleasure" reading method to a sample of Nitty Scott's lyric productions from her 2017 album *Creature!* The paper will discuss how the artist extends the limits of prior black feminist traditions, to account for multiple, relational experiences of culture and ethnicity, and colonialism and diaspora, from a radical 21st century feminist perspective.

Fran Haynes is a PhD Candidate at Edith Cowan University (WA). She has a passionate interest in the role of music in radical politics and is a former secondary English and Humanities teacher. Her research interests span hip-hop studies, black feminism, Native American critical theory, and negritude / Black internationalist critical traditions.

fchaynes@our.ecu.edu.au

"The cook, the thief, the spy and her lover: the Perth Workers' Art Guild."

Dylan Hyde

My book on the Perth Workers' Art Guild (a political, arts and theatre movement extant from 1935 until 1942) is to be published on 1 October. Its narrative takes in the personal and political life of the writer and Guild founder, Katharine Susannah Prichard, as well as the arc of the West Australian Communist Party and the intelligence arms shadowing the Party. The cultural venture of the Perth Workers' Art Guild was both hailed and damned in 1930s Perth. The Guild concentrated mainly on left-wing theatrical production but it also provided instruction in fine arts, writing, music and dance to its mixed-class membership. Its left-wing plays were progressive and propagandist; the performance aesthetic was experimental and unorthodox. Despite initial public outcry about the Guild's political bent, it rapidly became Perth's pre-eminent theatre company. The influence of the Communist Party on the Workers' Art Guild intensified from 1939 and the upheavals of war led to the Guild's demise in 1942. It is this story, as well as its genesis and writing, that I discuss in my conference paper.

Dylan Hyde is the author of *Art Was Their Weapon: The History of the Perth Workers' Art Guild* (Fremantle Press, 2019) and "'We present this play not for your entertainment but for your chastening', The Workers' Art Guild, 1935-1942", *Papers in Labour History* (Australian Society for the Study of Labour History, No.18 March 1997)

dylanh@westnet.com.au

The 1940 Coal Strike

Lian Jenvey

Traditional historical narratives of Australia during WW2 emphasise the domestic war effort as a time of national unity and solidarity. However, closer examination of key wartime industries such as coal, reveal significant unrest. In the words of Justice Davidson (head of the 1946 Royal Commission into the coal industry), the coal miners were "using their greater industrial strength and bargaining power during the war as a means of retaliating on the owners for real or imaginary rebuffs, believed to have been received from the latter during the depression."

This paper will focus the 1940 coal strike for a uniform 40 hour week for all coal field workers. This strike is significant as it was a national strike on all Australian coalfields covered by the Australasian Coal and Shale Employees' Federation and was a major confrontation between the union, colliery owners and the Menzies government. The strike presaged ongoing industrial conflict on the coalfields that dogged both the Menzies and then Curtin, Labor government throughout the war.

Lian Jenvey is a sessional academic and PhD candidate at Murdoch University. She is currently on the executive of the ASSLH, Perth branch.

lian.jenvey@gmail.com

Meatworkers' Union Blockade of the Hamilton Wharf, 17 October 1978: When the live export fight came to Brisbane

Marjorie Jerrard

On 17 October 1978, live cattle export was at the centre of an AMIEU blockade of the BHP wharf at Hamilton, Brisbane, where meatworkers were attempting to stop pastoral agent, Elders, shipping cattle to Japan in breach of a union-negotiated ratio. What had been organised as a peaceful protest for early morning soon became one where the police were 'batoning' meatworkers and making arrests. The media coverage was divided in terms of the photographs of police engaging in acts of violence (e.g. the *Courier Mail* 18 October 1978, the *Brisbane Telegraph* 17 October 1978) and the outcome of this violence while the accompanying articles blamed the meatworkers for initiating the violence. From correspondence between the Australasian Meat Industry Employees' Union (AMIEU) State Secretary and the Secretary of the Police Union, the meatworkers had clearly not initiated the violence, as was supported by the media photographs. The blockade also attracted Parliamentary attention: on the afternoon of the blockade, Queensland National Party Member for [Mourilyan](#), Mrs Vicky Kippin, commented that it was inappropriate for a "pregnant girl [to be] mixed up in the demonstration" because "a girl in that state should not be there [and] she certainly should not expect special treatment" (*Queensland Hansard*, 17 October 1978, Supply, 2260). Mrs Kippin failed to grasp the point that the meatworkers whom she stated "would be much better served if they got on with their work" (2259), were fighting to protect their jobs as in the mid-1970s, "50 percent of [the AMIEU's] members throughout Australia [were] either unemployed or working short time" in what was already a seasonal industry (Sparks, 1974 April/June, *The Meatworker*).

This paper examines the intentions behind and the organisation of the Queensland pickets leading up to the 17 October 1978. It highlights the legal challenges faced by the AMIEU and its members regarding secondary boycott provisions or the *Trade Practices Act* and explores the relationship between the AMIEU and other unions whose members were involved in the live cattle trade. It relies on AMIEU documents, including minutes, correspondence, notes and draft media articles, the union's journal, and external media sources, including photographs, to develop the analysis.

Marjorie A. Jerrard is a senior lecturer at the Monash Business School where she researches on aspects of the meat processing industry in Australia, New Zealand, the UK, and the US. She has recently published with Federation University colleague, Patrick O'Leary, on a comparison of the Australian and US industries and their deunionisation strategies and is currently working on immigration challenges facing the UK, US, and Australian industries.

Marjorie.jerrard@monash.edu

Press freedom and the Labour dailies: the case of Vance Palmer and his brother'.

Deborah Jordan

In pre World War I Brisbane, Vance Palmer, then in his mid-twenties, clarified his views on labour and capital in his letters to the young woman he was regularly writing to. In my recent edition of the love letters, *Loving Words: the Love Letters of Nettie and Vance Palmer 1909-1914*, it emerges that on the one hand Vance Palmer was mentored by Joe Silver Collings who edited the daily bulletin of the world's first general strike in 1912 (and was later a prominent ALP senator), and on the other, Vance mentored his younger brother William Palmer who was active in the Broken Hill strikes. This paper addresses the carefully kept and tragic secret of William Palmer, which nearly de-railed the romance of Nettie and Vance Palmer. William's contributions to the *Worker*, and Vance's involvement with the labour press both in England and Australia open up a discussion about the challenges of labour daily papers for control of the media before WW1. The creative output of Nettie and Vance's intimate literary partnership was to profoundly influence conceptions of the Australian nation between the wars.

