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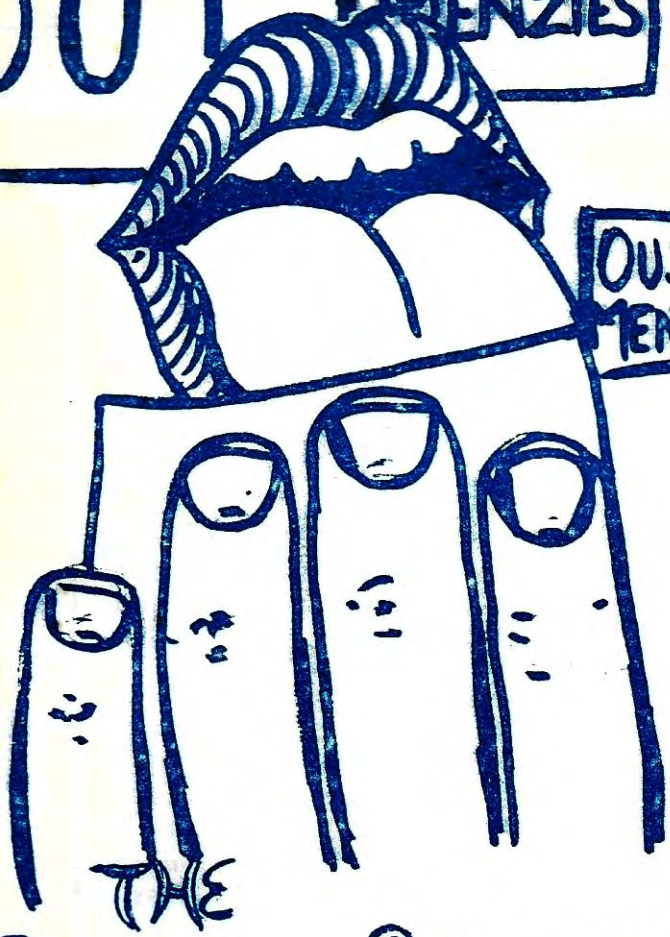
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THE  
CHAMPION STICKER LICKER  
& OTHER STORIES  
BY  
BILL SUTTON

*Whitcomb*

## foreword . . .

This small selection of my humorous yarns, sponsored by the Communist Arts Group, Brisbane, is humbly dedicated to the 24th Congress of the Communist Party of Australia.

While these skits are about true events, some of the characters and settings are composite.

They set out to show that the C.P.A. was, and is prepared to carry out its revolutionary task under all circumstances and conditions.

Although the struggle for socialism is a serious matter the stories indicate how comrades can and should be able to enjoy party life and laugh at their own mistakes.

The capitalist world and its political structures are in deep crisis. More communists are needed to help bring it down.

I appeal to the marxists who are close to us but not yet in our ranks to join our party and dedicate themselves to a lifelong fight for socialism.

COMMUNISM IS THE HOPE OF THE WORLD.

Bill Sutton. 1974.



Published by The Communist Arts Group, Brisbane.

## the champion sticker licker

"Get me 3000 'OUST MENZIES' stickers," Billy Jackson demanded of me.

Bill and I worked in the meatworks. His main revolutionary task was putting up stickers. His other activity was trying to get Communist Party members to stand for positions. Although not a party member, Bill considered it a waste of time voting for anyone excepting communists.

He was constantly approaching us to nominate for all kinds of jobs up to and including the prime minister-ship of the country. It didn't matter to him whether we were eligible or not: "Have a go," he would say.

Now and again he would be a little more subtle and put the request as a question. "Who will the party be standing for the job delegate (or whatever the position he had in mind)." He was inevitably disappointed if he got a negative reply.

He even wanted one of our comrades, Eddie Brown, to stand for a position in his local Alcoholics Anonymous. "But Eddie is a pretty fair drinker and has no intention of giving up the grog," we told him.

"No matter", was Bill's reply, "he'd do a better job than anyone else."

