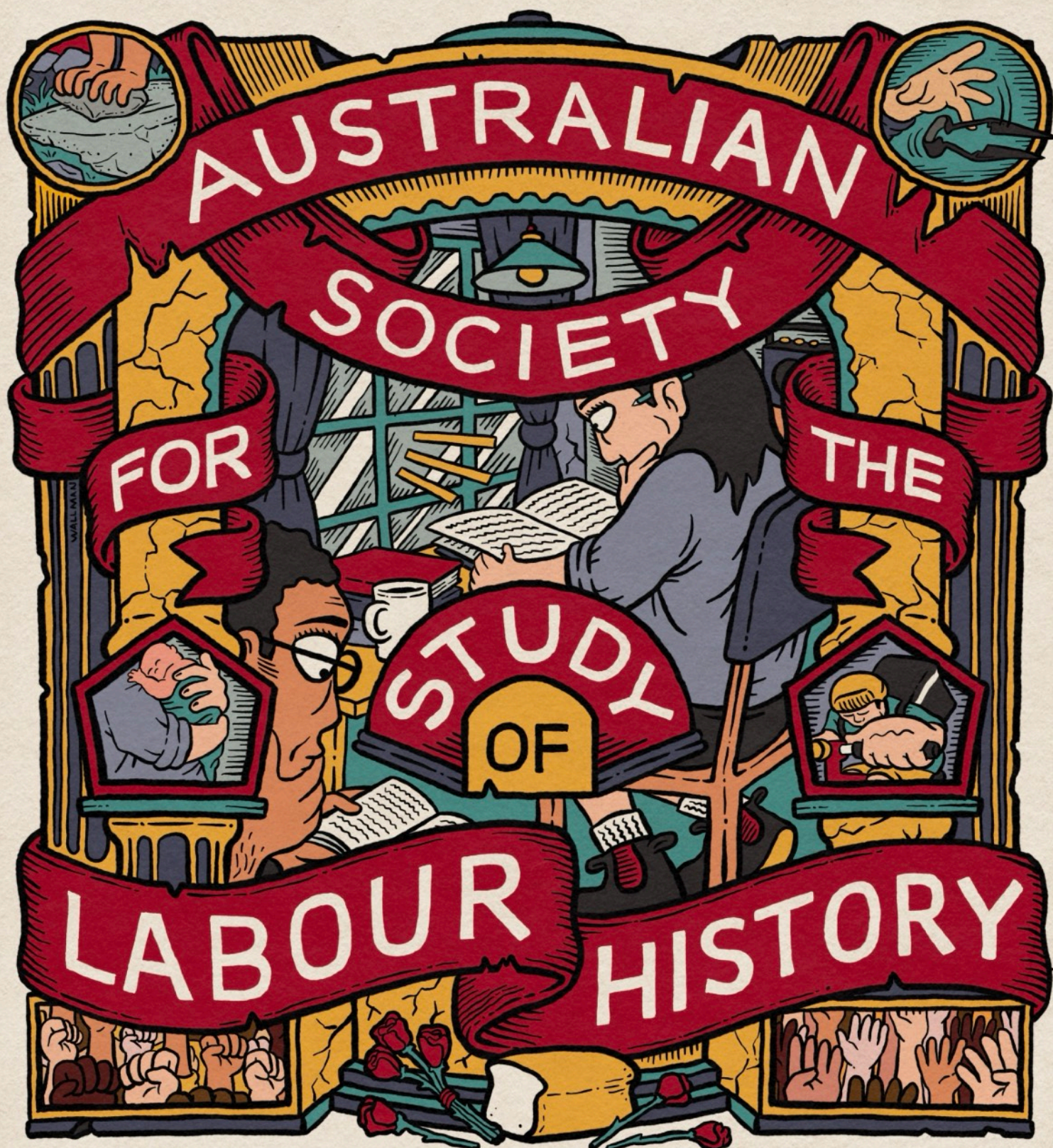


RADICAL CURRENTS | LABOUR HISTORIES





Radical Currents, Labour Histories

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HANNAH VINEY

The Employment of Female Officers at Melbourne Gaol, 1845-1923

On the night of 26 July 1902, two women visited the Russell Street lock-up in Melbourne to investigate gaol conditions for arrested women. They were representatives from the newly formed National Council of Women of Victoria (NCWV). The Council was concerned that women awaiting trial or release were not being afforded adequate privacy or respect from both (male) inmates and (male) guards alike.

This visit was the first of many by NCWV members to city and suburban lockups over the next six months. These visits culminated in a report written by Evelyn Gough recommending several reforms be made to the lockups to improve conditions for incarcerated women. A central recommendation was the need to employ women as warders. In the report's words, even criminal women had the right to services being provided by 'her own sex.'

This NCWV investigation and report were the endpoint of a ten-year campaign, begun by the Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU), to have women employed at watch houses (lock-ups) in Melbourne and its surrounding suburbs. The campaign reflected changing expectations of women's labour within Victoria's penal system and changing beliefs about the purpose of imprisonment and incarceration.

Melbourne Gaol opened in 1845 to cater to the rapidly growing population of the Port Phillip District, which had swelled from just a few hundred in 1836 to more than twenty thousand by 1842. The small gaols that had previously handled convicted individuals before or after trial in Sydney could no longer cope with the demand.

The 1841 opening of Melbourne's own Supreme Court emphasised the need for a larger, more centralised institution to house the city's offenders. Melbourne Gaol opened a separate wing for female inmates in 1865 to cope with the increased number of female prisoners due to the city's crackdown on 'indecent' behaviour and the disproportionately high number of women arrested for sex work.

Women were working at the Gaol from the beginning. The first woman on record was Mary Wintle, the wife of gaoler George



Melbourne Gaol, c. 1920. Photograph by Sir Raymond W. Garrett. Courtesy of the State Library of Victoria,
<http://handle.slv.vic.gov.au/10381/172570>

Wintle. She served as matron from 1845 into the 1870s. Wintle was supported in her work by two or three female warders, often the wives of male warders. These women were expected to be temperate, careful, restrained, modest, and dutiful. Female warders were subordinate to their male colleagues and expected to defer to male warders, despite how difficult this would have made their work.

Nineteenth-century institutions like Melbourne Gaol were vulnerable places for women. Inmates, both male and female, were often expected to undress in the presence of officers and would be thoroughly searched when entering or leaving the gaol. Prisoners condemned to death were to undress before bed prior to their execution so officers could search their clothing. More particularly, prison officers could take prisoners as servants for their households. Despite regulations prohibiting female prisoners from entering wardens' quarters without a female officer present, this ruling would have been near-impossible to enforce and placed the female inmates at heightened risk of physical or sexual assault.



Female Warders Standing Outside Watch House, c. 1909-11
Left to right: Eleanor Gertrude Wernert, Jean White, and Nora Fitzgerald
Glass slide compiled by Victorian Association for the Care and Resettlement
of Offenders. Dated incorrectly as c. 1915-24. Courtesy of the State Library of
Victoria. <http://handle.slv.vic.gov.au/10381/81632>

Such circumstances were worrying to penal reformers. Official government enquiries into the Penal Department in 1857 and 1871 questioned the conditions for prisoners, noting

particular concern about the safety of female inmates in non-segregated facilities. Both these enquiries concluded that more women needed to be employed within the system in order to better provide for the needs of female prisoners.

One outcome of these penal reform efforts was that, by the end of the nineteenth century, prisons were seen as both places for punishment and as tools for rehabilitation. Reformers insisted that separation from the corrupting forces outside the prison, accompanied by hard labour, would allow inmates to reflect on their crimes and encourage moral enlightenment.

For female inmates, this separation from ‘hardened’ and ‘fallen’ women would stop their further degeneration into immorality. In 1894, the Pentridge Female Prison was opened to separate women from male inmates. Most female inmates were transferred there to serve out their sentence. It was decommissioned in 1929.

To aid prisoners’ rehabilitation efforts, female officers increasingly took on the role of moral guardians as well as custodians. This framing of women’s penal labour was influenced by the growing Woman Movement at the turn of the century, where maternal feminists drew on beliefs that women were naturally more virtuous than men to argue for women’s inclusion in public life. Penal reformers adopted a similar position, arguing that women’s innate morality meant they were particularly suited to the rehabilitative responsibilities of prison work.

Such arguments were persuasive, and by the time the new Melbourne City Watch House opened in 1909, the ratio of female inmates to warders (or, in this case, matrons) was far higher than it had been in the early Gaol. The first matrons, Jean White, Nora Fitzgerald, and Eleanor Gertrude Wernert, were expected not only to supervise their charges and protect them from any physical harm but also to help redeem the women in their care.

In a newspaper article on her work, White lamented that there was no reformatory institution for women in Victoria as she believed ‘if only I had the women for longer’ she would be able to ‘save them from themselves or give them a fresh start.’ White believed that female penal officers like her had a greater responsibility than their male counterparts to ‘put a little hope’ in their female charges so redemption felt possible. It was this hope that White believed would make women ‘think it’s not too late to try’.

By 1923, the *Argus* reported that police officials acknowledged the important service policewomen were providing ‘in guiding wayward girls back to narrow but less precarious paths, and in reclaiming women from careers of crime and wretchedness.’ This belief in the reformatory duties of female penal officers was markedly different from prevailing ideas eighty years earlier. The combined influence of penal reform and the Woman Movement had not only increased the number of women employed in prisons and watch houses, it had also changed the very nature of the work such women performed. No longer were these female officers simple custodians for incarcerated women; now they worked to reform the women in their care.

When Evelyn Gough wrote her report for the NCWV in 1902, she concluded that the employment of matrons was necessary as ‘only contact with the decent, the sober, and the orderly of their own sex’ would be able to reform fallen women. She would have been very pleased to see that twenty years later, the system had come to agree with her.

Hannah Viney is a PhD candidate in History at Monash University, focussing on women’s activism in the mid-twentieth century. An expanded version of this article was originally published in Labour History, no. 123 (November 2022).

FREYER WILLIS

Gender, Work and Leadership in the Meatworkers' Union in the 1970s

The meat industry has long been associated with masculinity, power, and virility. The heavy work involved in meat production, undertaken in tough and dangerous conditions, required significant physical strength and violence. Carcasses were heavy, knives sharp, and protective equipment often inadequate. The blood and guts nature of the work, and the act of killing an animal (a symbol of human supremacy over beasts), was often seen as repugnant by those who did not perform the work themselves.

In an effort to insulate themselves from the stigma of their dirty work, meatworkers developed a culture that valorised militancy, physicality, and the ability to withstand difficult working conditions. Heavier and more violent meat processing tasks, such as slaughtering, boning and slicing, were rewarded with higher pay remuneration—paid at a piecework rather than a day rate. These historically male-dominated roles were highly prized and, therefore, fiercely guarded by male meatworkers. For decades, women were excluded from the Australian meat industry and the Australian Meat Industry Employees' Union (AMIEU) by this masculinist culture.

Prior to World War II, women had limited opportunities in the meat industry. Women gradually won the right to work in a series of Arbitration decisions in the 1940s and 1950s, first in making tennis strings and sausage casings, and later in trimming, packing, and white meat boning, where they remained largely concentrated until the 1970s. These roles were considered 'light work', and, accordingly, paid less, a division of labour that was justified on the basis of ideas about the capabilities of women's bodies. Light work, as one Arbitration Commissioner put it in 1975, required the 'manual dexterity ... [and] repetitive work' for which women were 'eminently suitable'. Women were considered unsuitable for 'heavy' (and higher paid) roles on the basis that the work jeopardised their reproductive functions, assuming a woman's primary social role was as a mother and wife.

In the 1970s, inspired by the confluence of women's increasing participation in the workforce and the Women's Liberation Movement, female meatworkers sought to challenge men's privileged position in the industry. They began to take up heavy roles, such as slicing, slaughtering, and boning, in larger numbers. Their efforts did not always go unopposed. In 1972, the AMIEU refused to make an application to lift the prohibition on women working in slaughtering, rendering, cold storage, and as butchers. In Queensland in 1973 and 1975, male meatworkers went on strike over the entry of women into their workplaces. Yet, over time, women's persistence and their everyday performance on the shop floor of traditionally masculine tasks expanded ideas about the work women could and should perform. Their presence in the meat industry became less remarkable and was no longer something to strike about. In 1975, the Arbitration Commission removed the legal restrictions on the types of work women could perform so that all roles were open to women.

In many ways, the masculinist culture that pervaded the shopfloor was replicated within the AMIEU. The union's social activities and traditions were established at a time when there were few women in the union. Male union officials often drank in sex-segregated pubs. The AMIEU (Vic.) held an annual union picnic for all members at which the men competed to show off their physical prowess in running races and shared (often sexist) jokes. Meanwhile, the women were expected to organise the food and look after the children.

The bonds cultivated through official union activities were important to workers' social lives and provided a basis for solidarity and collective action. Women's exclusion from the culture and camaraderie that defined union identity made it harder for them to participate equally in the AMIEU's industrial struggles.

Taking the example of the AMIEU's campaign against live animal exports in the late 1970s, pickets were set up at wharves overnight and often involved violent confrontations with police or suppliers trying to load the ships. These actions conflicted with the caring and submissive roles that women had been socially conditioned to assume and in many cases, with their actual caring responsibilities for their families. Sex segregation, moreover, meant that women's workplace disputes (such as equal pay) were seen as exclusively women's issues rather than union-wide issues, making it harder for women to convince men to participate in industrial action.

There were, nevertheless, examples of militancy among female meatworkers. In Queensland, where the communist influence was strongest, women frequently made up a significant proportion of the strikers. In turn, skilful female delegates leveraged women's participation in male workers' industrial actions to insist that male meatworkers also support women's campaigns, most notably for equal pay. In the words of one delegate, over time, women's insistence on men's support 'changed the ideas of males'.

One striking example of women's leadership and how it could transform ideas about gender, was Alice Hughes. Hughes had been a member of the Communist Party since the 1940s. An experienced organiser, she took a job at Borthwick's Queensland meat works in the early 1970s with the explicit aim of organising women workers at a grassroots level.

She used her position as a delegate on the Board of Control—a meeting of union representatives and management—to advocate for new boots, knives, and safety pouches for women workers, the installation of mirrors in the dining room, and the proper laundering of uniforms. In 1975, she also led a series of 24-hour strikes in support of the union's (ultimately successful) application for equal pay for women.

Hughes was perhaps most distinctive for her use of theatrics and performance to challenge sexist attitudes and behaviours. In one instance, she challenged a male meatworker who had been sexually harassing women to a boxing match, dressing up in oversized underpants to look like boxing shorts and goading him with blustering trash talk.

Hughes' cross-gender performance caricatured and mocked a figure (the boxer) who perhaps epitomises meatworker masculinity—physically strong, virile, tough, and prone to fighting. She subverted the equation of the male meatworker's persona with dominance and power, exposing it to be little more than fantastical dress-up. By moving easily between masculine and feminine gender presentations, she drew attention to the fragility of sexual difference. Hughes believed her actions helped to transform male meatworkers' ideas about women.

Change, however, was not linear. Hughes believed her outspoken challenges to sexism prompted retributive action from her employer, enforcing the compulsory retirement age on her (and not other militants, who were men). She sought to bring a legal challenge to the provision but did not have sufficient support from her fellow meatworkers. By the late 1970s, the meat industry was beset by compounding economic crises: the oil shock, stagflation, and a burgeoning live animal export trade. After several months out of the workforce and in a deteriorating economic climate, Hughes observed, 'a whole lot of backward, male chauvinist ideas ... came to the floor again ... [because they] couldn't be answered'.



Nellie Gall - topped the poll for organiser.



Alice Hughes - first woman member of the Committee of Management.

Nellie Gall and Alice Hughes: 'Militants Win Meat Union Poll', *Tribune*, 23 September 1975, 4.

The meat industry and its union thus illustrate how women's exclusion from the workforce and trade union movement has historically been legitimated not only through policies such as pay discrimination or restrictions on the kinds of work women can perform but also through culturally constructed notions of masculinity and femininity.

In the 1970s, these ideas were contested and subverted, but it was difficult to ensure lasting change. While women may have won the right to work in all areas of the industry, heavier meat processing tasks remain male-dominated to this day. Equally, while there were examples of female leaders challenging sexist behaviours, the progress they made could be reversed once they left the workplace. Cultural ideas about women's work, once entrenched, proved difficult to shift.

Freya Willis is a Masters student studying women's work at the University of Oxford. The original expanded version of this article appeared in Labour History No. 123 November 2022.

DUNCAN HART

The Proletarian in Founding Australian Communism

In the years following the end of World War I, workers' revolution in Germany and Austria seemed to augur the rapid spread of socialism. Australia's large and vibrant socialist movement particularly welcomed the 1917 Russian Revolution, which had brought socialism to power for the first time. This was the new society they had dreamt of and toiled for.

Australian socialists engaged in furious debate among themselves on how the revolutionary moment could best be seized. The politics that emerged as hegemonic was that of the Communist International (Comintern), established in March 1919 by the Russian revolutionaries, the Bolsheviks, to generalise their experience and spread revolution internationally. In Australia, these politics were expressed in the formation in October 1920 of the Communist Party of Australia (CPA). By 1922, the CPA had cannibalised practically all the existing socialist organisations to emerge as the only party on the far left of any significance.

A diverse range of socialist newspapers and journals were published at that time. The most significant for assessing how Australian socialists interpreted the arguments emanating from the Comintern was *The Proletarian*, issued from June 1920 until March 1922. Published as *The Proletarian Review* for its first four issues, this sixteen-page monthly magazine was the first theoretical journal in Australia to base its politics on the Communist International. Two Melbourne-based socialists, the university-educated middle-class Guido Baracchi and the self-educated son of a miner Percy Laidler, were the editor and publisher, respectively.

Baracchi, at the time, had been labelled 'Melbourne's foremost Marxist,' while Laidler, as the manager of Andrade's Bookshop in Bourke St, was able to tap into an already well-established network of radical literature distribution and publishing. Together, they helped the journal gain a national reach. In disseminating early Comintern politics to Australia, the journal played an important part in 'consolidating the trends towards a communist party', as the long-term leader of the CPA, J.B. Miles, would later put it. No other publication of the time played the same role.

A close study of *The Proletarian* indicates three significant themes were emphasised as the core of Comintern politics:

- 1) Smashing the capitalist state and erecting the dictatorship of the proletariat.
- 2) The necessity for mass action to achieve this.
- 3) The importance of winning over most workers to these goals.