Dr Deborah Jordan, adjunct research fellow History Monash University, associate researcher with the T J Ryan Centre, QUT, award-winning historian and Petherick reader at the National Library of Australia, has published widely in Australian cultural history and women's history. She has held research fellowships at The University of Queensland, the National Library and Flinders University. *Loving Words* was published by Brandt & Schlesinger in 2018.
deborah.jordan@monash.edu

Communist mythmaking: the NSW Northern District Coal Lockout 1929-30 and the Communist Party

Phoebe Kelloway

For sixteen months in 1929-30, miners of the NSW Newcastle and Hunter Valley coalfields resisted their employers' efforts to cut wages and destroy the union, at times defying their union leaders' advice. An idea persists that Communists led the coalminers' resistance, whereas in fact they played a marginal role. This paper considers the activity of Communists in the lockout, and the origins of the notion that they constituted an alternative leadership to the Miners' Federation officials during that dispute. Taking account of contemporary "red scare" material, it argues that the Communist Party was largely responsible for fostering this myth in later years. The paper also considers the relationship between Communists' efforts in the lockout and the election of Bill Orr and Charlie Nelson to national leadership positions in the Federation in 1934. Although they were the first Communists to lead a major Australian union, assumptions that their party was influential among miners five years earlier are ill-founded.

Phoebe Kelloway is a PhD candidate at the University of Melbourne. Her thesis is about the three major industrial disputes of 1928-30 and Communist involvement in them.
phoebek@student.unimelb.edu.au

PANEL: *Struggling Against Tradition*

Diane Kirkby, Emma Robertson, Katie Wood.

This panel is derived from Emma's and Diane's ARC-funded project, and Katie's PhD scholarship (funded under that grant) which is exploring the longevity and seeming intractability of the sex segregation of work, which has cast certain (higher-paid) occupations as 'traditional' for men and 'non-traditional' for women. Our papers explore how women's activism confronted and sought to overcome the intersection of 'tradition' and masculinity in specific workplaces, which not only restricted women's employment opportunities, but also shaped their experience of work. We concentrate on occupations in the railways and maritime industries which have been notable in the twentieth century, as 'traditionally' male areas of work in both Britain and Australia, and the Australian metal manufacturing trades. Our papers will explore how male traditions of work were constructed, how these traditions moved between Britain and Australia, and how they were challenged by feminist campaigns undertaken in the 1970s-80s. We take specific episodes that highlight actions taken by women. Emma's paper will concentrate on the railway industry, particularly train driving. Diane's paper will focus on women dockworkers and seafarers. Katie will concentrate on the experience of women workers in the metal trades starting with the colonial ammunition industry from late 19th Century Victoria.

Diane Kirkby is Professor of Law and Humanities at University of Technology Sydney and Research Professor (Emeritus) of History at La Trobe University Melbourne. She is the Editor of *Labour History*, has written extensively on women's labour history in both the US and Australia, and with Emma Robertson and Lee-Ann Monk is currently working on an Australian Research Council-funded project on women in non-traditional employment.

diane.kirkby@uts.edu.au

Emma Robertson is Senior Lecturer in History at La Trobe University (Bendigo campus) She is the author of *Chocolate, Women and Empire: A Social and Cultural History* (Manchester University Press, 2009) and is continuing to explore the gendered history of chocolate workers in transnational perspective, with a recent article on Cadbury in *Women's History Review*. In the co-authored book, *Rhythms of Labour: Music at Work in Britain* (Cambridge University Press, 2013), she combined her interests in gender and workplace cultures with the history of music.

emma.robertson@latrobe.edu.au

Katie Wood is an archivist at the University of Melbourne and a PhD student in History at La Trobe University, Melbourne, Australia where she is studying women workers in the metal trades.

15666874@students.latrobe.edu.au

Forestry workers mobilisation in Sweden and Australia in the period 1969 to 1975.

Ron Lambert

During the early 1970s, piece work forestry workers in Sweden and in Gippsland, Australia, struggled with economic pressures introduced into their workplaces with the advent of technological change in the timber harvesting labour process. New technology was being introduced to the forests and plantations of both regions, which increased rates of production and effort required to make an income. This struggle and workers' actions in seeking justice is well recorded in Sweden.

In 1969 similar dynamics were at work in the plantations of Australian Paper Manufactures Forest P/L, which supplied timber for Maryvale paper mill in the Latrobe Valley. Like their comrades in Sweden, the forestry workers did not enjoy ideal relations with Union officers based in the capitals of both regions. In both Sweden and Gippsland local actors formed committees and mobilised workers without the full support of the respective union's officials.

In the records of the Australian Timber Workers Union (No2) Victorian Branch there exists a history of the Union's interactions with the Gippsland Pulpwood Cutters committee and its members. These records detail at times tense relations between Bruce Tucker, the leader of the Gippsland mobilization, and city based actors in the Executive of the Union.

This paper argues it was mobilisation of regional workers in dispersed work locations in both nations that led to unions finally accommodating the forestry workers' need to take some level of control of the labour process in their respective workplaces and with the paper mills who ultimately set their conditions of employment. I will examine the forces at work in the mobilisation of workers in both regions using John Kelly's mobilisation theory, looking at Darlington's recent work on the leadership component of Kelly's work.