But back to the stickers.

"3000", I said, "seems a lot".

"Guarantee to get rid of them," was Bill's reply.



"Give you 500," said the Party District Secretary when I asked for the 3000.

I took them back to Bill next day. "Could only get you 1000 to start with," I said hoping he would not count them.

"They wont last long," was his remark.

"Give me about twenty to put up in my department," I requested. He handed them over reluctantly.

As I was walking up the steps to the dressing rooms I licked and put one up on the wall. Never have I tasted such vile glue. It left a sticky layer of nasty feeling in my mouth.

By lunch-time 'OUST MENZIES' stickers had appeared on walls, posts, offal barrows, tallow drums and numerous other places.

When one of the stickers appeared on a side of beef the boss of the slaughter board challenged Billy. Bill denied all knowledge of the sticker and took the attack by saying to the boss, "You tories is all the same."

"I've run out" he told me as we knocked off work for the day. "I'll need a lot more for my pub run." He looked at me. "By Jesus they taste crook," he said. This was the first complaint he had ever lodged against the party. Not sure how to handle such constructive criticism, I replied, "It's for a good cause."

"You can say that again," replied Bill, prepared to lick the stickers until he dropped dead.

The district secretary passed over another 500 stickers. He was not amused when I asked him if there were any vanilla flavoured ones.

I took them in but Bill was not at work. I never found out if he took a traditional sickie or whether he was really ill from the approximate 500 stickers

he had licked.

He came in the following day as fit as ever. When I passed over the stickers he invited me to go on his pub run with him. Intrigued, I agreed.

Our first trouble started on the bus going home. Bill had furtively placed the odd sticker or two on the seats in front of him. As we got off the bus driver challenged him. "I was watching you through the mirror," he said. "I saw you putting those things on the seat - you do it all the time."

Billy silenced him in an instant. "Mind your own business you scab," he said. The driver drove away in frustrated silence.

We went into the first pub. Billy soon had a line of stickers displayed artistically along the counter below the eye level of the bar workers. "On to the next rubbidity," he commanded; and on we went from one pbu to the other. Each was secretly decorated.

At the final pub Billy got really bold. When we had our final beer he placed a sticker on his empty glass.

The publican who was serving saw him do it. "Listen Billy", he complained, "I've been keeping an eye on you. The last time you put these things all over my pub I told you that you would be barred for life if you did it again."

Billy full of beer showed his ability on how to win friends and influence people. "Get stuffed," he suggested.

"Out!" said the publican.

We left, Bill mumbling something about getting the meatworks to declare the pub black, but having the



presence of mind to put a sticker on the swinging door as we departed.

I walked with Bill to the bus stop because I thought the coppers might get him. I vowed silently never to go on his pub run with him again. He kept saying, "I'll need more stickers by morning."

I put him on a bus going in the direction of his home. I watched him after he had entered the bus. The seats were all occupied so he had to strap-hang. But he only needed one hand for this. As the bus moved off I saw him reach in his pocket with his other hand, take out a sticker, quickly lick it and place it on the ceiling of the bus.

And thus are revolutions made.

## herb of the i.w.w.

"Oh yes", said Herb. "I've been in the State Hotel."

"State Hotel?" I queried.

Herb looked at me with a mixture of amusement and scorn. "Don't you know nothing?" he said, "State Hotel is the jail".

I liked talking to Herb, who was a real link with the past. He was the prince of all anarchists, who had found a spiritual home in the I.W.W. when that organization had been at its best.

Over fifty years later he was still using I.W.W. tactics. Every time he went into a bank to cash his pension cheque he would terrify or embarrass the tellers by loudly proclaiming: "It wont be long before the workers take over this joint!"

He was also a master intriguer and joined the Labor Party to subvert that organization.

When an election day came round Herb was allocated to a polling booth giving out how to vote cards. He altered the A.L.P. voting tickets to give the Communist Party candidate second preference. He even made out a few specials, which gave the Communist Party first preference, and kept them in a side pocket for selected customers.