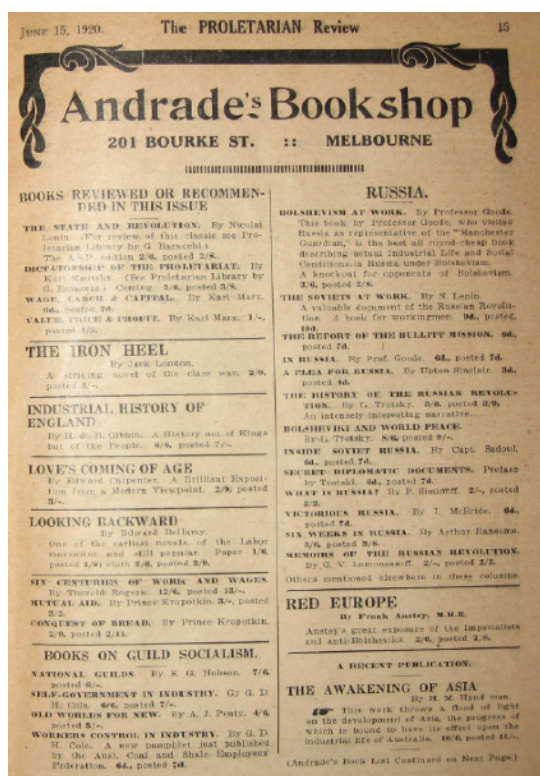
These political arguments were made by a combination of short articles by leading Comintern members, as well as by Baracchi and a smattering of other Australian socialists. Particularly revealing were Baracchi's book reviews of major works by Comintern writers. In

every issue, these reviews explained how such significant works as Vladimir Lenin's *State and Revolution*, Karl Radek's *The Russian Revolution* and Gregori Zinoviev's *To the IWW* were relevant to Australian socialists.

The magazine presented the capitalist state as based on fundamental inequality, which many Australian socialists failed to appreciate, particularly those seeking reforms through the Labor Party. Rather than being above classes, the state was the means of class oppression. It needed to be overthrown and replaced. This could be achieved by new forms of workers' democracy born in the revolution: the soviets. These were described as 'worker-delegate councils, which can always be re-elected, which always return to their native soil, the factory'. The image conjured up was of a higher form of democracy, 'no longer really the state': the dictatorship of the proletariat.

The achievement of this goal was closely tied to a strategy of mass action, a concept that was new in Australia. Existing socialists understood the path to socialism as following two tracks: political action and industrial (or direct) action. These two methods were usually viewed as running in parallel, a conception that fits the division of labour between the Labor Party and the union movement and their relative spheres of activity.

Mass action was explained as direct action by emphasising workers exercising power at the point of production. However, the term mass action encompassed a wider view than just workers in the workplace, defining it as ‘mass participation in a non-parliamentary medium for a political goal.’ Like the advocates of direct action, *The Proletarian* argued that workers, through their own activity, had the potential power to overthrow capitalism, but that this had to mean the elevation of workers’ struggles at a workplace level to a political level, i.e., addressing issues of the entirety of society and not just workers’ own workplace.



An example of the advertisements for Andrade's Bookshop, which filled the last two pages of each issue of *The Proletarian*. As can be seen, a large variety of works on Russia were clearly highlighted. Image courtesy of reasoninrevolt.net.au.

Australian workers had already participated in this kind of political industrial action through their involvement in the anti-conscription movement and efforts to stop post-war deportations. But the concept of 'mass action' leant their struggles a vocabulary they had previously lacked. For *The Proletarian*, the culmination of mass action was the revolutionary general strike and armed insurrection to transfer power to the soviets.

The journal waded into two controversial issues for Australian socialists: the necessity of working within existing, often conservative, trade unions, and the usefulness of utilising parliament for revolutionary purposes. Many socialists of the time favoured building their own revolutionary unions and abhorred parliament as synonymous with betrayals by the Labor Party.

The case for participation in the unions and parliament was built on Lenin's *Left Wing Communism*, which argued that socialists had to attempt relentlessly to relate to working-class

people where they were and not where socialists might hope for them to be. In this respect, the politics expressed in the journal were in stark contrast to the ‘elitism’ often said to comprise a core of Communism. *The Proletarian’s* politics differs from the generally understood view of Communist politics as being committed to a particular form of revolutionary organisation, usually described as ‘democratic centralism.’ While the need to cohere socialists into an organisation was a central theme of the journal, the form such an organisation took was not discussed. ‘Democratic centralism’ was not even mentioned.



Operator: "Trouble with you people is, you want the earth."
Miner: "Trouble with you is, you've got it."

Artist Clive Weed, *The Liberator* (January 1920). Duncan Hart writes: Incorrectly attributed 'as an original Syd Nicholls cartoon based on the signature, ... it is in fact a reprinted cartoon from the US Liberator magazine, January 1920 edition, where the artist is listed as Clive Weed. Unfortunately *The Proletarian* did not attribute either the artist or *The Liberator*.' The original can be viewed here: <https://www.marxists.org/history/usa/culture/pubs/liberator/1918-24-Liberator-2pg-cartoons-with-contents.pdf>

The Proletarian offers us a unique insight into the post-war period and its seismic shifts in the direction and ideology of Australia's socialist movement. The illumination provided by *The Proletarian's* emphasis on the why, how and what of achieving socialism often challenges existing perceptions of what was novel in the politics presented by the Comintern in Australia.

Duncan Hart is a PhD candidate at the University of Queensland, studying the far left in Australia in the post Great War years. He has been a union activist since beginning work at Target while at high school and has been a member of Socialist Alternative since 2008. The extended version of this article was published in Labour History, no. 123 (November 2022).

JACKIE DICKENSON

Luxury and the Australian Worker

According to Brisbane's *Worker* newspaper in 1900, workers had 'a right—a title' to take for their own use those necessities of life provided by the Creator: air; sunlight and the surface of the earth. These differed from the necessities of life that workers had to earn for themselves, including food, education, transportation and, tenth on the list, 'a reasonable amount of luxury.' The article argued that 'A person's mind is healthier if he thinks he is not pinned down to the bare necessities of life,' and so, 'Paradoxical as it may seem, a little luxury—of a harmless nature—is a necessity.' The vague phrases 'a reasonable amount' (by whose judgement reasonable?) and 'of a harmless nature' (harmless to whom?) reveal contemporary uncertainties concerning the types and quantity of 'luxuries' workers might expect.

These uncertainties were fuelled by the emergence of mass consumption and the shift from a cultural emphasis on work, sacrifice and saving to one of leisure, self-gratification and self-realisation. The final decades of the nineteenth century saw the beginnings of the modern advertising industry promoting a rapidly expanding choice of brands and products to a rapidly expanding consumer market, including workers.

The formation of the labour press occurred simultaneously with the expansion of mass consumption in Australia and an intense period of social, cultural and economic change. Critical of workers' exploitation within capitalism, the press occupied an ambiguous position in relation to modern consumption. As more and more workers accessed higher levels of disposable income, the press struggled to determine its attitude towards luxury within a broader rhetoric of needs and wants.

The advertisements carried by labour papers reflected the growing choice of products, including multiple, barely differentiated brands of 'essential' goods, appearing on the market. These advertisements employed concepts of needs and wants, which, along with other terms used to describe the objects of consumption—'essentials,' 'comforts,' and 'decencies,' for example—socially constructed consumption to take over logically and necessarily from production; 'needs are produced as a force of consumption.'



'A New Suit for Christmas Becomes a 'Must' for Workers'.
Tocsin, 11 November 1897, 1. Image courtesy of the State Library of Victoria.

Arguably, the most potent term in this contemporary rhetoric of needs and wants was 'luxury.' Eighteenth-century commentary on luxury had seen a conflict between commercial and political activity. According to this view, the greatest danger of luxury was that the 'civic' virtues of politically active citizens would be corrupted by commerce.

This was still a concern at the end of the nineteenth century when there were more politically active citizens with ever-increasing consumer power whose civic virtues might be corrupted by luxury. Additional analyses of the social and economic problems—and opportunities—associated with the pursuit of luxury emerged as political philosophers, economists and theologians explored the moral and economic dimensions of luxury spending.

This prolonged discourse impacted on the Australian labour press. Debates about luxury were central to anxieties around the expansion of consumerism to include working people, and the labour press was in a prime position to influence the attitudes of Australian workers. Looking for guidance, the press turned to diverse theorists and commentators to explore the moral and economic implications of luxury consumption.

They published views from multiple, mostly critical perspectives, in a veritable hodgepodge of commentary that reflected centuries of uncertainty regarding luxury's moral and economic value. These theorists included the theologian Jacques Bénigne Bossuet, as well as Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Karl Marx, John Ruskin, William Morris, Robert Blatchford, Henri Baudrillart, Émile de Laveleye, Alfred Russel Wallace, Peter Kropotkin, and Christian Socialists such as Percy Dearmer.

The theories fell into three broad themes: luxury was a bad thing because it fed inequality by using up resources that could be used to alleviate poverty; luxury was a bad thing because it corrupted and weakened those who desire it; and luxury was a good thing, it was natural to desire it and, therefore, all citizens should be able to enjoy it.

This commentary added up to a discourse that was neither definitively critical of mass consumption nor explicitly complicit with it, reflecting the ambiguous position in which the labour press found itself.



'Workers Were Urged to Smoke 'Luxury Tobacco' to Help Their Comrades in the Tobacco Industry'. *Worker* (Brisbane), 23 May 1896, 14. Image courtesy of the National Library of Australia.

As it tried to promulgate a message of economic and, in some cases, political change, the press was using the tools of the status quo, in particular commercial advertising.

Many of the ideas that exercised the labour press in this period are now either moribund, forgotten or looking increasingly fragile (democracy, for example). The consumerism that evolved from this period of expansion of mass consumption, however, marches on, accelerating after World War II and now seemingly intractable. Paying attention to the labour movement's engagement with contemporary theories of consumption—in this case, luxury consumption—helps our understanding of how we got to this all-encompassing position. It also offers a fresh perspective on the formation and dissemination of labour ideas, a reminder that workers were not only producers.



"The Use of the Blackface Dandy Was an Appeal to Younger Workers". *Worker* (Brisbane), 13 August 1898, 10. Image courtesy of the National Library of Australia.

Labour intellectuals in this period grappled with the implications of emerging mass consumption for the workers they represented, unsure whether to resist or embrace this new phenomenon.

The breadth of labour intellectuals' reading and knowledge, and their willingness to reference such diverse sources in order to make sense of this seismic shift in the social and economic lives of workers, is truly impressive.

The ambiguous position of the labour press in relation to modern mass consumption grew because of the difficulties of securing sufficient capital to keep the presses running, a problem that would recur throughout the first half of the twentieth century.

The labour press's struggles with the problems of accessing capital, building circulation and securing advertising revenue continued in the context of an ever-expanding consumer culture. As mass consumption became entrenched in Australia through the interwar years, with the expansion of hire purchase and credit facilities, labour's quest to ensure workers received their fair share of luxury—whatever it might be—would continue.

Jackie Dickenson is based at the University of Melbourne researching the history of consumer credit and how it entangled Australian workers in a consumer culture. The extended version of this article was published in Labour History no. 124, May 2023.

BIANKA VIDONJA BALANZATEGUI

Exploring the butt gang system of working in the sugar cane fields

Fictional works by writers who have authentic first-hand experience of the industry that they recreate in their novels help us understand the past and give voice to marginalised and lost workers. One such work is Welsh-born author and playwright John Naish's sugar field novel *The Cruel Field* published in 1962. The book offers an introspective 'first-person' account and a nuanced understanding of a labour method and lived experience since vanished from the Australian rural landscape. *The Cruel Field* has been judged by contemporary critics and later scholars as providing the most authentic account of cane field labour out of all the novels set in the Australian cane fields.

For over a century, sugar cane was harvested by hand in Australia, at first by indentured Melanesian labourers and hired Asian gangs, and then by free white labour working in a collective-piece-rate-payment system called the butt gang. Naish, a 'ten-pound Pom', cut cane between 1950 and 1961 in north Queensland. He was in a unique position to observe the workings of the butt gang, the mechanisms that held it together and conversely, the tensions that caused discord.



'Loading Cane, Mossman, 1955. Photograph courtesy of the Vidonja family.'

The butt gang system was adopted as white cane cutters entered the industry with the repatriation of indentured labourers at Federation after the introduction of the 'White

Australia' policy. The butt system was only possible in a free labour market and where the weighing of the cane at the mill allowed for the measurement of group rather than individual productivity. This meant all the men in the small, self-selecting gangs shared equally in the joint earnings. The system was endorsed by the Australian Sugar Workers Union in 1909.

The action of *The Cruel Field* takes place in 1951 in the fictional town of Nagonda in far north Queensland. Attitudes relating to race, class, labour, land, mateship and gender are explored through the novel's two protagonists: Mark Westcott, an Australian rough diamond, and Naish's alter-ego Emery Carol, a British immigrant and aspiring playwright. In the harvest season, they sign-on to cut cane in the same gang for mercenary Italian farmer Peter Leonardi and his kind brother Tony. Other members of the gang are Pedro Morgan, Danny Hoover and brothers Ruf and Jeff Craig. Additional characters integral to the story are Indigenous Australians Hughie Tray and Hope Lyons, nurse Judith Harrison, and Betty Craig, wife of gang member Jeff.



'Canecutter in Front of Primitive Barracks, Redlynch, outside Cairns, 1950. Photograph courtesy of the Vidonja family.'

Naish's main characters bring to life the rhythms of cane cutting. The novel begins with Mark and Emery, like thousands of others, making the seasonal descent on the sugar towns for sign-on day. The cane cutters then settle into the dilapidated barracks and embark on the daily work: burning, cutting, loading; the early painful months of blistered hands, screaming muscles and gashed shins broken by the welcome rest of weekends. The middle months are cooler, easier, they break into song as they work, they have acclimatised. As the heat of a searing tropic summer descends again the characters (those who have managed to save their earnings) long for cut-out day when finally, they can take the southward flight for the slack.

The mechanisms that held the butt gang together were the ganger, equality of prowess, arbitration, and a sense of mateship. Fault lines in these caused discord. A steady ganger like Ruf who could keep his cool when negotiating with the farmer and the mill's representative, the cane inspector, was vital.

Tensions were inherent in the relationships between mill, farmer and cutters. All three wanted to get the cane off as efficiently as possible, but an avaricious farmer, or cutters disgruntled with the condition of the cane, and a cane inspector whom the cutters viewed as siding with the farmers constituted a recipe for discord, as is made amply clear in *The Cruel Field*. Equality of prowess was essential. Carrying a weak ‘weed’ such as young Danny, who had never cut cane before, was a potential flashpoint for discord unless he shaped up or dropped out.

A social-psychological advantage of small booty gangs was the familiarity between gang members and a sense of commitment to each other, strengthened by bonds of mateship. Naish evokes the sport-like competition, the money, and the strong sense of mateship that drew cane cutters back season after season, which they later recalled with deep nostalgia.

As a new Australian Naish was well positioned to observe the Australian male character and the white working-class Australians’ code of mateship, a code which largely excluded people of colour. Ruf Craig’s gang is predominantly Anglo-Australian. Naish deliberately locates Hughie Tray and Hope Lyons his Aboriginal characters, outside the township, exposing the poverty and inferior social positioning exclusion brought to Indigenous Australians. He also picked up on Anglo-Australian resentment as more Italian immigrants took up farming and brought different attitudes to hired labour.

The masculine orientation of *The Cruel Field* mirrors both the sugar industry and gender assumptions of broader Australian society at the time. In the social milieu of the 1950s and early 1960s cane fields women, particularly married women, were firmly relegated to the domestic sphere. Naish homes in on the emotional and physical chasm, observing the uneasy dichotomy of the orbits of single cutters, called in the language of the time ‘Singalese’ (with their mateship, banter and freedom) and the married cutters known as ‘Maoris’ (with the burden of wife, children, debts and responsibilities).

The brutal work under a relentless tropical sun takes its toll, and the season ends in tragedy when the farmer and one of the cutters die in a suspicious cane fire. The fiery conflagration is fuelled by discord created by a confluence of factors. An avaricious farmer plants a variety of cane in unsuitable soil. Fallen and tangled cane causes frayed tempers exacerbated by unsatisfactory arbitration for adequate compensation for the poor cutting conditions. And finally, Jeff fears losing the retention money (held back as an incentive for a successfully completed season), and of becoming a burdensome ‘weed’ as illness slows him down. His wife Betty takes matters into her own hands by setting off a runaway cane fire by the age-old means of a slow-burning candle in a tin can. The season is brought to a sudden and tragic end.

A contemporaneous critic wrote that ‘Nothing written to this length has ever before pinned down the canefields for such exact analysis.’ John Naish’s fictionalised account authentically exposed the dynamics and workings of the booty gang system in the Australian cane fields in the mid-twentieth century. The nature of the booty gang in the cane fields of north Queensland is captured, and marginal voices are heard through the fictional Craig gang on the Leonardi farm in the actual year 1951.

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ELOISA BETTI

Women activists writing about anti-communism repression in 1950s Italy

Left-wing working-class women were witnesses and victims of the harsh political violence that ravaged Cold War Italy. Their memoirs and correspondence, long stored in family archives and recently rediscovered, unveil the levels of repression Communist women suffered as a result of their political involvement. They lost their freedom and experienced various forms of physical and emotional constraint under 'anti-Communist' measures implemented by Interior Minister Mario Scelba in the post-war period. These challenged Italian democracy, curbing freedom of speech and the organisations of left-wing activists, especially in areas called 'red regions' leading to many cases of imprisonment which did not spare women activists. In the city of Bologna alone, from late 1951 to the summer of 1954, almost two thousand women were put on trial, over half of whom were sentenced to serve a total of 182 years in prison and to pay heavy fines.

Working men and women were the main victims of police repression and political violence in early Cold War Bologna. In the industrial sector, thousands of women went on strike in the early 1950s, struggling against unfair dismissals and repression that targeted both the male and female members of left-wing organisations such as the Italian General Confederation of Labour and the Italian Communist Party. Hundreds of female factory workers were dismissed for political reasons, and several were arrested because they had occupied the factory they worked in.