(Darlington, Ralph, Gregor Gall, and Jane Holgate. "The Leadership Component of Kelly's Mobilisation Theory: Contribution, Tensions, Limitations and Further Development." *Economic and Industrial Democracy* 39.4 (2018): 617-38. Web)

Ron Lambert is a PhD candidate at Federation Universities Gippsland campus. He is interested in technological change and its impact on workers in a range of industries and nations. Ron came to the PhD through the support of his family and community and has worked in a range of roles including scaffolder, teacher's aid and his current job of casual school crossing supervisor. Ron is part of a very supportive community of comrades and former workmates.

ronaldlambert@students.federation.edu.au

‘The Northern Drivers’ Union: anti-racist organisation since 1960’

Cybèle Locke

In 1960, the Northern Drivers’ Union recognised that a colour bar existed in New Zealand and ‘agreed it must be vigorously stamped out, root and branch.’¹ Northern Drivers’ Union secretary Bill Andersen deplored ‘local instances of the cruelty and viciousness of apartheid,’ labelling racism a disease and connecting the local to what was going on in South Africa. With this understanding, the Northern Drivers put anti-racial discrimination policy in place, called on the government to cancel the proposed All Blacks tour of South Africa and led a boycott of South African goods. This paper explores what gave rise to the Northern Drivers’ social movement unionism, particularly its anti-racism stance, and how this developed into Auckland coalition work with the Citizens’ Association for Racial Equality, Auckland Committee on Racism and Discrimination, Halt All Racist Tours, Polynesian Panther Movement, People’s Union, Ngā Tamatoa, and Ngāti Whātua Ōrākei occupiers of Bastion Point in the 1960s and 1970s.

Cybèle Locke is a New Zealand history lecturer at Victoria University of Wellington. She wrote *Workers in the Margins: Union Radicals in Post-War New Zealand*, which explores how working-class unionists (including the organised unemployed) negotiated neoliberalism, deindustrialisation and welfare retrenchment. Her current project is a biography of communist trade union leader Bill Andersen.

Cybele.locke@vuw.ac.nz

Strangling Social Capital – Death by a Thousand Cuts:

Martie Lowenstein.

“Oral history shows the life changing events workers dealt with caused by cutbacks, changes in permanent employment, unfair contracts and increasing casualization from 1986-1996”
(Wendy Lowenstein)

This paper will tell individual personal stories of how life changed with cutbacks, changes in permanent employment, unfair contracts and increasing casualization in Australia from 1986-1996. These stories come from the collected oral history interviews of Wendy Lowenstein where interviewees have shared their experiences of the everyday effects of breakdown of work practices, wages and conditions starting from the mid 1980’s. Wendy Lowenstein recorded interviews for her 1997 book about changing work practices in Australia, “Weevils at Work”². These stories provide a real insight into the broad effect of neoliberal changes on the interpersonal networks, loss of experienced workers, personal goodwill and social cohesion. While the economic effects of the transformation of the workforce on the lives of workers are well-known, this paper, and the collection more broadly, particularly focuses on the social aspect of this dislocation and how socialisation began to change in this time.

The Wendy Lowenstein “Work Practices”³ collection contains 103 interviews, recorded between 1995 and 1997, is currently preserved in the Lowenstein Family archives.⁴ The stories cover major disputes, including: Pekoe Wallsend/Robe River Dispute, Dollar Sweets, Wollongong, Fire-fighters and Ambulance work changes, the Patrick’s waterfront dispute, underemployment, casualization, and also display effects of early banking malpractices. Wendy’s exploration of these issues through oral history, provides us with an excellent window into contemporary reactions to these sweeping changes to the employment landscape and comprises a very useful source base for historians working in late-twentieth-century labour history.

As Wendy’s daughter, **Martie Lowenstein** spent her early years immersed in labour oral history on a daily basis. Martie completed her B.A. as a mature student and has been cataloguing Lowenstein’s vast collection of unpublished recordings, starting with outback worker’s life stories recorded in 1969, to reducing standards of work practices recorded in 1996.

martie.lowenstein@gmail.com

¹ *Wheels*, August 1960, p.13.

² Lowenstein, Wendy. *Weevils at Work: What’s Happening to Work in Australia; An Oral Record*. Melbourne: Catalyst Press, 1997.

³ The Lowenstein Family has over 1000 hours of interviews recorded by Wendy K Lowenstein 1968-1997. The “Weevils at Work” recordings are 103 interviews of working and unemployed people from 1995-1997, currently a private collection.

PANEL: The decline of British slavery, convict transportation, and Aboriginal dispossession: the making of colonial Western Australia

Slavery's Swan (River) Song: The decline of British slavery and the making of a colonial working class

Jane Lydon

The celebration of British abolition of trans-Atlantic slavery has tended to overshadow the long-term, global story of the role of coercive labour in imperial expansion, including its racial dimensions. In particular, it has obscured the ways in which, for the British, race and class were articulated social categories that constituted competing objects of reform during the campaign for abolition. British convicts, overwhelmingly working-class, were seen by many contemporaries as white slaves, and their status remained the focus of tension throughout the operation of transportation. In this way transportation was shaped by slavery, but conversely, contributed to the racialisation of global post-emancipation labour flows.

In this paper I focus on links between the end of British slavery and the start of systematic colonization through debates about the establishment of the Swan River colony on the west coast of Australia in 1829. In the decade leading up to the triumph of abolition, the colonies provided an alternative for the investment of capital, goods and people, as instantiated by the life-journeys of figures moving from the plantations of the West Indies to Western Australia. As British policy-makers and investors pondered how to colonise, the question of a colonial labour force became pressing. The ascendant anti-slavery movement insisted upon the distinction between 'black' slavery and free 'white' labour. However, in schemes for Swan River, links to slavery are particularly visible in the form of arguments against free labour and the advocacy of racial, as well as class, labour hierarchies. The failure of *laissez faire* at Swan River made it an example of how *not* to colonise, and labour remained a key problem over following decades. Concurrent with the making of the English working class, the Swan River moment was formative in the making of a colonial working class, and entrenching the principle of regulated but free white labour as constitutive of the settler colony.

Jane Lydon is Wesfarmers Chair of Australian History at the University of Western Australia. She is the editor of *Visualising Human Rights* (UWAP, 2018), co-editor with Lyndall Ryan of *Remembering the Myall Creek Massacre* (NewSouth, 2018), and author of *Photography, Humanitarianism, and Empire* (Bloomsbury, 2016). Jane.lydon@uwa.edu.au

Dispossession and forced labour in York, Western Australia: 1830-1850

Jeremy Martens

Pastoralists from York, represented by the York Agricultural Society, played a key role in the agitation to introduce convict labour to Western Australia. Formed in 1840, the society proposed several schemes to alleviate the colony's labour shortage; and its members drafted a number of influential petitions supporting transportation from 1845. Although the activities of the York Agricultural Society are relatively well known, few historians have examined the society's push for forced labour in light of the violent dispossession of Aboriginal communities that took place in York throughout the 1830s. This paper aims to place the bloody conflict over land between York pastoralists and Aboriginal communities in the 1830s within the same frame of analysis as the pastoralists' agitation for convict labour the following decade.