Though he considered the Communist Party pretty weak, he thought they were the best of a bad lot.



Long before the next election came round, the Labor Party had quietly given Herb his marching orders.

"How did you get into jail?" I asked.

"Well, we had a big working class rally the day before. The coppers pinched a number of blokes but had missed me. Next day as I was getting ready to go to work - I was a navvy on the line - two coppers came to my tent. I was easy to find as I had a big red flag flying from my tent pole.

"They told me they had come to arrest me and that I had better unfurl the red flag before I went. 'Take it down yourself', I said. One of them stepped forward to do so. I filled out his eye for him. They soon had me in Boggo Road Jail on a number of charges.

"The fun started after that. There was a Labor premier in power and he sent us over some good tucker - even oysters - I ate mine and later decorated a flower bed with the shells.

"The warders were a bit frightened of us. One of them was named Bill. When he came around, we would say to one another, 'Don't get up it's only Shitty Bill.'

"Because we were anti-conscription, he thought he could get under our skins by saying that we wouldn't fight for our country.

" 'Listen Shitty Bill,' we told him, 'the only part of the country you own is the dirt under your fingernails.'

"This warder was very annoyed later when we sent a delegation to the head of the jail demanding that warders wear rubbers on their boots so as not to disturb the prisoners.

"We tried to organize the warders. Only one was sympathetic and that was on the quiet. He told us that most of the other warders were so bone-headed that they believed the story going round that the wobblies had

pushed the iceberg in front of the Titanic when that ship was sunk."

I decided to cut in on Herb as he would go on all day and all night. "What did you do when you came out?" I queried.

"Plenty," said Herb in his delightfully generalized manner.

"Such as?"

"Well, we had means of sorting out and getting rid of our weak members."

"How did you do that?"

"Many ways," Herb replied mysteriously. "But the one I remember best was for a number of us to board a fairly full tram and sing revolutionary songs from start to finish of the trip. The fellow worker members who were not game to sing were considered extra weak."

"I suppose you had a few casualties using that method?"

"Plenty", said Herb. "But it was a good trial."

"Perhaps that was one of the reasons why the I.W.W. collapsed," I suggests.

Herb grinned. "We aint finished yet - I'm still going, aint I?"



## how we fooled the fuzz

I am completely useless at understanding things mechanical. When I was chosen to be in on a secret working-bee, to compile and sew an illegal edition of Power Without Glory, by Frank Hardy, I knew that my selection must have been on the basis of my ability to keep my mouth shut about such matters, rather than for my expertise at book production.

Our group met in a borrowed flat one evening in Brisbane. To fool the fuzz, who were rather heavy at the time, we had arrived singly at irregular intervals by public transport. The small flat seemed to be full of cardboard boxes containing printed pages of Power Without Glory, to which we were to give our expert attention — of which we had little.

At 8p.m. sharp our instructor, who had been through a one-night illegal crash course on the art of compiling and sewing books, started to instruct us. He was virtually hopeless but still knew more than most of us.

We made some sort of erratic progress and after about six of the sessions the books were ready for an illegal bindery located elsewhere.

Though I reckoned that there would be a labour shortage at the bindery, I was not asked to help. This did not put me out as I had been the dunce of the class at the working-bee, although not much behind the instructor.

Soon the bound books began to appear on the underground market, selling at a pound (two dollars) a pop. It was the in thing to have a copy of P.W.G.. It was the most read and sought after book in the history of Australia. Few that borrowed it ever returned same - which is not unusual for book borrowers.

Then a few gentle complaints started to come in from the readers. The late Dave Surplus, who then ran The People's Bookshop, took me to one side and told me in his quiet Irish brogue, that he was a little worried about the quality of the book. "Some of the pages are upside down," he complained, "some fall out - chapters are out of place - the covers fall off - some have extra pages and some don't have enough."

Nobody was less surprised than me. However I was not in a position to divulge to Dave that I was one of the people to blame.

