

The Queensland Journal of Labour History

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The Brisbane Labour History Association

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President: Dr. Greg Mallory
ph: 0407 692 377

Secretary: Craig Buckley
ph: 0418 197 205
email: craig@amieuqld.asn.au

EDITORS: Howard Guille, Ross Gwyther,
& Bob Russell

Design and Layout and Production:
Ross Gwyther & Beverley Jeppesen

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

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Front Cover Photo:

In November 1917, an egg was thrown by Patrick Brosnan at the Australian Prime Minister Billy Hughes. He had stopped at the Warwick railway station during his campaign for the 1917 plebiscite on conscription. The Australian people successfully resisted his campaign. Photo from Margaret Whitlam Gallery, Uni of Western Sydney.

The Queensland Journal Of Labour History

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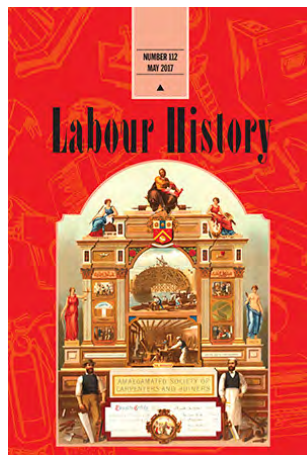


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Labour History, 112, May 2017

Australian labour historians have generally overlooked the relationship between unions, mutuals and co-operatives. The May issue goes some way towards rectifying this situation with a thematic section, guest-edited by Greg Patmore and Mark Westcott, that focuses on mutualism and co-operatives in relation to the labour movement. Also in this issue are several papers demonstrating the more varied aspects of Australian labour history. These include the long-term connections between the ALP and the margarine industry; the lives of Chinese furniture factory workers in the late nineteenth century; the activities of the Victorian State Services Federation during World War I; the participation of employees in company welfare schemes; and the interconnected histories of labour and homelessness in Australia.



Editorial

Ross Gwyther

The mechanical appliances consist of a chronometer and a motion picture camera. This invention is the most powerful tool ever for the measurement of efficiency, suggesting the whip of taskmasters and owners in earlier times.

Editorial, *Australasian Engineering and Machinery*, 1913.

In Sydney at 9 o'clock in the morning of Thursday the second of August 1917, 1000 men employed at the Randwick tramway workshops, and over 3000 workers at the Everleigh railway workshops stopped work. Through their unions they had been attempting unsuccessfully to stop the "Americanisation" of their working life through the introduction of time cards.

Within a few days the strike had spread to workers throughout NSW and some in Victoria and Queensland as well. It was to become one of the iconic general strikes of Australian working life. It was to last until the 10th of September, was to end in bitter failure, and at its' height was to attract some 200,000 people to street protests in

support of the strike — at a time when the Australian population was only 20% of current numbers.

Large meetings at the Brisbane Domain (the current City Botanic Gardens) supported the strikers, and listened to delegates talk about the problems with the card system — how it was to be used to establish "average times" for each particular task, and open those who were unable to keep up with those times to being sacked. Queensland rail workers blackbanned any rail transport of goods between NSW and Queensland, and the Ryan Labor government, although under severe criticism, did not overturn this ban.

The strike was not in support of higher wages or better conditions — rather a strike to challenge the control over labour time — a strike at the heart of what defines capital. No wonder there was such a determined campaign to resist and defeat the workers.

One important incident in the strike is often overlooked by those of us talking about Australian labour movement history. At 5 o'clock on the 30th August three men on strike had an altercation with a farmer who was driving goods

declared black. The driver, Reginald Wearne, drew a revolver and shot dead one of the men, Mervin Flannigan, 32 years old. Wearne was never convicted of the crime. Mervin Flannigan, along with Norman Brown from the Rothbury lockout, should be remembered as one of the martyrs of our labour movement.

In the long run the strike was anything but a failure. On the one hand some of the workers taking part in the strike went on to apply their hard industrial lessons as a new generation of Labor Party leaders — such as Eddie Ward and Ben Chifley. On the other hand it was to be only a few years later before the socialist movement came together to establish the Communist Party, which played such a critical part in the labour movement over the following decades.

2017 is a year with quite a few such dramatic anniversaries.

December 20th in 1917 saw one of the great people's victories of the First World War. Prime Minister Hughes, having been rebuffed in 1916 in his attempt to legitimise conscription of workers to fight in the war, had jumped political ship, teamed up with the conservatives and won victory in the polls early in 1917. He saw it as a shoe in to run a second referendum on conscription. However again the forces of workers around Australia, teamed up with farmers in rural communities, socialists and peace activists in the

cities were able to defeat this second referendum by a majority of 167 thousand. As Ian Turner pointed out in his history of industrial labour during this period, a key part of that struggle was the Australian Peace Alliance, formed by Victorian trade unions in 1914.

Of course the other momentous event one hundred years ago was the Russian revolution. The storming of the winter palace in October 1917 (or November, depending on your choice of calendar) introduced a new era in political struggles not just in Russia, not even in Europe, but in virtually every country in the world. The annual Labour History Australia conference being held in Brisbane this September is entitled "Workers of the World", and one of its key themes is the impact of the Bolshevik Revolution on labour movements in Australia and in other countries.

This year is also the 150th anniversary of a book that was literally to shake the world for the following centuries — Karl Marx's *Capital — a Critique of Political Economy*. Even today the impact of that work is attested to by the continual attempts to prove how wrong and irrelevant Marx was.

Anniversaries have two valuable functions for us. They provide an opportunity for us to consider the shoulders of those we stand on. But they also prompt us to examine our

paths ahead. Our journal this month has some topics to satisfy both of these needs.

The Australian Journalists Union was established in 1910 with a meeting of 100 journalists in Melbourne. The current union, MEAA Media, included a story of their history in a recent journal and we reproduce that story here. The union established the principle of equal pay for men and women 60 years before the Commonwealth Equal Pay decision in 1969, and one of their most significant contributions was the establishment of the Australian Press Council in 1976.

Frank Bongiorno delivered the Alex Macdonal lecture this year, on the topic of Labor, Labour and Australia's 1980s" and we publish an edited version of Frank's talk here. He talks in some detail about the contradictions which the ALP found during its years in office from 1983, as it moved from the previous Keynesian and protectionist policies to the neo-liberal directions of "unleashing market forces and deregulation". He places these moves in the context of world forces responding to globalisation. He critiques the moves to the Accord and discusses some of the arguments which relate the current dramatic de-unionisation to that policy. At the same time he identifies some of the positive aspects of Labor's reforms — social spending and a renovated welfare state.

An interesting history of Rex Patterson, Minister in the Whitlam Government, is provided by Lyndon Megarity. As the chief proponent of the "development of North Australia", Patterson's rise and fall is documented. Some of his remarks from the early 1970s show remarkable insight — "*.. China and Japan could become our two most important customers...the main determinant of growth in northern Australia will be investment in mining for export..*"

We publish three book reviews this month — a review by Greg Mallory of "*The House that Jack Built*", the story of Jack Munday and the NSW Builders Labourers struggles, a review by Ted Riethmuller of "*Wharfie*", the life story of Wally Stubbings, and a review by Deb Jordan of the classic Jack Lindsay book on the WWI Conscription referendums, "*The Blood Vote*".

We also include another story of working life by Ted Riethmuller, "*Lindsay Takes a Sickie*". Ted has written a number of such anecdotes and we have already published some others in earlier journal issues — they always bring to the journal a warm and insightful touch.

This year the Brisbane Labour History Association is hosting the bi-annual conference of the Australian Society for the Study of Labour History. The inclusions in our journal are a good complement to the many papers and

discussions which will be held later in September.

Two of our journal editors, Ross Gwyther and Howard Guille, are stepping away from the editorial board after this journal issue. We have both

enjoyed the task of putting together papers and stories that speak of working class experience and carry in their histories some lessons for the future struggles of the labour movement. We wish the new editorial board all the best for future issues.

BLHA

President's Column

Greg Mallory

The planning for the 2017 National Labour History Conference is well under way. So far we have obtained approximately \$10000 worth of sponsorship from the union movement. The unions that have contributed to the conference are the MUA, CFMEU Federal Office, CFMEU Construction Qld Branch, Queensland Teachers Union, Independent Education Union, National Tertiary Education Union, Australasian Meat Employees Union, United Voice and the Queensland Council of Unions. The Brisbane Labour History Association thanks these unions for their support. We have two keynote speakers, Professor Ruth Milkman from the City University of New York and Professor John Maynard from Newcastle University. We have nearly 60 papers for presentation. The

conference theme is 'Workers of the World' which recognises the 100 year anniversary of the Russian Revolution as well as immigrant workers and globalisation. The conference will take place at Emmanuel College at the University of Queensland. Ros McLellan from the Queensland Council of Unions will open the conference. Members who are interested in going should consult the BLHA website.

The QCU is holding a welcome for Ruth Milkman at the QCU Building starting at 4 pm on 22 September. The QCU will be sending out invitations to interested parties.

On 22 September, the day before our conference, there will be a Special General Meeting of the Federal body.

All members of the BLHA are entitled to attend this meeting as you are all members of the Federal Society. The purpose of this meeting is to amend the Federal Constitution to change the name of the Australian Society for the Study of Labour History to Labour History Society of Australia. The other part of the Constitution to change is to allow the Annual General Meeting to be held at the Conference and not at the end of the year. The meeting will take place at the Kurilpa Hall and will start at 3.30.

In June we held the Alex Macdonald Lecture which was presented by Frank Bongiono on the topic of 'Labour, Labor in the 80s'. This talk examined the relationship between the labour movement and the Labor Party in the 1980s. The paper was well received and is reproduced in this journal.

Wally Stubbings, Life Member of the BLHA and an industrial and political militant, book was launched in May at the Avid Reader before a packed audience. Wally was a Brisbane wharfie

who put his life story to tape before he died. Lesley Syngé did a marvellous job in bringing to life this story. The Brisbane Labour History Association jointly cosponsored this event with the MUA.

It is with great sadness that I report on the death of Jack Saunders, a former Executive member of the BLHA. Jack was a colourful character who played a significant role in supporting the Association when it was facing a significant threat from a rival organisation. His obituary is reproduced in this journal. The Association sends it condolences to his family.

Lastly, I would like to thank the Executive for their work but in particular Phil Griffiths, Al Rennie, Craig Buckley, Bob Russell and Georgina Murray for their work on the National Conference Organising Committee. I would like to single out Phil Griffith for his work on the conference program. I would like also to thank Jason Thompson for his administrative work.

**Labor, Labour and
Australia's 1980s**
2017 Alex Macdonald
Lecture
7 June 2017

**Frank Bongiorno, The
Australian National
University**

On 4 December 1984, on the Tuesday after a federal election that Labor won with a reduced majority, a 25-year old journalist and temporary Labor Party employee wrote to Kate Moore, the party's national organiser. He had been working on Labor's failed campaign to retain the Northern Territory seat, then held by John Reeves, later a Federal Court judge. But the young man was already moving on: he wanted a job working as a staffer to a Labor minister:

Dear Kate,

Here it all is. I hope it's enough. The three months here have made me keen to get to Canberra. One reason, I admit, is to see just how Porky will go in the big league.

Thanks for your help in finding me another job. And thank you, too, for the help you gave me during your visit to Darwin. You not only put me on the right track, but you helped me

enjoy the campaign, despite the eventual outcome.

I am also considering putting in a bid for a position of the 'Age' bureau in Canberra. This a remarkable turnaround for me, considering I used to be one of those prized people at dinner parties who never talked politics.

I am considering a third option—taking my hard-earned money and bugging off again. Ireland, perhaps, or India.

Whatever, I'll see you again, sooner or later.

The young man—who called himself Andrew Bolt (but presumably also 'Porky' if this letter is any indication)—must have seemed a likely prospect. The dux of Murray Bridge High School went on to complete the first year of an Arts degree in Adelaide before joining the Melbourne *Age* as a cadet reporter. He then spent most of the next few years overseas, working and travelling in Europe, and no doubt pursuing a rather catholic range of interests that, by his own account, included '[o]pera, football, travel, politics, Roman and biblical history, food, flowers, music, drama (particularly Ibsen), literature, competition and hard work.' He was a man of diverse experience: he had worked as a 'dance-band drummer, fruit picker and cutter, factory hand, flower packer and exporter, roustabout.' He could almost have been Billy Hughes,

who had pursued a similarly wide range of trades, including umbrella repair work, before settling on the trade of politics and sticking to it, but not to the Labor Party, for the next sixty years. One of Bolt's ventures was with a Dutch firm that planned to export flowers to Australia, but he did not tiptoe through the tulips for long. Clearly, such a man had a bright future ahead of him in the world of Labor politics.¹

Many of the middle-class progressives who joined the Labor Party in the 1970s and early 1980s moved on to other interests and causes, and it may well be that Bolt conforms to that pattern.² Bolt's effort to enter the world of the Canberra Labor operatives also alerts us to the professionalisation of politics, to the way even by the 1980s it was becoming a place for the tertiary-educated to gain employment, experience and contacts, sometimes on their way through to something else—a career as a right-wing op-ed columnist perhaps, or maybe—like a few of the comrades further south in more recent times—a lobbyist for the gambling industry.

The contrast with the labour movement activism of the Alex Macdonald could not be more stark: poor Scottish teenage migrant, Depression-era battler, committed Communist and trade union activist, organiser and official—this was a man for whom life in the labour movement was a life-long commitment as well as a labour

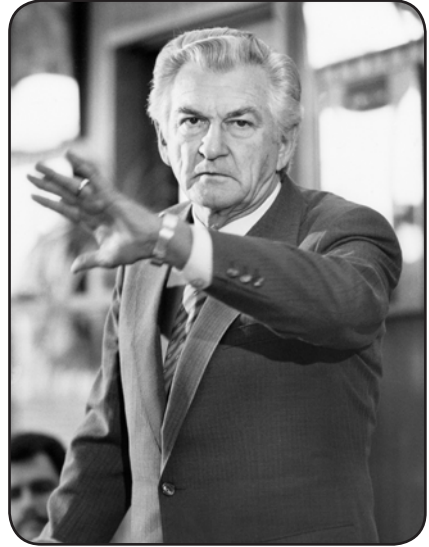
of love.³ I am honoured to deliver this year's Alex Macdonald Lecture for the Brisbane Labour History Society.

