

The Queensland Journal of Labour History

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The Brisbane Labour History Association



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Torbreck apartments under construction, 1960
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The Queensland Journal Of Labour History

No. 13, September 2011

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Contents

EDITORIAL	Jeff Rickertt	1
BLHA President's Column	Greg Mallory & Bob Reed	3
IN MEMORIAM		
Patrick Edward Dunne	Trevor Campbell	5
ARTICLES		
E.J. Hanson Sr and E.J. Hanson Jr: Divergent Directions in the Queensland Labour Movement, 1904–1967	Caroline Mann-Smith	8
Notes on Early Trade Unionism in Townsville	Phil Griffiths	17
George Britten Speaks about a Lifetime of Jobsite Militancy	Jeff Rickertt and Carina Eriksson	24
A Labour view of a Socialist — Tristram Hunt's <i>Marx's General: the Revolutionary Life of Friedrich Engels</i>	Howard Guille	35
BOOK REVIEWS		
<i>Union Jack</i>	Tony Reeves	47
<i>The Ayes Have It: the History of the Queensland Parliament, 1957–1989</i>	Brian Stevensen	49
CONTRIBUTORS		53
NOTICEBOARD		54

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Labour History (ISSN: 0023 6942) is an internationally recognised journal published twice a year, in November and May, by the Australian Society for the Study of Labour History of which the Brisbane Labour History Association is the Brisbane branch. Contents, abstracts and prices of back issues are available at the web site www.asslh.org.au. The journal is available in both printed form and via the non-profit publisher JSTOR. The association with JSTOR offers individual subscribers a range of advantages, including online access to the full run of *Labour History* from 1962 on.

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The most recent issue of *Labour History* (May 2011) marked the journal's 100th issue and featured nine articles traversing key aspects of Australian labour history. The forthcoming issue (November 2011) includes three contributions addressing mining-related themes: photographic images of the Broken Hill industrial disputes, 1908-1920 (Erik Eklund and Paul Adams); the state, labour management and union marginalisation at Electrolytic Zinc, Tasmania, 1920-48 (Ruth Barton); the state and gold miners' health in Victoria (Beris Penrose). Other articles explore a temporally and spatially diverse range of topics in labour and working class history: Aboriginal women and shellwork production, 1870s-1970s (Maria Nugent); the New Australia movement as an episode in Australian working class racism (Stephanie Mawson); welfare capitalism, internal labour markets and collective action at the Yarraville sugar refinery, 1890-1925 (Charles Fahey and John Lack); the Australasian Society of Engineers in South Australia: 1904-68 (Malcolm Saunders and Neil Lloyd); right versus left in the Tasmanian Liquor Trades Union (Michael Hess); industrial relations in the Australian Imperial Force during the Great War (Nathan Wise); and the removal of traditional youth recruitment policies and the ageing of public service workforces (Linda Colley).

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Editorial

Jeff Rickertt

The articles in this issue cover an eclectic mix of topics but each in its own way draws attention to one of organised labour's oldest dilemmas: how to know one's friends and enemies. With current Labor governments selling public assets, diluting workplace health and safety laws and criminalising basic union activity in the construction industry, it is, as ever, a topical question.

Often the enemy is obvious. Nobody on the labour side in 1891 was confused about the motives of the pastoralists and financiers. No-one had any doubts about Chris Corrigan and Peter Reith in 1998. But, as Phil Griffiths explains in his article on North Queensland unionism, alliances across the class divide were once commonplace. In Townsville in the 1880s, not only did the pubs function as union organising centres, the pub owners were often the ones doing the organising, naturally to their own economic and political advantage. A similar blurring of class allegiances was evident in Ipswich and Brisbane.

By the twentieth century, such cross-class fraternising was rare. The shearers' war and industrialisation saw to that.

As the class lines hardened, organised labour shed its entanglements with capital and emerged as an independent industrial and political force. In a sense, this made it easier to know your enemies but harder to choose your friends. The Hanson family is a case in point. Ted Hanson was a plumber by trade, a founding member of the Plumbers' Union and a long-serving Labor member of State Parliament. Jack, his son, was a leader of the Operative Painters and Decorators' Union in Queensland and a prominent member of the Communist Party. Both men claimed allegiance to the labour cause, but for most of their adult lives they were at ideological loggerheads, and at particular moments, such as during the 1948 railway strike, they were at political war. Their remarkable story is told here by Ted's granddaughter and Jack's niece, Caroline Mann-Smith.

In the workplace, the question of friends and enemies invariably takes on a different complexion as workers make common cause against the pressure of capital. In this issue we feature an interview I conducted with George Britten in November 2010, as part of the journal's work and union

life series. George, too, was a plumber but unlike Ted Hanson, he stayed with the tools for his entire working life, building a formidable reputation as a rank and file militant as he plumbed his way around the State. Whereas the Hanson biographies chronicle labour's political divisions, the work stories of George Britten celebrate the creativity, resilience and power of worker solidarity. The industrial action that George and his comrades took to make their industry safer and more civilised often got them the sack. But they did it anyway and, over time, they had success. If they did the same things today, under the construction industry laws maintained by the Gillard Government they would face gaol time.

Our final feature is Howard Guille's review of Tristram Hunt's biography of Friedrich Engels. As a young man, the bourgeois Engels made the cause of proletarian emancipation his own, spurning an easy life as a man of property to devote his wealth and intellectual prowess to supporting his friend Karl Marx and developing the body of radical theory that came to be known as Marxism. Howard ponders what Engels, the co-author of *The Communist Manifesto*, would make of his biographer Hunt, recently elected to the British House of Commons as the Labour member for Stoke-on-Trent Central. Hunt says he's a realist. Engels no doubt would ask: for which side?

I end on a personal note. As this is the final issue of the *Queensland Journal of Labour History* to be edited by Dale and myself, we thank the BLHA committee and members and the journal's many contributors for their support during our time in the job.

* * * *

BLHA

President's Column

Greg Mallory & Bob Reed

Since the publication of the last journal, the BLHA has continued to promote a number of public activities exploring diverse areas of labour history.

On 26 May 2011, the third Alex McDonald Memorial Lecture was delivered at Trades Hall. The event was again generously sponsored by the Queensland Council of Unions (QCU). The lecture, entitled *Pay Equity: Are We There Yet? The Longest Road Trip Ever* was delivered by leading academic and union activist Di Zetlin. Attendance was good and Di's historical analysis was incisive and compelling. The participation from the floor at the conclusion of the lecture was vigorous and included personal accounts from union activists of the current state of the struggle for equal pay and the issues to be addressed in the future.

On 25 June 2011, BLHA's long-time journal editor, Dale Lorna Jacobsen, launched her latest novel *Union Jack* at the offices of United Voice (formerly LHMU). The event was promoted by

BLHA and we thank United Voice for providing the venue and the Rail, Tram and Bus Union (RTBU) for its generous financial support. Dale's book is a fictional work based on the life of her grandfather, Jack O'Leary, a rail worker, socialist and Union activist during a heady period of history in which his union, the Australian Railways Union (ARU) regularly clashed with the government of the day.

The launch was well attended and Dale managed to sell a few books. Fittingly, as the ARU was one of the forerunners of the RTBU, the launch was addressed by former RTBU secretary, Les Crofton, and Dale's book was officially launched by current RTBU secretary, Owen Doogan. The afternoon was punctuated by musical interludes and concluded with an enjoyable social function.

BLHA's next public activity is a symposium to mark the 60th anniversary of the Menzies government's referendum to ban the Communist

Party of Australia. The symposium *Red Scare! Cold War Politics & the 1951 Referendum on the Banning of the Communist Party* will be held from 1.00pm to 5.00pm on Saturday, 8 October 2011 at the QCA Lecture Theatre, Queensland College of Art, Griffith University, 226 Grey Street, Southbank. Admission is free. The key speakers are Humphrey McQueen, Neil Lloyd and Bob Reed. There will be an open forum in which older comrades will be invited to share their experiences and memories of the era. It looks like being a great afternoon.

At the invitation of the QCU, the BLHA has joined its committee to commemorate the 1912 Tramways Strike. Committee member John Spreckley has attended planning meetings and committee member Avalon Kent also attends in her capacity as an officer of the RTBU, the descendant of the Tramways Union. Further news will be disseminated to members as it comes to hand but a range of activities, cultural, historical and political, are being planned for early 2012.

As to federal matters, President Greg Mallory and Secretary Jason Stein continue to represent our interests on the committee of the Australian Society for the Study of Labor History (ASSLH). As previously reported, ASSLH has solidified the federal structure and has revamped the Constitution. As a branch of ASSLH, the BLHA provided

important feedback on the content of the Constitution and is now satisfied with the document. We consider that the federal structure enhances the capacity of all branches to engage in and promote the study of labour history for the benefit of the community.

The Twelfth Biennial Labour History conference will be held from 15–17 September at the Manning Clark Centre at ANU. It is being organised by the Canberra branch of the ASSLH and the National Centre for Biography, ANU. The theme of the conference will be *Labour History and its People*, with special emphasis on biography in the study of Australian labour history.

On a melancholy note, we are sad to see that this edition of the Journal is the last to be edited by Dale Jacobsen. Dale has produced, as editor, 11 issues of the Journal over the past 5 ½ years and we pay tribute to the quality of the work that she has produced and the effort and dedication with which she has produced it. Dale's participation will be sorely missed but she has left a wonderful legacy. Unfortunately Jeff Rickertt, Dale's recent co-editor, will also have to step down for personal reasons. Jeff's talents have been of great benefit to the BLHA in recent times and he is the organising force behind the October Symposium. We wish him well and acknowledge with

deep appreciation his impressive contributions.

It would also be remiss not to again thank all members of the Management Committee for their hard work over the last 6 months, without which the organisation could not continue to function as smoothly as it does.

Enjoy the Journal and we look forward to seeing you at the October symposium.

Greg Mallory
President

Bob Reed
Vice President

* * * *

In Memoriam

Patrick Edward Dunne, 1930–2011

A Life Dedicated to Railways and the ARU



Pat Dunne commenced work with Queensland Government Railways in August 1945 as a junior worker in the Railway Refreshment Rooms at Roma Street. On 24 October that year he was stationed as a lad porter at Roma Street Goods Yards. His appointment was confirmed on 22 July, 1946. During the next few years, he was stationed on the Brisbane Relief, Cleveland and Brunswick Street, before being classed as a shunter at Mayne in late 1950. On 5 September 1951 he qualified as a guard and was stationed variously at Cleveland, Manly, Wooloongabba* and South Brisbane.

He served as District Secretary, Southern District, of the Australian Railways Union (ARU), returned to

Queensland Railways for a short period, and was then appointed Industrial Officer of the union in 1972. So successful was he in this position that Queensland Railways had to employ extra staff in the industrial section because of the number of claims Pat lodged in the Industrial Commission. On the 18 October 1974 he succeeded Roy Patterson as State Secretary of the ARU.

Pat, together with other ARU officers and members, was a staunch critic in relation to nuclear power, so much so that the ARU banned the haulage of uranium-based products. As a consequence of this, a shunting supervisor stationed in Townsville was stood down in 1976 for refusing the movement of a consignment of yellow cake for Mary Kathleen. The ARU undertook a national strike and trains stopped from Cairns to Perth. Following this dispute the member was reinstated. In 1976 Pat became Honorary National President of the ARU and remained in that position until his retirement in 1991. The minutes of the National Executive of January 1991 contained the following:

The ARU National Executive notes the retirement from 31 January of National President and Queensland Branch Secretary Comrade P. Dunne. Comrade Dunne retired after 45 years' dedicated service to the railway industry and the ARU

in which he served the Queensland Branch as Sub-Branch Secretary, Organiser, Industrial Officer and Branch Secretary for 16 years.

During his lengthy term as Branch Secretary, Comrade Dunne continued to advocate for and staunchly apply the principles of allgrades industry unionism. As an advocate before Industrial Tribunals, Comrade Dunne was respected by all — unions, employers and the Commission — as a thorough and resourceful union advocate. His administrative skills enabled the ARU in Queensland to expand during the 1980s and, due to his prudent financial management, the Queensland Branch is well placed to face the challenges of the 1990s.

As State President of the union, the writer had the privilege of working with Pat from 1976 until Pat's retirement in 1991. During that time I found him to be a man of firm union principles, an excellent orator, and a man of the strongest character. He worked closely with the Queensland Executive and if an issue arose, he would consult with the other three members of the Executive prior to a decision being made.

Among other things, he had a good sense of humour, which members of the National Executive and Branch

Council enjoyed. In the latter part of his Union career he became very disillusioned with the Australian Labor Party, sometimes referring to them as the Alternative Liberal Party. In more recent years I became disillusioned too. The privatisation of QR National was the last straw.

The Union, from its formation as the Queensland Railway Employees' Association (QREA) in 1886, through the hard years of the 1920s as the ARU (under the guidance of Tim Moroney and George Rymer), boasted many officials of outstanding ability. The bases on which the QREA was founded were carried through to the Queensland

Railways Union (QRU) and the ARU. Pat Dunne was a part of this, and I quote from a QREA rule book (as it appeared in Chapter 8 of the *Puffing Pioneers* by Viv Daddow):

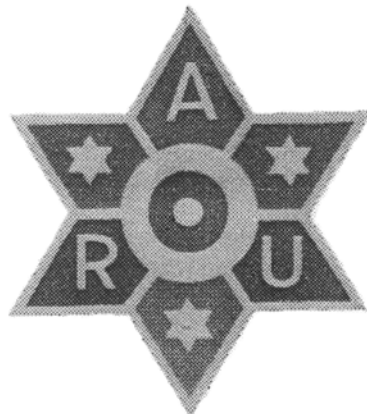
Let us work,
For the cause that needs assistance,
For the wrongs that need resistance,
For the future in the distance,
And the good that we may do.

You will be missed old Comrade. Pat is survived by his wife Tess and two sons.

* Queensland Rail always used the spelling 'Wooloongabba' for the suburb of Woolloongabba.