Anna Zucchini and Albertina Bitelli belonged to the generations of our metaphorical 'grandmothers,' women born in the 1920s and 1930s, educated in Fascist schools and frequently involved in the Italian Resistance Movement during World War II. Anna Zucchini (1922–1993) was born in Anzola dell'Emilia, a rural municipality surrounding Bologna. She entered the Ducati factory in the second half of the 1930s, when she was only 15 years old. Her discovery of *l'Unità* in 1943, at the time a clandestine newspaper, led her to become a member of the Italian Communist Party.

Albertina Bitelli (1922–2019) was born in the same year in the municipality of Zola Predosa, close to Bologna. She also entered the Ducati factory in the 1930s, attending a professional licensing course in order to become a semi-skilled worker. Their experience at the factory was fundamental in Albertina and Anna's lives. During World War II, both had faced Nazi occupation and taken part in the important strike that occurred in 1944 at the Ducati factory. In the post-war years they became more involved than ever in politics, in labour movement struggles and women's associations such as the Union of Italian Women (UDI), fighting for labour rights and equal opportunities.

Anna Zucchini was one of the hundreds of women dismissed from the Ducati factory in the early 1950s. Anna was arrested and imprisoned twice: the first time was during the Nazi occupation, and the second time in 1955. She was arrested along with another three women

in front of the gates of the Ducati factory as they were handing out mimosas and flyers in defence of women's 'right to work'. Anna wrote a diary about her last imprisonment, which was discovered after her death and published a few years later. Anna's diary gave a detailed description of her arrest and the following trial, well attended by relatives, friends, leaders of left-wing organisations and the unfairly dismissed workers. Anna recollects that she felt rather like a heroine thanks to the encouraging applause of the people attending the trial, although she was saddened by her husband's absence due to his involvement in Party matters. Other pages of the diary focus on everyday prison life and how simple actions like washing or going to the toilet became complicated. The ugliness of the cell, where they had to spend 23 hours a day, and the appalling food were the main reasons of complaint.



'Anna Zucchini Celebrating Her Release from Prison with Her Daughter and Friends, 1955'. Courtesy of UDI Archive of Bologna.

Albertina Bitelli was arrested, along with another woman, after a strike in 1952. Charged with intimidating female workers who had refused to join in the strike, she was sentenced to two months in prison. Albertina kept more than 90 items of correspondence, private photographs and documents, which reveal the solidarity she received during her imprisonment. Dozens of leaders of political parties, trade unions, female associations and female factory workers wrote letters to express their solidarity.

In spite of her low level of education, Albertina wrote as much as she could to her organisations, her trade union and the Party, and, above all, to her husband, describing her daily life in prison, her mood and her thoughts. Several letters addressed to Albertina's husband were publicly shared and read aloud, notwithstanding that they contained private details concerning the marital relationship between husband and wife. Albertina was actually considered an example in regard to her spirit of sacrifice, the perfect model of a Communist wife fully devoted both to the Party and her husband. Albertina's

correspondence with her husband shows her mood and feelings towards her imprisonment, unveiling the enduring belief in her commitment towards workers' rights which helped her to cope with the austere conditions of prison life.



'Albertina Bitelli and Her Husband, 1945. Courtesy of Albertina Bitelli.'

Anna and Albertina's writing also reveals how Cold War ideological rivalry was pervasive in women's lives, shaping their perceptions, memories and language, influenced by rhetorical Communist discourse and related symbols. In those years, the Communist press promoted an idealised view of the Soviet woman, seen as an emancipated woman. Nevertheless, Anna and Albertina seem to have been more influenced by a home-spun model of emancipated woman, mainly rooted in twentieth-century Bolognese history and characterised by an original work culture.

Political activism within the Party, the union and the UDI was considered emancipatory by Anna and Albertina, whose loyalty to Communism and the working-class cause was a crucial part of their identity, leading them to adhere to the model of the female Communist activist promoted by the Party. Anna and Albertina's writings show how the public and the private were interwoven in women's lives. Their enduring faith in the working class and the perception of their imprisonment as a sacrifice, a contribution to the cause of the working class, was combined with private feelings for their husbands, mothers and, in Anna's case, her daughter.

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NICHOLAS HERRIOT AND PAUL SENDZIUK

Becoming Activists: 1960s Student Radicalism at Flinders University

Distinguished guests attending Flinders University's opening ceremony on 25 March 1966 might have been concerned by the sound of firecrackers or the sight of a mock Soviet submarine floating in the recently filled lake. Having been excluded from the inaugural events, a small number of students had stayed through the afternoon in protest. In his history of the first twenty-five years of Flinders University, historian David Hilliard suggests that these 'commencement pranks' were an early 'indication that Flinders students were likely to be assertive and not inclined to pay much attention to traditional formalities.'

Certainly, the events of 25 March prefigured the tensions between dissenting students and university authorities that would come to define politics at Flinders during the next decade. Indeed, by the early 1970s, this new suburban university had become a cauldron of radical ideas. Instead of simply hanging out, smoking dope or chasing romance, as they were typically portrayed, many students were attending demonstrations, labouring over a hot Gestetner to print radical literature and, as one of them later recalled, trying to 'convince the world that it needed to change.'

Why did Flinders students choose to become political activists? We found an answer that illuminates one aspect of this story by exploring the personal experiences of radicals themselves, recorded through oral history interviews. Our interviewee cohort consisted of seven men and four women who were active participants in the student movement at Flinders University between 1969 and at least 1974. They represent a cross section of the radical political perspectives dominant among students at the time – Maoism, Trotskyism, Communism – and others who disagreed with these -isms. Their interview recordings have been deposited in the State Library of South Australia with the intention of assisting future scholars.

Prior to conducting the interviews, we had anticipated that the Vietnam War would unanimously be the radicalising factor for these former students. During their interviews, however, in detailed reflections on formative political experiences in their early lives, they indicated other influences. It is perhaps more appropriate to view the Vietnam War as a motor of dissent for young people who were often politically activated well before the height of the transnational anti-war movement.

When asked about her upbringing, Anni Browning recounted a visit to Paris with her parents during the uprising of May 1968. With great excitement, she recalled:

Looking out the window, seeing cars burnt and people tearing up the streets to throw rocks and build barricades ... I went to the Sorbonne to hear Sartre talking at one of the lectures there. It was really quite an extraordinary time to be in France.

Bruno Yvanovich could not identify a particular issue that caused him to take action. Instead, he detailed his upbringing as a Portuguese Catholic in the stratified British colony of Hong Kong. This experience fostered an 'enquiring mind' attuned to issues of social justice and inequality.

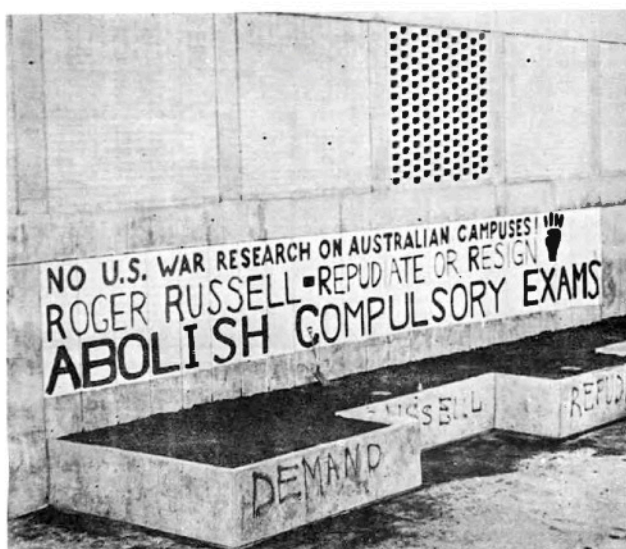
For other interviewees, similarly influential experiences were more local. Growing up in Broken Hill, Steve O'Brien remembered his burgeoning fascination with the 'forbidden fruit' of communism after discovering a pamphlet about Lenin in the school library. Bob Ellis had access to the Communist Party newspaper, *Tribune*, through his father, the president of the Whyalla Trades and Labour Council. This meant that Bob was 'already somewhat inclined towards left wing politics.'

For Chris Beasley, growing up in Alice Springs during the 1960s in a progressive family instilled an acute awareness of class and race: 'You couldn't grow up in that society at that time and not be aware that those things really mattered.' In Adelaide, high schooler Jeff Richards began his 'journey towards Marxism' when he discovered radical politics in 'the best-smelling bookshop in Adelaide,' the Maoist East Wind Bookshop in Rundle Street.

ISSUES OF THE OCCUPATION AT FLINDERS

Some people have been saying that the issue of history exams has been forgotten about - or even that it was only ever used as a pretext for getting into the Registry! We would say that the issue of exams hasn't been forgotten; but in the course of the occupation our understanding of the causes of the opposition to the students' demands has broadened and deepened. To begin with, most people saw the opposition as a rather simple matter: it was all caused by the arrogance and intransigence of one particular professor. However, we have come to realise that it isn't that simple: that we have to look at the whole nature of the University, and at the function which those in power wish it to have, and the role played in fulfilling that function. As a consequence, we have expanded our demands, so that they now are:

- No compulsory exams in History in 1974
- Student and staff determination of assessment procedures in all courses
- Education for people not profit



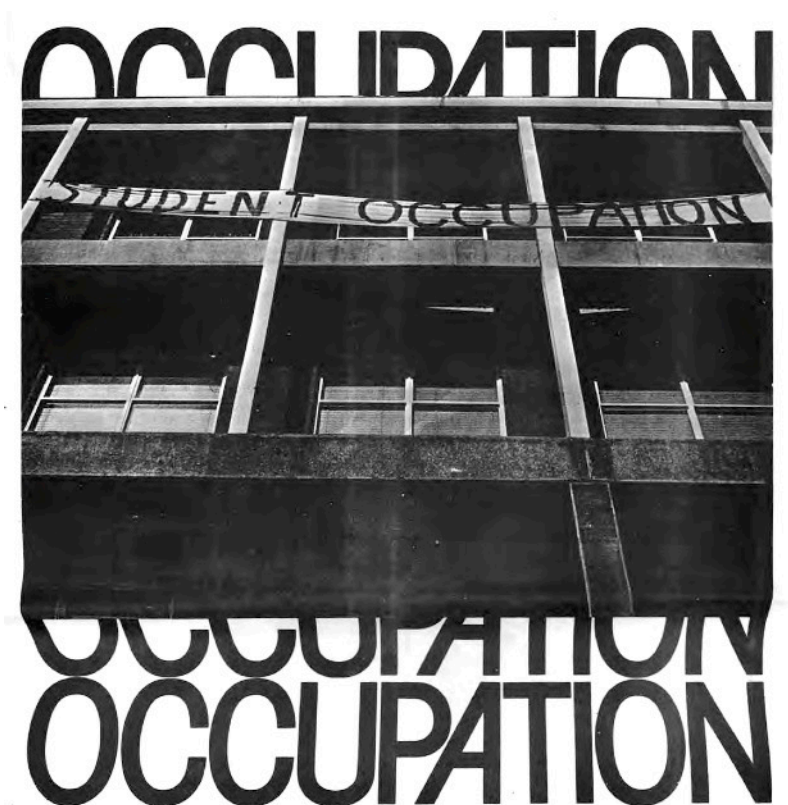
'Excerpt from *Occupation!*, Showing Graffiti on the Registry Building, 1974
Flinders University Archives Collection. Courtesy of Flinders University'

These reflections reveal the extent to which political radicalisation represents a process of evolution rather than moments of realisation while at university. All eleven interviewees already possessed a growing, if often inchoate, recognition of the need for social change before launching themselves into activism at Flinders.

Flinders University was South Australia's newest university, expected to draw its cohort from students living in Adelaide's southern suburbs. Proximity and convenience were expected to dictate choice. However, it was the experimental culture of this young institution that was a magnet for less traditional students who were receptive to more radical political and cultural

worldviews. Our oral history interviews highlighted the extent to which the progressive reputation of Flinders' curriculum was an influential factor in attracting what one interviewee described as 'weird and wonderful people' who would go on to become activists.

In recounting their strong desire to study at Flinders, many of our interviewees cast their enrolment as a conscious political choice. As school students, Jeff Richards and Steve O'Brien both 'wanted to go to Flinders.' They could possibly have gone to the older University of Adelaide, Jeff remembers, 'But we wanted to go to Flinders because it already had the reputation for radicalism.' Chris Beasley remembered, 'Flinders was seen as the new person in town and where interesting ideas and new subjects like sociology and that sort of subject would be taught.' She decided 'obviously, if I can get into university ... I will go to Flinders.'



Cover of *Empire Times*, Special Occupation Edition, 1974. Flinders University Archives Collection.
Courtesy of Flinders University.

So, part of the answer to the question of why Flinders students were radicalised is that some were predisposed to politics and self-selecting in their decision to attend the university. Understanding the motivations and journeys taken by these students helps historians to locate the previously under-examined South Australian student movement within a wider picture of Sixties protest.

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PHILLIP DEERY

Ric Throssell, ASIO and Soviet Espionage

As the Australian Security Intelligence Service (ASIO) continues to rehabilitate its reputation in the aftermath of the two Royal Commissions conducted by Mr Justice Hope in the 1970s and 1980s, it is easy to forget the dark and murky history of ASIO's counter-subversive operations in the early Cold War period. In his reports, Hope noted, but did not specify, ASIO's past transgressions, illegal practices, and prejudicial choice of targets. According to Hope, 'ASIO pursued radicals beyond what is required to obtain security intelligence relating to subversion', with the result that democratic dissent was equated with potential disloyalty.

One of those radicals pursued, and believed to be subversive, was Ric Prichard Throssell, the subject of this article. The Throssell case is one of the most controversial during Australia's Cold War. Adhering to ASIO's recommendation, the Department of External Affairs (DEA), for whom he worked as a diplomat, denied promotion and blocked advancements on the ground that he constituted a serious threat to national security. ASIO's conviction that he was a Soviet spy stymied his career, tarnished his reputation and stalked his life for decades.

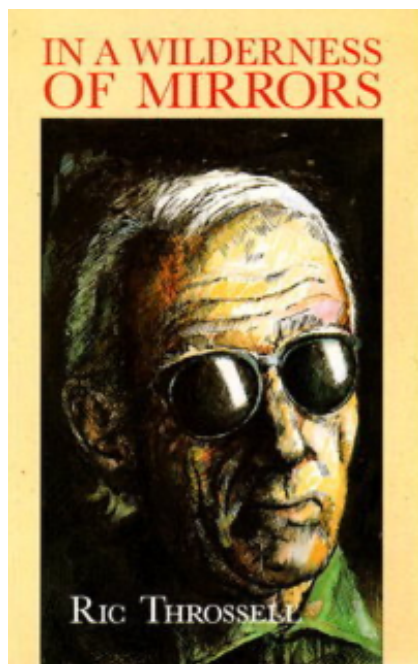


Original Portrait photograph of Australian Author and Playwright Ric Throssell taken by Gabe Carpay and restored by Bry Throssell.

The *Labour History* article argues that the allegations against Throssell were based on circumstantial evidence, recollections and guilt-by-association. They relied on three sources: Venona, the Petrovs, and the fact that his mother, Katharine Susannah Prichard, was a well-known member of the Communist Party. The first refers to encrypted cables sent from Moscow to its embassies in the West. They were broken, or decrypted, by United States Army Intelligence in the 1940s in an ultra-secret operation codenamed 'Venona'. The cables relating to Australia revealed a small network of agents within the DEA who passed classified information via their 'spymaster', Wally Clayton, to the Soviets. Despite the two oblique and unpersuasive references to Throssell in the Venona decrypts (unlike the direct connections made, for example, to Julius Rosenberg in the United States), ASIO suspected that Throssell was part of this network. Numerous historians have elevated this suspicion into fact.

The second source, the Petrovs, was even less convincing. After his defection in 1954, Vladimir Petrov recalled an unsuccessful attempt to establish contact with Throssell at a social function at the Soviet Embassy in 1953. Throssell didn't attend, Petrov didn't know what he looked like, and the plan was aborted. Evdokia Petrov, who also defected, informed ASIO debriefers that she had been told that Throssell was an active and conscious agent for the Soviets in Moscow and Rio de Janeiro. There were no incriminating documents or cables, only memories and hearsay – a deficiency highlighted by Throssell's counsel before the Royal Commission on Espionage hearings.

Punctuating Throssell's ASIO files are references to his prominent communist mother, the subject of no fewer than 16 security files. She provided the third element of his presumed guilt. As she was close to Clayton as well as her son, ASIO connected the dots: Ric supposedly divulged classified information to Katharine, who informed Wally, who in turn transmitted it to his contact in the Soviet Embassy. But, again, there was no documentary evidence. As I wrote in the article, inference, supposition and speculation are an insufficient basis for establishing culpability.



In A Wilderness of Mirrors is one of Ric's four novels. It was published in 1992.

Throssell was interviewed twice by ASIO and interrogated by the Petrov Royal Commission. The first interview exonerated him, finding him a 'loyal subject' and not pro-Russian. The second interview, relying on but not disclosing Venona, incriminated him. To the chagrin of ASIO, the royal commissioners contradicted this view. They wrote that the allegations against Throssell were characterised by inadequacy and 'remote hearsay' and too weak to conclude that he was a member of Clayton's espionage network. However, this favourable finding did not deter the Director-General of ASIO, Charles Spry, who insisted to successive DEA secretaries that Throssell was a security risk.

For the next thirty years, Throssell remained 'a person of interest' – his downgraded security status meant he could not secure a promotion nor find alternative employment. An ASIO officer told him in 1972 that there was 'never a closed door on this'. Throssell was left wandering in a wilderness of mirrors, never discovering the source of the allegations, never able to question or challenge them, and consigned to not knowing his crime. All he could do was to fight shadows. And the intensity of his frustration was matched by the blight over his life.

It was only in 1999, when he committed suicide, that an ASIO officer's comment that there was 'never a closed door on this' was rendered redundant. The door, however, was kept ajar by newspaper columnists and other commentators, such as Des Ball. My journal article cannot slam it shut. For there is still the problem that Throssell himself faced in his search for answers – as he put it, 'the reports that remained unrevealed, the undisclosed sources, the evidence that could not be questioned, could not be seen'. He was left wandering in a wilderness of mirrors. However, through a close examination of archival files, the weight of evidence leans heavily towards one inescapable conclusion: Throssell was a victim of innuendo, not a perpetrator of espionage.