There is perhaps one point at which Macdonald's career intersects with the story I am telling here. His *Australian Dictionary of Biography* entry says that he worked to secure the presidency of the Australian Council of Trade Unions for Bob Hawke.⁴ Macdonald did not live long enough for us to know whether he thought that an error of judgement, although it is hard to imagine him having welcomed some of the things done in the name of the Labor Party in the 1980s and 1990s.

What I wish to do here is to place the Labor Government of Bob Hawke—my focus here, as in my recent book *The Eighties: The Decade That Transformed Australia*—is on the 1983–1991 period.⁵ There is a powerful strain of nostalgia in our culture and it extends to politics. Those young in the 1980s are now, like me, middle-aged. They possess market power and our culture caters to their desires, through TV mini-series, films, books and the music played on certain radio stations. Political nostalgia is part of this business and for the Labor Party, there are things about which to be nostalgic. Hawke, Keating, talented ministries, major policy achievement, a string of election victories in the States and nationally, conservative disarray: on one level, the Labor Party has a great deal to celebrate about the 1980s. But

there is also a danger in measuring the present or the immediate past against a golden age. The Hawke Government minister Gareth Evans begins the published version of his diary on the 1984–86 period by pointing out—correctly—that the Hawke-Keating Government has often come to be treated even by non-Labor people as ‘the Australian gold standard’ but as he goes on to point out, ‘it did not always feel that way on the inside’.⁶

There was a conviction, by the early 1980s—including among some key Labor Party figures—that many of the policies that had done fairly well in helping to underwrite Australian growth, security, prosperity and egalitarianism in the decades since the Depression were reaching the point of exhaustion. Tariff protection had a growing chorus of critics, but so did aspects of Australia’s system of financial regulation, which was failing to manage the burgeoning activity of non-bank institutions, and Australia’s wages system, which was contributing to an inflation that undermined living standards. Yet it is notable that Bob Hawke’s election policy speech in February 1983 gave few signs of the dramatic changes that would mark the Labor government’s thirteen years in office, especially in the direction of what contemporaries called ‘economic rationalism’ and which is now more commonly known as ‘neoliberalism’. Responding to the recession of 1982–83, Labor’s election policy was



Prime Minister Bob Hawke in 1991

recognisably Keynesian as well as protectionist.⁷

Yet, almost from the moment Labor came to power, it shifted from this traditional approach, with both Hawke and the Treasurer, Paul Keating, worrying that excessive spending would lead to the very kind of inflationary break-out that had played such a role in destroying both the Whitlam Labor and Fraser Coalition governments. Keynesian economists soon found themselves on the outer. The most spectacular changes occurred initially in the Australian finance sector, where the government floated the dollar in December 1983—a decision recognised then, and even more forcibly since, as a critical moment in the making of modern

Australia—followed by a move in 1984 to allow foreign banks to begin operating locally. At the same time as it subjected the economy and its own decision-making ever more closely to the judgment of the global financial markets, the new government self-consciously cultivated an image of fiscal rectitude, seeking to place as much distance as it could between itself and the troubled Whitlam Government of the 1970s. It moved away from that government's emphasis on universality in welfare, with the notable exception of a new system of health insurance, Medicare. It imposed an assets test on the old-age pension and, in general, sought to direct assistance to those in need in a fiscally careful manner. The result was that the very poorest did a little better, but there was a continuing squeeze on many wage- and salary-earners. Meanwhile, the wealthy received warm encouragement from a Labor government to make themselves filthy rich, in an economy that would supposedly deliver the benefits to all in a trickle-down effect.⁸

Many of these changes were disorientating because introduced by a Labor Party that had historically sought to control rather than unleash market forces, to encourage the battler rather than the plutocrat. And there were many party members who did not welcome them. 'The rank and file have had no say for many months and this debacle is one of the results', declared

one Victorian local branch secretary after the 1984 election.

Many members are unhappy with very little implementation of A.L.P. policy ... We are a branch of less than 50 members but have worked and given \$2,500 in six months, so we are downright wild and unhappy ... The A.L.P. is our party no one member is above it, we are not happy with Bob Hawke domination of it, if elected members are not strong enough then rank and file will have to look more closely at preselection. Bob Hawke never mentions the A.L.P. but my party, my government.⁹

Of course, complaints of this kind had been a characteristic of Labor politics since 1891. But the unrelenting nature of the policy changes of the 1980s, the rapid and far-reaching changes to the economic order and labour market with which they were associated, the venture into territory previously considered off-limits by Labor governments, and the remarkable longevity of the Hawke and Keating governments meant that such complaints gained a sharper edge and gave rise to an identity crisis that still afflicts the party more than three decades on.

There is a strand of thought within the Labor Party, buttressed by many more strands beyond it, that celebrates the financial deregulation of that period as

a great Labor achievement, even *the* great Labor achievement of that era.¹⁰ But the 1980s was also the age of the entrepreneur. The trend began before Labor came to power in 1983 but Labor's financial reforms contributed to the scale of the speculation and, eventually, to the scale of the collapse. The Bank of New South Wales, or Westpac, began the 1980s as Australia's largest bank, with a proud history stretching back to the time of Lachlan Macquarie. It ended the period a shambles, with billions of dollars of bad debts. So did State Banks in both Victoria and South Australia.¹¹ Many banks engaged in reckless lending. In one notorious case, a man named John Friedrich in charge of an obscure not-for-profit organisation in Victoria called the National Safety Council managed to borrow from trusting bankers tens of millions of dollars using empty crates as collateral. Several of the famous entrepreneurs of the 1980s either served time in prison, as Alan Bond and George Henschel did; or, like Christopher Skase, they fled the country before the law caught up with them.¹²

It seems to me that we have not yet found a way to reconcile this excess of the wheelers and dealers with the image of the 1980s as the era in which our masters in the federal Labor Party and the financial pages of the press reformed the economy and saved us from ourselves. The close relationship that key Labor leaders

of the era established with several of these entrepreneurs—Hawke with Kerry Packer, Keating with Warren Anderson—dramatised the sense that Labor had abandoned its ideals, traditions and roots. This critique emerged at the academic level, where a group of political scientists argued over whether the party had indeed abandoned Labor tradition.¹³ But the same idea took root among party rank and file from a fairly early stage and, by the time of the 1987 election, was sapping the government's reputation among ordinary working people. Hawke's campaign launch promise to end child poverty by 1990 needs to be seen in this context—he had not intended to go quite so far—as does the success of some ministers from this time—Brian Howe on social security and Graham Richardson on the environment—in wringing concessions from this otherwise surprisingly economically liberal government. This was about shoring up the party electorally, but it was also about undermining the impression that the party now existed for the benefit of Labor's 'rich mates', as they were aptly called.

The dominance of services and mining in our economy today has also prompted a forgetfulness about a time when many were working for a high-tech, high-skill manufacturing future that owed something to the Japanese economic model, tempered by Scandinavian social-democratic virtues. Celebrations of the reform of the economy in the

1980s tend to leave out the bit where we were going to make sophisticated things that the rest of the world would want so that we wouldn't be dependent on unprocessed exports vulnerable to fluctuations in global demand and prices. Sadly, the valiant, far-sighted and partly successful effort of John Button to shift car manufacturing towards sustainability was ultimately unable to secure that industry's long-term future. Many communities already devastated by the neoliberalism and deindustrialisation of the last several decades are in for further ordeals.

The period was hardly one of unalloyed electoral joy for Labor, a point that always needs to be carried in one's mind when dealing with the myth of the Hawke Government as the greatest in modern Australian history. Despite Hawke's personal popularity, the party lost seats at the 1984 election. By the time the economy started to go bad in the mid-1980s, with the so-called 'banana republic' crisis prompted by Paul Keating's throwaway line in a radio interview, the ALP thought it was headed for defeat. An internal document from October 1986 commented that 'the electoral mood in the middle ground is one of seething anger and resentment.' Such voters were 'simply fed up with the economic management of the Labor government. The "image" of the ALP is declining at a rapid rate'.¹⁴ The government was saved by some signs of economic recovery and divisions on the conservative side

of politics that climaxed in a crazed attempt by the Queensland premier, Joh Bjelke-Petersen, to become prime minister—as well as by an embarrassing miscalculation by the Coalition in its election costings. By the time of its 1990 election victory, however, Labor was able to muster less than 40% of the primary vote. The party's traditional core of support up to the 1980s had ensured that even in very bad years, it usually collected the primary votes of more than four out of every ten Australian electors. Not so by 1990. Not so today. In that sense, 1990 might be considered the first 'modern' election in Australian history, the one which revealed more clearly than ever before that the old identities, loyalties and solidarities on which the political parties had depended for decades were fast disappearing.

Australia's shift towards deregulation, however, was anything but exceptional if considered globally. Such changes occurred across the world, most famously in the case of Britain under Margaret Thatcher and the United States under Ronald Reagan, but the 'neo-liberal counter-revolution' was in reality 'a transnational phenomenon'.¹⁵ The advance of neoliberalism occurred irrespective of whether the centre-left or the centre-right held office.¹⁶ The case of France is instructive because its shift towards more market-orientated policy seemed so unlikely when the Socialist, François Mitterrand, came to power in May 1981.¹⁷ Policies of the

early years included nationalisation, public sector expansion, a lower retirement age, a shorter working week, more paid holidays, increased minimum wages, pro-union labour laws and a wealth tax. By mid-1982 it was evident that such policies, far from stimulating the economy, were actually worsening many of France's problems. Inflation remained high and the country suffered a foreign exchange crisis that culminated in a decision to devalue the franc in March 1983—interestingly, the very same month that the new Hawke Government also devalued. A 'Socialist U-turn' followed. During the period of 'cohabitation' in the mid-1980s—that is, a Socialist Party President, Mitterrand, and a conservative Prime Minister, Jacques Chirac—Chirac privatised, cut taxes and spending, abolished price controls and introduced neoliberal labour market reforms—neoliberal for France, at any rate.¹⁸

The realisation that in an age of globalisation it was impossible for any particular country to follow its own course without regard for the broader international economic environment took a distinctive form in each country but was increasingly recognised. The Spanish Socialist Party, elected in 1982 under the leadership of Felipe González just a few months after a failed military coup, emulated the French u-turn and immediately turned to combatting inflation at the expense of employment. While halving inflation and bringing the external account into

surplus, unemployment climbed to twenty-three per cent, or three million. Like the Australian Labor government, the Spanish Socialists solicited the support of the unions in their economic efforts in the early years, but relations in the second half of the decade soured as foreign investment boomed and the economy improved, yet workers seemed not to be sharing the proceeds of growth. These tensions culminated in a general strike late in 1988.¹⁹

In faraway New Zealand, the radical shift to free market policy under finance minister Roger Douglas ('Rogernomics') occurred alongside a leftward turn in foreign policy. The Labour government, with David Lange as Prime Minister, refused to allow nuclear-armed or powered ships to visit its ports which, in the context of a US policy to offer neither confirmation or denial in such matters, amounted to a ban. This policy resulted in the suspension of New Zealand from the Australia New Zealand United States (ANZUS) Treaty, which had been in place since the early 1950s.²⁰

In Australia, while sections of the Labor left would have dearly loved to follow the New Zealand route on American ships, a different kind of trade-off had been entered into.²¹ The leadership of the Australian union movement, especially young Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) secretary Bill Kelty, and even including some former Communists, was given a seat



Protest in support of jailed BLF leader Norm Gallagher

at the table in helping to shape policy in exchange for acceptance of a wage restraint. The Prices and Incomes Accord between the Labor Party and the unions was repeatedly revised and renewed between 1983 and 1996, and it formed the centre-piece of Labor's approach to government. Unions accepted lower wage increases in exchange for social spending, such as on health, welfare, education and, from the mid-1980s, tax cuts and employer contributions to superannuation. Unions that tried to operate outside the disciplines of the Accord, such as the lowly-paid members of the Builders

Labourers Federation or the highly-paid members of the Pilots' Federation, found themselves subjected to as full a measure of state repression as the British miners suffered as the hands of Margaret Thatcher in 1984–85. Australian Labor governments accepted dealing forcefully with such militancy as necessary self-preservation, the alternative, from their point of view, being a wage free-for-all that would drive inflation up and their governments out of office.²²

Debate about the effects of the Accord on the union movement, and on



economic policy in general, continue.²³ It cannot, however, easily be blamed for de-unionisation. As Bradley Bowden has pointed out, declining union coverage of the workforce had been going on since the 1940s, driven in large part by the decline in the blue-collar workforce's share of employment. White-collar and professional work of various kinds never fully compensated, especially once part-time and casual labour expanded in the 1980s.²⁴ That, in turn, had a great deal to do with wider changes in the economy, such as the expansion of shop trading hours and the continuing rise of service industries. Women, including married women, were a growing proportion of the workforce, especially in this sector. The Accord, by providing unions with a recognised place in both the industrial and political structure of the nation,

may well have slowed the decline from around 50% of the workforce in the early 1980s to 40% around 1990. Changes in the 1990s, such as the legislative prohibitions on compulsory unionism, drastically hastened the downward trend in union coverage.²⁵

The effect of the New Right and the emblematic industrial disputes on these developments is no easier to fathom. Both the left and right have tended to exaggerate their influence. The Right wants to present the HR Nicholls Society as sweeping all before it, with the likes of Gerard Henderson and Peter Costello at prophets of the new order, and Jay Pendarvis of Mudginberri and Fred Stauder of Dollar Sweets as its brave martyrs. Joh Bjelke-Petersen is perhaps the Lutheran voice crying in the wilderness in this story, the heroic

victor of the SEQEB electricity dispute. Yet even at Robe River, where Charles Copeman of Peko provoked a major confrontation with iron-ore workers in 1986, the dispute was so bitter, and the immediate results so ambiguous, that plenty of water still needed to pass under the bridge before it was possible to conceive of non-unionised mining workforces on any scale. That would happen in due course—by the 1990s, in fact—but as late as 1989, sixty per cent of the workforce remained members of unions despite continuing aggression from management.²⁶ In the end, the bosses could not triumph without the assistance of union-busting laws from a new conservative state government. All the same, the fears of one locked out union member from 1986, forty-nine year old Keith, seem prescient enough:

If we lose this dispute, my kids are gunna suffer ... I think that's what a lot of people here don't realise ... [it's not that] because Uncle Charlie Copeman's gunna win this battle it's not going to worry anybody else. I'm sure that just about every big company in Australia is watching this. ... the way they work it is the rich are gunna get rich, and people like us we're gunna get poorer. We'll go back to living in a bloody old corrugated iron shed. ... I'm not looking at the short term because my working life is

nearly finished. But in the long term, for my kids, I wouldn't like them to work under these conditions. I think it would be terrible to make you sign work your contracts and ... when they say 'jump', you say 'how high and in which direction?'²⁷

Employer militancy and de-unionisation were not distinctively Australian phenomena. Rather, globalisation produced different kinds of effects as it encountered a range of national contexts. For instance, the mutual borrowing of ideas between American, Australian and German Green protest politics has figured as a prominent theme in recent social movement studies, as has the transnational character of anti-nuclear protest.²⁸ In the 1980s, one of the conduits for such flows was the German Greens activist Petra Kelly, a 'pioneering transnational networker' who visited Australia in 1977 and 1984;²⁹ another was her friend, the Australian anti-nuclear campaigner Dr. Helen Caldicott, who was based in the US but continued to exercise influence in her homeland. (Caldicott, for instance, was the star speaker at the 1984 Palm Sunday rally in Sydney in 1984.)³⁰ Yet as in the case of neoliberal economics, social movements were, as Astrid Kirchhof has shown, 'often firmly embedded in their respective political systems, social and political environments and national political and protest traditions'.³¹ The US peace

movement tended to emphasise the freezing of the arms race as a realistic goal, whereas the British and Europeans protested the stationing of weapons. In Australia, where anti-nuclear politics often took the form of protest against uranium mining, it was connected with the politics of Aboriginal land rights. Such national differences sometimes acted as barriers to transnational cooperation but they also encouraged dialogue among leading activists.³²

I do not belong to that school of thought that sees the Hawke Government as producing disaster. Nonetheless, a large part of Labor's 1980s problem is that its approach was very top-down, mainly focused on getting this or that powerful interest group aboard whenever a policy issue arose. The problem was that to the extent that you were not a powerful interest, you were in danger of being ignored. Indigenous people who thought that they were getting national land rights in the mid-1980s instead found themselves fighting a rear-guard action, against an aggressive campaign by the mining industry, to preserve gains already made under the Fraser Government in the 1970s. The only woman with speaking rights at Bob Hawke's national economic summit in April 1983 was Senator Susan Ryan, who also took responsibility for piloting the *Sex Discrimination Act* in 1984, but the new legislation operated within a financially straitened environment.³³ Pamela O'Neil, the Sex Discrimination

Commissioner, complained to Labor Party head office in September 1986 that 'as a result of recent Government decisions, the Sex Discrimination Act may be at risk'. During the Act's two years of operation, 'and despite persistent limited resources, nearly 2,000 complaints, ranging from sexual harassment in small shops to complex complaints of structural discrimination against women in Government departments, have been dealt with.' The budget allocation', however, was 'barely sufficient to allow the operation of the Sex Discrimination Act at minimal level.' Earlier in year, the Attorney-General Lionel Bowen's staff had informed her there would in future be fewer staff and less funding, and that future efforts would need to be confined to complaint handling, thereby excluding research, education and promotion.³⁴

Many voters no doubt felt as alienated from the interest groups as they did from the government itself, a feeling John Howard would later ruthlessly exploit. Some at the time criticised the government's strategy as a form of corporatism, while others have since called it 'elite pluralism'³⁵—whatever jargon you prefer, by the end of the 1980s the party was experiencing not only electoral decay but something far more serious and damaging; an identity crisis of its own. What did it stand for? Who did it represent?

Still, the Labor Party's legacy had its positive aspects. Despite committing to a freer market and working in a political environment in which voters demanded lower taxes, Labor remained wedded to social spending and a renovated welfare state. The party, through Medicare, established a health system that no future government has been able to abolish. It developed a successful strategy for countering AIDS. Labor improved the quality of Australia's engagement in Asia while still cultivating to older, widely-valued relationships such as that with the United States, yet mainly without the sycophancy that we have seen from Liberal and, indeed, the occasional Labor prime minister since that time. There were substantial achievements in protecting the environment, and in the cause of gender equity. Unions retained a significant place at the bargaining table in their dealings with employers and despite their rather meagre coverage of the workforce today, they remain major players through their influence on Enterprise Bargaining Agreements, to say nothing of their place in industry superannuation funds. Whether all of this was good for unionism or workers in general is another matter, of course.

Yet, something not easily definable was lost. Even in the 1980s, critics were already worrying over Labor's abandonment of its 'moral critique of capitalism'.³⁶ This loss was manifest not only in the embrace of the market but in an increasingly

bloodless language of productivity, competitiveness and efficiency that accompanied that embrace. It was also evident in the seeming constriction of a sense of the political itself, in prevailing understandings of what politics was for, of what it could deliver. Labor speechwriter Denis Glover has recently complained that the

new ideology of freedom for the market, like all such revolutionary ideologies, would calcify into a formula that would in fact narrow the way we see the world, limit our imaginations, take away our ability to think in moral terms and reduce our capacity to conceive of something better. Creative destruction has become an intellectual straightjacket, like Marxism became in Eastern Europe. And this calcification is exactly what has happened here in Australia. It was carried through by the managerialists, the *nomenklatura* of the neoliberal age.³⁷

The task of the labour movement today is surely to expand the possibilities of politics rather than to accept the limits on our political and industrial imaginations that the 1980s imposed. That decade can provide only limited guidance to how we might deal with Australia's challenges today because just as many of the economic successes of recent decades have their roots in 1980s policy choices, so do many

of our problems: from flat wages and deindustrialisation through to unaffordable housing and corporate oligopoly. The Hawke Government sidelined housing policy and urban development, matters that had figured so prominently in the Whitlam Government's program—much to the dismay of Whitlam's Minister for Urban and Regional Development, Tom Uren, who was left out of the Hawke cabinet and handed the minor portfolios of territories and local government.³⁸ But as we contemplate the shambles of our big cities today, the disasters of urban planning, the clout of developers, miserable public transport networks, decrepit infrastructure and the lack of affordable housing, who has been vindicated by subsequent events: Hawke or Uren?

The reforms of the 1980s—especially in economic policy—were responses to problems of the 1980s, but they cannot continue to serve us indefinitely. Indeed, even on the terms of the 1980s economic rationalists, the legacies of that era do not always seem to be all they are cracked up to be. Economic historians, for instance, have questioned some of the effects of the Hawke-era reforms on productivity, which rose in the 1990s, but then flattened out after 2000. The economic benefits delivered in the decade after 2000 owed virtually nothing to productivity improvements. The benefits of all that privatisation, of all that labour market reform, of all that competition policy, might not

have extended quite so far toward the present as the barrackers for 1980s economic rationalism would like us to believe.³⁹

The eighties now have their critics, and not before time. We are more likely to learn the right lessons from that era if we see it in the round rather than through rose-tinted glasses, whether provided by ageing journalists whose minds shut down long ago, or of superannuated politicians looking for an opportunity to congratulate themselves for a foresight and wisdom unavailable to the rest of us.

Notes

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Freddy's Gang

Ted Riethmuller

Part I. Working in Freddy's Gang

Every six months the Brisbane City Council Department of Electricity usually transferred their apprentices to a different section. After the Workshop I was afraid I'd end up in the Meter Room. If the Workshop was a prison the Meter Room would be the high security wing, but fortunately my new destination was Sub-Station Construction which had a reputation as a good place to be.

There were two gangs in that section. One gang was centred at the sub-station near the Breakfast Creek Hotel and worked closely with Sub-Station Maintenance installing and modifying high-tension sub-stations in the Brisbane City Council area. I was allocated to the other gang who installed pole-mounted transformers. These were part of the reticulation system reducing 11kv to 415/240 volt. Our depot was close by, down Argyle Street off Sandgate Road in an old Nissan Hut, one of a number of wartime buildings between Breakfast Creek and Sandgate Road. This was 1961 when many vestiges of wartime survived. I lived in Highgate Hill at the time and travelled to work by tram, changing to a Clayfield tram in The



Ted in Glasgow at 25 years of age. (from his personal collection).

Valley. Near the tram stop where I got off was a half finished brick building. The builder was a victim of Menzies's Credit Squeeze of that year. Someone had used white paint to paint a slogan on it that said, "Jobs Menzies not dole." It remained there for many years. I was disappointed when at last I realised it was gone. It's sad when something you take for granted disappears, like the dancing skeleton neon sign you could see when driving down Countess Street into Upper Roma Street.

My new job was a pleasure especially after being incarcerated in the workshop. The gang had a large truck allocated to it and was made up of a

leading hand, Freddy; two tradesmen, Lindsay and Tarzan (with sometimes an additional tradesman) and an apprentice, me. There was also a truck driver called Claude, an old bloke about forty-five years old.

Freddy was a good boss. He had no affectations, quite the contrary. He always needed a shave in the days when bristles weren't fashionable and most men shaved every day. He was coarse in his language and every second word was an obscenity. He carried his lunch and everything else to do with the job, including his paper work and even odd nuts and bolts and other hardware, in an old battered Gladstone bag. This bag was so knocked around, misused and generally decrepit that the bottom sagged and threatened to give way altogether. This meant it had to be supported from underneath rather than be carried by its handle. Because he was the boss he rode in the cabin of the truck with Claude, carrying the bag on his lap like one would a delicate child. The rest of us rode in the back, sometimes standing up hanging on to the ladders, sometimes sitting on our tool boxes or just on the back of the tray with our legs dangling over the side.

We thought nothing of such behaviour then but you wouldn't get away with it now. In fact we were blissfully free of all the petty restrictions and inhibitions modern safe work practice calls for. No uncomfortable long sleeves and no

greasy sticky lotion to rub on our skins. To get a good suntan was our right as Australians. It's true I've had to have a fair few sun cancers cut out but it hasn't killed me, yet.

Claude was a genial helpful sort of bloke and he would have gladly acted as a Tradesman's Assistant, but this was forbidden. As a Truck Driver he was a member of the Transport Workers Union and only Electrical Trades Union members could do electrical work. So because of union demarcation rules he was expected to do nothing but attend to the truck and do the driving. However Claude helped in small ways that did not challenge significantly the demarcation of roles, like throwing up a line clamp or some other small item to one of us working aloft.

It only takes so much time to keep a vehicle clean and tidy so Claude devoted much of his efforts to self improvement. Because he was a keen punter many of his efforts related to this hobby, such as training his memory and developing his computational skills. As well as this he spent a lot of time studying form, compiling statistics and calculating odds. This kept him out of mischief. Because a good memory was so important to success in his chosen hobby it was this he gave most attention to.

"Give me a list of ten items. Go on, any sort of items."

To be polite, one of us, usually Tarzan, would supply the list, choosing items differing from each other as little as possible hoping to confound him. But Claude always managed to repeat the list, in any order, without a mistake. All of this self improvement must have made him a very successful punter but apart from vague references to his wins he was very reluctant to give details. In any case one of the storemen who followed the horses himself said he saw Claude at Eagle Farm all dressed up in a suit and a smart little pork pie hat with a pair of big binoculars hanging from his neck.

"He looked like a real toff," he said.

Tarzan was a young man still in his twenties, fair haired, not very big but nicely built. His good looks were spoiled by a walleye, and as if to compensate for this when talking to you he'd stand close and speak softly and hesitantly. This intimacy meant you couldn't help liking him. Apart from this he was usually strutting around bare chested with his shorts hanging from his hips, challenging everyone to feats of strength, physical or mental. He seemed very irritated by Claude's mental prowess and he was always at him to reveal the trick underlying his feats of memory. But Claude would only laugh.

Tarzan's real name was Roger but Freddy nicknamed him after a young man by the name of Michael Formenko

who was dubbed Tarzan by the Press. He had gone bush in North Queensland a couple of years before. He wore only a pair of old shorts, lived off the land and avoided the discontents of civilisation as well as its comforts. Roger, in turn, got called Tarzan because of his vocal support for Formenko and what he stood for. The name stuck. Tarzan liked it because all of us young blokes of a certain age would have cheered on Johnny Weissmuller playing Tarzan at the Saturday matinees. Michael Formenko, AKA Tarzan, captured the imagination of everyone and became a much loved folk hero. Nowadays he would be rescued whether he liked it or not and be nagged by the police for putting unnecessary stress on the State's rescue services.

The other tradesman, Lindsay, was only a few years older than Tarzan, but in many ways he seemed even older. He was married and had three kids; that may have had something to do with it. Sometimes he and Freddy would talk about their families, another world as far as I was concerned. It seemed to be mainly about problems with minor illnesses and the on-going struggle by parents to get enough sleep.

"I came from a family of six kids," said Freddy.

"Yeah," said Lindsay, "we've got three and that's enough. Definitely."

To Tarzan everything was a joke but Lindsay was much more serious and although he said very little he was prepared to accept Tarzan's jokes and quips with good grace and was happy to compete in the various contests of strength Tarzan devised, such as, "What's the shortest length of $3/8^{\text{th}}$ copper rod you can bend at right angles with only your bare hands?"

I was a pretty quiet sort of young bloke myself, I couldn't compete with the others as far as raw strength was concerned but I could hold my own in the deep and meaningful discussions we often had like, "If you could become rich by wishing some Chinaman in the middle of the Gobi Desert to death, would you?"

"No, of course not."

"What if they were dying of starvation anyhow?" And so on and so on. Lindsay often thought the same as me and I liked him because our conversations were straightforward and mutually respectful and quite free of the confrontation underlying much of Tarzan's conversational style.