Trevor Campbell

* * * *



E.J. Hanson Sr and E.J. Hanson Jr: Divergent Directions in the Queensland Labour Movement, 1904–1967

by Caroline Mann-Smith

This paper analyses the contributions to the Queensland labour movement of Edward (Ted) Joseph Hanson (1878–1950) and Edward John (Jack) Hanson (1908–1967). They were father and son. A study of their directions in the Queensland labour movement appears to have relevance to the labour movement today.

Both men played significant roles in the development of the unions to which they belonged. Ted Hanson was a foundation member of the Plumbers and Gasfitters Employees' Union of Australia (PGEUA) and became the union's first full-time Queensland Secretary/Organiser, a position he held from 1915 to 1924. A career in the Queensland Parliament followed from 1924 to 1947, where he achieved the positions of Chairman of Committees and Speaker.

Jack Hanson was the Queensland President (1933–1939) and then Queensland Secretary (1939–1967) of the Operative Painters and Decorators' Union of Australia (OPDUA). Most of

Jack's life was dedicated to the union movement and also to the Communist Party and the Peace Council. Though both men devoted the largest parts of their working lives to the labour cause, their roles and goals in the movement were very different. Norma Mann, their daughter and sister, respectively, recalled that Ted and Jack 'frequently argued at the dinner table' about their beliefs and goals.¹

This paper compares and contrasts the contributions and political directions of these two labour movement identities. While it uses documentary sources, it is also an 'insider's' account, as I am Ted's granddaughter and Jack's niece. The paper draws heavily upon oral testimony from my mother and Jack's sister, Norma Mann.

The Slow Recovery of Metropolitan Unions

The years following 1900, which some have viewed as a period of rapid growth of unionism in Queensland, was rather a time of rapid flux in the unions' fortunes, with many being created but then failing soon after. Union development was hampered by many factors: changing labour market conditions; slow recovery from the previous decade of depression; the fact that there were as yet no economic benefits to be gained from being a union member; and opposition from employers. While figures in Queensland appear to show union

membership doubling between 1904 and 1907, Proctor has argued that the 'figures are difficult to interpret'. Other data reveals that during 1908–9, five new unions were registered in Queensland and four were disbanded.²

Industry in urban areas continued to be affected by the 1890s' depression until after 1910, handicapping urban union recovery. Rural unions grew more steadily from 1903 after the drought broke. These included the Amalgamated Workers' Association (AWA, now AWU). In 1910, Ted Hanson, speaking as President of the Trades and Labour Union Council (TLUC), described metropolitan

unions as 'for the most part in a state of complete disorganisation'.³ He also spoke out against the government's policy of deluding people in Britain into thinking work existed in Queensland.

The Industrial and Political Life of E.J. Hanson Sr

S.K. Proctor has vividly described the genesis of the Plumbers' Union:

One evening in April 1904 15 men gathered together to hear David Bowman, a stalwart of the labour movement, and Peter Mc Lachlan, later member for Fortitude Valley, speak of strength in unity and



Ted Hanson (front row, second from left) with union comrades, c1910
(OM81-80, Edward Joseph Hanson Papers, John Oxley Library, SLQ)

power in organisation. All 15 were plumbers by trade and that evening they had come to form a union. Two of them had seen the union created before, only for it to fail in the 1890s. They were John Hall and Arthur Sheridan and they were elected President and Secretary. 'Along with John Lewis, Frank Trundle and Edward J. Hanson, they held the union together in the ensuing years of struggle'.⁴

In 1908, Edward J. Hanson, or Ted to his family and friends, was elected Branch President, a position he held for the next 12 months. At this time, he was also very active in the broader union movement, serving as President of the TLUC in 1910 and also Assistant Secretary for some years. In 1911 he became the Plumbers' Secretary/Organiser. The following year he became the union's delegate on the 1912 Strike Committee. Norma Mann recalled being told by her Mum that 'he had to come home over the back fence of the family's home at Park Road (South Brisbane), to avoid the police'.⁵

The Secretary's position was part-time until 1915, when Ted successfully advocated for it to become full-time. He served in this role until 1924. Under his leadership, membership numbers increased significantly, from 104 on 30 June 1911, to 435 by 31 December 1919.⁶ Proctor wrote of Hanson: 'In his gradualism and industriousness he was one of a number of men, who, in their

comparative obscurity, provided the labour movement with a firm base'.⁷

The Plumbers' Union had a strong commitment to the individual welfare of its members. In 1923, members honoured one of their own, Johan August Olsen, by paying for a solid and beautiful grave. Compared to other graves erected at the time and still intact at South Brisbane cemetery, Olsen's appears to have involved expenditure of considerable money and thought.

In 1917, Ted was an active member of the union anti-conscription committee. Norma Mann recalled that he was 'named' by Billie Hughes, the then Prime Minister, in the Federal Parliament, for his role.⁸

Ted had been a founding member (1911) of the Buranda Workers' Political Organisation, (WPO), later the Buranda branch of the ALP. He was at times President and Secretary of the branch. Ted served in the Legislative Council from 1920 to 1922, being one of a group of 14 people appointed the same day to vote for the Council's abolition if the opportunity arose. This occurred in 1921, with abolition following in 1922. In 1924, Ted was preselected by the Labor Party for the Queensland State seat of Buranda, which he won in a by-election. He held the seat until 1947, when he retired, aged 69 years. During his time in Parliament, he was Chairman of Committees from 1932 until 1939, and Speaker until

1944. One of his achievements was to make the members' dining room self-funding. His achievements as a local MP included being an advocate and supporter of the Buranda State School, the Annerley Blind, Deaf and Dumb School and the Buranda Pre-School and Childcare Centre.

The Family and Socio-economic Influences on Ted Hanson

Ted's father, John, was an emigrant plumber from Stockport, England. Stockport had been the centre of much social action during the nineteenth century. Whether Ted was aware of this history I do not know. Ted Hanson was born in 1878 and was the second of four sons. He was the only one to live to adulthood, two of his siblings dying before Ted turned six. In his sixth year he lost his mother and in his eighth, his sole surviving brother, James George, was drowned in an unfenced quarry next to a local road while walking home from Dutton Park State School. In his public life, first as Secretary of the Buranda Schools Committee and later as the Member for Buranda, Ted became a champion for the Buranda State School. It was one of the first state schools in Queensland to boast a swimming pool.

Ted's father remarried and Ted subsequently gained five half brothers and sisters, with whom he had close relationships. He grew to adulthood in the 1890s, a time of depression

and drought in Australia. Like his father, he became a plumber. In 1899, Ted volunteered for the Boer War, becoming the 25th member of the 2nd Queensland Mounted Infantry. He served in Southern Africa for 15 months from 1899 to 1901.

Ted kept a diary from October 1900 to May 1901.⁹ In it he recorded that in 1901 he met Lord Kitchener, who thought he was English. 'He often told us stories about the Boer War,' Norma Mann recalled, 'but we didn't listen much, we didn't believe him, they seemed so incredible.'¹⁰ This would have been over 25 years after Ted returned from the Boer War. She also recalled that he kept his gun and his hat with emu feathers until his death in 1950.

Ted Hanson was not a member of the AWU, nor was he a Catholic. Both Catholics and the AWU have been a strong influence in the Queensland labour movement. Norma Mann recalled neither of her parents being 'religious at all'.¹¹

Ted Hanson's wife, Elizabeth McKay, my grandmother, was born of Scottish emigrant parents. Like Ted, she was one of the few children of a large family to grow to maturity. She also lost her mother when young, at the age of 11. Her sole surviving sister, Jane (aka Jean), joined the Communist Party and was active in Sydney until her death. Lizzie's family were very poor during

the 1890s' depression and often lived on oats, bread and syrup.

The Industrial and Political Life of E.J. Hanson Jr

Edward John (Jack) Hanson was born in 1908. Jack was the oldest of four sons and the third child in a family of eight. Although the two youngest children of Ted Hanson grew up in a home protected by their father's income in a relatively secure ALP state seat, the first six children grew up in a different environment. When Jack was four years old, Ted was employed part time as Secretary-Organiser of the Plumbers Union. Soon after Ted was black banned by some employers for his role as Plumbers' Union delegate on the 1912 Strike committee. When Jack was seven, his father became the first full-time Secretary-Organiser of the Plumbers Union.

Jack was a child during World War 1 and aged 21 years in 1929, when the stock market crashed on Wall Street. About this time he travelled with his swag north of Brisbane, looking for work. He met many people badly affected by the conditions of the time. Jack worked as a casual painter, which allowed him to join the Painters' Union. At the time of his marriage, Jack also worked making a small living 'searching for gold in the Mary Valley'.¹²

The records of the 1932 Queensland Labor-in-Politics Convention

show that Jack attended as a union delegate and moved a motion that the ALP 'immediately implement the socialisation objective'. It was resoundingly defeated. The delegate for Buranda at this convention was not his own father Ted, as might have been expected, but Arthur Laurie, then a Brisbane city councillor. Perhaps Ted had got wind of Jack's plans and preferred to be absent.

In 1932 the ALP went to a Queensland State election under the leadership of William Forgan Smith. Smith had a number of achievements, but, as Brian Costar pointed out, 'his cabinets were dominated by country members, Catholics and AWU graduates, who were loyal and even sycophantic'.¹³ Ted sought and won a fourth term in parliament and was appointed Chairman of Committees in the same year — a relatively secure income.

In 1933, at the age of 25, Jack became President of the Queensland Painters' Union. In 1939 he became the union's full-time Secretary, a position he held until his early and unexpected death in March 1967. Spierings has written that Jack was 'an outstanding union leader, a fine orator, a sharp intellect [and] a key influence in holding the OPDUA together during the tumultuous years of the 1940s and 1950s'. He was, opines Spierings, 'a brilliant campaigner on health and industrial issues'.¹⁴

When Jack became the union's Secretary, five of the union's members died each year of slow lead poisoning caused by white lead in house paints. Children also died or became ill from licking house paint when it was wet after rain. Prior to and during Jack's time as Secretary, the OPDUA in Queensland carried out an 'unremitting effort to embarrass the Queensland Government into legislating to outlaw the lethal compound'.¹⁵ In 1950, Jack, as union Secretary, wrote the book, *The Case against Lead Paint and for its Prohibition by Parliamentary Action*. On 14 January 1956 a law finally was enacted that virtually abolished lead in house paint.¹⁶ The campaign by the union had lasted over 50 years. During Jack's time as Secretary, membership

of the Queensland OPDUA quadrupled and, as Spierings points out, a 'struggling union became financially and politically stable'.¹⁷

In his role as chair of the Trades and Labor Council Disputes committee for 25 years, Jack frequently came into conflict with the ALP State Government, most notably during the long meatworkers' and railway workers' disputes of the 1940s. Ted, of course, was still a member of this Government. During the Mt Isa conflict of 1964–65, Jack played a significant role in negotiations as Chair of the Disputes committee and in organising relief supplies for the affected workers.



Jack Hanson (top middle with glasses) at Mt Isa airport with fellow union officials, Jack Egerton and Fred Thompson, January 1965

According to Bacon, Jack became 'saddened and disappointed by the performance of the ALP when it was dominated by the right wing in the 30s'.¹⁸ In 1940 he joined the Communist Party of Australia, of which he remained a member until his death. He was for many years a State committee member. During the 1940s it was common to join the CPA, but it was rare to remain a member through to the 1960s. After the Party split he sided with the CPA. Jack was also a strong supporter of the Peace and Disarmament movement.

In 1947, anti-Communist 'Industrial Groups' were formally endorsed by the Queensland ALP, and, writes Spierings, 'immediately the Painters' Union came under attack, particularly Jack, being Queensland Secretary'.¹⁹ Jack's son John recently recalled some of the consequences of the anti-Communist ethos of the 1940s and 1950s: 'Dad told me that once when he met Vince Gair, Queensland Premier, that Gair said that he knew where I was teaching. Dad told Gair not to take it out on me and I don't think that he ever did'.²⁰

Ted and Jack Hanson and the Labour Movement Today

There are some similarities and some difference between the issues faced by the Hanson men and those confronting the Queensland labour movement today. Early in their careers both men faced the challenges of organising

and building the membership base of the unions and parties they worked for. This issue continues in the labour movement. Though Australia is a more affluent nation today than in the early 1900s, this very affluence makes attracting workers to unions more difficult.

The fact that communication is now much more immediate and easier might be seen to be an advantage that they did not have. Even in urban Australia telephones did not have complete coverage in the 1970s. But in the early to mid-twentieth century the population was much smaller. Communication was more local, rather than electronic, as today. Many people in the early twentieth century worked a six-day week. Today there are additional competing attractions for people's time.

It is highly unlikely that a motion to implement the ALP socialisation objective immediately would be moved at a State ALP conference today, partly because of how the conference is structured and how delegates are chosen and partly because it seems that even the Left of the party and the union movement supports a mixed economy or a social democracy rather than socialism. Then again, many of the labour movement's original goals have been achieved in the last 100 years. Different challenges, however, continually arise for workers.

Workplace health and safety was a significant issue then as now. The OPDUA campaign against lead-based house paint lasted 50 years. Issues today are both physical and cultural, for example: asbestos, repetitive strain, back injuries and workplace bullying. An issue that does not appear to have existed in the years of Ted and Jack's activism is concern about the natural environment.

Factors such as religion and union factions continue to be important today. There continues to be Catholic influence in the ALP, and the AWU faction and Left factions continue as strong influences in both the ALP and the trade union movement. Though following different political directions, neither Hanson was a Catholic or a member of the AWU group. Ted favoured gradualism, while Jack favoured faster social change.

Ted told his younger children, many years later, about some of his Boer War experiences, and he kept personal items from that time until his death, indicating that the war continued to hold some importance to him. In 1917, Ted became a very active member of the Queensland union anti-conscription committee. It is plausible to conclude, therefore, that Ted's war experience influenced his later beliefs and directions in the Queensland labour movement. Ted's support of gradualism, for instance, might have

been influenced by experiencing firsthand the violence of war.