Dr Jeremy Martens at UWA teaches global history; South African, African and British imperial history; and the history of race and racism. His research interests include the evolution of immigration restriction legislation in Australia, New Zealand and South Africa, as well as race, gender and the law in nineteenth and twentieth century South Africa. He is the author of *Empire and Asian Migration: Sovereignty, immigration restriction and protest in the British settler colonies, 1888-1907* (UWA Press, 2018). Jeremy.Martens@uwa.edu.au

Remaking labour history: some implications of new scholarship on the legacies of slavery, convict transportation, and settler colonialism

Ann Curthoys

Since its formal inception almost sixty years ago, labour history in Australia and elsewhere has engaged with, learnt from, and contributed to many related historiographical developments, including social, cultural, women's, Aboriginal, and migration histories. This paper asks how the sub-discipline of labour history has been influenced by and contributed to two recently developing historiographical fields – the legacies of slavery and anti-slavery in the British Empire and the history of settler colonialism. Both fields are foundationally concerned with the mobility and treatment of labour in imperial and colonial contexts but both appear to have had limited connections to labour history as usually understood. I will explore just what connections there have been, especially concerning Western Australia, the implications of this scholarship for what we mean by 'labour history', and some possible future directions for labour history.

Ann Curthoys is Emeritus Professor at the Australian National University, and honorary professor at both the University of Western Australia and the University of Sydney. Her most recent book, written with Jessie Mitchell, is *Taking Liberty: Indigenous rights and settler self-government in the Australian colonies, 1830 – 1890* (Cambridge University Press, 2018).

Ann.Curthoys@uwa.edu.au

PANEL - The ILO in historical contexts.

ILO Conventions as political weapons: maritime, feminist and Indigenous strategies.

Heather Goodall

The ILO has been useful to Australian industrial and social justice activists, but not because of any direct inquiries or intentions to intervene in Australian conditions. While ILO Conventions were legally binding on nation states which ratified them, it has seldom been direct legal application which has been powerful. Instead, ILO Conventions have been drawn on strategically as a useful means of applying political pressure to the employers and governments inside Australia. Furthermore, its meetings – in which unions, employers and governments from participating countries could be represented – offered opportunities for interaction between industrial and social activists which would otherwise not have occurred. This was possible outside the industrial structures where unions and labour representatives were open to voicing the demands of non-unionised or minority memberships. This paper will consider three examples of such strategic use (with variable results) of ILO Conventions in political campaigns for social and industrial goals, two inside Australia and one, involving maritime unions, which crossed national borders.

Heather Goodall is Professor Emerita of History, at the University of Technology Sydney. Her projects include Indigenous histories and environmental history in Australia, twentieth century decolonisation and maritime history in the eastern Indian Ocean. Heather's publications include 'Port Politics: Indian Seamen, Australian unionists and Indonesian Independence, 1945-1947', *Labour History* (2008); and the books: *Invasion to Embassy: Land in Aboriginal Politics in NSW* (1996); the collaborative political union and Aboriginal history: *Making Change* (2013) with Kevin Cook and, most recently, *Beyond Borders: Indians, Australians and the Indonesian Revolution, 1939-1950* (2019). Heather is currently researching the connections between Indian and Australian women with Professor Devleena Ghosh and Helen Randerson with whom she has recently completed a biography of unionist, feminist, peace and refugee advocate Lucy Woodcock: *Teaching Change: Lucy Woodcock's Transnational Life*, to be published by ANU Press.

Heather.Goodall@uts.edu.au

Australia's administration over Chinese labour in mandated Nauru in the 1920s.

Julia Martinez

In June 1923, General T. Griffiths, Australian Administrator of Nauru responded to the League of Nations labour questions, stating 'As slavery does not exist . . . there is no necessity to take steps to ensure its suppression'. According to Griffiths the recommendations of the International Labor Conferences were not intended to apply to Nauru, but rather to 'more civilised communities'. His annual Mandate report recorded 578 Chinese and 255 Kanaka indentured workers who were mining phosphate for fertiliser. These men were not a legacy of German rule. In 1922 a further 288 Chinese indentured workers had been recruited by Australia. At the next meeting of the League of Nations, ex-Prime Minister, Sir Joseph Cook defended the government record on Nauru, but the League had doubts. Were the contracts signed by Chinese communicated to them in their own language? Was the Hong Kong government involved in recruitment? Was there a Chinese-speaking official in Nauru? Australia, it seemed, was not equipped to administer Chinese indenture using the old British colonial

system, and neither was it planning to abolish indenture which would have accorded with the ethos of the new International Labor Organization. In London the Colonial Secretary, J.H. Thomas denied that Britain might be responsible for ensuring that the recruitment of Chinese workers was within the spirit of the 1919 treaty of Versailles, upholding the dignity of workers. This paper seeks to understand the debates surrounding Australia's apparent rejection of the ILO ethos in its administration of Nauru.

Julia Martínez is Associate Professor in History at UOW and former ARC Future Fellow. Her research focuses on labour migration in transcolonial contexts, connecting north Australia to the Asia Pacific. Her book *The Pearl Frontier* (University of Hawai'i Press, 2015) with Adrian Vickers, won the 2016 NT History Award and the QLD Literary Award for History. Her recent book is *Colonialism and Male Domestic Service* (Bloomsbury, 2019) co-authored with Claire Lowrie, Frances Steel and Victoria Haskins. Current projects include a book on Asia Pacific traffic in women, an edited collection on Chinese women in Australia with Kate Bagnall, and an ARC DP on Chinese indenture with Claire Lowrie and Gregor Benton.
juliam@uow.edu.au

An end to indenture? The ILO, the continuation of penal sanctions and domestic worker activism in Singapore during the 1920s and 1930s