It was a good job. I soon learned why it was so popular with apprentices. The work was hard but we were all young enough to enjoy the sensual satisfaction that comes from hard physical work. We all got on well together (I believe Freddy had a subtle influence there), and we worked outside in the open air

away from the narrow confines of the depot. The job was interesting. It had enough challenges to make it so and we had something to show for our efforts at the end of the day. Not only that, we got paid for it. All work should be like that.

Part II. Lindsay Takes a Sickie

I climb the ladder, bodybelt on with its rope doubled back and thrown over my left shoulder. Hooked on one of the Ds on the belt is a pulley with the hauling line hanging from it. The ladder reaches just below the first pole step. Near the top of the ladder I pass the bodybelt rope around the pole and fasten it on the spliced eye at the rope's other end. Now, if I slip, the bodybelt will stop my fall. But why should I slip?

We're one short today; Lindsay didn't turn up. It's Monday and he must have wanted a long week-end. Claude had loaded the truck with the gear we needed including the transformer, and we were ready to go. We waited as long as we could but then we had to get out to the job. Freddy didn't like us hanging about the depot. "You make the fucking place look fucking untidy," he would complain.

He wasn't too happy about Lindsay not fronting up. I could tell that, even though he wouldn't criticise one of the gang in front of another. He had often said, "Listen you bastards, it's ok to

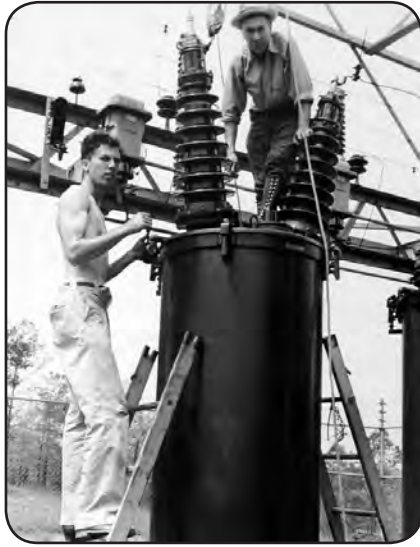
take a sickie but for fuck's sake ring me up the night before."

If he knew beforehand, he'd get one of the lads from another section when we had a big job on. But today he decided not to chase around for another pair of hands; we wouldn't attempt to raise the transformer, we'd just get everything ready, install the lightning arrestors and high-tension fuses and worry about the transformer when we had a full gang.

Not that we had anything against outsiders, it was just that by now we were a gang that worked smoothly and efficiently. Everyone knew what to do and if the work ahead was not too arduous Freddy would prefer to make do with a gang one man short.

When we had arrived on the job — it was somewhere out Moggill way — Tarzan put the ladder up for me while I put my bodybelt on and hung the pulley for the hauling line from it. Freddy would get annoyed with Tarzan when he insisted on raising the ladder by himself but Tarzan never missed a chance to show off; in any case, he enjoyed the physical challenge.

So here I am up aloft. Tarzan is down below off-siding for me. He's taking a keen interest in what I'm doing. Even though the overhead line is de-energised (and I can see the earthing sticks hanging down at the next pole, along where Freddy attached them first thing) it is our practice to always



Electrical workers on the job before the introduction of safe work practices.

have someone on the lookout below. Although I am confident in what I'm doing I'm still an apprentice and I welcome Tarzan's advice. I have learned that there is invariably an easier, better, way to do a job and the blokes with experience can tell you how.

Now I'm standing on the top pole steps, leaning backwards held in the embrace of the bodybelt. Using a short sling, I hook the pulley high up near the top of the pole with the hauling line dangling down to the ground. Tarzan has tied it to the back end of a pole platform and is hauling it up. I've learned the knack of placing a pole platform in position. The idea is to do it with a minimum of effort, allowing the hauling line to take

most of the weight while you get the chain around the pole and hook it up. I pull down on the end of the platform to bed it into the pole and I climb up on to it and retie the rope of my bodybelt. Now I'm ready to do some real work. To be standing up here, high up, with the birds, with blokes down below to serve me, I feel exhilarated. I love working aloft. Down below Tarzan is tying the tool bag to the hauling line. It contains the tools and items of hardware needed to do the job. He has the cross-arm ready to tie on next.

I have a chance to admire the scenery. My sunglasses are Polaroid which make the colours of my world crisp and saturated. The sky is a deep intense blue and the clouds, white and grey, sparkle in the sunlight. A lone crow, obviously with some purpose in mind, is flying on a fixed course, not to be distracted. If it wasn't for the bodybelt, anchoring me to the pole, I could use the platform on which I stand as a diving board, take a swallow dive and just before I reach the ground, zoom upwards into the sky and, arms outstretched, soar into the heavens and glide down after the crow and...

"Hey Dozy!"

I reach over, untie the canvas tool bag and hang it on a convenient pole step. I see Tarzan down below attaching the cross-arm on which the lightning arrestors and fuses will be mounted. He will tie it at one end, bring the

rope up to the other end and hold it in place by a short lashing. Slinging it this way means that the man up the pole can manage the cross-arm without busting his gut. When the middle of the cross-arm is at the check on the pole, by untying the lashing the cross-arm can be lowered into the horizontal and placed in position. As Tarzan is slinging the cross-arm I take an opportunity to have another look around.

I see a ute approaching. It's our supervisor's vehicle. His name is James Abbott but everyone calls him Bud. He seldom comes out to the job; Freddy is quite capable of doing every thing just right, without supervision, and in any case the truck is equipped with two-way radio. What brings him here? The ute pulls up and I watch Bud get out. He doesn't go over to the truck; he just leaning up against the door of the ute waiting. Because I'm up high looking down I can't see the expression on his face but I have a feeling that something is up. I see Freddy going over to him, he has pushed his hat back on his head and one hand is on his hip. They are having a conversation and I see Freddy take his hat off, rub his head and put the hat back on. That's a habit of Freddy's; he does that when he has a problem. I'm surprised to see how bald he's getting. Then I see Bud open the door of his ute. He nods goodbye to Freddy and takes his place behind the wheel and drives off. He hasn't said g'day to the rest of us even though he

usually does. Freddy is signalling me to come down.

We gather around Freddy; Tarzan, Claude and me.

"Bad news. Lindsay's wife has died. Suddenly."

No one said anything at first. I found it hard to make sense of the words. I repeated them to myself, the better to understand them: *Lindsay's wife has died — Lindsay's wife has died — suddenly.*

Even though I'm twenty years old, I've had no experience of personal tragedy and although I have a sense of the bond that exists between husband and wife, domesticity and married life as experienced by a man is unknown territory. And while I have a subjective and superficial knowledge of my own parents' marriage, it is too specific, too inadequate, to give me any insight into what it must be like for Lindsay.

"What'd she die of?" asks Tarzan.

"Dunno."

"Did it have something to do with the pregnancy?"

"Could've."

It is the first time I've heard of any pregnancy. I resent the fact I have been excluded from older men's business — secret stuff, venerable and primordial

knowledge harking back to beyond history. I have read my DH Lawrence but I know some wisdom cannot be gained from books alone and the awareness of my ignorance has left me embarrassed and not knowing how to react.

“When did it happen?” someone asks.

“Friday night.”

There are more questions but Freddy shows, with a gesture of his hands, that that he doesn't know any details. We stand around smoking, saying nothing, not knowing what to do.

After a while Freddy says, “Well, we better finish what we're doing and make a day of it.”

For once he didn't swear.

Part III. Lindsay Returns to Work

After the news of the death of Lindsay's wife, the mood of the gang was sombre. It didn't seem right for us to be enjoying our life and getting pleasure from the comradeship that comes with working together. Suddenly I'd realise I hadn't been thinking about him and I'd feel vaguely apologetic. Although Lindsay was a quiet sort of bloke and didn't impose himself on others like Tarzan did, it seems we were constantly aware he wasn't with us. I certainly was and I reckon the others were too because his name would come up in conversation.

“I wonder how Lindsay's getting on.” Or, out of the blue, apropos of nothing, “Lindsay's oldest kid is five years old.”

Even Tarzan's natural cheerfulness and ebullience was constrained and Freddy worried more and swore less.

Because we were one man short Freddy got Peter McDonald from the Test Lab as a fill in. He was a fifth year apprentice (apprenticeships were five years in those days) and was pleased to get away from the job they had him on. It was testing transformer oil used for cooling the windings in the trannies. It was a greasy, boring, evil-smelling job and he was very happy to get a job with us, out in the fresh air, doing things with his hands, away from the depot. We called him Samson because he was such a big lad. His sport was weightlifting and this was of great interest to Tarzan who, apart from enjoying exercising his mind on all sorts of technical matters, wanted to know the ins and outs of Samson's training regimen, his diet and psychological attitude. As it happened Samson (in deference to his wishes we called him Peter— at least in his presence) had a way of preparing for an upcoming weightlifting contest that captured Tarzan's imagination. Samson's theory was that actual training was a waste of time because how much you could lift depended on your mental outlook and if your attitude was right, your body would call upon its intrinsic capabilities to lift the weight. This mind/body nexus

was a thrilling concept for Tarzan and Claude although I believe Freddy thought it was a lot of bullshit — but he was too nice a bloke to say so.

So Samson mainly attended to his mental attitude and his diet. He was rather vague about his food regimen but I was aware that for morning smoko, which took the place of breakfast for us young single men, he'd have a couple of hamburgers, a bottle of flavoured milk and a large Snack Chocolate.

Samson was an easy going lad and like a lot of big fellows was not aggressive — he didn't have to be. Because he was unconnected to the tragedy he diluted the gloom somewhat but Lindsay's absence was still all too evident.

It was only a couple of days after we heard of his wife's death that I arrived at work and saw Lindsay having a cigarette and talking to Freddy near the truck. He'd had a haircut and was clean shaven and his boots were polished. His spruced up appearance made him seem younger. As I watched he drew deeply on his cigarette and then flicked the butt away in a nonchalant, tough guy way he had. A lot of his mannerisms contributed to this image: the way he walked, the way he wore his hat, the way when Tarzan came out with some tall story he would ask, "Oh yeah?" I tried to emulate him. I practiced inhaling deeply and blowing the smoke out of my nose and disposing of the butt in the emphatic way he did. I can

confess all this because the events I'm describing were over fifty years ago and I've attained a tolerance old men have for the affectations of youth, even their own youth.

I wasn't ready to face Lindsay. I didn't realise he would be back at work so soon. I felt embarrassed because I knew I should offer some sort of condolences, but I didn't know how to.

I went up to them and they said g'day. I returned the greeting and I managed to mumble, "I'm very sorry Lindsay." It seemed so inadequate I felt my face get hot.

"Yeah..." He didn't know what to say either but Freddy came to the rescue by asking him about the situation at home.

"It's ok; the wife's mother's got the kids".

I got the impression he hadn't yet got used to the idea his wife was gone and was never coming back and he still had, in the back of his mind, the assumption she would be there to greet him with a cup of tea when he got home from work.

He went on to say, "I couldn't stand it at home so I decided to come back to work."

"Well," said Freddy, "We can certainly use you. We've got a 100Kva transformer to raise. I've got young

Samson from the Test Branch to help but an extra pair of hands is always welcome. You can take it easy if you want to.”

“No, I’ll be right.”

Freddy made no comment. The storeman loaded the trannie on to the back of the truck with the fork-lift, Claude stowed it properly, and before long we were on our way.

But things did not return to how they had been although we had Lindsay back with us. He was very quiet, not that he often said much anyway, but his silent presence drew everyone’s attention to him even if we failed to look him in the eye. When he came back on the job I think every one expected the mood of the gang to improve, for the pall of depression to lift, for things to return to normal, but it was worse. Lindsay was even more taciturn than usual, not impolite, but we knew what we said was of no earthly interest to him. He moved very slowly and seemed very weak because he wanted to sit down all the time and to do anything seemed to take a huge effort. Everyone was sympathetic of course and said nothing but the fact is, deep down, too deep to be acknowledged, we saw him as a drag.

When we got to the job it was my turn to off-side for Tarzan. He quickly climbed aloft and got the job underway. The lightning arrestors and fuses were

already in place and all that remained to be done was to install and connect up the transformer. I attached the hook of our block and tackle to the rope and hauled it up. Tarzan hung it in a sling high up on the pole and it, in turn, was used in turn to haul up the chain-hoist. The load we had to lift was nearly a ton and so the chain hoist was a big one, and heavy. The hook for the load was up near the block so it had to be lowered first. Using the endless chain to do this was easy, but tedious.

Claude positioned the truck underneath the hook so the transformer was, as near as possible, directly under it. The hook was attached to the sling that was already attached to the load with D shackles. Gradually the hook was raised. As it took the weight the tray of the truck lifted on its springs and the transformer began to slide across on the two 4X4s it rested on. We had to steady it to prevent it banging into the pole. When at last the load swung freely in the air Claude moved the truck out of the way and the hardest part of the job was ready to be begin.

All we had to do was to front up to the dangling chain and haul away. You could train a monkey to do it — but he’d refuse; so why did we not hesitate? The first few pulls were easy enough, even pleasant to exercise your muscles, but soon it became uncomfortable, then painful, then agony.

Because it was the worst part of the job, the most demanding, Freddy fronted up first. He gripped the chain above his head and pulled it down. Then again and again. Soon his breathing was coming in gasps, his face red and glistening with sweat. At last he hesitated, just for a split second, allowing Tarzan to shoulder him aside saying, "Out of the way, old fella, let someone young and strong show you how."

The load had risen only a couple of inches. After Freddy got his breath back and had a swig from the waterbag, he said, "I'm gunna fucking stop smoking for fucking sure." But he didn't even cut down as far as I noticed.

The chain-hoist was a torture device. It demanded all our life's blood and gave, inch by inch, so little in return. It left our shoulders and arms aching and the palms of our hands red swollen and blistered. But we willingly climbed onto the torture rack, shackled our legs and arms to it and declaimed, "Do your worst, we will prevail over you."