Although Dave was not selling P.W.G. directly to the general public, it was fairly well known that he was the main supplier to the sub-agents handling the publication on the underground.

Dave's dilemma was that if someone were to ask for a replacement, he would have only been able to give them another defective copy.

This eventuality never arose. P.W.G. was a hard-to-get publication. People were prepared to accept it in any form, even if it meant having to skip pages, turn the book upside down every now and again to read it, or glue-in the unsewn pages.

One could imagine the problems of two people together reading separate copies of P.W.G.. The conversation could run: "Have you a page 96? This copy seems to be minus same." Reply: "Sorry no, but I do have two page 73s if they are of any use to you."

I was possibly my own biggest victim. I bought



fourteen copies in all over a period, mainly for lending. Six had chapters transposed - five had loose pages - two didn't seem to make sense at all - one copy only was perfect, no doubt having been produced in a more efficient collective than the one in which I had participated.

I am well aware of my limitations in such ventures. However I am always motivated by a saying attributed to Lenin which states, roughly - "Them what don't make mistakes is them what does nothing."

## history as not written by historians

My introduction to the ranks of the Communist Party was humorous and educational. A new recruit, I decided to leave the west of Queensland and grab a piece of the political action in the big smoke.

My first city task was not one that really involved the masses. I was to hire a flat or house where a party leader could go into smoke using me as the front man.

The reason for this was because the party appeared to be in some danger of being declared illegal by the tory government. This necessitated the setting up of an underground apparatus which would function alongside our existing legal organization.

"You may have to go under a false name," was one of the first pieces of advice I received. Having pleaded guilty under various bodgie names when up on charges of playing two-up and having used various aliases to obtain work in shearing sheds to beat the blacklist, this worried me not at all. I was probably the most qualified person in Australia in that direction.

I enjoyed many romantic moments thinking up my new revolutionary names. I knew what traps to avoid, never change your first name being the most vital rule of the game. This precaution cut across the danger of a long forgotten friend recognizing you in the street, and greeting you with a loud "Hello Bill", when everyone for miles around knew you as "Jim."



After much thought I decided Bill Smith was as good as anything else. It was not complicated and rolled easily off the tongue.

Having put all this original thought into choosing a pseudonym I was disappointed to be informed that I should keep my own name. The party leader, whom I was to hide, would be the one to assume the alias.

I hired and tried a number of houses and flats before I found a suitable one. The party leader moved in one dark night. He was good company, well read, practical, but a very rough diamond.

At my request he put me through a one man marxist class. A quick reader, I had read quite a number of marxist classics and was reasonably convinced that I would eventually become the Lenin of Australia.

The party leader suggested additional study material. He armed me with a bible titled "History of the C.P.S.U. (B)" and impressed upon me to particularly study the chapter on Dialectical and Historical Materialism. He told me that this section had been written by the greatest historian of all times, Comrade Stalin.

He also gave me his own typewritten thesis on historical materialism, hastily assuring me that of the two Stalin's was the better.

I studied all these writings with interest. The party leader went and came mysteriously. One night when he had no outside engagements we met for our class. The party leader had equipped himself with a stack of hand-written notes, a bottle of wine and a copy of Leontiev's "Political Economy, A Beginner's Course".

It was the shortest lesson in history. My tutor opened with a quick question. "After all the reading you have done, can you now tell me who you consider to be the main enemy of the working class?". I was eager and ready with my reply. "The Catholic Church," I said.

"God fuck me dead!" was the startled comment that fell from my tutor's lips.

Having got off to a poor start, the situation deteriorated until the party leader regained his composure. He then patiently guided me through the course. I am permanently indebted to him for his understanding.

My philosophical training completed, I underwent ever-greater trials. In addition to being the front man, I was also part of a unit of four comrades which was to work the underground press. Number Two of my circle had organized a supporter's house into an illegal printery, complete with duplicator, reams of paper and myriad tubes of ink.