Claire Lowrie

This paper aims to shed new light on the history of the abolition of Chinese indenture by analysing the relationship between domestic service and penal sanctions in Singapore. In response to international pressure, legislative reforms designed to abolish Chinese indenture were introduced in Singapore from 1914. The reforms brought an end to long contracts and criminal convictions for breach of contract. After the First World War, the global campaign against indenture stepped up pace, spearheaded by the International Labor Organization (ILO). Seeking to assess whether indenture had indeed been abolished in British Malaya, the ILO commissioned a report in 1927. The report concluded that 'labour is free' in Singapore, except in the case of domestic servants who could be fined or imprisoned for leaving their place of employment without giving notice, or, for being willfully negligent or disobedient in their duties. Reflecting the general indifference of the ILO to domestic workers, there is no evidence that they pressured the Colonial Office to rectify this situation. This paper explores why it was that Chinese domestic servants in Singapore were treated as a special category of worker for whom the provisions of indenture remained necessary. I argue that one factor in the continued use of penal sanctions was the perceived need to discipline a group of workers who were renowned for their collective bargaining and individual acts of rebellion.

Dr Claire Lowrie is a Senior Lecturer in history at the University of Wollongong, Australia. Claire works on the history of labour and colonialism in Southeast Asia and northern Australia. She has published her work in *Modern Asian Studies*, *Pacific Historical Review*, the *Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History* and *Gender and History*. Her most recent book is *Colonialism and Male Domestic Service across the Asia-Pacific* (Bloomsbury, 2019) co-authored with Julia Martinez, Frances Steel and Victoria Haskins.
clowrie@uow.edu.au

PANEL: "Women at birth and in battle: the gendered struggles of Western Australian midwives and nurses from the colonial period to the present day" **"Midwives and medicine in transition: childbirth management in WA before and after the takeover."**

Bri McKenzie

A central concern for historians of midwifery working in any geographical context is the disruption brought about by childbirth medicalisation. The story of the medicalisation of birthing is a gendered narrative which highlights the struggles experienced by independent female midwives in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This paper challenges traditional historical interpretations of the midwifery services offered in colonial Western Australia and emphasises the role of medical practitioners and the state legislative apparatus in the undermining of empirically-trained midwives in the early part of the twentieth century. Just as in other Australian states, the take-over of childbirth by male medical professionals in Western Australia was achieved through the successful marginalisation of midwives at a time when medicine as a profession was gaining significant social and cultural power. Within this context, female midwives in WA ceased to operate as independent practitioners and were brought under the control of institutionalised discourses managed by medicine and nursing. The results of this historic transition remain with us today in the medicalised management of childbirth.

Bri McKenzie is a lecturer in History in the school of Media, Creative Arts and Social Inquiry at Curtin University in Perth and coordinator of Curtin's history program. Bri's research interests include Western Australian social history, particularly women's history and LGBTQI+ subcultures.

“Unveiled: the stories of Australian nurses in war.”

Sarah Fulford

In every military conflict Australia has been involved in from the Boer War to the Vietnam War, female nurses have accompanied the men to the war zones. These Australian women's motivations for enlisting were similar to the men and all of their stories highlight that they were there to 'look after the boys'. It is this masculine remembering of Australia's military history which has reinforced the notion that men are the central focus of all Australian war stories and has resulted in the marginalisation of the female nurse's experience. These Australian women have struggled to have their place at the forefront of their own stories and often through societal restrictions placed on the role of women or even their own self-sanitisation they have struggled to acknowledge their own place within the parameters of Australia's military history. Using archival research, this paper brings to the forefront the stories of Australian war-time nurses and includes analysis of the women's own diaries, their biographies and autobiographies. The results of this research highlight that the nurses were highly trained and prepared to undertake any work if it meant saving the life of a patient. This reinforces the sometimes overlooked, but critically important role they played as part of Australia's Armed Forces.

Sarah Fulford is a sessional lecturer in the School of Media, Creative Arts and Social Inquiry and the School of Nursing, Midwifery and Paramedicine at Curtin University in Perth. Sarah's main research focus is Australian military history with an emphasis on the experience of Australian nurses in warfare.

“Looking back, moving forward: The suppression of autonomous midwifery In Western Australia”

Clare Davison

In Australia, the decline of midwifery as an independent profession began in the early twentieth century as nursing and medicine began to encroach on traditional midwifery practice. Midwives as independent practitioners became almost non-existent, with midwives in WA incorporated into the hierarchy of the professions with obstetrics as the lead profession and midwifery considered a speciality of nursing. This presentation will discuss the results of an oral history project undertaken with midwives and obstetricians. The research explored a number of themes including 'Power and control of the institutions' and its subthemes 'Persecution and reporting of midwives' and 'Legislation, red tape and jumping through the hoops'. These themes describe how the medicalisation of birth, within the medical model, enabled the institutions to gain 'power and control' over the midwives who did not subscribe to the medical ideology. This difference in ideology and the power of the institutions has led to the suppression of autonomous midwifery practice. This paper explores the experiences, social pressures, values and attitudes of privately practising midwives in Western Australia from the 1970s until the present date and provides insight into the experiences of these midwives who have struggled against the medicalisation of birth and the patriarchal institutions.

Clare Davison is a midwifery lecturer in the School of Nursing and Midwifery at Edith Cowan University in Perth and a doctoral candidate in the School of Nursing at Curtin University. She has a keen interest in the history of birth and midwifery. Clare is passionate about the frequently untold history of women.

Panel Contact: Bri McKenzie

Bri.mckenzie@curtin.edu.au

A Civil Movement: Crisis & Response in Depression Era, Western Australia 1929-1931.

Michelle McKeough,

Historically, economic and social historians writing on the Depression Era in Western Australia have been inclined toward the view that both State and Commonwealth Governments followed a 'philosophy of non-intervention' in their responsibility to the unemployed. Although providing a body of unsurpassed academic merit, historians have tended to overlook the question: 'If the government were not looking after the welfare of the unemployed, who was? Both State and Federal Governments essentially left the 'unemployment problem' in the hands of local governments, whilst the rapid upward trajectory of unemployment in Western Australia from 1929 caused almost immediate crisis in the community. From 1929 until 1931, local governments and businesses; ordinary citizens; religious representatives; and social affiliations such as the returned soldiers'

associations and the trades halls, found ways to relieve the poverty and want created by large-scale unemployment and provided food, housing and clothing to thousands of men, women and children. In 1931, the State government introduced public works projects which finally ameliorated the responsibility of struggling local institutions. However, until that time, and although a scant sustenance payment was available, the unemployed in Western Australia were let down by the State and Federal governments' slowness to act.