Unemployment continued to be high in the early 1900s in urban areas. But it is unlikely that Ted would have been unemployed on his return from the Boer War, as it is probable that his father, also a plumber, would have assisted with employment. What other motivations might there have been for Ted's strong involvement in the labour movement? Safety issues were a concern at that time for plumbers. Furthermore, altruism seemed to be a strong characteristic of many of the Hanson family, including the children. Teske wrote of the 'complex interweaving of self and moral motives in politics.'²¹ This appears to have been the case with Ted and Jack. In addition, both grew up as oldest sons, which, it is sometimes claimed, can lead to qualities of responsibility and leadership.

What were some of the different experiences of Ted and Jack that affected their beliefs?

The fledgling Labor Party had very briefly formed a Government in 1899. The arena of Parliament and Government was a fresh source of hope for many unionists and workers when Ted was in his early adulthood. On his election as MLA, in 1924, Ted had already been a MLC and had voted for the abolition of the upper house. There had been the successful

and reforming T.J. Ryan Queensland Labor Government. In contrast, Jack experienced the Depression of the 1930s when the Communist Party was growing in support. Thus, social and economic circumstances affected the political directions of the men in complex ways. Though both men are not so well-known today, both made significant contributions to the labour movement. They are just two of the many people who worked to give the movement a sound, organised and resilient foundation.

Notes

- 1 Caroline Mann-Smith, Oral history interview with Norma Margaret Mann (nee Hanson), Brisbane, 2003.
- 2 S.K. Proctor, 'Brisbane Unionism and the Plumbers' Union, 1904–1915', in D.J. Murphy *et al* (eds), *Prelude to Power: the Rise of the Labour Party in Queensland, 1885–1915*, The Jacaranda Press, Milton, 1970, p. 142.
- 3 *ibid.*
- 4 *ibid.*, p. 141.
- 5 Interview with Norma Mann, 2003.
- 6 S.K. Proctor, 'A History of the Brisbane Branch of the Plumbers and Gasfitters Employees' Union of Australia, BA (Hons) thesis, University of Queensland, 1964, Appendix A.
- 7 Proctor, 'Brisbane Unionism and the Plumbers' Union', p. 132.
- 8 Interview with Norma Mann, 2003.
- 9 OM81-80, Edward Joseph Hanson Papers, John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland, Australia.
- 10 Interview with Norma Mann, 2003.
- 11 *ibid.*
- 12 Ted Bacon, 'Eulogy at E.J. (Jack) Hanson's funeral', 31 March 1967.
- 13 B.J. Costar, 'William Forgan Smith', Australian Dictionary of Biography Online, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/smith-william-forgan-bill-8489>, accessed 15 August 2011.
- 14 J. Spierings, *A Brush with History: the Painters' Union and the Australian Labour Movement*, Hyland House, Melbourne, 1994, p. 160.
- 15 *ibid.*
- 16 E.J. Hanson, Preface to *The Struggle Against Lead Poison in the Painting Trade*, OPDUA, Brisbane, 1958.
- 17 Spierings, *A Brush with History*, p. 160.
- 18 Bacon, 'Eulogy'.
- 19 Spierings, *A Brush with History*, p. 146.
- 20 Letter to Caroline Mann-Smith from E.J. Hanson Jr., 2005, in author's possession.
- 21 N. Teske, 'Beyond Altruism: Identity-Construction as Moral Motive in Political Explanation', *Political Psychology*, vol. 18, no. 1, 1997, p. 71.

* * * * *

Notes on Early Trade Unionism in Townsville

By Phil Griffiths

Very little has been written about the early history of the Queensland labour movement. In part this is because the movement seemed to develop so rapidly in the late 1880s to suddenly become a powerful and radicalising force in the great strikes of the early 1890s. Historians have rightly focused on the big picture: the formation of the Australian Labour Federation in 1889; the Jondaryan strike and the launching of *The Worker* newspaper in 1890; the maritime strike of 1890; the shearers' strikes of 1891 and 1894; and the formation of the Labour Party in 1891. Before that, there is very little; the Brisbane Trades and Labour Council was formed only in 1885, and only brought together a modest number of unions and unionists.

Where did the activists and the traditions come from to produce such an extensive and powerful movement in such a short period of time? Periods of radical change can transform people and their ideas very quickly, but this requires some kind of existing core of activists with ideas and organising methods from which they have learned.

While Joe Harris, John Moran, Bradley Bowden and others have documented some of the early attempts at union

organisation in Brisbane, the picture for North Queensland is less well documented. Geoffrey Bolton wrote an interesting article on the role of trade unionists from Charters Towers in the very first issue of *Labour History*, in 1962, but there isn't much else.

A few years ago, I came across some material about new union organising in Townsville and Charters Towers in the mid-1880s as I researched my PhD thesis on the development of the White Australia policy, and I thought I would share what I found about Townsville.

Two things surprised me. The first was the significant role played by essentially middle-class people, and especially publicans, in the formation and running of these fledgling organisations, and I later found that this was quite common. Bowden has argued employers were crucial to union organisation in Brisbane before the late 1880s, so my observations about the Townsville union movement fit to some extent within the pattern he described.¹ The second was that even very new, local unions could successfully campaign and organise strikes, and that such successes often led to the union falling apart, presumably because workers had won enough of what they were after.

The material I found was in local papers, which would often cover everything a union did, including all its membership meetings. These local papers were tenuous businesses, publishing a few times a week, with a tiny staff. The

North Queensland Telegraph and Territorial Separationist (NQT) was an extremely minor, local paper — a four-paged newspaper, published daily in Townsville by Edward Reddin. Its main role was to advocate separation for northern Queensland. Apart from a few stray editions, the more important *Townsville Bulletin* is not available before October 1887.

Trade Union Activities in the North Queensland Telegraph

The *NQT* began publishing in May 1885, and by then there were a few unions operating in Townsville, including a Seamen's Union and a branch of the Society of Carpenters and Joiners. In the next year, a wharf labourers' union, a building labourers' union, and a union for painters were established.

On 1 July 1885, the paper reported on the regular meeting of the Federated Seamen's Union, and this showed union reliance on local worthies as their figureheads. The President was H.B. Le T. Hubert, the owner of a local auction mart and one of the leading liberals in Townsville. Unlike the majority of business people there, Hubert was an opponent of North Queensland separation, and organised a reception in Townsville for the liberal premier, S.W. Griffith, who was by then treated as a figure of hatred and contempt in the north. Hubert was also a member of the local Licensing Board, a prestigious government appointment. The union

had resolved to impose the eight-hours system in Townsville from 1 July, but Hubert had lectured his members on the need to allow non-union men to work if there were insufficient union men available. The meeting elected August Hansen delegate for the Burdekin.² Further meetings of the union were reported on 21 July, 4 August, 18 August, and issues included concerns over 'coloured labour' at Normanton.

The Townsville union also decided to ask the Brisbane Secretary, Charles Seymour, to visit the branch, which he agreed to do in September, but in the end it was Mr Russell who came up from Brisbane that November. He made a point of dodging the issue of North Queensland separation in public, declaring however that 'he hoped that the Seamen of Australia would never separate,' a comment greeted with applause. Russell refused to discuss union business with outsiders and reporters present, so the coverage of his organising visit is sparse, apart from a report of a meeting of the Wharf Labourers' union, which Russell attended, praising the union and its leaders.³

The Townsville Wharf Labourers and Lumpers' Union

In September 1885, there were moves to set up a union of wharf labourers. A meeting was held on 24 September at Harry Figg's Leichhardt Hotel and the publican acted as chair of the meeting and was later elected president. It seems

that the workers' grievances included being expected to wait around for hours for work to start, and being paid little or nothing for the time. There was also anger that ship owners were using immigrant passengers to do some of the work, rather than hire the workers from the port. In explaining the reasons for forming a union, Figg 'gave instances where the men had to be in readiness to work at any hour, and after waiting for upwards of 12 hours, had received five hours pay'.⁴ A few weeks later another member complained that he and a mate had been hired to unload cargo, but after nine hours in the bay and no work, they were sent ashore with no payment.⁵

For the position of Treasurer, the new union's leaders and/or activists seem to have been determined to recruit a prominent conservative businessman. At their founding meeting, they elected a prosperous local chemist, Edwin Richard D'Weske.⁶ A couple of months earlier he had signed a requisition for W.V. Brown to stand for the newly-created second seat for Townsville in the Queensland Legislative Assembly. Brown was a principal in the firm of Aplin Brown & Co, which had extensive shipping interests, including in the 'recruitment' of South Sea Islands labourers for the sugar plantations. Brown had been asked to stand for parliament by the Townsville Separation League and Executive Council.⁷ It is clear from subsequent articles that the union's original plan had been to get one of

Townsville's leading businessmen, Arthur G. Bundock, as Treasurer, and this proposal was withdrawn only when it became apparent that Bundock would also be standing for the newly-created second parliamentary seat for Townsville at the coming by-election, and the leading activists in the union expected him to win. When the union met representatives of the ship-owners for negotiations in October, Bundock was on the other side.⁸

Over the next two months, the new wharfies' union set out to pressure the shipowners to agree to better working conditions and union preference, both of which they won. They began by establishing a set of rules for the union; these were not a constitution in the modern sense, but the conditions under which union members were required to work, on pain of expulsion. They included an eight hour day between 7am and 5pm with two hours for meals. Wages were to be 1s 6d an hour, 2s for overtime (between 5pm and 7am), and 2s an hour for working coal or coaling. Half wages were to be paid for travelling times to and from the wharf. The new rules were to apply 14 days after they were adopted.⁹

Within a week, the shipowners were seeking negotiations, which suggests that the union must have had a reasonably strong bargaining position. In the negotiations, the ship-owners and the wharfies' representatives agreed to a ten-hour working day, 6am to 6pm. The shipowners offered 1s an

hour with 2s for overtime (or 1s 6d for work at any hour), half rates travelling to and from ships, with coal handling paid at 2s for five hours and 1s 6d thereafter. They also demanded that the men pay 6d for each meal, a sum they described as 'nominal'.¹⁰

When the wharfies met to discuss the negotiations, they were not happy. One of their leaders, King, pointed out that they had been getting full rates while travelling to and from ships, not the half-rate now being offered. The hourly rates offered were 'not sufficient to maintain their wives and family, and he hoped that they would stick to their own rules'. In reply, Edward Lowry, the union's vice-president who appears to have been either a seafarer or a wharf labourer, argued for the men to agree to the terms offered. 'Capital,' he argued, 'was a great power, as they could also obtain labor from other places ... He believed it was the desire of the agents to obtain all the labor they could at the port. It was a mistake,' he concluded, 'to be led away by claptrap'. At this, King attempted to resign as one of their representatives, but he was prevailed upon to stay on. The newspaper also reports that Figg, the publican president, and W.T. Morris also appealed for 'moderation'. The paper carried advertisements from a W.T. Morris, auctioneer and commission agent, and this may well have been the person appealing for moderation. In November 1885, two more local publicans, Long (Excelsior Hotel) and Thomas Enright (Metropolitan Hotel)

were unanimously elected as honorary members.¹¹

In late 1885, the membership is listed as 93, with 52 members fully paid, and 40 attending a routine meeting.¹² However, by early 1886 it was clear that business was depressed, and the union was on the defensive. Meetings were small, and the union was facing the prospect of their wages being cut. It resolved to 'wait upon Mr R. Philp on his return from the North, and solicit his influence on behalf of the Union'.¹³ Philp was the founding partner of Burns Philp, the fabulously successful shipping and trading business, and a successful real estate developer in his own right. By 1886, he was probably Townsville's leading businessperson, a leading separationist, and would soon be elected as a conservative-separationist for the new Townsville-based seat of Musgrave in the Queensland parliament. He would later become Minister for Mines, Public Works, Railways, Public Instruction, Treasurer and Premier of Queensland in 1899–1903 and again briefly in 1907–8. *The Worker* later described Philp as a representative of monopoly capitalism, and as 'the Northern boodler ... the godfather of black labour and the patron of the land-grant railway syndicate'.¹⁴ This was a year of recession in the north, with the government agreeing to fund public works to provide some jobs.

I don't know what happened internally in the union. Shortly after deciding to

approach Robert Philp for support, the union had thrown itself into raising money for a major wharves' strike in Melbourne, sending a substantial donation. They had also been involved in a local dispute with the chief officer of the *Glaucus*.¹⁵

By May 1886, the union was deciding to attempt to impose a closed shop on the wharves. At a meeting of 30 members, they determined that if 'the shipowners and agents did not consent to employ only Union men, the latter would cease work to-morrow'. They had support from the new union of building labourers.¹⁶ There is no indication of whether or not this action succeeded. The following day's edition of the *North Queensland Telegraph* is missing, and there is no mention of this dispute in subsequent issues. However, the publican-president of the union, Harry Figg, had decided to resign. There is no indication of why; but the new president, King, had been identified with a more militant stand in the union's original negotiations with the shipowners and agents.

Other Townsville Unions

The year of recession, 1886, also saw a new union of building labourers being organised. The impetus was an attempt by a major firm of contractors to reduce wages from 8s a day to 7s. A meeting to set up a new union was held on 2 April 1886, at the Cosmopolitan Hotel, on Ross Island. As with the wharf labourers' union, the meeting

was chaired by the publican, N.R. Davies, who was subsequently elected Treasurer. Davies told the meeting that if Messrs Brand and Dryborough succeeded in reducing wages, 'the standard of wages would then be fixed for the whole of the North'. The meeting then resolved that they would not work on public works for less than the government standard — 1s per hour for labourers, and 1s 1½d for hammer and drill men — and that they would not work with non-unionists. Membership dues were decided, 50 labourers joined, and a committee was elected, with the task of approaching the offending contractors.¹⁷ According to the *North Queensland Telegraph*, there was considerable anger amongst the workers, and the chairperson/publican, Davies, had 'cast oil on the troubled waters ... making them realise the danger they placed themselves in breaking the law'.

The following week, 27 members of the union struck at the jetty project, while other union members also struck on a railway project where non-union members were employed.¹⁸ The latter strike appears to have been settled with the non-members joining the union, but again we don't know what happened to the jetty strike; it simply disappears from the newspaper's coverage.