We had to do it. We felt we could not say no. Pride alone would not allow us to refuse and say, "Get a fucking crane. We aren't beasts of burden". Yet even more than pride was the acknowledgment that it was our job to do and do it we must.

Tarzan worked steadily. Generally we made a point of sharing any hard yakka but Tarzan always liked to do more

than the next man. For once he shut up and kept his breath for the task in hand. It was gut busting work and nowadays a crane is used. Mobile cranes were available back in those days but maybe our wages cost less than the hire of one. In any case we didn't whinge, just took it for granted this was the way to go.

When I see a line gang at work now I am amazed at the confusion of men and equipment needed to do a job that fifty years ago was done by a handful of men just using their muscles. Back in my day (and I suppose I sound like an old blade shearer critical of the new-fangled machine shears) we didn't have Elevated Platform Vehicles, mobile cranes or supervisors in their flash new utes and such a clutter of men, machinery, trucks and traffic controllers causing chaos on the road and interrupting traffic flow. And the workers themselves, all kitted out like pox-doctors' clerks with long sleeved shirts made from flame resistant fabric with coloured bands of reflective material. And hard-hats, safety glasses and gloves. Gloves! For hauling on the chain Freddy had a pair with the fingers cut off and this concession to comfort gave Tarzan an excuse to jokingly question his manhood.

Tarzan kept at it but suddenly he stopped and walked away. He had decided he had done his share for the time being. Usually Lindsay followed Tarzan or Tarzan followed Lindsay. They liked to challenge one another

but on this occasion Lindsay seemed unenthusiastic. He went up to the chain, looked up at the load, wiped his palms on the seat of his trousers and slowly commenced. One pull, very slow, then another pull just as slowly. His face wore an expression of worry even agony; then he said, “No. I just can’t do it,” and he walked away.

Freddy said, “Yeah, that’s ok. Just take it easy Lindsay. — Theo, you take over.” So it was my turn.

I persevered at it. I knew I could not match Tarzan but I had to give it a good try. I kept going until I got to the stage when I said to myself, “Just another ten pulls and that’s all.” Then after those ten I willed myself to do another ten but just when I decided to throw in the towel, Freddy told Samson to take over.

I was buggered. I dropped down alongside Lindsay who was sitting on the ground in the shade of the truck using the wheel as a back rest. He moved over to give me more room. I said nothing, he said nothing, he just sat there with his tobacco and lighter in his hand as if trying to decide if he wanted another cigarette. Certainly I wanted a smoke so I rolled a cigarette and when I patted my pockets to find my matches he silently lit his lighter and offered me the flame. Men will usually hand a lighter or a matchbox to another man rather than offer him a light as one does to a woman. I dimly perceived it was an intimate gesture.

“Thanks.”

He made no immediate reply but after a while he said, “Theo, do you reckon a woman who doesn’t want another baby — like she already has three kids — should be able to do something about it?”

I wasn’t ready for this. The question came out of the blue. I was flabbergasted but I at once knew what lay behind his question. I was at an age when one enjoys the intellectual challenge of pondering such ethical issues. On the one hand, in the bohemian circles of which I was on the periphery, the answer was unequivocally in favour whereas on the other hand I entertained a sort of half baked vitalism that advocated saying yes to “Life” no matter how inconvenient. Whatever *Life* meant.

But in any case, hitherto, such conversations took place in an unreal world of abstractions far removed from any relevance to life as it was for people like Lindsay.

However, despite my lack of commitment to either debating position, I found myself answering, without hesitation, “Yes.” And then, for fear my answer may be ambiguous, I added, “She should be able to do what she wants to do. For sure.”

I had turned to face him when I said this. He was looking down and I was

unable to gauge his reaction but I knew, despite the uncertainty I had before, from that moment on I believed it was a woman's private business. And to deny her the right to decide because of some principle, in the face of simple humanity and common sense, was not only wrong but absurd.

We sat there not talking. I couldn't think of anything more to say and for some reason I felt my heart beating. After about half a minute Lindsay put away his tobacco and lighter in his top pocket, got up and went over to the chain where Samson, face flushed and sweat pouring down his bare chest, was struggling to keep the chain moving. We had become aware the rhythmic rattle of the chain had reduced in tempo.

Tarzan had said later the reason why Samson wasn't very good on the chain-hoist was because his strength was best suited to weight lifting where a great effort was called upon for a short period of time, rather than the consistent application over a long period.

Lindsay watched Samson's efforts for a minute or two without comment and then he said, "Give us a go."

Samson, out of pride, gave a couple more pulls and then gratefully stood aside. Lindsay shuffled his feet a bit, as if to get a good grip on the earth, then reached up high and pulled, then quickly reached up again. We all knew

he could not keep up that pace for long but he gave it a good try and soon the inhalation and exhalation of his breath became another accompaniment to the music of the chain-hoist. Freddy said, "Take it easy Mate, we've got all afternoon."

But Lindsay didn't take it easy, if anything he worked at the chain even harder and his breathing became louder and even sounded desperate. I was aware Freddy and Tarzan were standing close with their hands out as if to grab him but they didn't dare to touch him as if his pain made him sacrosanct. I just stood there, very conscious of my ignorance and lack of experience in the ways of the world. I knew I was in the presence of a human drama and although I did not know how it would end, I knew that end it must. His breaths became louder; and then they became gasps, long drawn out cries of pain.

The gasps became sobs. He passed some tipping point and all of a sudden he was bawling like a baby. Freddy grabbed him in his arms. Lindsay was obviously shaky in the legs and I could see that Freddy, who was a small man, found it hard to hold him up. Tarzan hovered close and Lindsay continued to sob. He tried to stop but then he would just start up again.

"Come on Lindsay, old man, let's get in the shade. You've got a bit of fucking sun-stroke." Tarzan tried to help but

Freddy said, “No we’ll be ok. You blokes keep on the chain.” He took Lindsay around to the shady side of the truck and I heard Claude grab a tool box for him to sit on. The rest of us wondered if it was respectful to work away under the circumstances but the job had to be done; we couldn’t leave a transformer dangling from a hook over night. And in any case Freddy always knew what the right thing to do was.

After that day things returned to normal although, because I was gaining in wisdom, I knew things never return to exactly what they were. Samson went back to his bench in the oil room with a bad case of sunburn and blistered hands. Claude still attended to his self improvement, Freddy still swore and Tarzan got some of swagger back. Lindsay seemed to be ok, a bit quieter, often pensive and thoughtful and but able to smile at Tarzan’s tomfoolery occasionally.

At the end of six months I was shifted to the Drawing Office where I had many new things to think about and in time lost touch with Freddy’s gang.

A Proud History at the Forefront of Australian Journalism

The MEAA Media section has a century of experience campaigning on behalf of the profession, making it one of the oldest media unions in the world.

This article was originally published on the MEAA website (<https://www.meaa.org/news/meaa-media-turns-106/>)

MEAA Media is the name for the media workers section of MEAA. The section traces its history from 1910 with the foundation of the Australian Journalists' Association which was formed at a meeting of journalists in Melbourne after several unsuccessful attempts to form a bond or union as a professional association for journalists.

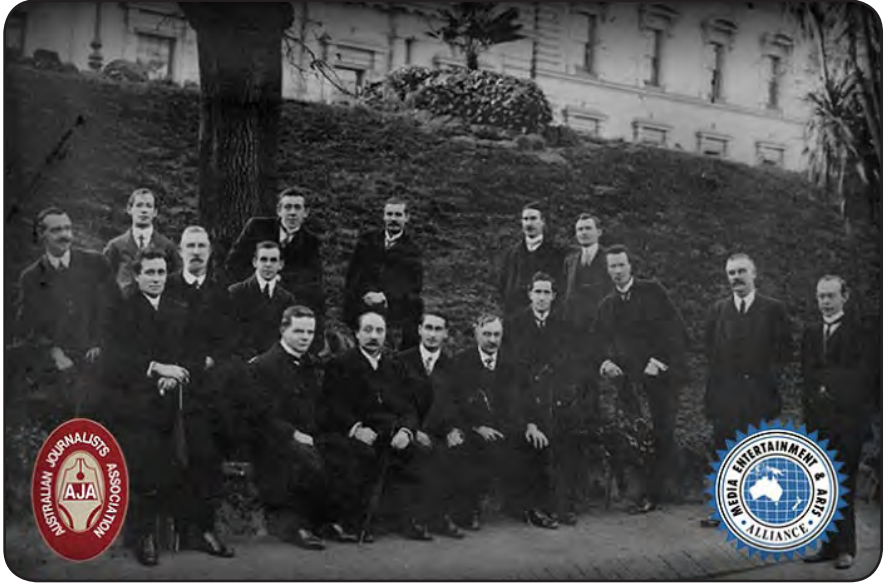
At the time, journalists were often working for “a-penny-a-line”. As a reporter on a daily newspaper, you were probably paid in the region of £3 or £4 per week for working something in excess of 60 hours—across at least six days a week. That is, of course, if you were paid a weekly wage at all. One of the journalists working as a “penny-a-liner” was Keith (later Sir

Keith) Murdoch, father of Rupert, who was scratching a living from piece work as a federal parliamentary reporter for *The Age* in Melbourne (the then national capital).

The meeting was called by Melbourne *Herald* reporter B.S.B. “Bertie” Cook. He had begun work there, aged 12, as a copy boy. After 10 years he was a reporter earning £3 for a 70-hour week. Concerned by journalists’ working conditions, he joined with colleagues in several failed attempts to form an effective industrial association. But in 1910 Cook saw an opportunity under the *Conciliation and Arbitration Act 1904* for journalists to register as an industrial organisation. The Act provided that “an employer shall not dismiss an employee or injure him in his employment or alter his position to his prejudice by reason of the circumstance that the employee is entitled to the benefit of an industrial agreement or award”.

Having taken advice from Prime Minister Alfred Deakin and the federal industrial registrar, A.M. Stewart, Cook was told that the legitimacy of registration by journalists as an industrial organisation was unclear and there would have to be a test case to determine this.

On December 1 1910, Cook sent the following letter out to journalists around the country:



The federal council of the Australian Journalists' Association gathers in Melbourne for its inaugural conference, March 1911

A meeting of journalists, i.e. persons professionally and habitually engaged on staff of newspapers or periodicals, will be held at the cafe in the basement of the Empire buildings, Flinders St., Melbourne on Saturday Dec 10th at 8pm sharp for the purpose of considering the question of forming an organisation to secure registration under the Commonwealth Conciliation and Arbitration Act.

You are invited to be present and to extend an invitation to any other qualified person with whom you are acquainted.

On behalf of the committee,
Yours faithfully
B.S.B. Cook
Melbourne Herald

On December 10, more than 100 journalists crowded into the cafe (262–268 Flinders Street, Melbourne). Cook says this was “a fair proportion of journalists, in those days, who would be qualified to attend. Some of these were not too sure about what they were getting themselves into, feeling it would be “*infra dig* for the ‘gentlemen of the Press’ to have to seek the protection of the law in arranging their working hours and salaries”, but

“after this is seemed as if the floodgates of discontent had broken their banks and speaker after speaker told of the intolerable hours they had to work and of the miserable salaries they were getting”. Sound familiar?

A secret ballot was held on the motion: *That this meeting of press writers of Australia affirms the desirability of forming an organisation for registration under the Conciliation and Arbitration Act of Australia.* While some abstained, the motion was passed 78 to nine.

James McLeod of *The Age* was elected president; A.N. “Arthur Norman” Smith, a journalist who ran his own press agency, became senior vice-president; and Bill A. Brennan and William Letcher—both from *The Argus*—were elected junior vice-president and treasurer respectively. Cook was appointed secretary. Smith took over the presidency soon afterwards.

Smith, whose bequest was to found the annual A.N. Smith Lecture to the University of Melbourne, “recognised that any improvement in wages and conditions would ultimately increase his own expenses”, became a key player in the establishment of the AJA.

The AJA lodged its application for registration on December 23 1910. It was met with an avalanche of objections from proprietors, who had

enjoyed a status quo in which they could pay what they liked and demand their employees work crazy hours.

The application came before the registrar on April 11 1911, with Frank Brennan, KC (Bill Brennan’s brother) for the AJA, against a Bar team of three, including two future Supreme Court judges, for the proprietors.

The arguments took several days, but Brennan’s case was strong, stating successfully that there was no objection under the *Conciliation and Arbitration Act 1904* to journalists registering as a profession. The employers, it was later revealed, had not been united in all of their objections. On May 24 1911, the registration was granted and the AJA became the first national association of journalists in Australia.

A national association was quickly developed. On January 17 1911, Melbourne became the first district branch of the AJA to be approved. Brisbane followed on February 14, followed by Adelaide (March 24), and NSW (April 23). On July 19, Hobart was admitted to AJA membership, followed by Perth on September 29.

Among the notable foundation members of the AJA were Stella Allen of *The Argus* and Maisie “May” Maxwell of the Melbourne *Herald*. In 1904 Allen had begun a weekly section in *The Argus* called “Women to Women” writing under the *nom de*

plume “Vestra”—believed to be the first section dedicated to women’s affairs, children’s interests and community welfare. Allen became a delegate for Australia to the fifth assembly of the League of Nations at Geneva and was a delegate to the second Pan Pacific Women’s Conference in Hawaii in 1930.

Maxwell, who had begun a career on the stage, had begun writing for Perth’s *Sunday Times*; quickly concluding that journalism offered a more stable career than the theatre. In 1910 she was invited to edit the Melbourne *Herald’s* weekly page for women. In 1921, the new editor Keith Murdoch asked her to make it a daily feature. Maxwell served on the AJA’s Victorian committee and became an honorary life member in 1960. In 1969 she was awarded an OBE for services to journalism.

Another foundation member was C.E.W. (Charles) Bean. Bean was a contributor to the *Sydney Morning Herald*. The Australian government of Prime Minister Andrew Fisher had promised the AJA that the association would be given full responsibility to select the country’s first official war correspondent to cover the AIF’s participation in the Great War. As Clem Lloyd writes in the AJA history *Profession Journalist*: “The AJA’s central committee called for nominations, rejecting some because they were unfinancial. It conducted a ballot in which the top candidates

were C.E.W. Bean with nine votes, Keith Murdoch with eight, and Oliver Hogue with six. A further preferential ballot was held with Bean beating Murdoch seven to three. Murdoch was nominated as the substitute if, for whatever reason, Bean was unable to go. (It is interesting to speculate what might have been ... if the ballot had gone the other way). Bean was given the honorary rank of Captain and paid a salary of £600 a year.”