To avoid exposing the set-up, Number Two and I were to go to this depot after dark and leave in the night only. We would sleep in the daylight hours and work in the night. In cases of emergency we planned to operate the machine in the daytime also, tucked safely in our little back room which was really a closed-in verandah.

Our first day's operation could have been considered a trial one. We arrived as planned, out of the darkness, and started duplicating. After a couple of hours I enquired, "Where do we crap?". I think the final word I actually used was a much stronger four letter one.

A frustrated look came over my companion's face. It was a moment of defeat. Months of marxist planning had gone into the project, but no allowance had been made for indoor sanitary needs in an unsewered area. The fibrolite loo could clearly be seen through a peephole in the curtained window. Although only about fifty yards away, it was taboo to us. We could not leave the building.

On reflection I am sure that if Chairman Mao's



Little Red Book had been in print at that time, it would have been impossible to find, even there, a quote that would have solved our complicated political dilemma.

But then we remembered, communists were people of a special mould. We could get around all problems. We solved this one by putting into use the only available receptacles, two empty fruit tins. One for liquids and one for solids.

Not only did we have to be humans of a special mould, we also had to have a good eye, perfect balance and plenty of concentration. But we made our mini-toilet a success.

Those were the days.

## the flat bed

A verbal instruction came down to the activists working in the underground political apparatus set up by the party, which was under the threat of illegality.

This directive stressed the need for individuals to build flatbeds which are one of the simplest forms of printing presses.

For obvious reasons the size suggested was one that would fit into a suitcase. A duplicated one-page sketched plan of how to construct the flatbed was supplied. Other details were set out on the back of the page.

No plan has ever made sense to me. They all look like mysterious lines on a piece of paper. Which way to hold it is a big problem for me.

I studied the sketch for a considerable period before finally deciding to have a go at it.

As usual I must have worked it out wrongly. I have since been told that I took the measurement from the inside, instead of the outside, or vice versa - or something. All I know is that I constructed the greatest monster since the Frankenstein effort.

Obedying the instructions I purchased the various parts carefully and at separate shops. A board here, a hinge there, the sheet of glass elsewhere.



Finally, when I had all the gear, I went into production. It took me a long time to get the flatbed done. I would be right in the middle of putting in a screw when the doorbell would ring. Everything would have to be piled under my bed until the visitor or whoever it was had gone.

Apart from these interruptions my workmanship was often put to the test. The frame fell to pieces about a dozen times before I could get it solid. Holes were bored in the wrong place, I couldn't get the muslin material stretched right; but like all brave Australian explorers I plunged on.

I soon realized that something was wrong. I knew after the first few nights that I would be lucky to get the wood, glass and cloth monstrosity to fit in a tin trunk, let alone a suitcase. Still, I felt there was no point in stopping.

Finally I got the thing made and placed it in its hiding place beneath the bed. There was not much room left under there.

I didn't mention to anyone that I had completed the job. Now and again I would take it out and gaze on it, sometimes in wonderment - sometimes in horror - but mainly with despair.

My chief party contact used to call on me about once a month. After a few visits he asked me if I had the flatbed done, as the centre wished to know how many were available.

I was cautious when I told him the flatbed was ready. I suggested that maybe he should inspect it before passing on news of its birth.

Never will I forget the look on his face when I dragged the contraption out and said, "What do you think?"

He was a man of few words. "Get rid of it," he said. Then added rather hastily, "A bit at a time."

It took me longer to dispose of it than it did to build it. I pulled it to pieces. The muslin I burnt, the boards I sawed-up and took, a piece at a time in my Gladstone bag, to dump in various parts of the city. Finally, the sheet of glass met a watery fate in a deep part of the river one cold winter's night.

I was glad when it was gone. I did not feel that I had done away with a good friend - indeed I slept much easier with it out of my bedroom.

No doubt the masses make history - but some of the masses make a few blues in so making.



## boys will be boys

When shearing is in full swing and labour is hard to get the workers are on top.

In the slack the bosses and the shearing contractors are very cheeky.