Certainly the union appears to have been successful. In September 1886 it reported 300 members, even as unemployment appeared its major problem. That month it decided to set

up a branch at Ross Island, a suburb of Townsville.¹⁹

In December 1886, there was an attempt by painters in Townsville to set up a union, called 'The Townsville Union'.²⁰

The Carpenters and Joiners' Society appears less frequently in the pages of the newspaper. But it was clearly functional. It is first mentioned in the *North Queensland Telegraph* two months after the start of publication, when Johnston and Kelso from the Townsville branch had gone to Charters Towers to assist with the setting up of a branch.²¹ The union ran a successful picnic in November 1885, held occasional large meetings, and its members supported a strike in Cairns by refusing to work, and returning to Townsville.²²

The Use of Middle-Class Leaders by New Trade Unions

I am in no position to discuss Bradley Bowden's argument that employer support was essential for trade union success prior to 1870; and I disagree with his interpretation of employer support for the 1878–79 seamen's strike against the replacement of 'white' seafarers by Chinese workers.²³ However, when he says that few would have been surprised by a businessperson playing a leadership role in a union in the mid-1880s, I completely agree. Bowden gives a series of examples, including William Galloway, the

owner of an oyster saloon in Brisbane, becoming a leader of the Seamen's Union and eventually one of the key union organisers in the city, while one of his business associates became the inaugural Secretary of the Trades and Labour Council.²⁴ This article has found their Townsville equivalents.

What significance should we attach to this use of middle-class leaders by the early unions? Bowden argues that 'these employer-unionists seem to have typically been journeymen who retained their interest in unionism despite having ... gone into business on their own account'.²⁵ This was probably not the pattern in Townsville.

The employer-unionists I found were mostly publicans, who undoubtedly benefited commercially from being identified with the economic interests of their customers and labourers in general, and who were also, like the journeymen Bowden found, mostly plebeian, relying on their own labour as well as any business profits for their living. It is also possible that leadership of a union, and calming down any impetus to direct action, were seen by these publicans as a vehicle for political office — N.R. Davies, the leader of the building workers' union in Townsville, stood unsuccessfully for council.

There is also evidence that conservatives attempted to use union concerns to win support for North Queensland separation in the face of scepticism (if not outright hostility)

by organised labour and more radical liberals. It is not clear how much trade unionism was seen by non-elite liberals as a potential bulwark against capitalists fighting Brisbane for the right to use indentured labour, but this has to be one possible motive.

Turning to middle-class people for some element of leadership was clearly an attempt by trade unionists to make their organising appear respectable, and their organisations seem less threatening. It may also have reflected a lack of confidence by labourers in their own abilities to run a union entirely with their own resources. Either way, the development of a layer of capable leaders and administrators from amongst their membership stands as one of the achievements of trade unionism.

Conclusion

In these few notes, I cannot offer a neat story, with a beginning and end. But my experience was that small, local newspapers carried a great deal of material on early union organising in the regional towns of Queensland. Anyone seeking to research a fuller history of our unions would do well to consult them, and both the State Library and the Parliamentary Library in Brisbane have extensive, if incomplete, collections of local newspapers.

Notes

1 Bradley Bowden, 'Harmony ... between the employer and employed': employer support for union formation

- in Brisbane, 1857–90', *Labour History*, no. 97, November 2009, pp. 105–22.
- 2 *North Queensland Telegraph* (hereafter *NQT*), 1 July 1885, p. 2, col. 3; Seymour's reply, *NQT*, 21 July, p. 2, col. 2.
 - 3 *NQT*, 10 November 1885, p. 2, col. 7.
 - 4 *NQT*, 23 September 1885, p. 2, col. 3.
 - 5 *NQT*, 13 October 1885, p. 2, col. 2.
 - 6 *NQT*, 23 September 1885, p. 2, col. 3.
 - 7 *NQT*, 3 August 1885, p. 3, col. 2; *NQT* 1 Aug 85, p. 2, col 2
 - 8 *NQT*, 2 October 1885, p. 2, col. 3; 14 October, p. 2, col. 3.
 - 9 *NQT*, 2 October 1885, pl. 2, cols. 2–3.
 - 10 *NQT*, 14 October 1885, p. 2, col. 3.
 - 11 *NQT*, 17 November 1885, p. 2, col. 4.
 - 12 *ibid.*
 - 13 *NQT*, 5 January 1886, p. 2, col. 3.
 - 14 W. Ross Johnston, 'Philp, Sir Robert (1851–1922)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/philp-sir-robert-8040/text14019>, accessed 4 August 2011.
 - 15 *NQT*, 4 February 1886, p. 2, col. 3; also 9 Feb 1886, p. 2, col. 3.
 - 16 *NQT*, 11 May 1886, p. 2, col. 4; also p. 2, col. 3.
 - 17 *NQT*, 3 April 1886, p. 2, col. 4, also col. 6.
 - 18 *NQT*, 7 April 1886, p. 2, col. 3; 10 April, p. 2, col. 5.
 - 19 *NQT*, 25 September 1886.
 - 20 *NQT*, 6 December 1886.
 - 21 *NQT*, 21 July 1885, p. 2, col. 2.
 - 22 *NQT*, 10 November 1885, p. 2, col. 6; 9 Feb 1886, p. 2, col. 3.
 - 23 This is one focus of my paper at the 2011 National Labour History conference at ANU in Canberra. Essentially my argument is that there was a broad ruling class desire to prevent Chinese immigration, and that in 1878–79 this involved all kinds of employers, investors and conservatives in supporting a strike they would otherwise have detested.
 - 24 Bowden, 'Harmony ... between the Employer and Employed', pp. 114–15.
 - 25 *ibid.*, p. 115.

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George Britten Speaks about a Lifetime of Jobsite Militancy

Interviewed by Jeff Rickertt,
14 November 2010

George Britten was born in 1926 and grew up in Ilford, in the industrial southeast of London, where working life was dominated by the chemical industry and by Cape Asbestos, a large factory churning out building products from blue asbestos mined in South Africa. George's grandfather, father, uncle and two older brothers all worked in one of the chemical factories, manufacturing quinine, aspirin and other pharmaceuticals. His mother was employed cleaning the factory manager's residence. In April 1940, after school broke up for the summer holiday, George's father announced that George, too, was going to work in the factory. The next day, he accompanied his father to the plant and was set to work with the plumbers in the maintenance department. Two years later George commenced a plumbing apprenticeship there, which he completed at the age of 21. Though not coming from a strong union family, George attempted to join the plumbers' union when still only 14 years of age, but was told he was too young. When he turned 16, he applied again, this time successfully, and began attending union

meetings. He was motivated, he says, by witnessing the hardship and evictions of families thrown into poverty by the Depression. Encouraged by a brother who had jumped ship in Sydney, in 1949 George migrated to Australia, arriving in Adelaide with no more than five quid in his pocket. He worked his way overland to Mt Isa where, in 1950, he found employment installing and maintaining air conditioning ducts down the mine shafts. Thus began a long life of work and struggle in Australia. I asked George about his life as a worker, communist and militant trade unionist in Mt Isa and elsewhere. Here are edited versions of some of his stories.



George Britten, 2011

Mt Isa, Mass Sackings and *The Plot*

GB: In Mt Isa they had a lead bonus. During the period before the [Korean] war the lead bonus would only be a very small portion of the actual wage. When the war started there was a great urgency to buy up lead, copper and zinc

by the Western powers, and of course the price shot right up. Well, when the lead went up so much per month on the national market or international market in London, it would send the bonus up. So we experienced the bonus going up each month, maybe a couple of pound a week in your wages. It got to the stage in mid-1951, about a year after the war started, the lead bonus at Mt Isa Mines was higher than your actual wage. I think it got up to over 17 pounds a week when the wage was about 12 pounds a week. Of course ... they didn't like seeing all their profit going out on bloody bonuses to workers, so they applied to the state industrial court here in Brisbane to clamp the wage at that price, at 17 pound something a week, and they threatened the court. They said if you don't do that we'll have to start sacking workers. [When the court didn't comply] they started sacking workers and I was one of the workers. This was in January 1952. That's when I got the marching orders from Mt Isa Mines. They decided they could mine lead and copper without me.

In the two years I was there much took place. I had only been there a few months in early 1950 when I was elected delegate for the plumbers. They had never had a delegate before. We had a meeting on some issue and they elected me as their representative. Not that I was able to do much for them but at least I was there as representation. We never had much cooperation from the union in Brisbane. The union in

Brisbane in 1950 was only used to dealing with little cottage industries around the townships. They couldn't deal with anything in Mt Isa. They would never come up there, they could never afford it.

There was the AWU, unfortunately, and they had the stranglehold on the union positions. They controlled probably about 90 per cent of all the employees up there in Mt Isa Mines and they had their own organiser there. The other people you might see were Fred Thompson from the Metal Workers' Union, and also Kevin Loughlin from the BWIU would come in occasionally.

But workers' representatives were coming in by train in those days, train from Brisbane up to Townsville, from Townsville up there. It would take about three bloody days to get to the Isa, you know, so you didn't get too much cooperation.

I teamed up with a number of people. One bloke, Eddie Heilbronn, was Secretary of the Ironworkers' Union sub-branch and he was also Branch Secretary of the CPA [Communist Party of Australia] in Mt Isa. What we endeavoured to do and fight for was to set up a provincial Trades and Labour Council. We were going quite well with it. We got the okay from Brisbane to go ahead, we got a number of unions involved. Eddie Heilbronn was a dynamo and played a major part there. Well, of course, when they decided

to sack a number of workers because they couldn't put a ceiling on the lead bonus, they picked out, I think, about 60 workers initially, and out of the 60 workers, of course, anyone who had any union activity, including myself, got the arse.

JR: And there was nothing that the unions could do?

GB: No. I sent an urgent telegram to our union, that was my only method I had — no phone or anything, the only way of communication — and I said — I think there was four plumbers that got sacked including myself — and I said we would like some union presence here to fight this. I eventually got a telegram back about four or five days later. It said: 'Unable to do anything with your request until such time as committee management meets, which will be another week'. So about two weeks after that I got a letter back, saying 'the committee of management has met, we can't do anything about it because underground work is covered by the AWU, not the Plumbers' Union'. Full stop. Never mentioned about the blokes being sacked or anything. So they weren't able to do anything, powerless, completely powerless to do anything.

JR: The initiative to set up a provincial Trades and Labour Council was coming from the unionists in Mt Isa? It wasn't an initiative from outside, from Brisbane?

GB: Initiated in Mt Isa itself. Of course, we got the full cooperation — during those days, I think Alex MacDonald was Secretary of the [Queensland] Trades and Labor Council — and we got the full cooperation to go ahead and do it and we were working on it at the time. We had quite a number of the good boilermakers there, but they ended up getting sacked too.

JR: 1951 was, of course, the height of the anti-communist hysteria and you had Menzies organising a referendum to ban the Communist Party after his legislation had been struck down. To what extent was the campaign to oppose the banning of the Communist Party taken up in Mt Isa?

GB: Well it was, yes. We were continually getting a flood of leaflets coming through from Brisbane and just about every other day — getting that much we couldn't handle it. But we had a lot of handlers there and we were putting it in all different parts of the mine, and that helped greatly ...

Also, then there was no daily paper in Mt Isa. The daily paper was a Brisbane paper or the Townsville paper which only came by train. We didn't get it till the day after. But what was in great demand was a leaflet that once a month the local branch of the Communist Party put out, called *The Plot* — PLOT. They were sought after everywhere and that really got my interest, right from the early days. You'd go into the

change room at seven o'clock in the morning and you'd see these leaflets with the big red *Plot* on them. That was the only thing there about the bloody workers, conditions and Christ knows what, rotten bloody conditions that we were living under at the time in the bloody barracks and Christ knows where ...

JR: How often did *The Plot* come out?

GB: Once a month. Sought after by everyone. You'd hear a worker say, 'You get your Plot?' 'No, no, only got a couple, so and so has got one, get one from him'. And they'd pass them around. It was in great demand. That was the news sheet of Mt Isa Mines! *The Plot*, put out by Eddie Heilbronn, my old mate.

High-rises, Hardhats and a Man They Couldn't Break

JR: Did you become active in the union in Brisbane?

GB: Oh yes, my word I did.

JR: Tell me about that.

GB: Well, I became as active as I could. I am probably the oldest member still around in Brisbane. I started going to the Brisbane union meetings in early 1952. And, of course, once you become involved in a union you become involved with the building trades group, which involved six

unions, including the leadership from the BWIU. They were the dynamos, there is no question about that. Without them there would not have been anything. There was always something going on, there was job meetings, there was bloody stop work meetings. In those days the building industry used to hold Saturday morning meetings in the Trades Hall, with the combined unions. Gerry Dawson and Ronny Brown and quite a few others used to be speakers there in those days.

.....

JR: What was the mainstay of the industry in Brisbane?

GB: Well the mainstay was humpy building. There was still a shortage from the war years and of course the Housing Commission was probably the biggest builder in Queensland in the early 50s and then the other government area was the Works Department. They outnumbered everyone else.

When we held Saturday morning meetings we not only got a good crowd there, say 500 to 600 workers, half of them would be from the Housing Commission or from the Works Department. So we got quite a militant type of atmosphere at those meetings.

JR: So the Saturday meetings were open to all members?

GB: Oh yes.

.....

JR: Can you remember different campaigns that were developed?

GB: There were many of them. There wasn't too many state-wide campaigns that I remember in the mid 50s, not until we started campaigning for three weeks annual leave. And I think it became four weeks annual leave. There were other issues that came up from time to time. Long-service leave came up in the building industry much later of course. And these were able to galvanise strength ... to bring up to date some of the conditions that had been won in other places. We got a good response to those issues.

JR: Did you have site meetings?

GB: Yes, well there were many site meetings ... in the mid 50s. I worked at the PA hospital, what's now the PA hospital, on the nurses' quarters — that's all been demolished and rebuilt. We organised pretty well there, hundreds of workers there, excellent cooperation from the unions, from the building unions, especially the BWIU. They were there all the time and we had some great rallies ...