The Hope Royal Commission defined subversion, which the *Australian Security Intelligence Organisation Act 1956* – introduced by the Menzies government to protect ASIO – never did. Hope restricted subversion to politically motivated violence or other related unlawful acts. ASIO's illegitimate war on subversives and its legitimate hunt for spies in the early Cold War resulted in Throssell becoming a long-term casualty. The reforms inaugurated by Hope came too late for him: the damage had been done.

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GREG PATMORE & MARK WESTCOTT

Credit Unions and Co-operative Education

Credit unions, which are financial co-operatives, played a significant role in the co-operative movements in Australia and North America. Credit unions in Australia arose after World War II to meet the credit needs of workers and provide an alternative to hire purchase and loan sharks. They formed the Credit Union Foundation of Australia (CUFA) in 1971 as the development arm of the Australian credit union movement, to promote credit unions in developing economies and within Australia among Indigenous and regional communities. One of CUFA's primary activities was the Development Education Program, which ran from 1991 to 2013. The structure of the Development Education Program was based on the Credit Union National Association Development Program in the US which commenced in 1982.

The Development Education Program became a platform for CUFA's international activities and shaped CUFA's engagement with credit unions both within Australia and the Pacific after 1991. It trained volunteers, Development Educators, to promote credit unions both within Australia and overseas. With the support of their credit unions, Development Educators provided the volunteer labour that became the cornerstone of CUFA's South Pacific activities. They worked to establish financial co-operatives, whilst aware of local cultural differences and the dangers of imposing one model based on the North American experience.

By 1992, 72 people had been through the Development Education Program with four from Fiji and one from Papua New Guinea. The Development Education Program expanded further to include participants from Western Samoa, the Solomon Islands, the Cook Islands, New Zealand (NZ) and Indonesia. By March 2005, 775 people, including 520 participants from Australian credit unions and 225 participants representing 25 Asia/Pacific countries, had passed through the 29 workshops held since 1991. At the 30th workshop held at the Lake Hume Resort in October 2005, virtually half of the 30 participants were international representatives, including delegates from NZ, Fiji, Thailand, Tonga, Bougainville and Cambodia. A large NZ contingent was underpinned by an annual scholarship program initiated by the New Zealand Association of Credit Unions and included a representative from the Māori Awhi Credit Union in Gisborne.

An example of their specific country activities was in Tuvalu, the former British territory of Ellis Islands over 5,000 kilometres north-west of Australia, with a population of over 9,000. Tuvalu had experience with co-operatives as early as the 1920s stemming from the trading in copra. As part of a visit to the Maritime Union of Australia, the Tuvalu Overseas Seamen's Union met with the Maritime Workers of Australia Credit Union in Sydney and the credit union subsequently agreed to provide \$30,000 to fund visits and training workshops to help establish a credit union. CUFA also provided supplementary funding and incorporated Tuvalu into CUFA's Pacific Training Program. The Tuvalu Maritime Credit Union was formed in May 1997 and within two years had 201 members, with \$37,000 AUD in assets and \$10,700 issued in loans to 42 members. This was achieved despite its remoteness and the unreliability of air services. A CUFA technical advisor provided training and assisted with auditing both the local seamen's and credit union's accounts. The technical advisor went on

to perform similar duties in Fiji and Tonga and was a facilitator in the Development Education Program workshops.

There were broader changes that ultimately led to the demise of the program. The deregulation of financial markets by the Hawke-Keating Labor Governments increased domestic competition among financial institutions and allowed foreign banks to operate in Australia. Credit unions lost their tax exemptions based on the mutuality principle and were required to register under the federal corporation's legislation with specific state credit union legislation repealed.

The increased legislative oversight of the credit unions created higher administrative costs for credit unions to ensure their compliance. These burdens reduced the extent that credit unions could engage volunteers to undertake community development. Smaller credit unions merged to obtain economies of scale and survive. There was a cultural shift away from 'members' toward 'customers' and credit unions became mutuals or member-owned banks.

There was a change in priorities for CUFA. It became less reliant on credit union funding, and there was a decline in volunteer involvement. CUFA increased its targeting of federal government overseas aid funding, which required different standards for the implementation of programs. Rather than volunteers, CUFA directly employed local staff in each country, which addressed the concerns about cultural sensitivity with local employees being familiar with local culture.

There was also a shift in focus away from credit union development to poverty alleviation after 2006 with new programs such as the Village Entrepreneur Initiative, where an Australian investor would link up with a local investor to develop a micro business that would allow the village entrepreneur to develop financial independence. A link remained to credit union development with the entrepreneurs being required to be members of credit unions to participate. There was some frustration with the Development Education Program inside CUFA, particularly around the benefit it created. Other approaches were seen as more effective financially, creating a greater engagement with the credit union movement. The Development Education Program began to wane and was finally wound up by 2013.

Co-operative education programs, such as the Development Education Program, have been a significant priority within the co-operative movement. It was enshrined as one of the original principles formulated by the Rochdale Pioneers in the UK and remains one of the current seven principles alongside training and information of the International Co-operative Alliance, the peak international co-operative organisation.

Co-operatives have historically spent part of their surpluses on educating a range of audiences, including elected officials, employees, members and the public. Some movements have their own co-operative colleges. Co-operative education influenced other education movements, such as the Workers' Educational Association. Education has been seen as a significant factor in explaining the spread of the co-operative movement. Conversely, the failure of some established co-operatives to commit sufficient resources to education can be seen as a significant factor in their demise.

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MALCOLM SAUNDERS AND NEIL LLOYD

Clerks, communism, and conflict

1945-54: a story from South Australia

At the height of the Cold War, most Australian union leaders encountered their most significant adversaries in their own trade union rather than, as was the case in the USA, from outside forces. This was certainly true for Harry Krantz (1919-2006), secretary of the South Australian branch of the Federated Clerks' Union (FCU). Krantz endured a many-years-long campaign, but the union eventually distinguished itself by being the only major state branch of the FCU to survive the anti-communist crusade.

The Clerks' was a particularly attractive target for anti-communists. Between 1945 and 1954 – and arguably much longer – the FCU was the union in South Australia the anti-communists most wanted to 'de-louse'. After enjoying extraordinary growth during and just after the war, the union had nearly 50,000 members nationwide making it, by early 1947, the fourth-largest union in Australia. Although it is unlikely Krantz was a Communist Party member, the views he espoused were 'indistinguishable from communists'. His steadfast support of the communists who dominated the union at the federal level from the early 1940s made his scalp a prized one for his anti-communist enemies.

Krantz's opponents in the state branch stemmed from three overlapping sources. The spearhead of the campaign was the semi-secret organisation, the Catholic Social Studies Movement (the Movement). Its members were dedicated to using trade union forums to oust communist and left-wing officials and replace them with people who were 'safe'. Another opponent was the Right of the Australian Labor Party (ALP), which between 1944 and 1946 was eager to participate in the anti-communist crusade then rapidly developing in the organised labour movement in South Australia. When relationships between the state ALP and the FCU worsened, the FCU disaffiliated from the ALP in 1946. Anti-communists then believed they had a clear mandate to return the union to the Labor fold.

Another source was the industrial groups established by most state branches of the ALP from 1945. These were, in effect, cells within unions ostensibly to educate workers about Labor's ideals but really to win back for that Party any unions that might have fallen under communist influence. Movement members played a major role in setting up the groups and tended to dominate them. Movement people were very active in the South Australian Clerks' years before a formal industrial group was set up in the union in the autumn of 1949.

From their base in the Commercial Clerks' Section – one of about ten sections in the union – Groupers harried Krantz and tried to remove him and his clique from office. At monthly branch council meetings – at which all sections were represented – and at half-yearly general meetings, they strove to have the union's rules amended to achieve their ends. One goal, for instance, was the abolition of secret postal ballots in union elections, the Groupers believing that they could more easily rally their supporters at general meetings. By 1949 the schism in the state branch was as wide and as bitter as it was in New South Wales and

Victoria and the Groupers were regularly winning 43-44% of union members' votes in some elections for office-bearers.

Yet the South Australian branch was able to buck the trend and resist this intense and highly-organised crusade. One reason lies in the way Krantz exploited his knowledge of union rules and used every trick in the book to frustrate the Groupers. For years the condemnation and abuse he heaped on the Groupers in print and at meetings was accompanied by constant denial, evasion, inaction, and obfuscation. Krantz denounced them as 'disruptors' and accused them of not even being bona fide unionists. Krantz's backers represented themselves as pioneers of the union who wanted to keep it free of political and religious sectarianism.



'Harry Krantz (right) with 'Big Jim' Bowditch (left), 1949
Bowditch was Secretary of Alice Springs Section FCU (SA)'. Courtesy of Library & Archives NT.

Krantz's constant outsmarting of the anti-communists peaked in July 1950 when the Groupers, intent on censuring and removing the executive, forced the calling of a special general meeting. In retrospect this special meeting, held at Adelaide's Tivoli Theatre, was the zenith of the Groupers' campaign. Of its drama and memorability, there can be no doubt.

A record crowd of nearly 650 attended the meeting, close to three times the previous highest attendance at a Clerks' meeting. But it was an anti-climax, because the showdown the Groupers had hoped for was forestalled. *Inter alia*, instead of allowing the Groupers to put their motion to the meeting, Krantz pre-empted them by instead moving a vote of confidence in the executive – a clear breach of the rules. After vehement protests from the Groupers, Krantz's motion was eventually decided on a show of hands and passed by 375 to 272. Expected to go on for at least a few hours, the meeting lasted a mere 75 minutes and, surprisingly, passed without violence.

The Groupers kept up intense pressure on the executive over the next year and a half via the letter columns of Adelaide's two daily newspapers and the State Industrial Court, sometimes winning small victories but most often suffering defeats. Many years later John Maynes, a leading Victorian Grouper and the union's long-time federal president (1954-92), admitted that the Groupers in South Australia had simply been unable to produce a leader who could match Krantz in ability.



'Crowded Foyer before the Tivoli Theatre Meeting, 13 July 1950. 'Happenings in Adelaide,' News (Adelaide), 14 July 1950, 12, Trove, <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/131133237>

Other factors were also at play. In October 1951, a month after South Australians had soundly rejected the Menzies' government's attempts to ban the Communist Party, the ALP in that state withdrew its support for the industrial groups. While some Groupers carried on regardless, many were discouraged. By the time the communist leaders of the FCU were ousted in New South Wales and Victoria in mid-1952, the anti-communists in South Australia were in no position to ride the wave, although a small but vocal group kept up the fight. In 1953, Krantz secured the approval of the union's branch council for the secretary to be elected for a six-year term, thus making his position near-impregnable.

By late 1954, the outcome was clear; Krantz had won. Communist influence in the South Australian branch of the Clerks' slowly ceased to be a major issue. Krantz's success in securing gains for the state's clerks since the early 1940s undoubtedly helped him too. And at all times, he had the support of a majority on the union's all-important branch council. But crucial was Krantz's cunning. A 'bush lawyer', he was thoroughly familiar with the union's rules and cleverly used them to frustrate his opponents. Krantz went on to oversee – some would say exert dictatorial control over – the union until he retired in 1984, by which time he had become the longest-serving trade union secretary in South Australia.

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PHILLIP DEERY

Curbing the Press: Macmillan, Menzies and National Security

On 29 August 1958, Michael Julian Brown was interrogated by two senior ASIO officers. He made a signed confession in which he stated that ‘over the last nine months I have been taking documents from my Section and selling them to a Ukrainian in Adelaide’. He said he met with the Ukrainian, whom he called ‘Leus’, on ‘about twenty occasions’ and that ‘LEUS and I both have a pro-Soviet outlook’. He added, ‘I don’t sort of regret what I have done but I regret being caught’.¹ Brown was a young RAF senior aircraftman at the Weapons Research Establishment at Salisbury, South Australia, where intermediate-range ballistic missiles were being developed. As a clerk he had access to classified technical information. The documents purloined were, according to Prime Minister Menzies, ‘top secret documents relating to guided missiles under test at Woomera’.²

I have written previously on the Brown case focusing, in part, on allegations that Brown’s espionage was enmeshed with an Adelaide-based Soviet spy ring targeting Woomera personnel.³ But this was written without access to a previously classified thick file held at the UK National Archives. That file reveals the extent to which the Menzies and Macmillan administrations sought to silence all publicity. This is the story, then, of an attempted cover up at the highest levels of government. It illustrates the disjuncture between official statements and actual concerns. The latter are revealed only through correspondence and cables, all labelled ‘Top Secret’, contained in the file.

The most compelling reason for seeking secrecy was outlined by Menzies in an ‘urgent message’ to ‘My dear Harold’ (Prime Minister Macmillan):

I understand your burdens and have no desire to add to them. But as you have so dramatically improved our confidential relations with [the] United States I think I should tell you of a matter which has arisen in Australia which unless it is swiftly and effectively handled may cut across some of your own invaluable work.⁴

¹ Appendix ‘E’ to PM1/TS/8875, 15 November 1958, The National Archives, UK (TNA): AIR 19/950. The interview was led by G.R. (Ron) Richards, ASIO’s deputy director-general.

² Personal telegram, Menzies to Eric Harrison (Australian High Commissioner, London), 2 September 1958, TNA: DEFE 13/17. The documents included Red Duster pre-acceptance and acceptance trial reports, Red Duster technical notes, volumes 1–6, and the layout of Woomera. Telegram, Charles Spry (ASIO) to Roger Hollis (MIS), para. 7(f), 2 September 1958, TNA: AIR 19/950. Red Duster was the initial name for Bloodhound, an operational surface-to-air missile system.

³ Phillip Deery, *Spies and Sparrows: ASIO and the Cold War* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2022), chapter 6. This article will not discuss the veracity or otherwise of such allegations.

⁴ Personal telegram, No. 1965, Menzies to Macmillan, 15 September 1958, TNA: AIR 19/950. There are no folio numbers in this 580-page undigitised file that was copied on my behalf in December 2022.

The 'matter' was Brown's 'treachery' and the 'confidential relations' referred to Anglo-American cooperation in the field of atomic weaponry. Macmillan met with President Eisenhower in top secret talks in mid-1958 and commenced this 'invaluable work': delicate negotiations to restore the exchange of classified information that was abruptly halted by the *McMahon Act* of 1946. Potentially the negotiations cut through American resistance to collaboration. But such advances could very easily be jeopardised by reports of inadequate security at a joint British-Australian weapons testing site. As Menzies continued: 'comments upon laxity of security would be devastating. What is much more serious the Americans might get on the high horse and Great Britain would be the sufferer', since is that 'treachery' could quickly 'broaden out into sweeping allegations about security and secrecy generally'.⁵

But it was not just Great Britain that would suffer. Since 1948, the United States had imposed an embargo on the transmission to the Chifley Labor government of classified information, especially concerning atomic research development, due to security concerns. Only recently had there been a partial lifting of the embargo. This, too, could be jeopardised. A day after his telegram to Macmillan, Menzies met with the British High Commissioner in Canberra, who reported that Menzies was:

very worried about the situation and extremely angry that it should have occurred. He explained forcibly the evil consequences this could have for Australia. As you know when he took office Australia under a Labour [sic] Government had come to be regarded by the Americans as a major security risk. He and his Government have laboured to put this right and the Americans are now reassured ... [But] these serious leakages ... are bound to have repercussions and greatly damage the relations Australians have so carefully built up with the Americans.⁶

The Macmillan and Menzies governments, therefore, shared a vital, vested interest in the Americans remaining ignorant of this incident. At risk to both was access to American secrets. To prevent such 'evil consequences', publicity must be suppressed.

Once it was decided to repatriate Brown to the UK for a court martial, the British Secretary of State for Air cabled the commanding officer at Salisbury, Group Captain Carey, that Brown was to be strictly guarded to prevent 'communication with any outside source'. More pointed was the instruction that 'no statement of any kind is to be made to the Press'. It was impressed upon Carey to keep 'all information on need to know basis' and that it was 'essential that nothing of this matter is known to [the] Press'.⁷

Between his arrest and extradition, Brown escaped from RAF custody. He was on the run for two days, heading towards Sydney, until captured near the South Australian/Victorian border. When charged he confessed not only to car theft but also to selling official secrets and receiving £200, consistent with what he had previously told ASIO.⁸ While Brown was still at large, a 'deeply distressed' Menzies cabled Macmillan. He informed him that 'things have gone from bad to worse' in what was a 'deplorable development'. Menzies' language was blunt

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Lord Carrington (High Commissioner to Australia), Canberra, to C.G. Costley-White (Head, Commonwealth Relations Office), London, 17 September 1958, TNA: DEFE 13/172.

⁷ Top Secret cablegram, UK Eyes Only, 17 September 1958, TNA: AIR 19/950. A similar message, copied to the Under Secretary of State, was sent on 23 September ('Essential that Press learn nothing of the matter').

⁸ Record of conversation with Detective Sergeant Jones, Renmark Police, 17 September 1958, National Archives of Australia (NAA): A6119, 5247, folios 46-8.

because he was angry.⁹ Brown's escape confirmed his view that 'your Air Force people' at Edinburgh airfield base, where Brown was in custody, 'have no conception of the seriousness of the position' or 'the gravity of this matter'. Unless Brown was 'collected within the next 24 hours his Communist friends may be able to arrange for his final escape'.¹⁰ Communist sympathy was an issue. Menzies continued, 'I am sorry to tell you that within the last few days my Security people have already detected several R.A.F. members with distinct Communist associations'.¹¹ But his anxiety about the glare of publicity was more immediate: 'Unless the most stringent measures are taken at once it seems clear to me that the story will come out and when it does the effects will be entirely evil'. The story will become 'world news and have serious effects in America'.¹² Domestic political imperatives were also at play. Menzies told the Acting High Commissioner in Canberra that he was 'also most concerned at effect of disclosures in present pre-election situation'.¹³ The federal election was only two months away, scheduled for 22 November 1958.

Brown arrived in England on 29 September and was transferred to the West Drayton RAF station in Middlesex, where he was detained in isolation for the next 72 days. Initially, nothing filtered out. The commanding officer at West Drayton was instructed to 'take all precautions to ensure that there is no disclosure to the Press or general public'.¹⁴ Consistent with Macmillan's assurance that 'we shall do our part to play the whole affair as quietly as possible',¹⁵ pre-emptive action was planned in the event of questions from reporters. The Under-Secretary of State wrote:

It is conceivable, though I hope improbable, that you will get Press enquiries about an airman with the above name who has been charged with a disciplinary offence in Australia. If, and only if, you are called to deal with such enquiries, you should be guided by the Press brief attached. You should avoid all speculation or any suggestion that this is the prelude to some dramatic disclosure.¹⁶

The press brief, one-sentence long, stated that an aircraftman had been brought home, was in custody and had been charged with conduct prejudicial to good order and Air Force discipline.