This paper will examine the crisis of the first two years of the Depression in this State and argue that the absence of State or Commonwealth funding was the imperative that forged a robust civil movement in Western Australia.

Dr Michelle McKeough is an Historian working in Western Australian history. Her article, 'Depression Era, Fremantle 1929 – 1931: How a civil movement grew out of the empty space where government funding should have been' was recently published in University of Melbourne Historical Journal '*Contested Spaces*' (2018).
drmmckeough@bigpond.com

'Medicine for all Tired Trade Unionists': Australian and American Union Theatre Culture

Lisa Milner

Within a network of early twentieth century international communism, a number of nations established radical theatre practices. They developed these from the dual impulses of providing a theatre for a working-class audience, and of presenting progressive, radical ideas to that audience. Local inspiration and political protests were woven through underlying global concerns of radical theatre practice and labour politics. The mobility of ideas, genres, dramatic texts, and people in this radical cultural milieu made for a variety of outcomes around the world. In 1940, American labour activist Alice Evans had come to the New Theatre League after working as a communist labor organiser. She reviewed a Labor Drama Tournament, which, she believed, 'should be prescribed as medicine for all tired trade unionists'.¹ With the introduction of theatre, a novel form of narrative to structure working-class life entered the culture, as union members translated their own experiences of exploitation and struggle on to the stage, and redefined relationships between class and culture.

As a part of a transnational comparative study, this presentation considers connections and comparisons between trade union theatre in the US and Australia in the first half of the twentieth century. It looks at theatre's relationships with unions and organised labour: how these relationships were built, the narratives the plays took up, and why union support for theatre declined in each nation.

Dr Lisa Milner is Senior Lecturer in the Media program at Southern Cross University, Coffs Harbour. Her current research includes an international comparative study of workers' theatre, screen representations of workers and unions, and labour history.
lisa.milner@scu.edu.au

The First Motor Mechanics: Class, Labour and Technology in Early Twentieth-Century Australia

Michael Pearson

The arrival of the car in Australia transformed society and culture in important ways. This paper focuses on one aspect of this technological transformation: the impact of automobiles on the labour force and class in Australia between 1900 and 1920. The first motor mechanics were a motley group whose knowledge and skills were adapted from nineteenth century industries. This paper charts how metalworkers, engineers and others became motor mechanics through informal, haphazard processes. These processes resulted in a trade that was disorganised and struggled to define its boundaries throughout the early decades of the century. This disorganisation contrasted sharply with the effective organisation of motorists, almost all of whom came from Australia's social elite. The paper demonstrates this contrast to help explain why motorist organisations came to have significant control over the motor mechanic trade by 1920s, in the process shedding light on aspects of class in Australia at the time.

Michael P.R. Pearson is a PhD candidate at the Australian Catholic University.
michael.pearson@myacu.edu.au

¹ Alice Evans, 'Trade Unions Take the Stage: Drama Tournament Shows Amateur Theatre Source of Creative Stagecraft', *Daily Worker*, 20 April, 1940, p. 7.

Work, Respectability and Framing Transgender Rights in 1990s Victoria and NSW

Noah Riseman

The 1990s witnessed the beginning of sustained transgender activism in Australia. Most of it was state-based and focused on numerous issues, most prominently the push for anti-discrimination laws. One critical argument was the centrality of employment for transgender people. Activists argued that transgender people wanted to participate fully in the economy and society, but prejudice denied them employment opportunities and marginalised most transgender people either to welfare or to sex work.

In NSW transgender activists pushed a more liberationist argument, which was unapologetically challenging mainstream conceptions of gender. In Victoria, activists argued about work in the professions, epitomising the politics of respectability. The activists were cautious not to demonise transgender people who sat outside the bounds of respectability, but at the same time the activists did not challenge the middle-class values that defined respectability.

This paper analyses the politics of respectability versus liberationism among 1990s transgender activism. While both states won anti-discrimination protections for transgender people, the emphasis on employment and respectability proved more palatable in the neoliberal climate that dominated the latter half of the decade.

Noah Riseman is an Associate Professor of History at Australian Catholic University in Melbourne. He specialises in LGBTI and Indigenous history, and this paper derives from an ongoing ARC Discovery project on the history of transgender people in Australia.

Noah.Riseman@acu.edu.au

Community Activism in the Cold War: The Congress for International Cooperation and Disarmament.

Laura Rovetto

From its formation in late 1959, the Congress for International Cooperation and Disarmament (CICD), a direct lineal descendent of the Australian Peace Council, criticised Australian foreign and defence policies in SE Asia. It challenged official and media representations of Australian military involvement in the region and was amongst the first to oppose the subsequent introduction of the national conscription scheme. While the Menzies government responded by denouncing it as a communist-front organisation, the CICD supported movements for national self-determination, positive relationships with our Asian neighbours, and an independent Australian foreign policy. The paper argues that, despite its little-known significance in the early 1960s, the CICD epitomised community activism and peace movement internationalism during this phase of the Cold War. It further demonstrates that by 1966, the CICD strategically modified the tenor of its demands as a means of mobilising a broadly-based mass opposition movement, thereby complicating prevailing views of the CICD's moderate attitude to the anti-Vietnam War protest.

Laura Rovetto is a PhD candidate in the School of Arts and Education, Victoria University. Her research focuses on the CICD's role in the Australian peace movement from its formation in 1959 until the late 1960s. She is a recipient of the Victoria University Medal for Academic Excellence (2016) and the Centenary Postgraduate Research Scholarship (2016).

laura.rovetto@live.vu.edu.au

Southeast Asian histories: State-society relations and labour laws in Malaysia and the Philippines

Jonathan Sale

State actors and institutions have played a major role in post-colonial Southeast Asia. Local elites who governed after colonial rule grasped the political significance of 'labour issues' affecting the toiling masses.² Labour laws became key aspects of decolonisation discourses in Malaysia and the Philippines. Displaying 'unitarism' which

¹ This paper draws on chapters from the author's PhD research at the Faculty of Business and Law, The University of Newcastle.