Both Bean and Murdoch would play different but crucial roles at Gallipoli, with Bean going on to write the official war history.

Murdoch, who was also a foundation member of the AJA, welcomed the union ending the era of “penny-a-line” piece work, saying: “The AJA ... got me a rise of one pound a week and relief from slavish conditions.” He later wrote:

“The AJA has not only greatly improved conditions for the journalists, but has also done a great deal for Australian newspapers.”

The next major battle for the fledgling AJA was the establishment of an industrial award to cover the various duties of journalists. A committee was formed for this purpose and in November 1911 the “Blue Log” of Claims (for the tinted legal foolscap it was typed on) of journalists’ duties was lodged with newspaper proprietors.



LtoR: founder members of the AJA—Stella Allen (courtesy Melbourne Press Club) Maisie «May» Maxwell

A.N. Smith described the Blue Log as the AJA’s Magna Carta and Bill of Rights rolled into one. “It contained the basic laws of a grading system, the proportion of grades, the limiting of hours of working and provided for holiday requirements. Finally, it submitted a scale of pay.” Under the proposed staff-grading system a senior reporter on a “Class A” morning newspaper would earn a minimum of £7 a week; a first-year cadet £1 and 10 shillings. Senior reporters had to make up at least three-fifths of a newspaper’s staff. Working hours were fixed at 48 hours per week, with one clear day off in seven.

In a rare move for that era, the Blue Log made no distinction between the rates of pay for men and women—establishing

the principle that was almost 60 years ahead of the Commonwealth Arbitration Commission’s equal pay decision in 1969.

A conference was held on December 14, 1911, between representatives of the employers and the AJA, at which there was stalemate between the employers’ position and the AJA’s log of claims and a brief walkout by AJA representatives.

A compromise was eventually reached and the agreement filed in the Arbitration Court, for 12 months dating from January 1 1912. The breakthrough was hailed by Britain’s National Union of Journalists as “an agreement which revolutionised the condition of daily newspaper staffs”.

The battle to improve the lot of journalists in Australia had begun. In 1912 there was a strike at the Perth *Daily News* over pay rates—the first by Australian journalists (and possibly by journalists anywhere in the world). Staff at *The Mercury* in Hobart failed to win parity with Melbourne and Sydney rates, but the AJA negotiated some salary increases, three weeks' paid holiday a year and a limit of 48 hours a week. By 1913 the AJA had 765 members, 530 of them in Victoria and NSW.

Guiding the fledgling union on this path for the next 30 years was Sydney Ernest Pratt. A member of a prominent family of journalists, Syd Pratt had worked on the *Sydney Morning Herald* and the *Mining Standard* in Melbourne. While honorary secretary of the AJA's South Australian district in 1911–19, Pratt was a member of the team that prepared the union's submission in proceedings before (Sir) Isaac Isaacs in the Commonwealth Court of Conciliation and Arbitration that led to the first Federal award covering journalists.

In 1919 he became general secretary of the AJA. The *Australian Dictionary of Biography* says Pratt was an adroit conciliator, settling most disputes and concluding industrial agreements with newspaper proprietors by extensive negotiations. In 1927–28 Pratt and the AJA's president Syd Deamer successfully argued before Robert

(later Sir Robert) Menzies, who had been appointed arbitrator, that all newspaper literary staff should be graded as journalists covered by industrial awards. The journalists' grading system continues to this day. During the 1930s Pratt also worked assiduously to prevent substantial cuts in newsroom jobs and to minimize wage reductions at a time of large-scale labour attrition. He adeptly guided the AJA through the Great Depression, but later conceded that the pressures on the association in those years had “nearly wrecked it”. In 1954–55 he directed a protracted and arduous industrial-award hearing which resulted in significant improvements in salary and conditions; it was one of the few occasions when he was forced into a court battle with proprietors.

Pratt's early work for the union quickly had the AJA right in the midst of industrial fray. The AJA's first industrial award was signed in May 1917 and established a 46-hour week with one-and-a-half days off, provision for overtime, three weeks' paid holiday, paid sick leave, and the principle of equal pay for men and women in the profession.

Ratifying the 1917 agreement, Justice Isaacs commented that “No just comparison can be made by journalism with any other occupation. Journalism is a profession, *sui generis* [‘unique, in a class by itself’]. I cannot measure



LtoR: candidates in the AJA ballot to become Australia's first war correspondent—Charles Bean (courtesy Australian War Memorial) and Keith (later Sir Keith) Murdoch

it by what is paid for totally different work.”

A leading article the AJA house publication *The Journalist* commented that the result of the case “will be to raise the prestige and status of the profession. Journalism will become less a means of earning a living and more a profession imbued with high ideals”.

So effective was this early work by the AJA, that the union—and its agreement—became a blueprint for similar organisations developing around the world. Britain’s NUJ, which had been founded only two years before the AJA, looked on in envy

at the agreement as “an example for emulation” by its journalists.

Also in 1917, John Curtin, future Second World War Prime Minister, applied for membership of the AJA (he soon became WA district president) and the original Melbourne Press Club is formed.

In 1919 *Bulletin* founder J.F. Archibald died, leaving a large share of his estate for the AJA’s NSW District to establish a benevolent fund “for the relief of distressed Australian journalists”. The fund continues this work today—as do other AJA/MEAA-associated benevolent funds in across the country. A year later, newspaper artists and photographers come under

the AJA's umbrella. In its 1926 report on the working conditions of journalists in 33 countries, the International Labour Office at Geneva wrote:

“Australian journalists are among the members of the profession possessing the most satisfactory status ... No other country has such minute regulations on the subject of hours of work.”

In 1928 Robert Menzies chaired a tribunal to overhaul the Metropolitan Dailies' Agreement. Changes include improved conditions for journalists, replacement of the old grading system with four news grades of A, B, C and D, and the introduction of a four-year cadet system with proper recruitment and training.

By 1930 the AJA has 1900 members—about 90 per cent of those eligible to join.

The ideals of the AJA as a professional association for Australia's journalists were to achieve their fullest expression in 1944 with the AJA Code of Ethics for journalists, in the face of opposition from proprietors—many of whom refused to display the eight-point code in their newsrooms. To promulgate and enforce the code, each state set up an Ethics of Judiciary Committee, which administered the code and dealt with complaints. The code was revised substantially in 1984, when it was issued as a set of 10 clauses, and again in 1999 when it became the 12-clause

MEAA *Journalist Code of Ethics* that operates today.

One of the most significant contributions of the AJA to journalism as a profession has been the establishment of the Australian Press Council in 1976 after more than 20 years of lobbying by the union. The Council comprises representatives of the proprietors, the union and the public.

The union's core focus on arbitration and conciliation has been challenged on a number of occasions: in 1944 and 1955 in support of colleagues in the print unions—disputes that ended when AJA strike newspapers (in 1944, the *News* and in 1955, the *Clarion*) were created and sold up to 200,000 copies.

Industrial action has rarely been over money, with the union successful in its wage negotiations. Instead, strikes and other action have been over proprietorial interference in content, to secure adequate compensation for the introduction of new technology or over the devaluing of journalistic skills.

The AJA was central to the establishment of journalism as a profession. In 1956, the chairman of Ampol, Sir William Gaston Walkley, set up a foundation to run awards for journalistic excellence. Since its inception, the Walkley Awards have grown from five to more than 30

categories and introduced a raft of professional development initiatives.

In 1992 MEAA was formed through the merging of the AJA, Actors' Equity and the Australian Theatrical and Amusement Employees' Association. Since amalgamation, the Symphony Orchestra Musicians' Association and the NSW Artworkers' Union have joined MEAA and the Screen Technicians' Association of Australia has come under the MEAA banner.

In 2000 the Walkley Foundation was constituted under MEAA by-laws as an autonomous organisation; today it operates as a company limited by guarantee. Its tasks are to organise the Walkley Awards, advance the interests of professional and ethical journalism, implement education and training programs for journalists, and to advance the interests of the MEAA Media section. The Walkley Foundation Limited directors are the three nationally elected officials of the MEAA Media section, the MEAA CEO and the Walkley Board chair. Together, they may appoint up to two additional directors.

MEAA also led the way in campaigning for equal pay and status for women journalists, and was the first union to introduce a quota system to ensure equal representation of women on its governing body. MEAA has established Women in Media as a mentoring and networking initiative for members.

Women in Media campaigns for gender equity and has released a study of the gender pay gap in the profession: *Mates Over Merit—The Women in Media Report—A study of gender differences in Australian media.*

MEAA has recognised Australia's shifting geopolitical priorities and has moved towards greater involvement in regional issues, hosting the Asia-Pacific office of the International Federation of Journalists at MEAA's federal headquarters in Sydney.

Mindful of the changing nature of the media industry, MEAA has also established a special category of membership, Freelance Pro, which provides members with professional indemnity and public liability insurance as well as training in the MEAA *Journalist Code of Ethics* and the latest developments in media law. Freelance Pro members are identified with a special membership card and the use of a trust mark for marketing their business.

MEAA has also been at the forefront in campaigning for press freedom, releasing an annual report cataloguing the state of press freedom in Australia each May (around UNESCO World Press Freedom Day May 3). MEAA regularly lobbies on press freedom matters and is a member of the Australia's Right To Know media industry group.

In 2005, MEAA established the Media Safety and Solidarity Fund, which is supported by donations from Australian journalists and media personnel, to assist colleagues in the Asia-Pacific region through times of emergency, war and hardship.

MEAA's Media section welcomes as members people who work in Australia's media and communications industry including those working on any platform (print, broadcast, digital); as reporters, editors, photographers, designers, producers, artists, cartoonists, sub-editors—including those working as full-time, part-time and casual employees or as freelance

independent contractors, and in public affairs and communications. Today, MEAA's Media section has about 5500 members.

The men and women of the fledgling Australian Journalists' Association helped turn an underpaid and often ramshackle craft into a profession. Among the many notable members of the AJA/MEAA are: Kenneth Slessor, A.B. Banjo Paterson, Dame Mary Gilmore, Otto Beeby, Syd Deamer, Rupert Lockwood, George Godfrey, Syd Pratt, John Curtin, Paul Lyneham, George Brickhill, Billy Hughes, Marien Dreyer, Graham Perkin and Andrew Olle.



LtoR: AJA members Banjo Paterson and Dame Mary Gilmore

Dr Rex Patterson: A Biographical Portrait

by
Lyndon Megarrity

[Note: This is an edited version of an article published in 2016 by the TJ Ryan Foundation <http://www.tjryanfoundation.org.au/> entitled 'Northern dreams, national realities: the life and times of Dr Rex Patterson'.]

The year 2016 saw the passing of a proud political champion of the north: Dr Rex Patterson, the first Minister for Northern Australia. This biographical study of Patterson is designed to encourage greater historical interest in the life and times of a Queensland Labor MP who made an important contribution to Australian public life.

Early Years

Rex Alan Patterson was born on 8 January 1927, the son of Ronald and Margaret (nee Walker) Patterson.¹ He grew up on a farm at Gooburrum, near Bundaberg. Better known at Bundaberg State High School for his sportsmanship than his scholarship,² he nonetheless passed the Junior (1941) and Senior public exams (1943) during an era when many Queenslanders left school aged fourteen. After attending the Queensland Teachers' Training College in Brisbane (1942–43), Patterson began his initial career as a



Dr Rex Patterson circa 1965 (National Archives of Australia: A1200, L54868)

state school teacher at the Proserpine Rural School in 1944.

After serving in the Royal Australian Air Force during the last year of World War II, Patterson began teaching at Mackay State High School.³ During his early Mackay years, he achieved local 'star' status by winning the 1946 North Queensland tennis championship. Patterson's record as a talented young footballer, tennis player, athlete and cricketer in several regional, district and university competitions would later come in handy when, two decades on, Patterson needed to portray himself to voters as a 'man of the people'.

In April 1947, Patterson was sent by the Department of Public Instruction

to teach at Ipswich Technical College, but some months later he enrolled as a Bachelor of Commerce student at the University of Queensland (UQ).⁴ Patterson never talked much in public about his UQ days, although while he was there he continued to attract attention for his winning way with a tennis racquet.⁵

By late 1949, Patterson had relocated to Canberra, taking up a position as a researcher at the Federal Bureau of Agricultural Economics. His research involved taking field trips to the northern parts of Queensland and Western Australia, along with the Northern Territory. Patterson was influenced in his growing interest in northern development through working with senior colleague, J.H. Kelly, whose enthusiasm for Northern Australia and its cattle industry was boundless.⁶

There were two big events in store for Patterson in the 1950s. Firstly, he married Eileen Nelson in 1954: their daughter, Jayne, was born in 1957.⁷ The second big occasion occurred in 1958, when Patterson won a Fulbright scholarship to the USA, where he ultimately completed a PhD in Agricultural Economics at the University of Illinois. Patterson's doctorate was related to his work at the Bureau of Agricultural Economics; his thesis made the case for constructing beef roads across the north. Patterson was proud of his academic research,

which influenced the Commonwealth to finance beef roads in Northern Australia during the 1960s and 1970s, 'opening up the country not only for the cattle industry but also allowing more and more people to go into those areas.'⁸

Returning to Australia in 1960, Rex became the assistant director of the Bureau of Agricultural Economics. He was subsequently appointed the director of the Northern Division of the Department of National Development (1964–65) and continued to make trips to northern districts. He developed a reputation in the north as an engaging speaker on issues such as defence and primary industries.⁹

However, as Northern Division director, Patterson had limited powers. His Division provided policy advice on northern resources, but ultimately, Northern Australia was not a Coalition priority.¹⁰ A fervent believer in water conservation to combat drought and harness rainfall for agricultural purposes, Patterson was particularly disappointed that the Menzies Government seemed reluctant to financially support an expansion of the Ord River irrigation scheme in Western Australia's north.¹¹ Patterson consequently believed that he might be able to make more difference to the north in politics than in the public service. With this in mind, Patterson

made contact with the ALP's Deputy Leader Gough Whitlam.¹²

From Public Servant to Politician

Patterson would have been attracted to the federal ALP, because under Arthur Calwell's leadership (1960–67), the development of the 'Empty North' was viewed by Labor as a necessity for Australia's defence at a time of military and cold war tensions with newly independent Asian nations.¹³ Labor aligned itself with the popular theory that building up the north's population would deter external invasion and provide additional economic opportunities for Australia. Furthermore, Whitlam had campaigned heavily in Queensland during the 1961 and 1963 federal elections, focussing on the Commonwealth's alleged neglect of the north.