Actually, on all the jobs I have been on, I have been a delegate, sometimes appointed by the union, sometimes I wouldn't wait for the union. I always carried in my bag a rule book, a union rule book, and I carried copies of the Building Trades Award — we had one Award for six unions. I always aim

for a job where there was plenty of workers. I wouldn't want to work for a humpy builder. So I get on to the job and after you sort of see how you go and do the right thing for a week, you take note of what's got to be done and what hasn't got to be done: first aid, safety, workers' conditions and so on, hygiene and all these other things ...

What I would do then is have a yarn with other workers and try to get them to nominate a delegate, and when we went through that process, I would then call a meeting of the job committee. By that time, I would have been in touch with my own union. I didn't always wait for my own union to respond and come there and officially make me the delegate. It didn't make any difference. I was the spokesperson because I was more experienced, unfortunately for me, I suppose ... That would be the set up I'd aim for, to get a job meeting going. It wasn't always successful, sometimes it was only half successful, trying to get a job meeting going and discuss conditions. Safety conditions were bloody non-existent in days gone by. Fifty years ago, unbelievable what went on in jobs.

Anyway ... any job I went to that was of any size — say over three workers — I'd take that position of assuming responsibility of checking work conditions, health, safety and first aid, etc, etc. That's the way I have always worked, always, all the time I have been in the industry.

JR: So, if you were up against a particular safety issue that needed to be fixed, you've got your job committee set up and you've identified something that needed to be fixed. How do you go about fixing it?

GB: Well, depends on the circumstances, I suppose. We'd go and see the boss if we had not already seen him and we'd say: 'Well listen, we have had a meeting there and what we find is that there is no lighting on the third floor, it's dangerous for workers going through there, there is too much rubble on the floor because workers are going through there in the dark to get to the stairwells'. Something like that. We'd want it fixed up and if there was no agreement to it we'd get the officials down there and we'd call a stop work meeting, we'd call a lunch-hour meeting and work that way. Get the officials to pursue it.

In 1960 I worked at Torbreck, which is a big residential block in Highgate Hill and it's the first I believe of the residential buildings of a high-rise nature in Brisbane, and we had all sorts of problems there. I think there was 15 plumbers on that job ... And anyway we were building this high-rise building there. As you know, there is a stairwell that goes through on each end of the building, and in the middle there's the lift area, probably two lifts or more, built in with brick work. But as the floors are rising up, bricklayers were working up the top,

contract bricklayers. Unfortunately [they] couldn't care a stuff about workers' conditions or workers' bloody safety. Bricks were coming down the stairwell. We were working down on different floors and these bricks would come — bits of concrete, Christ knows what. Anyway, we called a stop-work meeting and said we want to get bloody helmets — unheard of in the building industry.

JR: No helmets?

GB: No, no, no ... and so anyway we had — the builder was Kratzmann. So we had a deputation, including myself and I think about three others. We went and seen the boss, the foreman. We told him what we wanted. He said all I can do is pass it on to the big chief. He passed it on to the big chief and the big chief said: 'No. You want helmets, get them yourself!' So that led to another stop-work meeting. Eventually, of course, we said: 'Well, that's not good enough, we want helmets or there will be further stoppages'. He said no. So we held a stoppage for about two hours or something like that, and went back to work. Anyway, a couple of days later they came back and said: 'Well what he's prepared to do, a compromise, he'll get helmets for all workers but you'll pay for them'. And, of course, the workers told him what to do: 'Get stuffed!' So, anyway, this went on over a period of few weeks: stop work and next day there would be another bloody stoppage and Christ knows what. It got

down to the case where they agreed to give us helmets if we paid for them and when we leave, if you return the helmet, they'd give you your money back. He got the same answer: 'Get stuffed! No good, we don't want it, we want helmets'. So I think we had about a four-hour stoppage then, and eventually they came back after this going on for a few weeks, because this time we refused to work around these lift wells, mainly the plumbers doing all the pipe work around these bloody wells, all galvanised pipe in those days, not plastic, and they agreed [to the demand].

Along with the main agitators on our job committee was a job delegate for the Builders Labourers' Federation called Vince Englart. Amazing bloke, full of knowledge and a good speaker too. Anyway, they were very dirty; they knew Vince was the main agitator, along with a few other blokes. Out the back of the building of Torbreck was about the distance of three housing blocks wide, that gives you an idea. They had a trench they wanted dug. It was for storm water. Went from about two feet six inches to about 18 inches. Normally, [they would have] about half-a-dozen blokes doing that. What the boss done — he was under orders from Kratzmann — he put Vince to work on it, thinking he won't stick it too long, he'll throw the job in.

JR: On his own?

GB: Yeah: 'So we won't have to sack him and they can't accuse us of victimising him'. They put Vince on this job and Vince took it on. When you were going up in the building six or seven floors, you'd see this bloke down there all by his bloody self and you'd hear these voices: 'Stick to it Vince, good on yah, mate!'

He does the whole thing himself. They thought he'd pull the plug and leave so they wouldn't have to sack him. The rotten bugger, he let them down, he wouldn't leave. He kept on digging. He done the job all on his bloody own, with just a bloody shovel and a pick. So they had to pick something else then. When they pour a floor in a high-rise building in one big pour, it leaves a very smooth surface on the bottom of it. So what they had you do was what they called 'key it in', so that the plasterers have got something for the plaster to stick on to. You can't have it just on a flat, smooth surface. So what they done, they set up a scaffolding about halfway up the room height, about four feet high. A bloke gets up there. He's got a miniature type of jackhammer [to do the keying in]. The noise alone could bloody kill you. They gave Vince at least four of these big rooms to do and he had to do it on his own. He had no protective clothing. He had an old bag around him over his head and clothes. Imagine all the dust and Christ knows what?

JR: What about ear plugs?

GB: Oh, I don't know, I can't remember that, maybe not. Vince was the sort of bloke who might have brought his own. But anyway, he done that too and he did a wonderful bloody job of it. It had them bloody beat.

JR: They couldn't break him.

GB: They couldn't break him. No, he wouldn't bloody resign and they didn't want to sack him because they knew

we would stop their job. So anyway, eventually, Vince went on for a while, but of course he did get sacked in the end, like we all got sacked.

But we got over that period about safety on the job at Torbreck and we were the first building workers in Brisbane — I'd say in Queensland — to be given hard hat helmets for protection ...



Workers on the Torbreck project, Highgate Hill, 1960. Their determined campaign forced the employer to supply helmets, creating a new safety standard across the industry in Queensland.

(Folder 1, UQFL426, Fryer Library, University of Queensland)

JR: The right to have helmets became an established right throughout the industry?

GB: Yes, right through Brisbane, in the building industry. All this time we had cooperation through the building trades group. We wasn't isolated from the union leadership.

Black Lists, Frozen Chooks and the Art of Getting Sacked Twice

GB: I often had problems getting a job. I remember one month there ... I couldn't always get on to a big job because it wasn't available. I had to cope with a little more than humpy building with only one or two workers; you might as well talk to your bloody self. Anyway, one of the big contractors was advertising for plumbers and it was in the paper every other day: 'Plumbers Needed', blah blah blah. I went over there for the job and I went to the desk and spoke to the young woman there. I said: 'I am so and so and I am after a job'. 'Oh, good, good, yes'. So, she went into the office to tell them what my name was on a bit of paper, and she was in there for a while. She came and said: 'Won't be long'. They kept me waiting about 15 minutes or more and she came out again and she said: 'Oh, look, I am terribly sorry, all the jobs have been taken'. So I didn't get a start, they were just checking up. Another time, I was working for a mob from the city and I'd been there for about three months or so. A bloke came up and said: 'Hey George, come down

here, someone wants to see you'. It was a bloke from the office. He handed me this envelope and I said: 'What's that?'. He said: 'That's your finish-up money'. I said: 'What are you talking about?' He said: 'We are paying up to tonight but you are finished'. I said: 'Why is that?' 'Oh,' he said, 'I don't know, they just told me to bring this out to you'. And the foreman said: 'That's not bloody right, I want George here, he is doing a good job'. The foreman said this! ... Yeah, so I got the sack. I got the sack from all sorts of jobs. It was quite normal. I wouldn't last too long. The only job I ever lasted on was working for the Housing Commission. I worked there 20 years, last job I had. I suppose it would be pretty hard sacking me from the Government, [though] I nearly got the sack a few times.

JR: You either never managed to get a start at all or if you did manage to get a start you didn't last very long?

GB: No I didn't last very long. [laugh] I got a start at the glass works, did you know about that?

JR: At West End?

GB: I got a job there and I got the sack, see, which is understandable, I suppose ... I think they gave me a couple of days' notice. At that particular time there was an annual building trades' picnic coming on. The union encouraged delegates to go down and sell tickets for the children's picnic,

down at Shorncliffe. So I used to do that. Every Friday myself and a mate, we used to sell tickets around the glass factory, and we used to raffle half-a-dozen frozen chooks. Frozen chooks were all the go in those days ... We used to do a bloody good trade, have no trouble selling half-a-dozen chooks and we'd make two or three quid.

So, any rate, Les Allen, the Plumbers' organiser, was up there in the office, getting me re-instated from my first sacking. He said to me later: 'Here I am, pleading your case why you should be re-instated, I look out the window and I seen you over there near the fitter shop, and you got tickets out like that and your mate's collecting bloody money'. He said: 'Jeez, you make it bloody hard for me'. Any rate, they withdrew their notice of me being sacked and I lasted about another three months and they sacked me again on some other issue. I'd had a gutful of the glass works anyway and I decided I wouldn't contest.

Cops, Barbed Wire and the Workers who Banned a Football Game

JR: George, through the 50s, 60s, even going into the 70s there was a wealth of political issues emerging and unions in Queensland and elsewhere ... were willing to play important roles. You mentioned the Korean War, the campaign against the Bomb, and in the 60s, of course, the Vietnam War emerged, and conscription. How were

those issues taken up on the job? Did unionists, organisers, activists, raise those issues?

GB: Yes, we were pushing those issues all the time, not always with the success that we wanted ... We'd start off with leaflets and things of that nature, to get them informed what was going on and what was union policy and so on. We opposed conscription and so forth. We'd hold a meeting at, say, 12 o'clock and have someone come and talk about it. A young bloke from perhaps the anti-conscription mob, plus a union organiser would come down and address the workers and if we could we would put out leaflets and so forth and try to keep them informed on that issue while it was current ...

I got a job at the RNA Show Grounds over there at Bowen Hills. They had a good organisation there, about four unions were involved. I was the delegate for the Plumbers. The Springboks were to come out here and things were starting to develop, things started getting hot. They came to New South Wales and they played, and then came up here. They were going to play up here at the Show Grounds where we worked, and Bjelke-Petersen decided to call a State of Emergency to protect his troops and so on. We were doing maintenance work, we had about 50 workers doing maintenance work, there were about five or six plumbers at the most at that time. Anyway, I was the delegate there. We opposed the idea that the coppers would say we are

going to come into the ground because they declared a State of Emergency; the coppers would come into the ground and are going to protect the ovals. And we said, well, you won't be protecting any bloody oval while we are working there. We are not working with coppers and we are not working under the threat of a bloody emergency. What they did, the coppers came there and they build a scaffolding — not them, they had workers doing it for them, they give them the orders — all around the perimeter of the oval itself a big high scaffolding; scaffolding

everywhere and all barbed wired, except for a couple of openings. We held meetings there and eventually — Hughie Hamilton played a very good role in this — we decided there that we would not work with a bloody State of Emergency, we would not work with barbed wire and we will not work where there is bloody coppers.

So that was it. We were organising a walkout from the job. This is a week or two before Show day too. This is mid-week and the big game is to be on Saturday and Bjelke-Petersen is



Preparations for the Springbok game in Brisbane, 1971. Plumbers and other maintenance workers refused to service the site.

(Box 18, UQFL241, Fryer Library, University of Queensland)

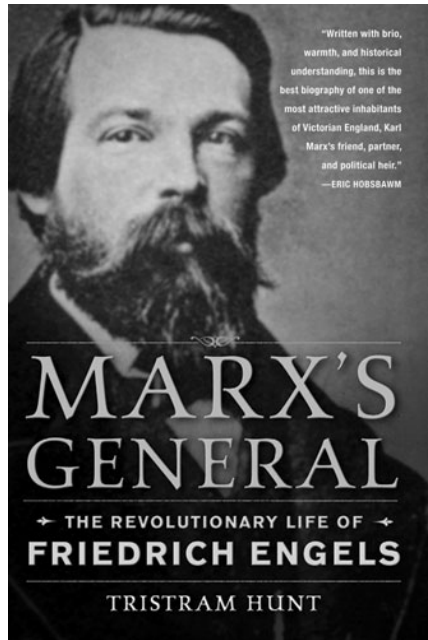
threatening everyone ... Two big buses came there full of coppers, cadets mainly, I think. Hughie went to one bus, I went to the other one, and I got there and I said, with a bit of Dutch courage: ‘Righto, you blokes ... stay in your bus, turn around get out of it’. The bloody coppers are looking at me, about 40-odd coppers. Hughie did the same thing. He told them: ‘Piss off out of here, you bastards.’ ... Well, after all the workers walked off the job, the coppers were inside the ground, everywhere the scaffolding was up, the barbed wire was up, we were walking around the edge or the perimeter of the barbed wire fences ... We were out for the week and they played their game of rugby union under difficult circumstances and I think they played the next one up there at Toowoomba away from us. They got big protests up there too. I remember the Saturday of the game ... a very large number of protesters outside the RNA, all along the street, there was about six deep all the way through there and all around the place. Bjelke-Petersen got the message that they were not that welcome here ...