² See Dane Kennedy, *Decolonization: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford University Press, Digital Book, 2016) 78.

suggests employer and worker interests can be ‘unified’³ through ‘strong leadership’ by ‘management’⁴, the agency of employers as societal actors, however, has had influences on state actors and institutions. Workers have had limited agency as indicated by low trade union density and collective bargaining scope. As ‘sources of agency’ ‘outside the state’,⁵ how have employers and workers shaped labour rule-making, if at all? In what ways have these societal actors been impacted by labour rules? This paper presents case studies of Malaysia and the Philippines.

Jonathan Sale is a Lecturer in Employment Relations and Human Resource Management at the University of Newcastle, NSW.

Jonathan.Sale@newcastle.edu.au

Unemployed Protest in Western Australia during the Interwar Period.

Alex Salmon

This paper will explore the protests of unemployed workers in Western Australia during the 1920s and 1930s. While the 1931 Perth Treasury riots are the most spectacular protests of this period, this only tells part of the story of a protest movement that stretched throughout this period. Combining lobbying tactics such as meetings and deputations to politicians and union officials with more direct tactics such as marches and strikes the unemployed workers, while unable to win all their demands, were occasionally able to win significant concessions from governments often unwilling to improve their plight.

Alex Salmon holds an undergraduate degree in History from Murdoch University (2007) and an Honours degree in history (2008). His honours thesis is entitled *The Communist Press in Western Australia 1932-1950*. His essay on the 1931 Perth Treasury Riots was published in *Radical Perth, Militant Fremantle*, edited by Charlie Fox, Bobbie Oliver and Lenore Layman (Black Swan Press, 2017).
aslmon301282@yahoo.com.au

"Working Lives-Digital Age": Revisiting the Struggles of Convict Australia.

Bruce Scates

The session will introduce people to the documentary series I produced, working closely with the National Museum of Australia. “Australian Journey” tells the story of the Nation through objects. Three of 12 episodes have a strong WA focus. The series is co presented by Susan Carland and myself. I would like to present select screenings from the series at a session of the conference and discuss some of the challenges I faced creating this digital documentary, focussing on the episode on the moral economy of convict Australia. “Australian Journey” has been put together as a free-online resource and I hope it is useful to many of us engaged in teaching Australian history - both at home and overseas (the series is now captioned in Mandarin and we are working on a Spanish translation).

Bruce Scates, FASSA, is Professor of History in the Research School of Social Sciences, at the Australian National University, Canberra.
<bruce.scates@anu.edu.au>

The Fourth International in Australia – Building a Narrative

John J Sebesta

Emerging in struggle against the degeneration of the 1917 Russian Revolution, Trotskyists fought to preserve Bolshevism’s revolutionary program internationally and to implement it as the Fourth International. They

³ See John Budd, *The Thought of Work* (Cornell University Press, 2011) 99-102.

⁴ See Mark Bray, Peter Waring, Rae Cooper and Johanna Macneil, *Employment Relations: Theory and Practice* (McGraw-Hill Education, Sydney, 4th edn, 2018) 54.

⁵ See Jefferey Sellers, ‘State-Society Relations’ in Mark Bevir (ed), *The SAGE Handbook of Governance* (SAGE, 2011) 124, 129-135.

experienced failures and defeats. But episodes of influence counter contemporary “death of communism” claims and point toward a different outcome.

Organisations looking to the Fourth International have a fraught history in Australia that is not widely known. The aim of this project is to make some of that accessible to historians and others from primary documentary sources.

Based on archival holdings of Nick Origlass and JR Wishart in the Mitchell Library, I am developing an Annotated Index along with appended transcripts of internal discussions on key questions including: the long-term entry of the Origlass forces into the Australian Labor Party; the 1945 Balmain strike; the Industrial Groups; the 1953–54 split in the Fourth International; Soviet nuclear testing in 1961 and the evolution of the Communist Party from Stalinism to social democracy.

Critical study of these organisations, their origins, evolutions and fates is key, not only to an understanding of Australian political and social history, but of internationally significant issues as well. A systematic, annotated index will help to facilitate that task.

John J Sebesta graduated from the University of Texas in 1969. He was a Left-wing activist in the US Civil Rights movement and in the Students for a Democratic Society, and has been involved in trade union organising in Texas, California and NSW. He is active in the Committee to Aid the Deacons for Defense and Justice, and delivered the Harold Peden Memorial lecture in 2009).

johnsebesta@optusnet.com.au

PANEL: Radical Publishing in Australia in the 21st century

The difficulty of sustaining publishing houses in Australia is well known. For non-academic books of radical politics and labour history, it is even harder as commercial publishers can be loath to take perceived risks.

Janey Stone will discuss the history of left wing publishing in Australia and introduce *Interventions*, an independent not-for-profit incorporated association which publishes radical books on a break even basis without censoring content. *Interventions* has published eight books since 2017. The most recently introduces Red Swan Series in radical Western Australian labour history and politics brings to life stories from the workers’ movement and social movements that need to be told. It offers a perspective on the state’s history and politics that challenges the status quo.

Bobbie Oliver will discuss the first volume in the Red Swan Series *A Natural Battleground*, launched on 4 March, 2019, the 25th anniversary of the closure of Midland Railway Workshops.

The Workshops exemplified the British industrial diaspora when skilled workers migrated to all parts of the empire. They created a network of railway workshops, built to a model and with a strong trade union culture. As Western Australia’s largest industrial employer for many years, the Workshops trained thousands of apprentices and employed a skilled workforce that peaked at around 3,500. It is as one of the last intact railway workshop sites in Australia. Bobbie will argue that as a significant heritage site the site there should be a rail heritage museum to interpret the history as well as tell stories of those whose working lives were spent there.

Alexis Vassiley, editor Red Swan Series, will introduce the latest book, to be launched at this conference. The new updated edition of *Radical Perth Militant Fremantle* tells 35 short and fascinating stories of radical moments in the two cities from industrial struggles and the Chinese community’s fight for survival to Perth’s Red Dean and his rock masses and bodgies and widgies at Scarborough’s Snake Pit.