Whitlam encouraged Patterson's political ambitions. By the mid 1960s, Patterson was well known in Canberra as a public servant and expert on sugar; thus his approach to the federal ALP would have been taken seriously. Whitlam was keen to see tertiary educated men become more prominent in his party, and it is not surprising that he saw Patterson's potential.

In August 1965, Patterson publicly signalled his intention to resign before the next federal election to become the ALP candidate for the seat of Dawson. When the Menzies Government

learned of Patterson's intention to stand as an ALP candidate, it swiftly transferred him to a specially created position within the Department of National Development and prevented him from obtaining further access to cabinet papers and policy documents. The Prime Minister later gave Patterson free publicity by attacking him in parliament for appealing against the transfer.

Patterson's political career began more swiftly than anticipated because of the sudden death of the incumbent Country Party MHR for Dawson, George Shaw, on 9 January 1966. Consequently, a by-election for the seat was to be held on 26 February. The main population centre of Dawson was the northern sugar town of Mackay but the seat encompassed several hundred kilometres of rural and semi-rural land, as well as several other townships such as Proserpine and Sarina. As such it was considered a natural Country Party electorate, but Patterson had some advantages. He had an understanding of life on the land, having been brought up on a farm; he had taught as a school teacher in Mackay and Proserpine; and as a young man he had been an accomplished sportsman.

Concentrating on the issue of northern development, Patterson, with Whitlam's support, won a previously impenetrable Country Party seat with a swing of 12 per cent. It also brought renewed media attention to Gough

Whitlam because he had skilfully used the Dawson campaign and the popular Northern Australia theme to highlight his leadership qualities to the general community. As journalist Jack Lunn pointed out, 'Mr. Whitlam's [northern development] plan becomes of great importance to Australia as present political developments could shortly make him Labor parliamentary leader.'¹⁴

Further, Patterson's victory was instrumental in gaining crucial support from the Queensland branch of the ALP for Whitlam's internal struggles against the Labor hierarchy and then ALP leader Arthur Calwell. Because the Queensland delegates on Labor's federal executive switched their votes, Whitlam narrowly escaped expulsion from the Labor party on 3 March 1966 for 'gross disloyalty'. Several members of the federal executive wanted to expel Whitlam because he publicly criticised their decision to bind ALP parliamentarians to opposing state aid to non-government schools. Patterson played a small but key role in preventing Whitlam's political oblivion. On a visit to Allan Fraser (MHR Eden Monaro), Patterson became alarmed when Fraser received a phone call from an exultant Calwell crowing that the federal executive had the 'numbers to expel the big bastard'. Having been made aware of Calwell's comments, Patterson informed Queensland State Secretary Tom Burns that Whitlam was in political danger. Burns phoned the

Queensland delegates and convinced them to change their votes and prevent Whitlam's expulsion.¹⁵

Member for Dawson

Soon after his election as Member for Dawson in 1966, Patterson left his home in Canberra to take up residence in Mackay, the chief seat in his electorate.¹⁶ By all accounts, Rex enjoyed being a local MP and developing favourable links with all sectors of his large constituency. According to one journalist, if you had been in the Dawson electorate for 'thirty days, Rex Patterson will have called on you.'¹⁷ Patterson's personal and family links with the Dawson area ran deep, with some of his ancestors having settled in the area during the nineteenth century. He commanded local attention because of his 'political legend' status following the Dawson by-election of 1966, as well as the pleasant irony of his being the nephew of Country Party Primary Industry Minister Charles Adermann. Patterson also knew the value of a good political stunt: he once spent 24 hours up a pole in 'the middle of Mackay, to raise money for homes and a hospital for the aged.'¹⁸

Intentionally or otherwise, Patterson created an image of himself as a relatively uncomplicated, straightforward 'knockabout bloke' from the bush. This can be seen in the story of Whitlam and Patterson's

campaign encounter with a retired Childers canecutter. The blue-singleted retiree invited the pair for a yarn and a Bundaberg rum with milk:

‘A little early for me,’ said Whitlam. It was nine o’clock [AM]. Patterson handed Whitlam his glass, raised his own and downed it, saying to Whitlam, who had no option but to follow: ‘When in Rome [do as the Romans do]’.¹⁹

Such colourful stories notwithstanding, Patterson was more than just a ‘knockabout bloke’: he was a deeply ambitious politician. When Whitlam became leader of the federal Labor party in February 1967, Patterson stood unsuccessfully for the deputy leadership. He was nevertheless elected as a member of the ALP federal executive (1967–1972) after less than a year in parliament, a reflection of his links to Whitlam and his dramatic victory in Dawson.²⁰ Patterson also became prominent as the ALP opposition’s chief spokesman on rural affairs and Northern Australia.

Patterson’s years in Opposition saw him collaborate effectively with Whitlam over Northern Australia policy. Their northern development policies were united under three themes. First, Whitlam and Patterson argued that Northern Australia’s minerals, beef production and other primary commodities held the key to

Australia’s future economic prosperity and destiny:

The increased export earnings which the north can provide are necessary to raise the productive capacity of the South ... what happens in the Fitzroy Basin in Central Queensland or on the Fitzroy in the Southern Kimberleys is important to the people who live in Fitzroy, Melbourne.²¹

This sense of Northern Australia’s national significance justified federal investment in ambitious schemes like the ALP’s proposed retention of the Snowy Mountains Authority to develop northern water resources. Patterson was especially keen on this idea. The Coalition government had decided to dismantle the Snowy Mountains Authority once its major task, the Snowy Mountains Hydro-Electric Scheme (southern NSW/northern Victoria) was completed. Why not use the engineering skills and talents developed at the Snowy for water projects in Northern Australia?²²

The second major northern theme explored by Whitlam and Patterson was the notion that the Commonwealth had a key role to play in a bold national infrastructure program of dam-building, road construction and power generation. Influenced by Patterson, Whitlam pledged in 1969 that he would create a Department of Northern Development, which would not only

deal with economic development but would also be responsible for nature conservation in the region.²³

The third northern political theme fleshed out by Patterson and Whitlam was the argument that since Labor lost power in 1949, the Liberal-Country Party Coalition Government in Canberra had neglected the north. Whitlam asserted that only the ALP had the will and the desire to rectify the situation. Patterson and Whitlam went on a tour of North Queensland towns in 1967 where this message of northern neglect was rammed home:

Southerners might grumble about telephone services, but when Gough Whitlam's staff tried to contact him at Karumba on the Gulf of Carpentaria during his current northern tour they were told the telephone line had been out for three months.²⁴

As the 1969 election approached, Patterson was at the peak of his popularity with his Labor colleagues, and Whitlam publicly declared that in a future ALP government, Patterson would be 'a senior member of the Labor Cabinet':

Such is Dr. Patterson's talent and dedication, and such is my reliance on him, that he will virtually name his own position in any Cabinet I lead.²⁵

Unfortunately for Patterson, Whitlam did not become Prime Minister in 1969. While he continued to play a public role as the federal ALP's rural spokesmen, Patterson in the early 1970s found that his rural and northern policy ideas were coming under challenge from within the party. Urban MPs attacked Patterson's emphasis on subsidies and protectionism for primary industries, and recommended caution and 'cost/benefit' analysis before ploughing ahead with irrigation schemes.²⁶

Given the fact that federal Labor was now dominated by MPs from urban areas with little interest in agriculture, it is not surprising that Patterson hit a roadblock in his political ambitions. Furthermore, having been fast-tracked into the seat of Dawson without a history of Labor activism, Patterson lacked the wider support base he needed within the Labor caucus to further advance his personal goals.²⁷

Rex and China

Ironically, Rex Patterson's membership of Labor's 1971 delegation to China might have turned his political fortunes around—had Patterson been the leader of the China delegation, as originally planned. During 1970 and 1971, the Coalition Government's economic and political relationship with the Chinese mainland came under fire from the Labor party, and Patterson as rural spokesman led the attack. After a decade of lucrative wheat sales to China, the

Australian Wheat Board found it could not renew its contracts. Ostensibly to find out why, but mainly to embarrass the Australian Government, the ALP federal executive agreed in April 1971 to seek 'an invitation' from the Chinese Premier, Zhou Enlai, 'for an ALP delegation to visit China.'²⁸ The proposed delegation was to be led by Rex Patterson, and the press coverage shows him in 'Whitlamesque' mode, leading the Government from the Opposition:

Dr Rex Patterson said in Brisbane tonight that his direct aim was not to sell wheat to China. He merely hoped his coming trip might make it easier for Australia to sell China her wheat ...He hoped to discuss Australian steel ... coarse grains and livestock products, while in China. 'In the next decade China and Japan could become our two most important customers in the world', he said.²⁹

When, after several weeks, the Chinese Premier agreed to issue the invitation, Whitlam decided that he himself would lead the delegation: the Labor leader's belief in meaningful engagement with Asia would probably have made leading the delegation difficult to resist. Whitlam's China visit paved the way for the Whitlam Government's recognition of the People's Republic of China in 1972. While given a place in the resulting six-man delegation,

Patterson was understandably disappointed. His frustration was expressed by attacking the inclusion within the delegation of Labor figures from outside federal parliament, whom he labelled as 'machine men'.³⁰

Ruffled feathers aside, Rex Patterson was able to play a constructive role in the delegation of July 1971. He initiated talks in China that, in 1973, ultimately resulted in the Chinese Government agreeing to purchase around 300,000 tons of sugar per annum for 3–5 years.³¹

The Whitlam Years 1972–1975

Had Patterson gone to China as the leader of the 1971 delegation, his status within and outside the ALP would have been lifted to a high level. A future Whitlam Government would probably have felt obliged to give Rex the portfolio of Primary Industry: this position would have enabled him to pursue his northern dreams with some degree of authority. However, when Whitlam came into office, he chose to give Primary Industry to Ken Wriedt, who had limited knowledge of rural matters.³² Wriedt became a respected Minister, but it must have been a difficult moment for Patterson, identified as Labor's rural spokesman for some five years. Judging from Whitlam's later actions on farming issues, Whitlam probably felt that Patterson's traditional rural mindset no longer fitted with Labor's political direction.

Instead of Primary Industry, Patterson was appointed Minister for Northern Development. Subsequently, in October 1973, Patterson was given the Northern Territory portfolio as well. As Minister for the Northern Territory, Patterson assisted with the Commonwealth's emergency response to Cyclone Tracy and the reconstruction of Darwin which followed. In June 1975, Patterson's two portfolios were amalgamated to form the Department of Northern Australia: very shortly before the Labor Government was dismissed from office, Whitlam transferred Patterson to Agriculture and put Paul Keating in his place.

Patterson found his time as Minister for Northern Development to be a frustrating experience. One of his key problems was that there was a sense of uncertainty about the Department of Northern Development's role and jurisdiction. At the time of its establishment, the party leaders declared that Patterson's Department was 'responsible for all matters concerned with the specialised development and utilisation of the natural resources of land, water and minerals' north of 26° latitude.³³ As Northern Development Minister, Patterson therefore expected to be given substantial authority for development in northern areas. He was especially eager to gain primary responsibility for northern minerals, as 'There can be no doubt that the main determinant of growth in northern Australia will be investment in mining

for export.' Patterson was nevertheless prepared to give responsibility for Northern Australia's uranium, natural gas and petroleum to Minerals and Energy Minister, Rex Connor.³⁴ However, by the time Patterson had made an abortive cabinet submission in early 1973 on the roles and functions of the Northern Development Department, it was becoming clear that Patterson's power to influence the direction of Government policy on northern matters would be inhibited by the formidable Connor.

On 31 January 1973, Connor announced that the Cabinet had decided to impose price controls on Australian mineral exports. As the *Courier-Mail* explained, 'The Federal Government in effect will set a minimum price and the maximum tonnage for minerals to be exported.'³⁵ Connor was partially motivated to introduce export controls by his conviction that Queensland's cheaper coal prices gave it an unfair advantage over New South Wales coal. Patterson went public with his dissent:

The facts are that if northern coal producers had demanded the relatively high U.S. coal prices, or the average world price ... it is likely that the central and north Queensland coalfields would not have been developed at all.³⁶

The Prime Minister and many members of the Cabinet were in no mood to tolerate Patterson's public criticisms

of an announced Government decision. Whitlam successfully moved a motion at the ALP's federal executive meeting (5 February) congratulating 'Federal cabinet on the ... steps it has taken to carry out the party's programme with respect to ownership, control and development of Australia's natural resources.'³⁷ This motion received unanimous support, and appears to have been a deliberate attempt to demonstrate that the Northern Development Minister did not have strong internal support for his views. Several 'off the record' comments by anonymous Labor figures criticising Patterson's 'breach of Cabinet solidarity' were reported in the press. This also served to underline Patterson's limited political authority compared to the popular Minister for Minerals and Energy.

Patterson's powers as a Minister for Northern Development were limited, as other Ministers with national responsibilities such as transport, mines and primary industry were not prepared to relinquish any of their power to a regionally-focussed Minister. The only major sector over which Patterson had clear jurisdiction was sugar. Patterson subsequently became something of a rural 'outsider' within the Whitlam Government. Whitlam now paid more attention to the ideas of Rex Connor, who was fixated with securing greater Australian ownership of mining projects. Connor's attempts to 'buy back the

farm' ultimately led to a scandal over a grandiose but unsuccessful attempt at loan-raising on a massive scale, which would eventually help destroy the government.