I once approached a contractor in an out of the season period and asked for a job. His reply was that as rouseabouts were so plentiful at that time of the year all he had to do was shake a tree and one would fall out.

Some time later when he badly wanted men he came to me and said he needed a shed hand. In the best tradition of repartee I replied, "Try shaking a tree."

It was not only my anarchistic militancy that had made me give this reply. I had won fifteen pounds (thirty dollars) in a poker game the night before and considered I was well on the way to self-emancipation.

This illusion was shattered on the following night when I emerged from the card game broke.

The contractor learned of this and made a compromise offer. He would supply transport and pay me the full adult rate if I would go rouseabouting to Barcaldine Downs - which was a big shed.

Poverty made me accept.

At that time there was a rank and file movement going called "Abolition of Youth Rates Campaign", the aim being that the adult rate must be paid to all shed hands regardless of their age.

On arriving at Barcaldine Downs I was amazed to find that the young rouseabouts had been signed on at the lower rate.

On the second day we asked the union reps to call a meeting at which five boys and myself decided to walk off in protest.

As I had been on the adult rate, the boss of the shed threatened to prosecute me under a war-time regulation which meant that a fine of one hundred pounds, six month's imprisonment or both could be handed out to me.

I provoked him into sacking me. In doing so he let me off the hook. He was so angry at his mistake that he started talking about punching me up.

We neutralized his aggression by the lads flanking me with a bodyguard when I went to collect my two days pay.

The employer's next move was to put pressure on the wool lorry driver not to take us to the nearest town, Barcaldine, which I think was about fifteen miles away.

We strikers gathered up our swags and ports and walked a little way until we were out of sight, over a rise.

There we became a guerilla band, arming ourselves with sticks and stones, ready to break a few bones.

We took up position on each side of the road. When the wool lorry came along, a number of us jumped on to the road and held up our hands. We were prepared to be the first political hijackers in Australian history.



The driver, whose name was O'Toole, pulled up and invited us aboard. It has never been ascertained whether he was influenced by his rebel Irish ancestry or the sticks we held. Whatever it was it proved to be the quickest capitulation ever.

We reached Barcaldine at about ten that night, set up a National Liberation Front near the railway goods shed and held the fort there till morning when we made our way to the pub across the road.

The proprietor was a Mr. Lennon (a name pronounced but not spelt the way Vladimir Illyich did his), but he had a kind face and put us up on the basis of a very risky pay-later promise.

The state apparatus flew into action. A compulsory conference was called. As I had been sacked I could not be summonsed or dealt with in a legal manner. I decided to test my degree in bush lawyership by representing the lads in court.

Working out our guerilla tactics in a manner of which Uncle Ho or Chairman Mao would have been proud, the five lads made their way to the court room in close formation.

I was to time my arrival to get there and announce that I was the boys' mouthpiece just as the case started. We considered that the element of surprise would be in our favour.

When I approached the court house I was met by a policeman who also had an Irish name, but he lacked either the humanity of his countryman, O'Toole, or the kind face of the publican. Worst of all he knew me.

He asked me where I was going. I told him I intended to appear for my clients.

He countered by asking me if I had any legal training. I almost said yes, but decided to answer in the negative.

Showing himself to be master of the short sentence he ended the confrontation by saying, "Piss off."

We guerilla fighters know that the main rule of our art is never to attack the enemy when he is in strength.

I tipped the scales at about nine stone in those days. One of the police officer's boots appeared to weigh about that much.

Muttering silent slogans such as, "It's better to be a live coward than a dead hero" and "I'll get you after the revolution," I beat a strategic retreat.

But the lads, who were fifteen and sixteen years old, had the element which made all legal aid unnecessary - working class solidarity.

The magistrate was nice and nasty by turn - but the lads refused to return to work.

The campaign for the abolition of youth rates gathered impetus and, in an illegal manner, soon became a hundred per cent effective.



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LEAVE THE HEADS ON 'EM and OTHER STORIES.

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