**Jeff Rickertt and
Carina Eriksson**

•••••
 • “The society which scorns excellence •
 • in plumbing as a humble activity •
 • and tolerates shoddiness in philosophy •
 • because it is an exalted activity will •
 • have neither good plumbing nor good •
 • philosophy. Neither its pipes nor its •
 • theories will hold water” •
 •
 • John Gardner. •
 •••••

A Labour view of a Socialist — Tristram Hunt’s *Marx’s General: the Revolutionary Life of Friedrich Engels*

By Howard Guille



Friedrich Engels¹, a member of the Workingmen’s Correspondence League, later the Communist League, wrote the *Condition of the Working Class in England*, among other things. Tristram Hunt, a member of the British Labour Party elected to the British House of Commons in 2010, has written *Marx’s General:*

the Revolutionary Life of Friedrich Engels, among other things.² Their lives are over a century apart but their careers have less than ‘five degrees of separation’. Matters like the state of the Left in Britain, the prospects for change through parliaments and the contribution of Keir Hardie bring them together.

Hunt has written a big book. I find it impressive, fascinating and compelling. It covers Engels’s family life — both with his parents and in his own households; it covers the writing and publishing of the corpus of Marx and Engels; it covers his indulgences in grog, tobacco, women and even fox hunting. Hunt weaves these together with strong dramatic tension. One learns much about Engels as a thinker and writer, as a political operator, as a military commentator and as a person. There is much about his attributes — including an immense talent for languages, loyalty to Marx and his family and the sustained devotion to Mary Burns and then to Lizzy Burns. However, the limited mention of art, music and literature struck me.

An early embrace of Shelley is mentioned and an early published poem but little else except Engel declaiming poetry and singing folk songs after imbibing. This may reflect Hunt’s own bias, as Lindley says that 12 of the 46 surviving letters of Engels from Bremen discuss music including opera and efforts at composing a

chorale. Indeed, Engels wrote that ‘the best thing about Bremen is its music’.³

Reading Hunt’s book, one learns or relearns the canon that Marx and Engels produced together and separately. Hunt documents the sheer size and range of these works that include political, philosophical, scientific and social analysis, theory, commentary and polemic. It is a relatively painless way to learn about their writing. Combined with, say, David Harvey’s *Limits to Capital* or his more recent *The Enigma of Capital and the Crises of Capitalism*, Hunt’s biography would be a solid grounding in the key ideas. Likewise, it could be a solid grounding in value and the more analytical political economy combined with Jacques Gouverneur’s *Contemporary Capitalism and Marxist Economics* or Ernest Mandel’s *An Introduction to Marxist Economic Theory*.⁴

The Author as Politician

Tristram Hunt seems likely to make history and not just write it. He was elected as Member of Parliament for Stoke on Trent in the British Midlands at the 2010 election. The conurbation was the centre of the British pottery industry from the eighteenth century and a major coal mining area. Both industries declined in the 1980s. His accession to Parliament was not uncontroversial with issues about the displacement of locals and allegations of favouritism. There were suggestions

that Hunt's candidature would 'gift' the seat to the far-right British National Party. The London *Times* commented that 'Mr Hunt, a lecturer in modern British history at Queen Mary, University of London, as well as an author, columnist and broadcaster, is a friend of Lord Mandelson'.⁵ While the latter was the *eminence grise* of New Labour, such sagas are hardly surprising to those who know the workings of the Australian Labor Party. More interestingly, as discussed below, Engels also seemed quite capable of such manoeuvrings.

The selection of a parliamentary candidate who is a scholar who knows their Marx and Engels is more remarkable. Not that Hunt is Marxist in his politics. Maybe he has no need for surplus value and the class contradictions of capitalism. While Marx and Engels might be useful for criticism of the excess of the system, perhaps, in Hunt's view, programmes of abolishing private property and the wage system are anachronisms. Ideas of superseding capitalism are just dreams. Markets are not part of social and political oppression but neutral tools that can advance 'progressive' agendas. In this way, Hunt's book, however entertaining, is part of the taming of demand for fundamental change. In turn, one of my questions in reviewing the book is whether Hunt's 'labourism' conditions his reading of Engels? Of course, in the converse, my evaluation of 'labourism' conditions

my reading of Hunt. It is an appropriate place to turn to how Hunt portrays Engels. I will examine four aspects — Engels's support for Marx, his writing, some of his political analysis and his activity as a political operative.

Engels's Support for Marx

I begin with the incredible generosity Engels showed Marx. This was most substantial from 1849 onwards when Marx and family moved to live in London after banishment from Paris. Engels had taken refuge in Switzerland after serving in both the Elberfeld militia and the Baden-Palatinate revolutionary army against the Prussian Army Corps. He also went to London and from there made supplications to his father to take a director's position with the family cotton firm Ermen and Engels in Manchester. From late 1850, Engels worked 19 years for the family firm — effectively a cotton magnate.

Engels's turn to the family firm was a deliberate decision to enable him to support Marx and his family. Hunt estimates that around half of Engels's income went to the Marx family over the period he was with the company.⁶ There was a conscious division of effort to advance the cause. Hunt says that 'heroically, between 1850 and 1870 Engels abandoned much of what gave his life meaning — intellectual inquiry, political activism, collaboration with Marx — to serve the cause of scientific

socialism'.⁷ Wheen confirms this in his biography of Marx:

though Engels soon assumed the outward appearance of a Lancashire businessman — joining the more exclusive clubs, filling his cellar with champagne, riding to hounds with the Cheshire hunt — he never forgot the main purpose was to support his brilliant but impecunious friend.⁸

As Hunt puts it, he (Engels) endured a self-loathing existence as a Manchester millocrat in order to allow Marx the resources and freedom to complete *Das Kapital*.⁹ Engels's life as a mill owner was lucrative and Hunt estimates his annual income from Ermen & Engels was UK£1,000 (150,000 in current prices).¹⁰ Engels also supported Marx's daughters Laura, Jenny and Eleanor, and Hunt documents the assistance to Laura's husband, Paul Lafargue, and to Eleanor's lover, Edward Aveling. He suggests that both men took advantage of Engels; Lafarge is described as practicing what he preached in his book *The Right to be Lazy* and Aveling is said to accumulate debts and have 'embarrassing financial irregularities'.¹¹

Engels the Writer

Engels's writing is in two periods: one up to 1850 and one from 1870 after his retirement from Ermen and Engels. The best-known work of the

first period is *The Condition of the Working Class in England*, published in German in 1845, with the first edition in English published in New York in 1887 and in London in 1892. The period also includes Engels's war reporting of 1848–49, published in *Neue Rheinische Zeitung*, and some seminal works in political economy.

The Condition of the Working Class is a detailed account of '...(what) brought together those vast masses of workingmen who now fill the whole British Empire, whose social condition forces itself every day more and more upon the attention of the civilised world'.¹² Hunt calls it 'one of the most celebrated polemics in Western literature' and 'a leading text alongside Disraeli's *Sybil or The Two Nations*, Dickens's *Hard Times* and Elizabeth Gaskell's *Mary Burton*'. In it, 'Manchester's "stink, noise, grime and human horror" leap off the page'.¹³ As such, 'so much of what we know about Victorian Manchester is itself the product of Engels and his lacerating prose'.¹⁴

The *Condition* is analysis and polemic as well as a description. It identifies the working class as a historic force and predicts 'the revolution must come; it is already too late to bring about a peaceful solution'. And, 'the war of the poor against the rich now carried on in detail and indirectly will become direct and universal. It is too late for a peaceful solution'.¹⁵ Yet there is also a suggestion that reform might be

possible; in the Introduction, Engels writes 'it is high time, too, for the English middle-class to make some concessions to the working-men who no longer plead but threaten, for in a short time it may be too late'.

Likewise, the preface written by Engels for the American edition in the mid 1880s is worth reading for its critique of Henry George. Engels writes:

What the Socialists demand, implies a total revolution of the whole system of social production; what Henry George demands, leaves the present mode of social production untouched and has, in fact, been anticipated by the extreme section of Ricardian bourgeois economists who, too, demanded the confiscation of the rent of land by the State.¹⁶

This is especially pertinent to Australia given the claimed influence of George on industrial and political labour here. The Geogist organisation, Prosper Australia, claims that George's 1890 visit to Australia 'was the catalyst for the formation of ... the Australian Labor Party.¹⁷ Nairn, on the other hand, is more sceptical, writing that 'His [George's] antagonism to socialism and trade unionism alienated much working-class and radical support'.¹⁸

While *The Condition* is the most famous of the early works by Engels, two other works deserve to be better known.

These are the two draft programmes for the Communist League, written in 1847, that were the basis of the *Communist Manifesto*. Engels wrote them in the form of a catechism and called the first of the two *Draft of the Communist Confession of Faith*.¹⁹ The second of the drafts is *The Principles of Communism*. Engels proposed to Marx that 'I believe we had better drop the catechism form and call the thing: *Communist Manifesto*'.²⁰

Engels recommenced writing after his retirement from Ermen and Engels when, as quoted by Hunt, he was 'reborn at forty-nine'.²¹ *The Housing Question* was the first work of this period published as a series of articles in 1872. The work is a critique of Proudhon and his 'petty-bourgeois socialism'. Engels rejects reformism stressing that 'the revolutionary class policy of the proletariat cannot be replaced by a policy of reforms'.²² The 'revolutionary class policy' is abolition of the capitalist system. The publication of *The Housing Question* also marked a new form of partnership between Marx and Engels. Engels notes in 1887:

As a consequence of the division of labour that existed between Marx and myself, it fell to me to present our opinions in the periodical press, that is to say, particularly in the fight against opposing views, in order that Marx should have time for the elaboration of his great basic work.²³

The 'great basic work' is of course *Capital*. Volume 1 had been published in German in 1867.

Engels wrote more than periodical and press articles. He was immensely prolific and a partial list of his writing after 1870 includes *On Social Relations in Russia* (1874–5), *Anti-Duhring* (1877), *Socialism Utopian and Scientific* (1880), *The Dialectics of Nature* (1883), *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* (1884), *On the History of the Communist League* (1885), *Ludwig Feuerbach and the End of Classical German Philosophy* (1886) and *The Peasant Question in France and Germany* (1894). In addition to these 'new' works, Engels edited, and almost certainly completed, the second and third volumes of *Capital* in, respectively, 1885 and 1894. As he says, 'it was no easy task to put the second book of *Capital* in shape for publication'.²⁴ The publication of Volume 3 was delayed by other work and his deteriorating sight. Chief among this 'other work' was the English translation of *Capital Volume I* of which he said 'I am ultimately responsible'.²⁵

This is an incredible output by almost any mark and it would probably invite disbelief if submitted at any Group of Eight University to the administrators of today's research evaluation exercises. In addition, to use another vogue term of the research evaluators, Engels's

work had 'impact'. For example, Karl Kautsky, who is generally regarded as taking over the leadership of mainstream Marxism after the death of Engels, stated 'Marx's *Capital* is the more powerful work certainly. But it is only through *Anti-Duhring* that we learned to understand *Capital* and read it properly'.²⁶ Hunt, moreover, is convincing in defending Engels from allegations that he corrupted or inverted Marx.

Engels as Theorist

Reading Hunt's biography reintroduced me to Engels as a theorist and analyst. I will look at his contribution on colonialism and globalisation. While Marx and Engels were critical of imperial abuse, they initially treated colonisation as a necessary step to modernisation. Thus, in 1853, Marx wrote that irrespective of the 'crimes of England' in India, 'she was the unconscious tool of history'.²⁷ Hunt discusses this in some detail and reminds us that they saw some peoples as 'stationary and unhistoric'.²⁸ By this, they meant without a class history or place in the class struggle. Engels used similar language in 1848 about the Slavs and, in the same year was scathing of 'Scandinavianism'. He called the latter an 'enthusiasm for the brutal, sordid, piratical, Old Norse national traits, for that profound inner life which is unable to express its exuberant ideas and sentiments in words'.²⁹ The ACTU clearly had a

different view of Scandinavia when it endorsed *Australia Reconstructed* and its diluted version of the Rehn-Meidner model in 1987.³⁰

Engels's views on colonial domination changed over the century. Moreover, he seems to have always held a different opinion about Ireland and the Irish. The situation of the Irish immigrants to Manchester is a major part of *The Condition of the Working Class* and he visited Ireland in 1856 with Mary Burns. Hunt says that Engels led Marx on the Irish question and wrote that 'Ireland may be regarded as the earliest English colony whereby the English citizen's so-called freedom is based on the oppression of the colonies'.³¹ Later, Marx adopted Engels's views on colonialism and came to support some independence struggles. Together they argued that the cause of the Polish people for liberation from Russia and Germany was a struggle for democratic self-determination that should also be the cause of German workers. Eventually, by the 1870s, Hunt says 'the Marxist vision of proletarian-led colonial resistance that would prove so inspirational in the twentieth-century was in place'.³²

Engels argued strongly that Irish immigration split the English working class and retarded revolution; 'it diverted the revolutionary spirit of the proletariat down chauvinist blind alleys'. As Marx put it, 'in relation to the Irish worker, (the English worker)

feels himself to be a member of ruling nation'.³³ The 1867 Reform Act enfranchised the urban working class in England and Wales but in 1868 the new voters supported the Tory Party. Engels commented on this and Hunt concludes that 'Ireland and the Irish question had strengthened, not eviscerated, the English class structure'.³⁴ As an aside, Engels seems to do what many of us have had to do on election nights — 'To cheer myself up properly, yesterday I made Borchardt's son-in-law, who had dutifully drudged for the Liberals, as drunk as a lord'.³⁵

The seductions of nationalism still disrupt efforts for global worker solidarity. It is hard to dispute that the living standards of the working class in developed countries has been boosted by goods sourced at declining real prices from the Global South. Argheri Emmanuel's account of *Unequal Exchange* continues to attract adherents with its claim that nationally-based and enclosed labour movements cause as well as sustain the gaps between rich and poor economies.³⁶ This is a confronting position but in the lineage of Engels. Moreover, 'global' efforts of unions rarely go beyond cooperation between national bodies. Workers speak different languages and immigration barriers hinder their movement. Corporations, on the other hand, operate globally in the shared argot of markets and their executives carry corporate identities rather than national passports.