⁹ As the UK Acting High Commissioner reported after meeting with the Prime Minister, Menzies was 'very worried' and 'extremely angry', and 'explained forcibly the evil consequences' of the situation. Telegram, 17 September 1958, TNA: AIR 19/950.

¹⁰ 'Cypher Emergency', Menzies to Macmillan, 16 September 1958, TNA: AIR 19/950.

¹¹ Brown told ASIO that he had joined the British Young Communist League in 1953 and since then retained a 'sympathetic interest in Communism'; he displayed 'good knowledge of' and 'clear support for' Soviet foreign policy, and had once been disciplined for 'painting up pro-Soviet slogans'. Telegram, Charles Spry to Roger Hollis, para. 14, 2 September 1958, TNA: AIR 19/950.

¹² Menzies to Macmillan, 16 September 1958, TNA: AIR 19/950.

¹³ Telegram to Commonwealth Relations Office, London, 17 September 1958, TNA: AIR 19/950.

¹⁴ 'Instructions for the Security of 4168738 S.A.C. BROWN M.J.', R.A.C. Carter, Air Commodore, to C.F. Babbage, Wing Commander, 27 September 1958, TNA: AIR 19/950.

¹⁵ Telegram No. 1204, Macmillan to Menzies, 5 September 1958, TNA: AIR 19/950.

¹⁶ Correspondence, Under-Secretary of State to Duty Press Officer, CIO, 17 September 1959, TNA: AIR 19/950.

Only Brown's father, a retired naval officer, was informed of his son's arrest but in the same brief, general and anodyne terms. If the story leaked, 'something more' may be given to him.¹⁷

The main reason both governments wished Brown to stand trial in England, not Australia, was to minimise any 'dramatic disclosure'. In camera proceedings, whether civil court or court martial, were permitted under British law, not Australian. Moreover, he could be prosecuted in England under inconsequential charges, whereas in Australia the as-yet unidentified Ukrainian recipient would be brought into the picture along with damaging open court allegations of a Soviet spy ring.¹⁸ Indeed, 'in order to minimise the risk of publicity', Downing Street recommended to Canberra that proceedings not be instituted against the Ukrainian.¹⁹

Notwithstanding all attempts to maintain secrecy, the story was leaked. The Information Division of the Home Office was telephoned three times by the defence correspondent of the *Daily Mail*, Noel Monks, on Friday 10 October. On each occasion, Monks was told 'we had nothing to give him'. He was seeking confirmation of 'a good story we have got from our Scotland Yard man' (the initial telephone conversation was paraphrased) that an aircraftman passed 'highly secret information to do with the Woomera range ... to a spy ring'. A Ukrainian was mentioned, as were the numerous telegram exchanges between Menzies and Macmillan. This was highly classified intelligence and Whitehall was alarmed. The reference to 'our Scotland Yard man' was considered a cover for someone 'familiar with all the facts' within a 'narrow circle' inside its own ranks.²⁰ There is no further reference to the identity or motivation of this whistle-blower.

On Monday 13 October the story broke. Under the headline 'Spy Hunt at Woomera Base' the *Daily Mail* published an incomplete story of the affair. Over the next two days, the *Daily Telegraph* (which 'managed to tap, perhaps, the same source') was more expansive: it included Brown's name, the charges against him, the possibility of 'an organised espionage network' with 'Communist agents', cooperation between British and Australian security services, and reference to the prime ministerial communications.²¹ Downing Street went into damage control. It issued a short, bland press statement that included the comment that no further statement can be made because investigations were still proceeding. A memorandum entitled 'The Drill' was circulated. The sixth point was 'To enquirers asking for more than the statement gives - nothing to add'. (Despite this, advice continued to be offered into November on how to field questions from the press, which 'are showing renewed interest in the Brown case.'²² The evening the story broke, Macmillan telegraphed Menzies with the press statement 'which I

¹⁷ Minute, A.L.M. Cary to Private Secretary, Under-Secretary of State, 9 September 1958, TNA: AIR 19/950. When the story did leak, Brown was told 'I am sorry I cannot be more specific at present'. Correspondence, M. McF. Davis to C.H. Brown, 13 October 1958, TNA: AIR 19/950. When Brown Snr received the first letter, he replied that his son needed 'mental treatment, not punishment' and that his mother had long been committed to a mental institution. Correspondence from C.H. Brown, 11 September 1958, TNA: AIR 19/950.

¹⁸ In fact, the RAF Holding Unit at Edinburgh was instructed by London to frame 'suitable and innocuous holding charges which will not create publicity'. Telegram, 3 September 1958, TNA: AIR 19/950.

¹⁹ Notes of meeting, 10 Downing Street, 13 September 1958, TNA: AIR 19/950.

²⁰ Memorandum, M.J. Dean to Sir Norman Brook, 14 October 1958, TNA: AIR 19/950.

²¹ 'Spy Ring Inquiry in Australia', *Daily Telegraph*, 14 October 1958, p. 1; 'Spies May Have Black Knight Data. Serious Concern Over Leakages', *Daily Telegraph*, 15 October 1958, p. 1.

²² Memorandum, E. Broadbent (Private Secretary to Secretary of State), 6 November 1958, TNA: AIR 19/950.

hope will concentrate attention on our [British] responsibility as much as possible'.²³ Menzies was not appeased.

Thanks to the lead of the *Daily Mail*, a mainstream Adelaide newspaper felt unconstrained to publish, on its front page, the first of several stories on 'The Woomera Spy Drama'. It contained this remarkable statement:

At the personal request of the Prime Minister, who pleaded that national interest was involved, this story has been withheld by *The News* for five weeks. Publication in Fleet Street today frees *The News* to give [the] inside story of the Woomera spy drama.²⁴

The parallel story of Menzies' invoking 'national interest' to squash publication is intriguing. The editor of *The News* was a left-leaning journalist, Rohan Rivett. According to the Canberra correspondent of *The News* and later editor-in chief of the *Sydney Morning Herald*, David Bowman, Rivett was 'anything but an admirer of Menzies'. Moreover, he claimed, although Menzies was a friend of Sir Keith Murdoch, he was 'much more likely' to speak to son Rupert. By 1958 as editor-in chief and proprietor, Rupert was 'firmly in the saddle' and his decision on this issue would certainly have been carried out.²⁵ Rupert Murdoch, on the other hand, has no recollection of any direct approach to him from Menzies in 1958; 'in fact, I have no memory of ever in my life having met or spoken to Mr Menzies, unless I met him with my father when I was a child'. Indeed, Murdoch commented that his relationship with Menzies was one of 'mutual dislike'.²⁶

However, according to still-classified ASIO records, Menzies met Murdoch personally, appealed to his patriotism to withhold publication, and Murdoch agreed.²⁷ Menzies' version is a little different, suggesting that he pressured Rivett, not Murdoch. 'I was able to get it excluded from publication by getting the editor of the evening paper whose man had secured the story to refrain from publishing it'.²⁸ The Acting British Prime Minister, in response, applauded Menzies for his successful effort to 'keep secret what has taken place'.²⁹ In any case, if *The News* had not acquiesced, it is possible that compliance may have been enforced through the D-notice system which covered 'UK atomic tests in Australia'.³⁰

But the genie was out. In addition to *The News*, the *Adelaide Advertiser* and numerous Melbourne and Sydney papers (relying on London newspaper reports) carried the story on their front pages. The *Advertiser*, for the first time, referred to Brown's 'dramatic' escape from custody'.³¹ Menzies' words to Macmillan a month earlier when he first learnt the Adelaide press had got hold of the story (but had agreed to suppress it) – 'I regret to tell you that things

²³ Macmillan to Menzies, 13 October 1958, TNA: AIR 19/950.

²⁴ *The News*, 13 October 1958, p. 1.

²⁵ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 22 January 2000, p. 1.

²⁶ 'Murdoch denies that he stifled spy story', *Age*, 24 January 2000, p. 4.

²⁷ 'Note for Record Purposes', 15 September 1958, ASIO records, in David Horner, *The Spy Catchers: The Official History of ASIO 1949–1963, Volume 1* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 2014), pp. 481–2.

²⁸ Menzies to Macmillan, Telegram No. 824, 16 September 1959, TNA: DEFE 13/17.

²⁹ Lord Chancellor (David Fyfe) to Menzies, 16 September 1958, TNA: AIR 19/950.

³⁰ See Elizabeth Tynan, *Atomic Thunder: The Maralinga Story* (Sydney: NewSouth, 2016), p. 215.

³¹ 'New Disclosure In Case of Airman', *Advertiser*, 17 October 1958, p. 1. The front-page headline of the *Sydney Sun* (14 October 1958) read 'Security Shock – Red Spy Ring Fear'.

have gone from bad to worse' – now applied with far more force.³² British politicians fell back on obfuscation. When asked in parliament about the 'concern' following press reports of leakages of classified information about ballistic projects, and the sufficiency of security arrangements, the British Minister for Supply, Aubrey Jones, gave a perfunctory and duplicitous reply: 'I am perplexed about the causes of certain kinds of Press publicity. I am satisfied that there have been no leakages of the kind mentioned in the Question.'³³ In Australia, parliamentary discussion was avoided and reaction to local press reports was limited to the Minister for Supply, Athol Townley, noting that *The News* had placed 'national interest above its own' in postponing publication of its scoop.³⁴ Menzies was silent.

Notwithstanding the flurry of press reports about the Brown case, the British and Australian governments' early policy of containment appeared to work. There is no record of United States anxiety or that the door to the 'American cupboard' (as Menzies put it in relation to access) was shut.³⁵ Nor, other than one article in the communist press, was there any reference to the security breach in the run-up to the 1958 federal election.³⁶ The fact that Brown was court-martialled on minor charges – possession, not transmission, of classified documents resulting in a light sentence (one year's jail and RAF discharge 'with ignominy') – was a deliberate strategy to 'limit ourselves'.³⁷ This, too, undercut exposure to Washington's potential alarm about lax security. Meanwhile, ASIO's hunt for the Ukrainian continued quietly.

This article is, in a sense, a case study of how governments can hush up or spin a story, sometimes with the collusion of the press, so that damaging consequences are minimised. It is only when archival files are released, many years later, that we are able to discern a fuller and more accurate picture than the one publicly known at the time. A contemporary example exemplifies this. There is much incomplete information or disinformation about Australia and East Timor: what the government knew about the Indonesian invasion and the murder of the Balibo Five, and specific details about the bugging of both the Timorese cabinet offices during negotiations over Timor Gap petroleum and gas fields, and the Canberra office of Witness K's lawyer Bernard Collaery. Eventually, when 'national security' is no longer invoked, archival releases may yield unpalatable truths.

Phillip is an emeritus professor of history at Victoria University, Melbourne. His books examining the Cold War are Spies and Sparrows: ASIO and the Cold War (Melbourne, 2022), Red Apple: Communism and McCarthyism in Cold War New York (New York, 2014, 2016), and the co-authored The Age of McCarthyism: A Brief History with Documents, Third Edition (Boston, 2016), and Espionage and Betrayal: Behind the Scenes of the Cold War (Milan, 2011). His books examining Australian labour history include Labour in Conflict: the 1949 Coal Strike (Sydney, 1978), and Fighting Against War: Peace Activism in the Twentieth Century, co-edited with Julie Kimber (Melbourne, 2015). His next book, on Russians and Cold War Australia (edited with Sheila Fitzpatrick), will be published in 2024.

³² Menzies to Macmillan, Telegram No. 824, 16 September 1959, TNA: DEFE 13/17.

³³ *Hansard*, House of Commons: Oral Answers, 3 November 1959, clipping in TNA: AIR 19/950.

³⁴ 'Rocket leak alleged', *The Sun*, 14 October 1958, p. 3.

³⁵ A Memorandum of Understanding between Macmillan and Eisenhower was signed in March 1960; see <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1958-60v07p2/d371>.

³⁶ 'Menzies' election 'Rabbit': Woomera Arrest Has A Strong Petrov Smell', *Tribune*, 15 October 1959, p. 1

³⁷ 'Draft Personal Message from the Prime Minister to Mr. Menzies' [nd, November 1958], TNA: AIR 19/950.

MICHAEL MCKERNAN

Review: Ross McMullin, *Life So Full of Promise*

Ross McMullin, *Life So Full of Promise. Further Biographies of Australia's Lost Generation* (Scribe: Melbourne, 2023). pp. 640. Paper \$49.99.

This is a long book. The text runs to 562 pages and there are many pages of notes. A sequel to *Farewell, Dear People*, the current book features the stories of three Australian soldiers, the first book told the stories of eight. In effect, *Life So Full of Promise* is three full-scale biographies packaged as one book.

The three men, Brian Pockley of Sydney, from a wealthy background, was a talented footballer and an excellent student. At Sydney's Shore school and at St Paul's at the University of Sydney, he was always a leader in his classes and on the football field.

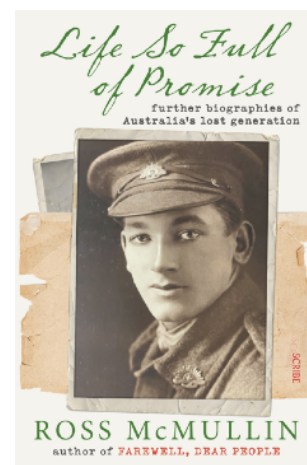
Norman Callaway, a working class boy from Hay in New South Wales, relocated with his family to Waverley in Sydney to advance his career as a cricketer. A prodigiously talented youngster, in grade cricket in Sydney, he was a stand-out and progressed to play for New South Wales.

Murdoch ('Doch') McKay was from a wealthy Bendigo family, his grandfather established the *Bendigo Advertiser*, which his father and two uncles managed with great success. Again a prodigiously talented cricketer, he was also a first-class student, winning academic glory as a student at Ormond College within the University of Melbourne.

Towards the end of his book Ross McMullin speculates that had McKay survived the First World War, such were his abilities and leadership skills, he might easily have been Prime Minister of Australia. Introducing Robert Menzies into his account McMullin says that like Menzies, a few years later, McKay won the Victorian Supreme Court prize for the best final year law student.

Like Menzies, McKay was a sought-after barrister almost as soon as he began practising. McMullin wonders if Menzies's record-breaking stint as Australia's longest serving prime minister might well have been challenged by McKay or any number of other talented Australians who lost their lives in war. McMullin is asking readers to think of what grievous loss of talent the nation endured as a result of the war. This is a meditation for which there can be no answer but the question may unsettle many readers.

Ross McMullin is one of Australia's leading historians. This book shows his skills in so many different ways. He shows himself to be a sympathetic and skilled sports historian. He is also a skilled social historian dealing adeptly with the complexities of family, of community, of love, of boys growing to maturity, of all the arrangements of Australian society in the early years of the twentieth century.



He also writes so well about battle, one of the hardest challenges a writer can face. In his searing anger at the waste of Australian lives at Fromelles and Bullecourt, thrown away by incompetent generals, McMullin shows his detailed understanding of what was happening.

His account of the battle for Pozzières Ridge, where Doch McKay died, is a wonderfully clear account of a battle that was so dreadfully confused and profoundly difficult to step through. At a crucial point in the battle, the Australians were confused and in danger of being slaughtered as they bunched and fell upon one another. McKay became the leader, sorting out the mess and resurrecting the charge. He died leading his men from the front. The success of the battle is due to him.

Charles Bean acknowledged that in his official history. Readers may wonder what McMullin adds to the now-accepted account of Australia at war. The answer lies, I think, in the intimate understanding readers gain of national and personal loss. Bean tells us that but this book's impact, being so intensely personal, is so much greater. If there is to be another book in this series, I would like Ross McMullin to apply the same techniques to Australian women at war.

Why did these men enlist? For Pockley and McKay, it was an enlistment bred into them from an early age by an overwhelming sense of duty. Pockley, though a young doctor, enlisted as soon as it was possible and was near the very first of the Australians to be killed in the war as a member of the Australian Naval and Military Expeditionary Force to German New Guinea. For Norman Callaway, his enlistment was the result of the intense pressure exerted on leading sportsmen to give up their games for the real game of war. Had he been less prominent, he would have enjoyed the space to make up his own mind. Norman Callaway died at Bullecourt.

Long though this book is, reading it will repay the effort in spades. Readers will appreciate the prodigious research which underlines it. They will marvel at McMullin's skill as a writer and they will be forced to think of the most serious question of them all: was it in any way worth it? Bean did not, could not, even suggest that question.

Readers will know the statistics: that 60 000 Australians lost their lives to the war; that at least 150 000 Australians returned home severely wounded. *Life So Full of Promise* takes readers behind these statistics. Three lives are presented in such compelling and, perhaps, loving detail that readers come to know the true cost of war.

Doch McKay, marrying only days before his departure, wrote so lovingly to his wife from the front. His only ambition in life, he said, was to enjoy a happy family life at home. This was denied him. Ross McMullin does not flinch in describing the agony of grief in the homes these three men left behind. Not only was the nation denied its potential leaders, parents, wives and girlfriends were denied those around whom their lives revolved. The picture of grief endured until death by Norman Callaway's parents will haunt most readers long after they put this book down.

Life So Full of Promise is Australian history at its very best.

Michael McKernan is a professional writer, reviewer, and commentator in the area of Australian history. He has written about war and society, the region, sport, and Australian politics. He was a senior lecturer in Australian history at the University of New South Wales before accepting the position of deputy director at the Australian War Memorial. Now working as a consultant historian, he is the author or editor of more than 20 books, including The Australian People and the Great War, This War Never Ends, and Victoria at War: 1914-1918.

DAVID FABER

Review: Alison Pennington, *Gen F'd? How Young Australians Can Reclaim Their Uncertain Futures*

Alison Pennington, *Gen F'd? How Young Australians Can Reclaim Their Uncertain Futures* (Hardie Grant Books: Melbourne, 2023). pp. 144. Paper \$24.99.

Historians will tell you that the world is made by big blocs of different people with differing interests finding commonality and moving together as one.

Alison Pennington

Alison Pennington MA is a proud alumnus of a public high schooling, the foundation of her subsequent tertiary education in social science method at the University of Adelaide and the famed University of Sydney School of Political Economy. She has risen from the ranks of the people in the hard school of the battle of ideas. She has publicly thanked her Woodville High secondary teachers for instilling in her that hard work and acumen can prosper and compensate for the lack of the unfair advantages of old school tie, private school, inside running.