Janey Stone is a life-long socialist who has published book chapters on Australian labour history and Jewish resistance to Nazi Germany and presented many talks on a wide range of radical subjects.

Bobbie Oliver is Honorary Research Fellow in History at The University of Western Australia and was previously Associate Professor of History at Curtin University. She is the author of several books on labour history.

Alexis Vasseley is a PhD candidate at Curtin University, Perth. He is the co-editor of *Radical Perth, Militant Fremantle* (2nd ed, 2019, forthcoming), and has published in *Labour History*.

Panel Contact: Janey Stone <jstone1@vtown.com.au>

Unveiling the ‘Employer’: Indian Supreme Court’s Adjudication of Sham Contract Claims

Rohini Thyagarajan

This paper will map the trajectory of the Indian Supreme Court’s adjudication of sham contract claims subsequent to the Indian Parliament’s enactment in 1970 of the Contract Labour (Abolition and Regulation) Act (CLARA). The CLARA—a statute governing the practice of engaging workers as ‘contract labour’ across industries and States in India—wrested from courts their power to prohibit deploying workers as contract labour from time to time. Consequently, post-1970, ‘sham contract’ claims became the only viable judicial conduit for workers to challenge the precariousness attendant to being classified as ‘contract labour’. The juridical category of ‘sham contracts’, in the absence of the judicial remedy of ‘abolition’, allowed workers to contest the contract between the principal employer and contractor as a mere device for circumventing obligations that would be statutorily owed to an ‘employee’. The paper will advance two specific contentions in connection with the Supreme Court’s adjudication of workers’ sham contract claims from 1970 onwards. First, sham contract adjudication continued to be largely shaped by ‘master and servant’ law insofar as the court placed reliance on its conceptions of subordination to determine ‘employee’ status. Significantly, this occurred despite the Court’s unequivocal articulation in 1978 of the need to move away from stringent common law ‘master and servant’ indicia to a more capacious test of ‘economic control’ to decide whether to pierce through the contractual veil. Second, beginning in the early 2000s the Court, while broadly retaining the master and servant law criterion, started effecting subtle shifts in their substantive content. Specifically, the Court engineered a significantly stricter conception of ‘total’ control and supervision. It did so by uncritically deferring to clauses in the contract, which stipulated the principal employer’s right to exercise minimum ‘quality control’ over contract labour. This, the paper will argue, reveals a turn in the Court’s orientation towards reinforcing contractual status quo and away from piercing the veil of the contract.

Rohini Thyagarajan is a student of law at Jindal Global Law School, Jindal Global University. Previously she worked with Justice S. Muralidhar at the High Court of Delhi; at the Centre for Equity Studies, New Delhi; at the Bharatiya Muslim Mahila Aandolan (BMMA) and at the Quill Foundation—an organization dedicated to conducting research at the intersection of constitutional law and anti-terror legislation. She is also a convenor of the Indian Feminist Judgment Project, a shadow judgment-writing project aiming to bridge the gap between feminist theory and practice. Her primary areas of interest are labour law and the history of labour law, constitutional law, and more generally, critical theory.

14jgls-rthyagarajan@jgu.edu.in

Film: ‘Do Nothing and Do It Well’

Liam Ward

‘Do Nothing and Do It Well’ is a 52-minute film about Chinese labour radicalism in Australian history. Weaving together the film-maker’s family history and a semi-fictionalised dead narrator, the film presents a sprawling and radical view of Melbourne at the turn of the 20th century while addressing questions of race, class and the Australian labour movement.

File:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1BtzvzMJQyPJJrY-dgruNPfSVPWE5EkIX/view?usp=sharing>

Dr Liam Ward is a lecturer in Media and Communication at RMIT University. A rough version of this film was completed as part of his PhD in 2017, and he has spent the last 18 months polishing it in preparation for broader distribution. The film is partly a companion piece to his 2015 article ‘Radical Chinese Labour in Australian History’ (*Marxist Left Review*, no.10, Winter 2015, <https://marxistleftreview.org/articles/radical-chinese-labour-in-australian-history/>).
liam.b.ward@rmit.edu.au

Australian Political Travellers in Revolutionary Ireland: Negotiating Settler Subjecthood and Radical Cosmopolitanisms, 1919-21

Jimmy Yan

This paper explores the ambivalent place of Irish independence in the imperial, 'racial' and 'cosmopolitan' imaginary of early interwar Australian labour radicals. In foregrounding the circulation and diffusion of intellectual influences across the Anglophone world, it examines the travel performances of Australian 'political pilgrims' in Ireland during the War of Independence. A re-centering of actual border-crossings over essentialist narratives of 'Irish radicalism' can help to extricate the 'Irish Question' from the realm of Australian nationalist nostalgia, and to reposition it within the post-war 'internationalism' of the 'Wilsonian moment.' While the unsuccessful attempt of Daniel Mannix to enter Ireland in 1920 has received substantial attention, the transnational lives of radicals who did reach Ireland, including some who established contact with Irish republican networks, reveal a richer web of radical friendships and political exchanges than has been acknowledged in bounded histories of Irish-Australia. Among these 'political tourists' were Labor parliamentarians, radical students, and political deportees. Their divergent impressions of the intellectual and political ferment in revolutionary Ireland ranged from the nostalgic to the dystopic, and included descriptions of social conditions, military violence and popular politicisation. In addition, their enactments of Australian radical nationalist tropes in Ireland offer an insight into imaginings of 'self-determination' within what Marilyn Lake identifies as the nexus between settler-colonialism and progressivist radicalism. An investigation of radical networks beyond the nation-state allows for a reframing of the 'Irish Question' in terms of counter-imperial solidarities and transnational contention.

Jimmy Yan is a third-year PhD candidate in History at the University of Melbourne. His research examines connections between the Irish revolutionary period and Australian radical social movements in 1912-23. He has published in *Labour History* and the *Australasian Journal of Irish Studies*, and in 2017, received the Irish Studies Association of Australia and New Zealand Postgraduate Essay Prize. Earlier this year, he undertook research at the National Library of Australia as the Seymour Summer Scholar.
hjyan@student.unimelb.edu.au