Hunt concludes his book by invoking Engels as a scourge of globalisation now. He says ‘Engels’s relentless denunciation of the devastating processes of capitalism is particularly apposite when it comes to the unregulated global market’.³⁷ He illustrates this by juxtaposing a passage from *The Condition of the Working Class* with an extract from the testimony of a Chinese migrant worker in Shenzhen where ‘the shop floor is filled with thick dust. Our bodies become black, working day and night indoors’.³⁸

Hunt uses this to emphasise how the factory regimes of 19th century England and 21st century China are essentially similar. It is a theatrical end to the book and allows Hunt to throw some stones at ‘actually existing socialism’. Yet, Engels’s analysis of globalisation is trivialised. Hunt emphasises ‘a more dignified place for humanity’ and ‘a more equitable system’ of the distribution of abundance. While Engels did not eschew such things — after all who can argue with goodness Hunt’s approach smacks of reform of the system and not its abolition. Maybe this is one area where labourism informs his history.

Engels the Political Operative

It is easy to concentrate on Marx and Engels as theorists and forget that they were also activists thoroughly engrossed in organising and advancing

the socialist cause. This was a quotidian activity for Engels beginning in the mid 1840s. Adler, according to Hunt, describes Engels as ‘the greatest tactician of international socialism’.³⁹

In 1842 Engels dropped his Hegelianism in favour of ‘communism’. He spent two years in Manchester as an ‘apprentice’ cotton tycoon. Here he first met George Harney, one of the British Chartist leaders from the ‘physical force’ left-wing group who was a strong advocate for a ‘Grand National Holiday’ (aka a general strike) that would result in an uprising.⁴⁰ Harney became the editor of the *Northern Star* and published articles by both Engels and Marx. Pushed out of the *Northern Star* because of his advocacy of socialism rather than the more moderate Chartist demand for the franchise, he established the *Red Republican* in 1850. This paper is famous as the publisher of the first English translation of the *Communist Manifesto*.⁴¹

In 1844, Engels returned to the Rhineland via Paris. This was when the partnership with Marx was formed ‘over ten beer-soaked days’. In Hunt’s words, ‘from then on, Engels’s life was given over to managing the ‘Moor’’.⁴² It is also where Engels ‘learnt the dark arts of machine politics’.⁴³ He practised these in the League of the Just (*Bund der Gerechten*), the German Workers’ Educational Society and the Communist Correspondence Committee, to name a few. Engels was

the willing enforcer; as Hunt describes, 'over the decades he would express his love and loyalty to Marx by gleefully enforcing party discipline, pursuing ideological heretics and generally playing the Grand Inquisitor'.⁴⁴

Engels the political operative came to the fore after his retirement from Ermen and Engels. Elected to the General Council of the International Working Men's Association (the International) he was 'de facto in charge of coordinating the proletarian struggle across the Continent'. 'His passion for street politics, his organising skills and his ability to churn out barbed polemics made him the ideal choice to keep the European left's warring factions in order'.⁴⁵ The fights and the barbs came to a head in the sustained battles with Bakunin and then with Lassalle. Later in the 1880s and 90s, Engels clashed with the emerging British left including Hyndman, founder of the Social Democratic Federation, and William Morris, who led the Socialist League that split from the SDF. In his usual choice language, Engels described Morris as a 'sentimental dreamer pure and simple'. Hyndman, in retort, said that if there was no one else Engels 'would intrigue and plot against himself'.⁴⁶

Clearly, denunciations and 'shit sheets' have a long pedigree and Engels seems to have been among the best practitioners of the art. Most efforts of left and right in the Australian Labor

Party, or in the multifarious parties to the left, seem juvenile in comparison. The late Bob Gould is a honourable exception. His long analysis of what he calls Stuart MacIntyre's 'grey armband Australia history' is an example. A taster is Gould's assertion that 'Macintyre doesn't only abolish the Catholics, he just about abolishes religious history from the 19th century story [and] ... very nearly abolishes the Irish Catholics'.⁴⁷ Similarly, see Gould's repeated skewering of the groupuscules of the left — for example his commentary, 'Statistics on the Socialist Alliance'.⁴⁸

Engels on Hunt?

As a piece of counterfactual history, it is intriguing to think what Engels would have said about Hunt. One clue is their attitude to Keir Hardie, the first leader of the British Independent Labour Party (ILP). This party was formed in 1893 at the initiative of the Trade Union Congress. It deliberately took the name 'Labour' and not 'socialist' even though it was to the left of the Fabians and the Lib-Labs. Hunt says it had a 'generally liberal feel to it' rather than a 'specifically socialist intent'.⁴⁹ The notion of 'fairness' was central, although it had objectives of 'collective and communal ownership of the means of production'. As David Milliband put it, the aim was (and is) to become 'the reasonable hope of a reasonable people'.⁵⁰

Engels became involved in British left politics in the 1880s and 90s. He rejected most of the British left including the ‘Fabian beard strokers’ and their gradualist strategy and called for a British socialist workers’ party like the German *Sozialdemokratische Arbeiterpartei*. Although initially supportive of Hardie’s break to the left, Engels became less impressed over time. He called Hardie ‘demagogic’ and ‘tactically indefinite’ and accused him of getting funds for his newspaper from Tories and anti-Home Rule Liberal-Unionists.⁵¹

Hunt gave the Keir Hardie lecture in 2010 and compared Hardie with Robert Noonan (or Tressell), author of the English socialist classic *The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists*. Hunt favours Hardie. He recognises that Tressell’s book tried to show how socialism is a practical possibility. However, he argues that it portrays socialism as a ‘heaven on earth’ to be brought to workers by a middle-class vanguard. This is not just criticism of Tressell but a rejection of the communist orthodoxy of revolutionary organising.

In contrast, while Hardie also attended to socialism as a religion, Hunt says he [Hardie] was motivated by electoral pragmatism. According to Hunt, this meant ‘the desire to improve the lives, however incrementally, of labouring people’. In other words, to improve things in this life and not wait for the

revolution or the after-life. This is to make a virtue of politics; as Hunt says, ‘Hardie was never above politics — [he was] happy to embrace the art of the possible’ and come to pragmatic understandings with the more radical Liberals.⁵²

Hunt concludes the lecture commenting on current tasks for British labour. He gives a Hardie-like prognosis and writes, ‘we need to rediscover the inspiration of socialism; but also to appreciate that our politics must be based in electoral realities’. Had Engels been sitting in the audience, one can only imagine the polemical scorching of Hunt that would have followed.

Howard Guille

Notes

- 1 Hunt uses the German spelling of ‘Friedrich’, while other works referenced in this review use the Anglicised ‘Frederick’.
- 2 Tristram Hunt, *The Frock-Coated Communist: The Revolutionary Life of Friedrich Engels* (U.S. title: *Marx’s General: The Revolutionary Life of Friedrich Engels*), Metropolitan Books, New York, 2009. Hereafter, Hunt.
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- 4 David Harvey, *Limits to Capital*, updated edn, Verso, London, 2007; David Harvey, *The Enigma of Capital and the Crises of Capitalism*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2010; Jacques Gouverneur, *Contemporary Capitalism*

- and *Marxist economics*, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, New York, 1983; Ernest Mandel, *An Introduction to Marxist Economic Theory*, 2nd edn, Pathfinder Press, London, 1974.
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 - 7 Hunt, p. 179.
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 - 9 Hunt, p. 8.
 - 10 Hunt, pp. 189–90.
 - 11 Hunt, pp. 263 & 326.
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 - 15 Engels, *The Condition*, p. 291.
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 - 17 Mark Hasted, *Biography of Henry George*, Prosper, available at <http://www.prosper.org.au/about/biography/>.
 - 18 Bede Nairn, 'George, Henry (1839–1897)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/george-henry-3603/text5591>, accessed 31 July 2011.
 - 19 See introductory note to *The Principles of Communism*, Marx-Engels Archive at <http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1847/11/prin-com.htm#intro>.
 - 20 Letter to Marx, 23–24 November 1847, *MECW*, vol. 38, p. 146. The second draft was first published in 1914 by Eduard Bernstein in the German Social Democratic Party's *Vorwärts!*.
 - 21 Hunt, p238
 - 22 Frederick Engels, *The Housing Question*, 1872 at <http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1872/housing-question/index.htm>.
 - 23 Frederick Engels, *The Housing Question, Preface to the Second German Edition*, 1887, at <http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1872/housing-question/preface.htm>.
 - 24 Preface to the First Edition of *Capital Volume II*, at <http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1885-c2/ch00.htm#1885>.
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 - 29 Hunt, p. 165; see also Frederick Engels, 'The Danish-Prussian Armistice', *Neue Rheinische Zeitung*, no. 99, 1848,

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- 31 Hunt, p. 230.
- 32 Hunt, p. 224.
- 33 Hunt, p. 231.
- 34 Hunt, p. 233. He appears to be quoting Engels's *Letter to Marx*, 18 November 1868, *MECW*, vol. 43, p. 163, but the source does not contain the sentence quoted here from Hunt.
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- 38 *ibid.*
- 39 Hunt, p. 240.
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- 41 See Chartist Ancestors, Subscribers to the Red Republican, at <http://www.chartists.net/Red-Republican-subscribers-1850.htm>.
- 42 Hunt, p. 112.
- 43 Hunt, p. 114.
- 44 Hunt, pp. 133 — 4
- 45 Hunt, p. 240.
- 46 Hunt, p. 322.
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- 50 David Miliband, 'Keir Hardie Lecture 2010', Cynon Valley, 9 July 2010, at <http://davidmiliband.net/speech/keir-hardie-lecture-2010/>.
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- 52 Tristram Hunt, 'Trapper not Tressell', Keir Hardie Lecture, Merthyr Tydfil, 10 March 2011, at www.tristramhunt.com/web/2011/05/11/keir-hardie-lecture.

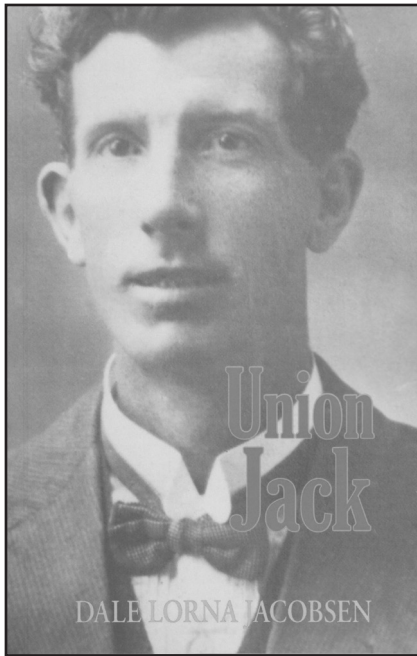
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Review of

Union Jack

By Dale Lorna Jacobsen *

Copyright Publishing Company,
Brisbane, 2011
ISBN 9781876344801



A thoroughly good read!

Union Jack is **not** a story of the British banner, but the heroic tale of a man who was proud to wave a flag of deepest red in his struggles for the lot of his fellow workers on the rapidly expanding Queensland rail network.

John Laurence (Jack) O’Leary, the subject of this fascinating probe into a family’s history, worked in the coalmines of Wales before migrating to Queensland, where he took up work as a railway construction worker. The ‘navvies’, as these workers were called, lived in squalid tent camps beside the rail track they were building, shifting every few weeks to a new base to stay close to the work.

When Jack married young Scottish immigrant Mary Stevenson she was understandably taken aback when he transported her on a hand-pumped rail trolley to his tent beside the Mary Valley line north of Gympie. Sleeping on two wired-together camp stretchers was hardly the romantic honeymoon she might have expected. After the birth of their first child, Jack transferred to the Railway Workshops at Ipswich, and moved into a small cottage with Mary and their child. From then on, Jack became active in the Australian Railways Union (ARU, now called the Rail, Tram and Bus Union, RTBU). He became union delegate at the Workshops and relished involvement in fights for the rights of his workmates.

The family then moved to Rockhampton, with Jack increasing his union activities among fellow workers at the Railway Workshops there. A couple of years later, his restlessness brought the family to Warwick, and finally, in 1924, to Brisbane. This last shift coincided with the rising

fear campaign being generated about Communism, with the ALP Central Executive demanding all party members sign an anti-Communist pledge. Labor Premier, Ted Theodore, also pushed for Communists to be removed from trade unions, and decided to target Jack's union, the militant ARU.

The Government sacked many railway workers and cut wages, all part of the vicious Theodore campaign against the union. Strike action followed and Jack shared the stage at meetings with leaders of the ARU. As part of the protest against the anti-Communist actions of the ALP, he stood — unsuccessfully — for ALP pre-selection in the seat of Logan.

This set the scene for increasing confrontations between Labor's Left and Right factions (nowadays a repetitious piece of history!), the breaking by the ARU of the Mungana Mine corruption story, and the elevation of Jack O'Leary to the position of District Secretary of the ARU. The political heat intensified and eventually Jack was expelled from the ALP for 'supporting the ideology' of the socialist Labor Premier of NSW, Jack Lang. Eventually the politics moved from vigorous verbal confrontations to physical violence, with fatal consequences.

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My own experience in writing non-fiction has taught me that research,

more research and then yet another trip to the dusty archives is the key to unlocking hitherto untold stories. To weave fictional elements into such material with studious discipline could be fraught with difficulty, particularly in the area of credibility. Jacobsen explains that after delving through a great many dusty files:

I needed to loosen my grip on the recorded facts and set these characters free to tell their own story. My role would be to ensure they told their tales truthfully.

The historic accuracy of the accounts of Jack O'Leary's life adventures was confirmed by the knowledgeable people at the launch of *Union Jack* in Brisbane on 25 June 2011. In this most enjoyable read, Jacobsen has combined the two strains of writing to superb effect to tell the tale of O'Leary, her own grandfather.

Praise must therefore go to the author for the additional 'colour' she has provided, bringing the cast of characters to life as real, living beings, struggling to buy food, living in the squalor of railway navy camps and becoming the target of vicious attacks by rich and powerful — and corrupt — men over the politics of the era.