The success of steadily growing fame has not spoiled her, as anyone who has met her and heard her speak can attest. She remains a genuine person who has not forgotten the Adelaide Western suburbs where she came from and to which she frequently returns to keep in touch with family and friends. She remembers well her years of insecure, entry level and casual employment. She still holds loyalty to the One True Religion of Port Power.

This compact analysis of the lived experience of 'millennial' Australian youth, and by extension, us all, on the neo-liberal labour market, is no nostalgic recollection of the better days of yesteryear. It starts from accurately documented recognition of exploitation in 'the gig economy', beautifully conveyed and artfully sprinkled with statistics. But Pennington knows that only a constructive, optimistic prognosis can justify a diagnosis. So, she focuses on divining practicable paths ahead in the years to come.

A key finding is that a liveable Australian future for the people of this country begins with the rebuilding of unionism amongst us. This reflects her past experience as a union



organiser. She calls for refurbished, more youth-friendly labour institutions and a rejuvenated Fair Go, returned to the heart of national life, reminiscent of Franklin Delano Roosevelt's New Deal. The New Deal helped pull the United States out of the Great Depression. We, too, need a renewal of key ancestral values, job security and sustainable prosperity.

The labour turn to politics of the 1890s arose from a similar phase of rebuilding the movement against industrial setbacks. What has succeeded once can succeed if you properly account for historical uniqueness. Addressing adversity with an optimistic spirit, with one arm tied behind your back, but ever onward and upward, 'resilience' wins in the end, as on the footy field. As the late great socialist and Royal Commissioner Elliott Johnston QC used to say: Excelsior!

This stupendous little book, as the world-famous economist Yanis Varoufakis writes, is 'packed with insights on how this generation might earn a shot at a future worth living for.' It is an absolute joy to read and supremely accessible. It is as if she has modelled her prose on the direct simplicity of a Hemingway and the subtlety of a Scott Fitzgerald. If more of us wrote as well as she does, we would be more powerful and persuasive. Her telling points are routinely made in simple, plain English sentences, varied with basic, recurrent dependent clauses. It is short, to the point and expressively and discretely diplomatic without pulling punches, for example, when calling for a turn away from the atomistic, neo-liberal pitfalls of identity politics towards a resurgence of solidarity and collectivism.

Read this breezy, heartening, timely book, and recommit to the struggle. Buy a copy for a young friend or anyone interested in demystified economics. Remember that labour history is full of positive precedents for resistance to rapaciously exploitative capitalism, even against the odds. Such are the conditions of class struggle. And the battle of ideas in which this robust writing engages is a key part. Respectful of history and aware of its literature, Pennington is well placed, for example, to differentiate the 'wage-push' inflation of the 1970s from the greed-driven phenomenon driving the current cost of living crisis.

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MATTHEW MERCER

Revolutionary Rehearsal: The 1912 Brisbane General Strike

The 1912 Brisbane general strike was a dramatic chapter in Australian labour history, as one of the few moments in which working class revolution presented itself as a serious threat to the capitalist establishment. The strike ultimately went down in defeat but posed the potential to escalate in a more radical direction at various points. This article asks if the strike was a revolutionary threat and why it was treated as one by the Queensland state government and employers.

The decade prior to 1912 had seen an uptick in the strength of industrial unionism in Queensland. The growing momentum of the union movement, particularly with the hard-won victory of the 1911 Sugar Strike, produced a feeling of intense optimism among Queensland unionists. This optimism found its mirror image in the concern of employers and the Queensland government, who increasingly concluded that unionism in Queensland had to be crushed. Premier Digby Denham had previously attempted to check unionism's growth by attacking its legal rights to organise. These years of tension set the stage for a generalised conflict over the right to unionism in Queensland.



Australian Tramway Employees Association badge. c/o The Australian Tramway Employees Strike in January 1912 (pdf) - The Brisbane Tramway Museum Society.

The general strike itself emerged out of a dispute between the Australian Tramway Employees' Association and the Brisbane Tramway Company. Four hundred and eighty tramway workers donned their union badges on 18 January and were suspended by the intransigently anti-union company manager, Joseph Badger. Badger's actions were interpreted by much of the union movement as pre-empting sweeping attacks on unionism across Queensland. To confront the danger, all forty-three Queensland unions struck on the 30th, bringing out over twenty thousand workers.¹ In initiating a general strike, the union leaders had unleashed a conflict which brought much more than unionism into question.

The general strike forced the emergence of important questions around political power and economic control, but not on an abstract or ideological basis. Rather, it was the social dynamics unleashed by the strike which caused these questions to arise. The concrete, economic pressures levied upon the strike movement compelled the newly-formed Strike Committee headed by Queensland union officials to make incursions into the arena of political power and economic control. These incursions presented a de facto threat to capitalism, regardless of the intentions of the Strike Committee's leaders. They signalled the potential for the Brisbane strike to mount a revolutionary challenge to the State.

¹ Denis Murphy, *The Big Strikes: Queensland 1889-1965* (St Lucia, Qld: University of Queensland Press, 1983), 120-124.

With economic life at a standstill, the Strike Committee was compelled to restart some aspects of production and distribution under its own auspices. This was partly in order to ensure that the necessities of life were still provided to Brisbane, but it also served a functional purpose for the strike, to guard against the possibility that the workers would be starved into submission. Dozens of butchers, bakers, cafes, restaurants, grocers, and hairdressers reopened only under conditions set by the Strike Committee.² As a Strike Committee permit issued to an unknown business ordered:

Sir, - The provisions governing the enclosed permit are as follows:-

(1.) All work to be carried out solely by Unionists.

(2.) The said Unionists not to receive any remuneration direct from you, but such remuneration to be forwarded to the Strike Committee, who will pay strike allowance to such employees on application, providing they produce fidelity vouchers signed by you. Any infringement of the above provisions will render the permit liable to forfeiture. The Committee hold the right for the withdrawal at any time of this permit.

J.A. MOIR, Sec.³

Various permits and exemptions were granted by the Strike Committee to authorise the continuation of work. An extended episode saw the manufacture of ice for hospitals disrupted by the strike, with ice production and delivery then restarted with union labour.⁴ At the Brisbane General Hospital, the Strike Committee made an offer to continue construction on an urgently needed pavilion under union provisions, which was denied by the employing contractor.⁵ A permit of particular importance was granted to the Mount Crosby engineers to ensure the continued supply of water to Brisbane.⁶ The Committee even distributed coupons which could be exchanged for foodstuffs at union run shops in place of paper money. These interventions were pragmatic but pointed in the direction of a far more radical possibility – the emergence of an embryonic dual power in Brisbane.

The Brisbane general strike predated Vladimir Lenin's theory of 'dual power' by half a decade, yet the concept holds relevance in identifying the dynamics that the Strike Committee had unknowingly set in motion. The essence of a dual power situation is the 'destruction of the social equilibrium [which has] split the state superstructure. It arises where the hostile classes are already each relying upon incompatible government organisations ... which jostle against each other at every step in the sphere of government.'⁷

The Strike Committee in Brisbane was certainly discussed in such terms by those hostile to it as a 'rival and hostile authority, which had taken upon itself to ... make and enforce its own laws.'⁸ The key governmental function in dispute was the regulation of the economy. When an organisation like the Strike Committee begins to determine the conditions of economic production across society, even if in an informal or ad hoc manner, there is certainly an

² Combined Unions Strike Committee, 'Important to Unionists,' Official Bulletin, No. 18, 20 February 1912, Official Strike Bulletin, Number 1-77, Microfilm, MIC3625, Fryer Library, The University of Queensland Library (Hereafter, UQL).

³ Strike Committee permit, date unknown, TLC Collection, UQFL118, Album 5, Fryer Library, UQL.

⁴ 'Other Incidents - Exemptions and Permits,' *The Telegraph*, 2 February 1912, Strike Press Cuttings, F2285, Fryer Library, UQL.

⁵ 'Hospital and Strike,' *The Telegraph*, 16 February 1912, Strike Press Cuttings, F2285, Fryer Library, UQL.

⁶ 'Other Incidents,' *The Telegraph*, 2 February 1912, Strike Press Cuttings.

⁷ Leon Trotsky, 'The Dual Power,' in *The History of the Russian Revolution* (1930), <https://www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/1930/hrr/ch11.htm>.

⁸ 'The Brisbane General Strike: (Communicated by a Correspondent in Queensland),' *The Round Table* 2, no. 7 (1912), 477.

argument to be made that it has entered the realm of playing a governmental role. The enrolment of Vigilance Officers by the Strike Committee to maintain order is also an indication of a potential challenge for governmental functions in disputing the traditional role of the police. This dispute was recognised consciously by Police Commissioner Cahill:

I have now to inform you that the preservation of public order is entrusted to me by the Government of this State, and I will not allow any interloping or interference with my functions. I have now to direct you to withdraw the [Vigilance Officers] from the streets, otherwise the Police will be ordered to treat them as street-loiterers.⁹

However, the potential of this latter challenge remained unfulfilled, as a serious clash over which body would keep the peace never occurred. In fact, the Vigilance Officers were proactively instructed by Strike Committee President Harry Coyne to 'offer no resistance whatever' if arrested.¹⁰

Any potential dual power in Brisbane was clearly far from developed. The Strike Committee by no means had the capacity or intent to rule society, nor was it based on any democratic control by the workers as the Russian Soviets later were. Both capacity and intent would have been required for a serious, revolutionary challenge to State power. Of equal importance was the subjective aspect. The politics of the strike leaders and the consciousness of the workers were factors that set limitations *vis-à-vis* the prospect of revolutionary upheaval – this will be explored in more depth later. As a result, the Brisbane strike appeared not as dual power, but as the potential for the emergence of an embryonic dual power. Regardless, even this potential challenge for the reins of power sharply caught the attention of the strike's opponents. The government and employers used the Strike Committee's interventions into the economy to argue that Trades Hall intended to usurp the government by revolutionary means.

The employers and government were alarmed by the threat the general strike posed and used every means available to end it. What is less clear is exactly what kind of threat the capitalist establishment believed the strike to have represented – was revolution considered a serious prospect, or it was just politically expedient to claim that it was? Much of the rhetoric and behaviour of both the press and establishment does seem to indicate that an escalation of the strike was genuinely anticipated, particularly before the violence of which the momentum of the strike movement began to decline.

The tone taken by prominent politicians demonstrates that an uprising of some kind was expected among the higher echelons of the State. The Governor considered the Strike Committee to be revolutionaries, sitting 'under the red flag' in Trades Hall, preparing their 'reign of terror and intimidation,' while Premier Denham declared Brisbane to be in 'a state of siege ... a state of war.' Police Commissioner Cahill also believed that the strike was not in fact over the principle of unionism but was intended as 'a revolution and an insurrection' from the beginning, a belief which directly precipitated the refusal to issue procession permits and the subsequent repression on Black Friday.¹¹ Press reporting elaborated on the government's train of thought. In response to a deputation of striking Government printers, Treasurer Barnes directly referenced the Strike Committee's forays into organising food supplies as indicative of their seditious intent:

⁹ Combined Unions Strike Committee, 'Peace and Order: Objected to by the Police Authorities,' *Official Bulletin*, No. 4, 3 February 1912, *Official Strike Bulletin*, Number 1-77, Microfilm, MIC3625, Fryer Library, UQL.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Carole Ferrier, Jeff Rickertt, and Raymond Evans, *Radical Brisbane: an unruly history* (Carlton North, Vic: Vulgar Press, 2004), 145.

The Treasurer said, as servants of the Government, the printers entered into a movement which had directly for its object practically the overthrow of the Government, as far as the requirements of the city were concerned. They had even gone so far as to block food supplies ...

... The Treasurer: You come here and practically say you have been rulers so far as the city of Brisbane was concerned and everybody else.¹²

The Minister for Lands, E.H. MacCartney, took a similar tone:

Apparently, a new power has come upon the scene – a power which has claimed all the right of government, and which comes from a centre known as Trades Hall. It seeks to direct the movement of this community, of every individual in it – employer, manufacturer, and employee.¹³

It was certainly a recurring theme in the pro-capitalist press that the general strike was an immediate precursor to the implementation of a proletarian dictatorship over Queensland. The dangers of a revolutionary threat were usually the ideological basis for the media's continual vitriol and denunciation of the strike. Much is made of the supposed true intentions of the 'seditious strike leaders'¹⁴ to launch a general strike intended as 'neither more nor less than an attempt at revolution [as] a challenge to constituted authority.'¹⁵ A litany of alleged crimes inflicted upon the population were hurled at the Strike Committee:

The paralysis of trade, the starvation of innocent children, the merciless persecution of the sick and dying throughout the capital city, the wilful destruction of property, and the open defiance of all law and order are factors of this absolute dictatorship and features of this Reign of Terror.¹⁶

The intent of such accusations was to politically isolate the strikers, by framing them as opposed to the interests of the broader community. This argument from the capitalist establishment was crucially important to win exactly because it was untrue. In reality, 'a considerable section of the community seemed to be on the verge of actual revolution,' meaning this false opposition between the strikers and the 'community' had to be hammered home strongly and repeatedly for it to become convincing.¹⁷

One could argue that this rhetoric was cynical, intended to demonise the strike, and should therefore be dismissed. While this has an element of truth, the government figures' assessments of the strike are not entirely unreasonable. If such an impressive and novel strike can be launched at will by the union leaders over abstract principles, it is not necessarily a radical step to conceive that it could be escalated further at the union leaders' will. Even short of revolution, the growing attempts by some workers to forcibly close still-

¹² 'Government Printers – Deputation to Treasurer – Mr Barnes Takes a Firm Stand,' *The Telegraph*, 16 February 1912, Strike Press Cuttings, F2285, Fryer Library, UQL.

¹³ 'The New Power,' *The Telegraph*, 20 February 1912, Strike Press Cuttings, F2285, Fryer Library, UQL.

¹⁴ 'Beaten All Along the Line,' *The Telegraph*, 7 March 1912, Strike Press Cuttings, F2285, Fryer Library, UQL.

¹⁵ 'The Strike,' *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 2 February 1912, Strike Press Cuttings, F2285, Fryer Library, UQL.

¹⁶ 'The Reign of Terror,' *The Darling Downs Gazette*, 3 February 1912, Strike Press Cuttings, F2285, Fryer Library, UQL.

¹⁷ 'The Brisbane General Strike,' *The Round Table*, 477.

operating businesses, which on several occasions produced riot conditions, also certainly would have been seen as the precursor to a more generalised disruption of the social order.¹⁸

Importantly, it was not only the establishment's rhetoric which suggests that they were genuinely gripped by the fear of revolution. Words were followed by action, both in responding to the immediate manifestations of the strike and in preparing for future escalations. Denham's repeated pleading for military support is difficult to explain without appreciating the government's state of mind. These requests were initially directed to the Federal Government but were rebuffed by Labor Prime Minister Andrew Fisher. Denham, along with Governor McGregor, also appealed to the British Colonial Office to have a warship standby off the coast of Queensland in preparation for an uprising, and even discussed landing sailors from a nearby German vessel on Australian soil to confront the strikers.¹⁹ These preparations, while fruitless and ultimately unnecessary, unavoidably lead to the conclusion that the State was preparing for a violent conflict.

A military response, had it occurred, could potentially have shifted the terrain of the struggle in a revolutionary direction. Such was the analysis of the Victorian Socialist Party, who (from afar) considered the Brisbane strike to be 'a rehearsal for the revolution' as it existed, as emblematic of a greater potential:

The revolution may be precipitated at any moment by the spreading of a general strike and the intervention of the military. When the final crisis comes, every bit of knowledge and experience gained in previous strikes will tell.²⁰

The most effective action taken by the State was the enrolment of three thousand 'Special Constables,' ostensibly to augment the police and maintain order. They assisted both in breaking the strike on Black Friday and in helping to reopen Tramways and businesses across Brisbane as the strike faltered.²¹ This recourse to expanding the State's capacity for brute force is indicative of a mindset which saw the halting of the strike's momentum to be of the utmost necessity. This strategy found its clearest practical expression on Black Friday, in the deliberate infliction of terror on the strikers by police and Special Constables to break workers' morale:

The people were ridden down on the footpaths by armed police officers ... men, women and children were chased and ridden at, or beaten with batons ... A dent in the skull, a half-paralysed arm, absence of teeth, an injured eye will all serve as life-long remembrances.²²

The talk of revolution and socialism was not one-sided. The politics within the union movement had also given the employers cause to suspect it was motivated by revolutionary intentions long before 1912.²³ The real presence of an influential syndicalist current within the unions was of particular note to the establishment, given that syndicalism as a tendency strongly favoured the general strike as the ultimate weapon in the class struggle.

¹⁸ Ferrier, Rickertt, Evans, *Radical Brisbane*, 144.

¹⁹ Ibid, 145.

²⁰ 'Rehearsing the Revolution,' *The Socialist*, 9 February 1912, Trove, <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/240674872/26192284>

²¹ Ferrier, Rickertt, Evans, *Radical Brisbane*, 143.

²² Ibid, 147.

²³ Murphy, *The Big Strikes*, 122.

The prevalence of syndicalism within the Australian working class was clearly influenced by the growth of revolutionary syndicalism abroad, particularly in Europe.²⁴ The Melbourne *Argus* recognised the European syndicalist influence, referencing the 1909 general strike in Sweden, while also comparing the Brisbane events to the French revolutionary syndicalist movement, both of which the paper naturally predicted to be 'doomed to failure.'²⁵ The *Darling Downs Gazette* also repeatedly linked the Brisbane general strike to pre-existing syndicalist ideas throughout its coverage, as 'that latest development of Continental Socialism, which is becoming more and more apparent' within the Australian union movement.²⁶

In Europe, the syndicalist conception of the general strike was inseparably connected to the desire for socialist revolution. The role of the general strike in the traditional syndicalist schema was to be 'a means of inaugurating the social revolution, in contradistinction to the daily political struggle of the working class.'²⁷ Given that the discourse of syndicalism and the general strike abroad was explicitly revolutionary, and that this tendency had a real presence in Australia, it stands to reason that the employers' concerns about the forces of Australian syndicalism wanting to overthrow the government were not necessarily cynical ones.

These fears were no doubt reinforced by the rhetoric of the Strike Committee's leadership, who heavily leaned into syndicalist themes in both their public oration and in the published articles of the daily *Strike Bulletin*. Bombastic *Strike Bulletin* articles proclaimed, 'Socialism Your Only Hope!' to the workers, in their 'never ending struggle of our class for emancipation from the domination of Capitalism.' The general strike was only 'the latest phase of that struggle,' a struggle with far higher aims.²⁸ Strike Committee leaders such as Secretary John Moir (also the secretary for the Tramway Employee's Association) made public speeches arguing for the reversal of class power in society, asserting that 'the political machine should be subservient to the industrial machine.'²⁹ However, similarly to the capitalist press, much of the public rhetoric of the Strike Committee leadership also served an argumentative purpose - to maintain the confidence and support of striking workers. There was some genuine syndicalist influence, disorienting enough for the employers and government to have taken it at face value, but beneath the radical veneer was a political strategy far more conservative than it purported to be.

Much of the responsibility for the failure of the general strike to escalate, and for its defeat in general, can in fact be attributed to the conservatism and restraint of the allegedly revolutionary Strike Committee leaders. The crux of the failure was their unwillingness to physically challenge the State's control over Brisbane, particularly on Black Friday and the subsequent day. On 2 February itself, strike leaders tried desperately to avoid a confrontation between the fifteen thousand gathered workers and the police, after the unions' daily procession permit had been denied by Police Commissioner Cahill. Even before the workers were attacked, Harry Coyne frantically dissuaded the agitated workers from defying the State. As the *Strike Bulletin* boasted the next day:

²⁴ Ibid, 120.

²⁵ Editorial, *The Argus*, 31 January 1912, Strike Press Cuttings, F2285, Fryer Library, UQL.

²⁶ 'Tramway Syndicalism,' *The Darling Downs Gazette*, 27 January 1912, Strike Press Cuttings, F2285, Fryer Library, UQL.

²⁷ Rosa Luxemburg, *The Mass Strike, the Political Party, and the Trade Unions* (Melbourne: Red Flag Books, 2020), 14.

²⁸ Combined Unions Strike Committee, 'Workers, Paste This in Your Hat! Socialism Your Only Hope!' *Official Bulletin*, No. 10, February 10 1912, Official Strike Bulletin, Number 1-77, Microfilm, MIC3625, Fryer Library, UQL.

²⁹ 'Last Night's Meetings,' *The Telegraph*, 16 February 1912, Strike Press Cuttings, F2285, Fryer Library, UQL.

He rushed into the space in the street, between the armed police and unarmed civilians, and addressed the seething mass of excited people. He exhorted them to act as peaceful citizens and led them from the points of the hungry bayonets.³⁰

It was only through the 'bravery' of Coyne's intervention that 'serious consequences [were] averted at a very critical time,' according to the *Strike Bulletin*. Perhaps the most insightful contemporary commentary on Black Friday came from an article in *The Bulletin*, ironic given the paper's strident anti-strike position. Dave Bowman, the Queensland State Leader of the Labor Party and an influential figure at Trades Hall, was considered to have played the pivotal role:

The fate of the Brisbane general strike – regarded as a 'general' affair – was probably decided when David Bowman surged up, a hatless but honest man, between the strikers' procession and the police, and urged that the law should be obeyed, and all violence carefully avoided. By that decision that was then arrived at, his party abandoned the only weapon by which it could possibly achieve a victory.³¹

This analysis is entirely correct – at that moment, the Strike Committee had effectively surrendered their physical control over Brisbane, giving the State a free hand to gradually restore the status quo and break the back of the strike in the process. William McCormack, a leader of the Amalgamated Workers' Association and veteran of the 1911 Sugar Strike, identified the alternate possibility Black Friday had represented. He argued that 'the crowd should not have been restrained at all in Brisbane on Friday,' and regretted that 'something extraordinary' had not been done the following day. If the workers have been given a lead, 'we could have heard a different tale from Denham ... a start would have been followed up by the mob and then goodbye the specials.'³²

Such a lead was not given, and the decisive opportunity to preserve the momentum of the strike through escalation was squandered. A sympathetic paper, *Truth*, echoed this argument, making the case that such an attack by police in any other country 'would quickly lead to an insurrection,' referencing the revolutions of 1848 in Europe as examples.³³ The difference, *Truth* contended, lay primarily in the political interests of the strike's leadership:

There is a very great difference between the insurgent workmen of Paris and the striking workmen of Brisbane. The former were organised in revolutionary societies by conspirators who risked their lives; the latter are organised in unions by men who risk little, and most of whom would certainly not do anything that would jeopardise the getting, or holding, of a paid position in Parliament.³⁴

The self-defeating restraint of the Strike Committee was certainly not an accident or an oversight. It flowed naturally from a reformist political outlook, which saw the ultimate goal of the labour movement as electing the ALP into government. Queensland unionism had long since been aligned to the Labor Party, and this alignment played out in the politics of the strike's leadership. The Labor Party stood to benefit electorally from a show of union

³⁰ Combined Unions Strike Committee, 'Baton Friday,' *Official Bulletin*, No. 4, 3 February 1912.

³¹ 'The Upheaval in Brisbane,' *The Bulletin*, 15 February 1912, Strike Press Cuttings, F2285, Fryer Library, UQL.

³² Ferrier, Rickertt, Evans, *Radical Brisbane*, 148.

³³ 'Swords and Bayonets - The Strike and the 'Cossack' Army,' *Truth*, 11 February 1912. Trove. <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/201744638/22172042>.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

strength (which they in fact did in metropolitan areas, despite the strike's defeat).³⁵ However, they were also keenly aware that Premier Denham also stood to benefit from the polarisation a general strike could cause, by running a law-and-order electoral campaign against them in response. These electoral considerations, as well as the threat the strike posed to Australian capitalism generally (a system which the ALP intended to manage in government), encouraged the strike leaders' emphasis on respectability and undermining of militancy. Therefore, despite the strike leaders' syndicalist trappings, they made explicitly reformist arguments to workers, preferring voting to revolution as the chosen strategy to achieve. The *Strike Bulletin* argued that:

The elections are drawing near. Let us not forget to attack the stronghold of Capital with the full force of the BALLOT and call to the bar of public opinion the wreckers of our rights and hard-won liberties.³⁶

The *Strike Bulletin* also frequently lauded the peacefulness and self-control of the workers. Aggressive actions by the police were attempts 'to incite the people to rebellion.'³⁷ These supposed provocations, signalling that the State was regaining ground, were interpreted as demanding further restraint to avoid more conflict. Even the initial processions and mass meetings outside Trades Hall were designed to restrict workers' active participation and involvement in the strike. The daily meetings were top-down affairs in which the strike leaders speechified (often dishonestly stoking workers' illusions about the strike's deteriorating condition), while the processions were little more than a 'valuable safety valve,' in the words of Dave Bowman, to 'keep the men orderly and under discipline.'³⁸

This strategy ensured that the strikers, who had threatened to explode on 2 February, remained firmly under the Strike Committee's control. This was successful from the narrow perspective of the union leaders but undermined the strength of the strike. The lack of any organised response to Black Friday demoralised and demobilised workers, whose militant activity and industrial power had frightened the employers and government to begin with. While speculation is not a useful endeavour, several factors were perhaps lacking for the strike to have overcome its subjective political hurdles and reached towards revolution.

The first of these missing factors was an alternate political leadership to challenge the politics of the existing Strike Committee. While contemporary socialist groups existed, their forces were too far away to intervene. Groups like the International Socialists or the Victorian Socialist Party supported the strike but were based in NSW and Victoria, respectively. The syndicalist Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) union, influential in later struggles of the decade, appears to have had no meaningful presence in Brisbane either. The IWW did not launch their paper, *Direct Action*, until 1914, and so offered no commentary on the Brisbane events. What an alternate leadership strategy would have looked like concretely is also unknown. The critiques provided from afar were admittedly vague, as revolutionary socialist commentary tended to focus on drawing out positive lessons from the strike. The *International Socialist*, for example, limited itself to writing about the Strike Committee that:

³⁵ Murphy, *The Big Strikes*, 130.

³⁶ Combined Unions Strike Committee, 'A Fearless Woman Writes,' *Official Bulletin*, No. 4, 3 February 1912.

³⁷ Combined Unions Strike Committee, 'Badge Billets,' *Official Bulletin*, No. 5, 5 February 1912.

³⁸ Murphy, *The Big Strikes*, 127.

It is true that all the methods of the Brisbane Strike Committee will not appeal to Socialists. A committee of Socialists would probably have conducted the strike along far different lines to those along which it is being conducted. But this is not the time to level critical discussions at the Strike Committee.³⁹

The second factor was the necessity for workers to consciously recognise that victory required the reassertion of their own power over Brisbane. On the question of revolution, however, the prerequisite conditions for workers to have radicalised *en masse* imply far-reaching changes to the entire historical landscape. In Lenin's famous formulation, a revolutionary situation requires a severe social crisis, in which workers and capitalists are unable to live, or to rule, in the same way. Only in such a revolutionary situation could workers see revolution as a necessity to overcome the crisis.⁴⁰ This crisis, suffice to say, was nonexistent, though the general strike demonstrated the potential for working-class revolution in its absence.

Not all the limitations on the possibility of victory, or revolution, were subjective ones. Objective factors, particularly Queensland's regionality, played an important role. A regional strike on such a scale required solidarity from the national union movement. Some workers struck in Queensland localities outside Brisbane, such as Ipswich and Townsville, but these strikes were short-lived. No serious support was provided from the southern unions at all. In fact, the union leaders around the country appear to have been even more conservative than their adventuristic Queensland counterparts. While the Transport Workers' Council in New South Wales declared their sympathy to any unions 'resisting oppressive regulations or conditions,' they were 'not in sympathy with the principles of general strikes. They are illogical, and injure indiscriminately and wantonly destroy amicable relations.' The Council executive accordingly forbade any workers from taking industrial action in solidarity with the Brisbane strike.⁴¹ This lack of support permitted the Queensland government to ship goods across the country unimpeded as part of restarting the economy, which compounded the growing sense of defeat and demoralisation among workers in Brisbane, further reversing any possibilities of a recovery and victory.

Despite its failure, the Brisbane general strike had been a tangible and potentially revolutionary threat to the established order in Queensland, a fact which was recognised by both the employers and the Denham Government. That the strike stoked fears of revolution is attested to by the political discourse and actions of the capitalist establishment, despite the often cynical bent of their argumentation. However, the politics of the Strike Committee, alongside other subjective limitations and objective circumstances, ensured that a revolutionary challenge did not emerge in reality. The general strike was defeated, but for this very reason, it provides insights into the trends within the early Australian labour movement, as well as into the universal dynamics which emerge in the course of generalised class conflicts.

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³⁹ 'Queensland's Revolt,' *The International Socialist*, 10 February 1912, Trove, <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/130879997/12366588>.

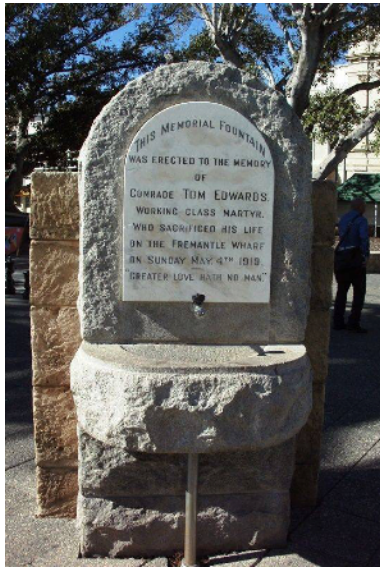
⁴⁰ V.I. Lenin, 'The Collapse of the Second International,' 1915, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1915/csi/ii.htm#v21pp74h-212>.

⁴¹ 'No Strike in Sydney,' *The Telegraph*, 14 February 1912, Strike Press Cuttings, F2285, Fryer Library, UQL.

BOBBIE OLIVER & CHARLIE FOX

Remembering Bloody Sunday and Tom Edwards

Bobbie begins this article with an outline of Tom Edwards' story:



Tom Edwards' fountain in Adelaide St, Fremantle. Photograph by Bryan Hardy.

The message on Tom Edwards' fountain in Adelaide St, Fremantle, reads:

'This memorial fountain was erected to the memory of comrade Tom Edwards. Working Class Martyr Who sacrificed his life on Fremantle Wharf on Sunday May 4th, 1919. Greater love hath no man.'

Who was Tom Edwards? He was born in Lockwood, Victoria in 1878, to Henry Edwards and Mary Edwards (née Fletcher) and married Sarah Jane Phillips (born 1882) at Bendigo in 1901. Tom gave his occupation as 'striker' – a worker who sets off mine explosions.

The Edwards family came to WA in 1910, initially settling in Boulder, where in November they buried their 19-month-old son, Charles Ernest. By December 1917, they were living at 14 Howard Street, Fremantle, and Tom was working as a lumper. With fellow members of the Fremantle Lumpers Union, he was forced to sign the infamous conditions imposed upon waterside workers by the federal government. These included three pick-ups a day instead of the previous two; a requirement to work alongside so-called 'National Volunteers' (members of the scab National Waterside Workers Union), and to work under foremen who were not union members.

The situation at the port was tense when on 4 May 1919 a riot – which came to be known as 'Bloody Sunday' – erupted on Victoria Quay between members of the Lumpers' Union and police. Saturday passed quietly as preparations were made to transport a party of 'scabs' down the river to the wharf early on Sunday morning to erect barricades around the Dimboola to prevent lumpers disrupting its unloading. Police were brought in and quartered in B Shed in readiness for following day. On Sunday morning, Premier Colebatch travelled down the river with the boatload of 'scabs'.

As soon as the lumpers became aware of what was happening, they rushed to the wharf. Meanwhile, the police who had been brought secretly to the wharf on Saturday night took up their positions. A force of 50 mounted police (some of whom had been recruited specially from country stations) joined them to cordon the wharf entrance.

Although the few lumpers gathered initially moved when requested by police, the crowd on the railway bridge was not so compliant. As the launches carrying the Premier and members of the volunteers passed underneath, the crowd hurled bars of iron, lumps of road surface and rocks, despite attempts by police with drawn bayonets to stop them.

As the launch passed, the crowd rushed from the bridge to the wharf, where numbers reportedly swelled to over 1,000. The police were unable to prevent the lumpers surging onto the wharf and throwing missiles. They headed for the Pick Up bureau between B and C sheds, intent upon throwing the barricades into the harbour.

The police on the wharf were ordered to fix bayonets, although at that point their rifles were not loaded with ammunition. As one of the lumpers, a man named Brown, ran towards the spot where a group of employers and National Volunteers were erecting the barricades, police grabbed him and, according to an eyewitness, 'seemed to bayonet him' despite Brown being unarmed.

The Lumpers' President, William Renton, claimed that before this incident, there had been no trouble between the lumpers and the police, which conflicts with accounts of lumpers hurling rocks and other missiles. Renton stated that no missiles were thrown until after the bayoneting. He asked the police to let him help the injured man, but they refused.

Three or four police 'with rifles and stones in their hands' surrounded Renton. One said, 'Get him' and Renton was hit on the head with a stone as he faced the police. He fell to the ground and, when he tried to get up, a police officer knocked him down with a baton. Tom Edwards, going to Renton's assistance, was also hit on the head and knocked to the ground. A blow, either from a police baton or rifle butt (accounts are conflicting) or from the kerb where he fell, fractured his skull. It proved a fatal injury.

The Police Commissioner, Robert Connell, his senior officers, Inspectors Mann of Perth Police and Sellinger of Fremantle, and two labour officials, ALP State Secretary Alex McCallum and the Member for Fremantle, Ben Jones, held an emergency meeting in C Shed. McCallum obtained a guarantee from the Premier that the lumpers and their supporters wouldn't be attacked as they left the wharf. He then addressed the crowd from the footbridge, urging people to leave the wharf quietly. Unfortunately, at this point, a car arrived with ammunition for the police and a sergeant began issuing cartridges to the foot constables.

Sources differ on whether, at this point, the Riot Act was read. Inspector Mann's police report didn't mention it, but the *West Australian* reported that it was. That the small force of 150 mounted and foot police wasn't immediately overwhelmed by several hundred angry lumpers probably says more about the respect for police and authority than any lack of provocation.

The Chief Inspector acted quickly to stop the issue of ammunition and, after McCallum had received the Premier's guarantee that he would leave the wharf and, in response, had promised that Colebatch's launch would not be attacked as he went back up the river, the lumpers, too, withdrew to the O'Connor Monument. In all 26 police officers and lumpers were injured, including Tom Edwards. Tom died of a fractured skull three days later.

Bill Renton, his head still bandaged, led the funeral procession on horseback from Fremantle Trades Hall to Fremantle Cemetery. The route from the Trades Hall to the cemetery gates was lined with hundreds of mourners. Every Federal and State Labor MP who was in the State marched in a procession estimated to number 5,000 people.



Tom Edwards' funeral. Courtesy: Moya Sherlock.

At 3pm on Friday, 9 May, the time that the funeral cortege reached the graveside in Fremantle Cemetery, industry throughout the State stopped for three minutes' silence and flags flew at half-mast. In Kalgoorlie, trams and trains stopped for three minutes; at Midland Railway Workshops, the men stopped work.

Thomas Walker MLA delivered an oration at the graveside, in which he urged his hearers not to yield to bitter feelings. He spoke of Tom Edwards as:

... a man who loved his home, and was in his home beloved. It was not only the love he gave his wife and family that endeared him to us all, not only the warmth of a large heart and the support he gave to his comrades, but above all, he was a good citizen. His large heart beat with sympathy for the homes of those that were breadless, with a great desire for the betterment of those that were breadless, with a great desire for the betterment of those who had suffered so long in apparently hopeless despair.

Widow Sarah Jane continued to live in the rented house at 14 Howard Street with her three daughters, Emily, Hazel and Thelma. She received donations of food from land farmed by members of the Industrial Workers of the World. Later, she moved to a shop and residence organised by the Tom Edwards Trust, a fund raised by the ALP and unions in WA and elsewhere. Some funds came from the sale of a book titled *The Fremantle Wharf Crisis of 1919*, which was published and printed by the *Westralian Worker* under the editorship of John Curtin.

In 1936 Sarah Jane married William John Kent but, on her death in 1964, she was buried in the same plot as her first husband. Tom Edward's headstone is among some 1200 grave monuments sponsored by the Fremantle Lumpers' Union, but it is noticeably more impressive than others.