While it is important to make every effort to record the details of our history with great accuracy, Dale Jacobsen's *Union Jack* shows quite clearly that

there are moments when those details can be blended into a captivating and thoroughly enjoyable read. The arrival of this book is indeed one of those rare moments.

Tony Reeves

* Dale Jacobsen is co-editor of this journal.

www.daleornajacobsen.com

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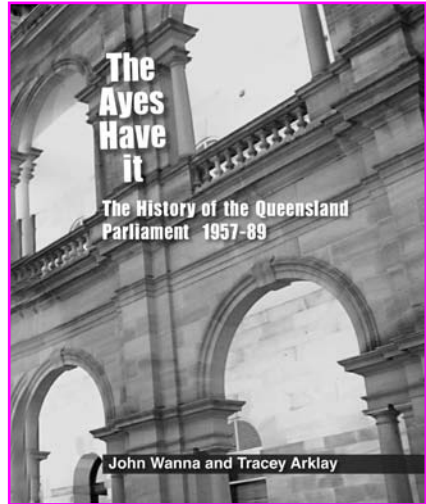
Review of

***The Ayes Have It: the
History of the Queensland
Parliament, 1957–1989***

**By John Wanna and Tracey
Arklay**

ANU E Press, 2010

ISBN: 9781921666308



This book tells the story of the Parliament of Queensland when the conservatives governed the state for roughly one generation. Like Tolkien's *The Hobbit*, the tale grew in the telling: in the case of Wanna and Arklay's magisterial tome, the growth was very gradual, and as is outlined in the preface, emerged *in toto* after 15 years,

with both authors (who were virtually unpaid for this book) concurrently working on diverse other projects.

The focus, inevitably, is on the parliamentary actions, legislative and otherwise, of the Country-Liberal, later the National-Liberal, coalition government, which, after the collapse of the coalition in 1983, governed as a National government in its own right. There were only three Premiers in this period, one of whom, Jack Pizzey, led for only six months before his death in July 1968. The other two were the gentlemanly and deceptively mild-mannered Frank Nicklin, who ran his Cabinet and his parliamentary team with an iron fist that rarely emerged in public, and the abstemious, sanctimonious and politically ferocious Joh Bjelke-Petersen, who behaved during his 19 years in the job with 'native cunning and utter ruthlessness'. (p. 252)

The book is generally chronological in arrangement, and is in two very large parts. Part I deals with the years from 1957 to 1968 and covers the fall of Labor, the premierships of Nicklin and Pizzey, the legislative program of the coalition government up to the death of Pizzey, and the non-government parliamentary parties of the time. Part II takes in the period 1968 to 1989. It covers the premierships of Bjelke-Petersen and his lucklessly short-lived, but decent enough successors, Mike Ahern and Russell Cooper, the legislative programs of these governments, the

Labor party experience in opposition, and (with fortuitous symmetry) Labor's renaissance, handily timed to replace a self-righteous and blinkered regime whose questionable economic competence (the abolition of death duties excepted) will forever be eclipsed by its indisputable moral bankruptcy.

It is a truism that in any Parliament in the democratic world, the ayes certainly do have it. But as has been pointed out so often, Queensland is different, and by virtue of the unicameral legislature, the ayes have their way even more. Here, without ever needing to consider the possibility of legislative mauling in the non-existent Upper House, governments controlled the proceedings 'almost invariably' and 'almost to the point of despotism'. (p. 652) Much ink has been spilt (and, in recent times, bandwidth occupied) on the relationship between Queensland's unique unicameral state government and the untrammelled and unmoderated nature of the legislation that said government has produced.

Wanna and Arklay state unsubtly in the preface that neither of them 'is a member of any political party or has a particular axe to grind'. They hardly need to. The most sobered and factual recitation would leave no one in any doubt of the at-times grotesque use to which the governing parties put the Queensland Parliament during these years. Although the conservatives are wont to accuse the ALP of

radicalism, these pages show that it was they who, time and again, cast aside norms, modes and courtesies of traditional parliamentary convention and procedure in pursuit of political advantage.

Wanna and Arklay demonstrate repeatedly that Bjelke-Petersen, whose period in power covers two-thirds of this book, 'never really did comprehend how an effective legislature ought to operate'. (p. 374) Bjelke-Petersen ignored the most common of parliamentary courtesies, suspending standing orders and closing down debate when it suited, and issuing bills to the media and even debating them before the opposition had seen them. And where else in the democratic world would a government, in a mean-spirited act of unmitigated political bastardry, go against the perfectly reasonable and mutually convenient convention of 'pairing' an absent member, when the member, Denis Murphy, was terminally ill? (p. 553)

Nowhere did the Bjelke-Petersen government more detestably combine its brutal and unparliamentary tactics with its cynical use of the ayes than in its replacement of a deceased Labor party Senator in August-September 1975. (pp. 370-373) Despite the longstanding convention that a Senate vacancy be filled by a person chosen from the same political party, Premier Bjelke-Petersen announced he would not accept Labor's sole nomination, and then demanded that the party

put up a list of three candidates from which the Parliament would decide. As is well known, the Parliament refused to endorse Labor's sole nominee, Mal Colston (who did, ultimately, have a long, appalling and abysmally disappointing career as a Senator), instead, endorsing a disgruntled ALP member, Pat Field, who was promptly expelled under party rules. All the Nationals and virtually all of the Liberals, including many of the self-styled 'reformers' voted to refuse the Labor party's wish to appoint its own Senator, though many of these later sided with Labor to oppose the appointment of the pliable and uncomprehending Field. In both cases, the ayes had it.

These years, were, for the most part, desolate for the Australian Labor Party, which in opposition had no less than 11 parliamentary leaders during the period covered: Premier Vince Gair (expelled from the party on 24 April 1957), Jack Duggan, Les Wood, Jim Donald, Jack Duggan again, Jack Houston, Percy Tucker, Tom Burns, Ed Casey, Keith Wright, Nev Warburton, and Wayne Goss. Few on this list were of the stuff of which Premiers above average in capability were made: Duggan, a capable and energetic transport minister for a decade before the Labor split and who would more than likely have succeeded Gair had it not occurred, probably Burns and of course Goss, who actually made it, basing his tactics as opposition leader

on multi-stranded issues of systemic, systematic and ingrained government corruption for which his predecessors would have cheerfully killed. The next installment of the history of the Queensland Parliament will no doubt be primarily devoted to the ALP's years in government, although time will tell if these years come to a prolonged halt after the state elections scheduled for 2012.

The book contains several appendices dealing variously with profiles of the Speakers, brief details of all parliamentarians that served between 1957 and 1989 (including those who served both before and after these years), and listings of members who died in office or who were suspended from the House. Although there is no denying the abundance of effort that went into the compilation of this work, its value would indubitably have been enhanced with short character sketches of the most memorable members of this period, as included in the previous parliamentary histories of Clem Lack and Charles Arrowsmith Bernays. The so-called 'Minister for Everything' Russ Hinze, for example, probably displayed more colour in his career than all of the Speakers combined, even including The Cannonball Kid, a motorcycle speedway rider who survived the 'Wall of Death' at the Brisbane Exhibition Grounds and eventually morphed into Sir David Nicholson, Speaker from 1960 to 1972.

There are plenty of photographs, though most of these lack captions identifying the persons depicted. It was a curious editorial decision to make Perc Tucker, opposition leader between 1972 and 1974, quick-tempered in nature and 'craggy and funereal' of face, the only personage favoured with a full-page portrait, particularly as there is no specific photographic identification of Bjelke-Petersen. The bibliography is ample, as is the index — presumably the references to 'Bugger-em Bill', (which refers the user to the index entry to a Speaker, 'Lonergan, William'), 'Cannonball Kid' (see above) and 'toilet doors' were inserted to demonstrate the lighter side of a serious topic.

All in all, Wanna and Arklay have produced a valuable compendium that goes well behind the large collections of facts, lists of names and turgid anecdotes that have characterised other works of this kind. The volume will be of service as a reference tool for as long as the period is of interest to political scientists and historians. If this account of how its inhabitants treated the Parliament during the 32 years under consideration is unedifying, it is not the fault of the writers. But let us all hope that the author or authors writing of the next era in Queensland parliamentary history have a more uplifting tale to tell.

Brian Stevenson

CONTRIBUTORS

Trevor Campbell has been associated with Pat Dunne since 1966 when Pat was Sub-branch Secretary of the Australian Railways Union (ARU). Trevor, a second generation railwayman and ARU member, was President of the ARU, Public Transport Union (PTU) then Rail Tram and Bus Union (RTBU) from 1976 until his retirement in November 2002. He is the recipient of the Centenary Medal for 'distinguished service to the community in the area of Industrial Relations'.

Caroline Mann-Smith studied history and government at the University of Queensland before studying to become a social worker. She is a member of the Australian Services Union and of Toowoomba North ALP. She intends to write a book about the McKay and Hanson families of Kurilpa and South Brisbane.

Phil Griffiths teaches Political Economy at the University of Southern Queensland, Toowoomba.

Jeff Rickertt is a labour historian and librarian.

Carina Eriksson is a library technician, editor and photographer. Her photographs illustrated *Radical Brisbane: an Unruly History*.

Howard Guille was Queensland Secretary of the National Tertiary Education Union from 1994 to 2006.

Tony Reeves is author of three major non-fiction books on crime and police and political corruption. He was winner of the Crime Writers' Association Ned Kelly Award for True Crime writing in 2005 for *Mr Big, Lennie McPherson and His Life of Crime*. His second book, *Mr Sin, the Abe Saffron Dossier*, was published in 2007. His latest work, *The Real George Freeman*, documents in detail the deep levels of police, political and judicial corruption in NSW over four decades. See more about Tony's books at <<http://www.rlgbooks.com.au>>.

Brian Stevenson is a librarian, researcher and writer, and is currently Reference Librarian at the Tropical North Queensland TAFE. He is the author of several commissioned organisational histories, and edited Peter Beattie's first book of memoirs, *In the arena* (1990.) He has written sixteen entries for the *Australian dictionary of biography*. In 2007 he was awarded a Ph D from Griffith University for his biography of Vince Gair.

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Noticeboard

Red Scare!

Cold War Politics & the 1951 Referendum on the
Banning of the Communist Party

a symposium by the Brisbane Labour History Association

1.00-5.00pm
Saturday
8 October 2011

QCA Lecture Theatre,
Qld College of Art,
Griffith University,
226 Grey St,
South Bank.
(opposite South Bank train station)

Free admission



Communist Party picnic, Lone Pine, Brisbane, 1951
(UQFL191 Box 15, Fryer Library)

Speakers:

- Humphrey McQueen
 - Neil Lloyd
 - Bob Reed
- + open forum

All welcome

The BLHA acknowledges the assistance of Griffith University



* * * *

The AGM of the BLHA will be held on 3 December commencing at 3pm.

Venue: United Voice, 27 Peel Street South Brisbane.

* * * *

Flames of Discontent at Woodford Folk Festival

This event has become a constant in the Woodford Folk Festival Program. Many events will come under the Flames umbrella this year, with the key event being the show, *Unlikely Alliance: the Battle for Green Bans*. Script by Dale Jacobsen, featuring a terrific cast, including a well-known UK female folk singer. It will be staged at the **GreenHouse** venue. Not to be missed!

* * * *

The honorary position of **editor** for this journal is now vacant. The journal is issued twice a year, in March and September. Tasks involve liaising with contributors, proofing articles, sourcing photos where necessary, reporting to the BLHA Executive, forwarding to layout designer. Dale Jacobsen will be available for advice and assistance with layout.

Applications to:

The Secretary
Brisbane Labour History Association
PO Box 5299
West End QLD 4101

* * * *

The Brisbane Labour History Association

The Brisbane Labour History Association was formed in 1990 to encourage and promote the study, teaching, research and publication of labour history and the preservation of labour archives. There are no limits on the study of labour history and the diverse membership reflects many different areas of concern.

The BLHA is the Brisbane branch of the Australian Society for the Study of Labour History. The Association organises seminars, lectures, meetings, conferences and publications on themes of labour history. Membership is open to all individuals and organisations who subscribe to the Association's objectives.

Editorial Policy

The Queensland Journal of Labour History is a journal of labour and social history with a particular emphasis on Queensland history. The history of labour, the classic social movement, is central to our concerns, as are the histories of newer social movements. This journal is committed to the view that history has a social purpose. It publishes articles which, in Ian Turner's words, engage our sympathies, affect present circumstances and suggest answers to present problems. In the words of the Association's slogan, 'The Past is Always with Us'. Material published herein does not necessarily reflect the views of the Association or the Editors. The Journal's Editorial Board is the Committee of the BLHA, chaired by the President.

Notes for Contributors

The *Journal* is published in March and September. Articles of up to 4000 words may be accepted; shorter contributions are encouraged. First person accounts of labour history are particularly welcome. Reports on exhibitions, seminars and research projects are sought, as are book reviews and photo essays. Obtain a copy of the Editorial Guidelines before submission.

Contributions should be made in hard copy to the Society's post office box and (if possible) digital format via email, to the Secretary's email address (see inside front cover). Hard copies should be typed, double-spaced, on single-sided A4 bond paper, with a margin of at least 3 cm. Please number the pages. Two (2) copies of each manuscript are required. Please ensure all contact details are given, including phone numbers and an email address.

Please advise if you have ideas for graphics (photographs, maps, drawings, cartoons, etc) that might accompany your article if accepted for publication.

The Queensland Journal Of Labour History

No. 13, September 2011
ISSN 1832-9926

IN THIS ISSUE

E.J. Hanson Sr and E.J. Hanson Jr: Divergent Directions
in the Queensland Labour Movement, 1904-1967
Caroline Mann-Smith

Notes on Early Trade Unionism in Townsville
Phil Griffiths

George Britten Speaks about a Lifetime of Jobsite Militancy
Jeff Rickertt and Carina Eriksson

A Labour view of a Socialist – Tristram Hunt's
Marx's General: the Revolutionary Life of Friedrich Engels
Howard Guille

OBITUARIES * BOOK REVIEWS * NOTICEBOARD * REPORTS



*Brisbane branch of the
Australian Society for the Study of Labour History*