Charlie Fox takes up the story to reflect on the powerful memories and the memorialising of these events:

As I walked down Adelaide Street in Fremantle to the 2019 May Day celebrations on Fremantle's Esplanade, I passed the little fountain erected to commemorate Tom Edwards' death. Reading the plaque got me thinking about the symbolism and historical construction of Bloody Sunday. These meanings have both long and short histories. Some come from the catastrophe of the First World War, some from Australia's own radical traditions; others from longer political, cultural and religious narratives. The legends of Bloody Sunday and Tom Edwards drew on ideas from many sources.

Although it also called the events of that day by a more pragmatic title – the Battle of the Barricades – the *Fremantle Herald*, began calling the day Bloody Sunday in its banner headline on 9 May, just five days after the event. So how was the name chosen? Obviously, the explanation begins with a violent act. Internationally, there is a long history of attaching the adjective 'bloody' to days on which governments (and not always governments) perpetrated bloody violence on protesters and their movements but, importantly, survivors of the violence took control of the subsequent accounts to name and shame the perpetrators and so dramatise the day. Such bloody days can be found in many countries, in violence used against many political movements and, in those accounts, Ireland and labour movements figure prominently.

In 20th century Irish history there is not one Bloody Sunday, but four. The first was named for two men killed in an industrial dispute in Dublin in 1913; then there were three more, all moments in the struggle for Irish independence. Ireland has long memories of such events. Another was Bloody Monday, 1855, in Kentucky, USA, when 'nativists' killed 22 Irish and German immigrants. Russia had its Bloody Sunday too, at the beginning of the 1905 Revolution when Tsarist troops opened fire on workers. And just six weeks after Fremantle's Bloody Sunday, unionists in Winnipeg, Canada, declared a day in which two unionists were killed, to be Bloody Saturday.

Most of these were still to come in 1919, but the tradition had been set by the 1913 'Bloody Sunday' in Dublin, which was recent enough to be remembered in Fremantle. Irish ancestry, culture and politics loomed large in the Australian labour movement. It was front and centre in the fight against conscription during World War I. Irish Catholicism was still a powerful marker in Australian politics and Irish grievances against Britain were a constant theme in working class politics, which always identified the Australian ruling class as British.

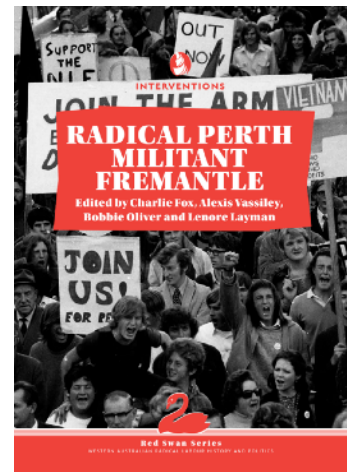
The other half of Bloody Sunday is, of course, Sunday. In Christianity, Sunday has special meaning, a day of rest, God's day. For active Christians it was a day to go to Church, to worship, contemplate and pray. For non-conformist Sabbatarians, it was a day of trying to keep the ungodly from doing anything they might enjoy; so they advocated closing shops, libraries, art galleries and hotels, banning sport, dancing and music. And often trade unions, concerned about long working hours if Sunday shop trading was allowed, were happy to agree. This meant that there wasn't much to do on Sundays in Fremantle, and one consequence of this was that it allowed plenty of willing reinforcements to hurry to the wharf

on Bloody Sunday, to confront the police and strikebreakers. But killing people seemed particularly horrifying when it happened on a Sunday.

Bloody Sunday had another name, not one which was universally adopted but was significant all the same. On Saturday, 10 May 1919, just a week after Bloody Sunday, the Perth scandal rag, *Truth*, called it Fremantle's Eureka and the name stuck. The aim was to give Bloody Sunday extra importance by incorporating it in Australia's radical political tradition and into the radical nationalist school of Australian history. Eureka was implanted in Australia's political consciousness more than it is today. This school, at its most powerful in the 1950s-1960s, did much to rewrite Australian history away from its British heritage and towards Australia's own radical past, a past constructed out of a real engagement with Australia's unique environment, radical democracy, working class, bush culture, and a labour movement which defined Australian culture.

In 1948, at a Eureka Day peace rally on Perth's Esplanade, Leah Healy, Secretary of the WA branch of the CPA, described Bloody Sunday as an event in 'the militant tradition of the Australian working class, handed down from Eureka'. Fremantle's own Paddy Troy in a speech outlining the history of trade unionism, including Bloody Sunday, agreed, saying that, 'The working class stood completely loyal to the spirit expressed in the struggle at Eureka'. Then, as left-wing historians began to write histories of Australia, we see Bloody Sunday set out very clearly as part of the radical nationalist narrative. Bertha Walker's 1972 book, *Solidarity Forever*, in part a survey of the first 25 years of labour movement radicalism in the last century, called her section on the conflict, *Fremantle's Eureka*.

And the idea lives on. The front page of the booklet produced for the centenary of Bloody Sunday, by the Maritime Union (MUA) for May Day 2019, is entitled *Western Australia's Eureka Battle. The Fremantle Wharf Crisis of 1919. May Day 2019. 100 years on*. But historians didn't need to co-opt Eureka to be able to portray Bloody Sunday as an important part of the history Australian and WA radicalism. Justina Williams in her 1976 book, *The First Furrow*, argues along these lines, and Bloody Sunday was among the first stories Bobbie Oliver, Lenore Layman and I chose when we produced *Radical Perth, Militant Fremantle*.



Tom Edwards' funeral was immense, bigger apparently than that of former Premier and federal cabinet minister John Forrest, which was held on the same day. The *Westralian Worker's* story, probably written by then editor, John Curtin, was headlined, *The Union Buries its Dead*, which is the title of Henry Lawson's famous short story. And it's an impressive coincidence that Tom Edwards' fountain and John Curtin's statue, lie not 30 metres apart in Fremantle's Kings Square, just another 30 metres from the statue of the sculptor who constructed Edwards' fountain, Pietro Porcelli.

The fountain is small and plain. In 1920, there was a plan to put a bronze bust of Tom Edwards on it, but it never appeared. Perhaps there was no money to pay or perhaps Porcelli wanted a plain fountain for a plain man. Even the plainest of fountains expresses the idea of life-giving, life-saving and life-affirming water, of the fountain of youth. And they are useful for a thirsty man or woman to have a drink on a hot day. So the choice of a fountain to commemorate Tom Edwards' death seems to have been to affirm life.

Bloody Sunday took place just six months after the end of World War I. It is therefore no accident that the language on the plaque is similar to that on war memorials, hundreds of which were built about the same time as the fountain, in suburbs and towns across the country. Australia built more war memorials after the war, per capita, than any other country, probably because they act as surrogate graves for the killed, as no Australian dead were brought home.

‘Greater Love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends’. This is a biblical phrase from the Gospel according to John, spoken by Jesus to his disciples, anticipating his own impending sacrifice and urging others to follow suit. The idea of sacrifice and war comes up early in the commemorations of Tom Edwards’ death.

In the *Westralian Worker* are the words, ‘Thomas Edwards, who sacrificed his life for the whole of his comrades just as much as any man who fell in France’. On the first anniversary of Bloody Sunday, an advertisement for a meeting at Fremantle’s Esplanade to commemorate Bloody Sunday and Tom Edwards, was headed, ‘Lest We Forget.’ Throughout the 1920s the *Westralian Worker* printed constant reminders of Tom Edwards, ‘who sacrificed his life for the solidarity of labour’, ‘who sacrificed his life to rescue a fellow unionist’.

Then, over the years his name was called on to support militant actions. Bobbie Oliver sets out several in her chapter on Bloody Sunday in *Radical Perth, Militant Fremantle*. It’s long been associated with Fremantle’s May Day. It’s been used for other causes too. When Bob Menzies attempted to ban the CPA in 1950, Paddy Troy responded:

I demand in the name of Labour, of Tom Edwards, of those who have defended their rights, the same right to put my case, defend my democratic rights.

But Tom Edwards’ name has also been used in conflicts within the labour movement. In 1924, for example, just five years after Bloody Sunday, during that monster British seamen’s strike which gripped Australian and other ports and held up hundreds of cargo ships, conflict blew up between the Communist-led Australian Seamen’s Union (ASU) and the ALP government of Phillip Collier. The ASU called out Collier’s Minister for Labour, Alex McCallum who, as a union leader, had played a significant role in the lumpers’ victory in 1919, and who had opposed the presence of police on the wharves; however during the seamen’s strike he sent police to the wharves to ‘keep the peace’. This was, the Union argued, ‘a betrayal of Tom Edwards memory’.

May Day 2019 was the centenary of Bloody Sunday and the death of Tom Edwards. They were suitably remembered with speeches, memorabilia and a well-produced booklet provided by the MUA. Bloody Sunday and Tom Edwards live on. They have become part of Fremantle’s history and WA’s trade union traditions and sit deep in the historical consciousness of waterfront unions. They will be called on in the future as they have in the past to rally tomorrow’s protesters in their struggles against injustice.

Bobbie Oliver is an Honorary Research Fellow in Humanities at UWA. She is the President of the Perth Branch, ASSLH. Charlie Fox is an Honorary Fellow in the School of Humanities at UWA. He edits Western Worker, the WA branch of the ASSLH's newsletter/journal. This article was first published in the Western Worker, no. 8, September 2019.

JULIE KIMBER

Citizen Love: Teacher, Activist, Scholar & Friend

Our dear friend Peter Love is no more.

His involvement with the Australian Society for the Study of Labour History spans fifty years – and countless meetings, conferences, symposia, editing and printing of newsletters and journals, and so much more. For the last thirty-five of those years, Peter has been president of its Melbourne Branch.

His dedication to the Society personified his belief in active republican citizenship and represented just one of the many civic engagements of his life. Another that he was especially proud of was as a Trustee of the Trades Hall and Literary Institute, Melbourne.

Peter was born in 1947, at a time of acute housing shortages. His earliest memories were of the crowded but happy living arrangements at his grandmother's house in Newstead Street, Maribyrnong. His father had been in the Air Force with John Gorton during the war, and his admiration for and interest in that generation 'that copped the lot' was key to his later scholarship.

As a young man, Peter was perpetually on the move, a sometimes mug lair, keen sportsman, and passionate musician. His working-class origins and keen eye and ear for the condescension around him provided the spur to his radicalisation in the 1960s.

Trained as a primary school teacher, Peter spent several years as a chalkie and several more as a bureaucrat in the Education Department. A period of soul-searching while reading Tolstoy's *The Death of Ivan Ilyich* and a chance meeting during a smoke break while on a lobbying trip in Canberra would prove decisive.

That chance meeting was with a young, spirited Joan Kirner. Their 'fellowship of the fag' led to an animated discussion of the roting of education funding by Bjelke Petersen's government. Sufficiently enraged, they conspired to make a public statement against this when their meeting resumed. Their intervention embarrassed Peter's boss, whose opprobrium – coupled with Peter's fear of becoming one of the 'grey cardigans' of the Department – was the final straw. Peter walked away from the job and into postgraduate study.

At La Trobe University, Peter found refuge, as others had done, in the 'great encourager' Peter Cook, and inspiration from La Trobe's innovative narrative approach to history championed by Rhys Isaac, Inga Clendinnen, and Greg Denning. Peter's 'galloping interest' in radical political economy led to the publication of *Labour and the Money Power: Australian Labour Populism 1890-1950* – and this scholarship of left-wing populism in Australia propelled his shift to the Australian National University, where he undertook a biographical study of Frank Anstey (1865-1940) under the supervision of Eric Fry and Les Louis. Anstey's role as a

‘popular theorist’ most engaged Peter, especially his influence on the Chifley government’s attempts to nationalise the banks. Here we come back to Peter’s preoccupation with citizenship and political economy and how his father’s generation tried to reimagine a new Australian polity.

Peter’s biographical study of Anstey was almost derailed by a flood that saw his work float from the house he shared with his second wife and the love of his life, Susanne Provis. Supported by his best mate, Andrew Moore, and with the aid of John Arnold from the National Centre for Research and Development at Monash University, Peter managed to piece his research back together.

By 1990, when Peter submitted his thesis, he was ensconced in the then-supportive environment of Swinburne University. His contributions to the university during his twenty-seven-year career are too many to list, but include his history, Practical Measures: 100 Years at Swinburne, his long-term union activism – including a stint as President of the Swinburne Branch of the NTEU between 1994-1997 – and his legendary status as a teacher. He set a high bar for himself and those silly enough to try and emulate him. Frequently proclaiming that ‘notes are for amateurs’, he was delighted that he delivered his last lecture without one.

After his retirement in 2015, Peter lamented the direction of the university as it shifted away from its early collegiality into its current diminished form. It was this collegiality that set Peter apart. His disdain for personal promotion made him a generous and supportive colleague, and his capacity to engage and nurture the curiosity – and crap detectors – of a generation of students was renowned. His capacity to listen, what he called his ‘good ear trick’, made him a go-to person for students and colleagues alike.

Throughout his career, Peter continually honed his thoughts about citizenship and what it meant to be an Australian. He railed against the greed-is-good mantra of the Kennett years and the public choice theorists who viewed us all as ‘egoistic, rational, utility maximisers’. The connections between these obsessions, his vision of what a good public education could do, and his fascination with the Chifley government’s aims of building a ‘new Jerusalem in Australia’ tell us much about the man and his mission.

It also helps to understand why Peter dedicated fifty years to an association that, from its inception, characterised much of what Peter embodied. The society’s aims to be a bridge between the academy and the labour movement, which later – thanks to the efforts of Ann Curthoys, Susan Magarey, Lyndall Ryan, Rae Frances, Carmel Shute, Janet McCalman, among many others – expanded its remit to incorporate the home and social history, were ideals that he practised in his own life, as a worker, activist, fundraiser, volunteer, citizen, academic, and a great encourager.

Above all else, Peter personified his own ‘communitarian civic ideal’. His description of what that embodies can be equally applied to Peter with his ‘unassuming nationalism, simple decency and a willingness to place the public good before private benefit’. Befitting a man who operated according to the ‘Old Mates Act’ and practised noncontractual reciprocity, his friendship circles were large. He will be sorely missed. We send our heartfelt condolences to Peter’s wife, Susanne, and his extended family and friends, and we grieve with them in their loss.

Julie Kimber teaches history and politics at Swinburne University, where she worked with Peter for over a decade. This tribute was first published on the Labour History Melbourne website: <https://labourhistorymelbourne.org/>



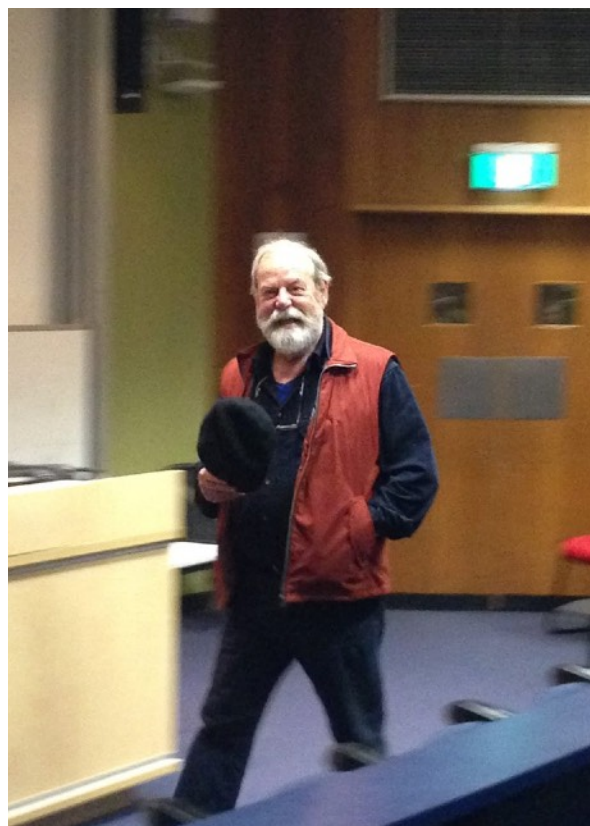
With his best mate, Andrew Moore c. 1995.



PJ c. 1973



With his wife, Susanne Provis, 2021



Last lecture, 2014



With Dimity Hawkins at the 2015 LH Conference



PJ with his students, Dustin Barter and Rob Hoffman c. 2005

CHRIS MONNOX

(Re)Sources: Historical Inquiry and Labour History Archives

This year, the Canberra Branch of the Australian Society for the Study of Labour History (ASSLH) will host the Society's 18th Biennial Conference. The Conference will be held at the Research School of Social Sciences Building (Building #146, Ellery Crescent), ANU, Canberra, on 23-25 November 2023.

(Re)Sources: Historical Inquiry and Labour History Archives will enable us to reflect on the significance of archives and libraries to the study of history. Archives and collections provide individuals and communities, authors and historians, and unions and universities the opportunity to reflect on their pasts, recover lost voices, contextualise established ones, and check the facts.



Associated events include an exhibition of artwork by Sam Wallman, and the launch of three new books: Hannah Forsyth's *Virtue Capitalists: The Rise and Fall of the Professional Class in the Anglophone World, 1870–2008*; Kate Laing's *Sisters in Peace: The Women's International League for Peace and Freedom in Australia, 1915–2015* and Alex Ettling and Iain McIntyre's *Knocking the Top Off: A People's History of Alcohol in Australia*.

Go to the Conference website for program details and to register for the conference: <https://www.labourhistory.org.au/asslh-2023-conference/>

ABOUT THE SOCIETY

The Australian Society for the Study of Labour History is a non-profit organisation, founded in 1961 to study 'the working class situation ... and social history in the fullest sense'. The Society aims to encourage teaching and research in labour history, and the preservation of the records of working people and the labour movement. It desires to make history a vital part of popular consciousness and a matter for reflection and debate.

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The Australian Society for the Study of Labour History is able to continue its work to promote, preserve and produce labour, political, and working-class history because of the generous sponsorship of our Society by individuals and organisations. If you are able to support the work that we do, please consider joining the Society. Join via one of the branches above, or join the Federal Society here: <https://www.joinit.org/o/australian-society-for-the-study-of-labour-history/>

In 2022, the ASSLH hosted a seminar series to celebrate its 60th anniversary. Find out about this series and the other activities of our branches at <https://www.labourhistory.org.au/events/>