Whitlam's decision not to appoint Patterson as his Minister for Primary Industry (later retitled Agriculture) until October 1975 must also account for Patterson's inability to shape rural policy in favour of his northern objectives. He reacted strongly against the Prime Minister's lack of political understanding of rural matters, shown in Whitlam's drastic decisions to cut special assistance schemes which had long been taken for granted in the bush. These budget savings, including petrol subsidies to country areas and the superphosphate bounty, helped contribute to a disastrous result for Labor in the 1974 Queensland state election. The decision to abolish the subsidy on superphosphate fertilizer did not sit well with Patterson's ideas on developing Northern Australia's pastoral industry:

Improved pastures such as Townsville Stylo have got to have phosphate ... It [the Northern Territory] is a development area and it does still need financial incentives.³⁸

With some justification, Patterson felt that Whitlam had lost touch with Queensland and the north, which had played such a part in the formation of Whitlam's public profile. Whitlam by

the end of 1974 was better known in Queensland for his personal slanging match with Premier Joh Bjelke-Petersen than for his northern policies. Much to Whitlam's annoyance, the Queensland Premier proved unwilling to co-operate with Federal Labor's centralist reform program. The Queensland Government also successfully encouraged the perception of a neglectful Canberra during the Whitlam era.

Patterson himself was a 'true believer' in much of the Whitlam 'quality of life' social reform agenda, but by 1974 he was concerned that Whitlam was no longer listening to the concerns of Northern Australia:

Mr. Whitlam is the best national leader in Australia ... But his message ... is not getting to the people now ... The great benefits of the Federal Labor Government's achievements in education, health and social services have been completely lost because of the large number of pin-pricking policies which have been resented by Queensland and the north in general ... Queensland is fiercely parochial—a feeling which intensifies the further north one goes ... The pouring of millions of dollars into heavily-subsidised Sydney and Melbourne ... make[s] no impression in the north ... such actions only intensify the

feeling of neglect when they are skilfully handled by anti-Labor forces.³⁹

Ironically, by December 1975, Patterson and Whitlam could look back on a number of achievements in northern development. Patterson secured bilateral agreements with countries such as Japan, China and Singapore to purchase Australian sugar, benefiting North Queensland farmers. The Whitlam Government also provided several millions of dollars in grants and loans to facilitate the building of Queensland water projects, including the Kinchant Dam at Mirani, near Mackay; Ross River Dam, catering for the water needs of Townsville residents; and Julius Dam, assisting with the water supply of Mount Isa. Further, the Whitlam Government continued the former Coalition Government's financial support for beef roads in Queensland and Western Australia.

However, these northern outcomes were modest in comparison to the ALP's oft-repeated vision of a vast new Snowy Mountains scheme to develop the north. Even if Labor had wanted to pursue a spectacular, Snowy Mountains-type scheme in Northern Australia, there were a number of giant hurdles in the way. For example, strong doubts were emerging about the north's capacity to become a paradise for irrigators. Passionately supported by Patterson, the Ord River scheme

in north-west Australia was less than successful. Completed in 1972 with the federal support of the Liberal-Country Party Government, the Ord River scheme proved to be relatively unprofitable: Ord River farmers experimented with several crops, including cotton, but the crops were frequently decimated by natural pests.

Further, it was difficult to maintain the sense of urgency to develop Northern Australia as economic and diplomatic relations between Australia and Asia became closer under Whitlam. The dismantling of the White Australia policy in the 1960s and early 1970s meant that fear of northern invasion was no longer acceptable as a means of drawing attention to the north. The national media, so fascinated by Patterson and Northern Australia in 1966, had relegated northern development to a second order issue by the time that Whitlam had come to power.

Rex after Politics

Patterson was defeated in the Dawson electorate in December 1975. Based in his adopted home of Mackay, he began a new career as a financial and economic consultant, advising several international corporations on agricultural matters between 1976 and 2008. Patterson developed personal interests in the sugar and cattle industries, and largely avoided the limelight. A patron of the Mackay

Rugby League club for many years, Patterson was also passionately involved with a number of local causes including animal welfare.⁴⁰ Dr Rex Patterson died on 6 April 2016, survived by his daughter Jayne.⁴¹

Reflections

Dr Rex Patterson contributed to the north both materially and non-materially. Among other things, he successfully negotiated sugar deals to benefit North Queensland cane farmers, assisted the cattle industry with beef roads and helped to rebuild Darwin after Cyclone Tracy. He was, however, unable to accelerate the development of Northern Australia as much as he hoped. His ambitions were stifled partly because his status and authority declined within the ALP: he lacked sufficient allies within the party, Whitlam's attentions moved away from northern development, and Patterson's rural and mining ideas received a cold reception from his mostly urban Labor colleagues. Yet Patterson stands out in the Whitlam period as an outspoken champion for the rural north, measured but firm in his views. Australian and state parliaments continue to need people like Dr Rex Patterson, who will fight for regional concerns to be heard and acted upon by the city-based MPs that dominate Australian political culture.⁴²

Notes

- 1 Basic biographical information in this essay is derived from the following sources: 'CP now changes its poll tactics', *Canberra Times* (hereafter *CT*), 22 November 1966, p. 7; 'Vote 1 Patterson for Dawson', *Worker* (Brisbane), 14 February 1966, p. 2; Rex Patterson RAAF Service Records, A9301 2002 453239, National Archives of Australia (hereafter NAA); *Who's Who in Australia 1996*, Melbourne, Information Australia Group Pty Ltd, 1996, pp. 1248–9.
- 2 See Austen Whitaker, 'Looking back on school in the good ol' days', [Bundaberg] *NewsMail*, 25 January 2014, <http://www.news-mail.com.au/news/days-in-the-old-school-yard/2149836/>.
- 3 'Holidays are over', *Daily Mercury* (Mackay) (hereafter *DM*), 2 February 1946, p. 2.
- 4 'Personal', *DM*, 12 April 1947, p. 2; *DM*, 11 September 1947, p. 3; *Queensland Times*, 11 September 1947, p. 3.
- 5 *Truth* (Brisbane), 18 April 1948, p. 12.
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- 7 *CT*, 4 April 1957, p. 13; *Who's Who in Australia 1996*, p. 1248.
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- 9 Bruce Juddery, 'Farewell to vision of northern region', *CT*, 18 February 1976, p. 15; P.T. White, *Townsville and Lavarack Barracks: The Early Years*, Bachelor of Social Science Honours thesis, James Cook University, 2007, p. 27.
- 10 See Colin A. Hughes, 'The Dawson by-election, 1966', *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, vol. 12, no. 1, April 1966, pp. 12–16. I have drawn upon this article for my discussion of the Dawson by-election.
- 11 Jonathan Gaul, 'Job switch for Dr Patterson', *CT*, 23 September 1965, p. 1.
- 12 'The lone ranger', *Nation*, 29 May 1971, pp. 12–13.
- 13 For Patterson's transition from public servant to ALP candidate, see Lyndon Megarrity, "'Necessary and urgent"? The politics of Northern Australia, 1945–75', *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society*, vol. 97, pt 2, December 2011, pp. 147–8.
- 14 Jack Lunn, 'Growth in north', *Courier-Mail* (hereafter *CM*), 15 February 1966, p. 8.
- 15 Brian Costar, 'Political leadership and Queensland nationalism', *Journal of the Royal Historical Society of Queensland*, vol. 19, no. 1, 2006, p. 71.
- 16 Peter Bowers, 'Patterson is king', *Sydney Morning Herald* (hereafter *SMH*), 23 November 1966, p. 8.
- 17 'The lone ranger', p. 13.
- 18 'Labor man up a pole', *CT*, 19 June 1971, p. 3. For Patterson and the electorate, see also *CT*, 30 September 1965, p. 3; 'CP now changes its poll tactics', *CT*, 22 November 1966, p. 7.
- 19 John Stubbs, *Hayden*, Port Melbourne, William Heinemann Australia, 1989, p. 62.
- 20 Jonathan Gaul, 'Anatomy of the Labor power struggle', *CT*, 14 February 1967, p. 2; 'A.L.P. executive seat for Patterson', *SMH*, 9 February 1967, p. 8.
- 21 E.G. Whitlam, *Opening Address: 1967 Senate Election* [speech at Blacktown Civic Centre, 13 November 1967], copy held at Mitchell Library.

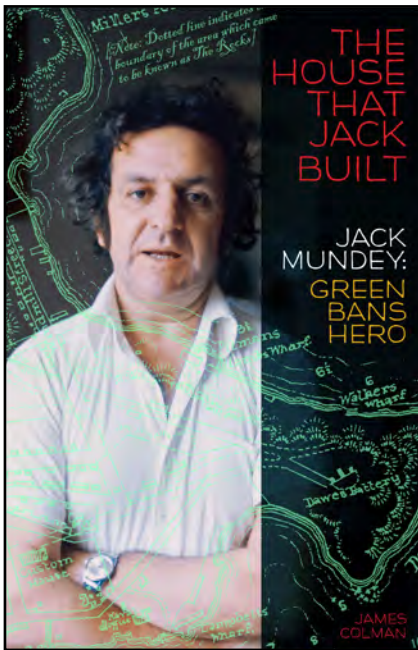
- 22 See 'Patterson victory personal triumph', *CT*, 28 February 1966, p. 1; Rex Patterson, *CPD*, 15 March 1966, p. 250.
- 23 Gough Whitlam, Australian Labor Party Policy Speech, Sydney Town Hall, 1 October 1969 (transcript at Mitchell Library).
- 24 'Where time stands still', *Sun-Herald*, 30 April 1967, clipping in M156 35, NAA.
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- 29 'Patterson: Aim not to sell', *CT*, 16 April 1971, p. 8.
- 30 FitzGerald, *The Coup*, p. 7.
- 31 'Prime Minister's press conference, Peking, China, 4 December 1973', held at the Whitlam Institute (University of Western Sydney) (hereafter WI).
- 32 This section on the Whitlam years draws heavily on Lyndon Megarrity, 'Northern visions: the Commonwealth and the north since 1945', *Northern Territory Historical Studies*, no. 27, 2016, pp. 26–36; Megarrity, "'Necessary and urgent'"?, pp. 151–55.
- 33 Rex Patterson, 'The role of the Department of Northern Development', 22 February 1973, Cabinet Submission No. 151 (Withdrawn), A5915 151, NAA.
- 34 Ibid.
- 35 'QLD may put coal law to High Court: exports control', *CM*, 1 February 1973, p. 1.
- 36 'Patterson stands by sales of cheap coal', *Australian*, 3 February 1973, p. 1.
- 37 'Labor closes ranks over mineral policy', *Australian*, 6 February 1973, p. 1.
- 38 Errol Simper, 'New Minister pleases Northern Territorians', *CT*, 24 April 1974, p. 2.
- 39 'Minister says P.M. out of touch', *CM*, 10 December 1974, p. 1.
- 40 Loris Wall, 'Obituary', *DM*, 23 April 2016, <http://www.dailymercury.com.au/news/changing-political-landscape/3005691/viewed-online-29-April-2016>. See also Tony Stephens, 'Years on, Gough's men look back on their summer storm', *SMH*, 19 December 1987, p. 1; *Who's Who in Australia 2011*, North Melbourne, Crown Content, 2011, pp. 1679–1680.
- 41 Death Notice, 'Patterson: Rex', *DM*, 13 April 2016, p. 35. His wife Eileen had passed on some years previously.
- 42 This research was supported by the Australian Government under an Australian Prime Ministers Centre Fellowship, an initiative of the Museum of Australian Democracy.

Review of

The House that Jack Built: Jack Munday Green Bans Hero

By James Colman, Sydney, NewSouth
Publishing, UNSW Press, 2016
(356 pp)

Reviewed by Greg Mallory



Jack Munday is a unique Australian as he has had a long involvement in the 'left' progressive movement through his membership of the former Communist Party, his position in the trade union movement as former secretary of the NSW Builders Labourer Federation

(BLF) as well as being a pioneer in the environmental movement.

In summing up Munday's political and environmental position he has said:

"Ecologists with a socialist perspective and socialists with an ecological perspective must form a coalition to tackle the wide-ranging problems relating to human survival"

James Colman, Sydney based architect and planner, has penned a book which traces Munday's involvement in the green movement from the first green ban at Kelly's Bush in 1971 to his involvement with environmental organisations over a forty-year period including his membership of the Greens Party.

Colman tends to tie in two themes, firstly he traces Munday's political, social and environmental development with the history of the heritage/green movement in Australia. The book begins with a discussion of Munday's background from the Atherton Tableland to Sydney to play Rugby League for Parramatta as well as a history of heritage conservation in Australia. It traces the Munday's concept of calling environmental bans 'green' when workers withdraw their labour for environmental protection. There is a discussion of the first green ban at Kelly's Bush with a detailed discussion of the history of the area. As secretary of the NSW BLF Munday

initiated a policy that in order to place a ban there had to be a meeting of residents as well as a meeting of the BLF rank-and-file. This happened and a 600 strong public meeting endorsed the ban. Other green bans that are discussed were the Rocks, Woolloomooloo, Pitt St Congregational Church, Victoria St, Centennial Park. The Queen Victoria Building was also saved largely influenced by grass roots activism and the inspiration of the green ban era.

After the intervention of the Federal body, under the leadership of Norm Gallagher, into the NSW BLF branch Munday lost his position and he began a life-long involvement of bringing trade unionists and environmentalists together. One of these first actions was a meeting of trade unionists and environmentalists in San Francisco with the Sierra Club. He was also invited to England to address unionists and environmentalists by the Friends of the Earth. He also became involved in a campaign with unionists and environmentalists to save the Birmingham General Post Office which still stands today as a heritage building.

Munday was involved with a number of environmental organisations namely the National Trust and the Australian Conservation Foundation (ACF). He was on the Executive of the ACF for many years achieving Life Membership. He played a significant role in bringing the concept of urban

conservation to the general attention of the public.

During his years of activism Munday had relationships with prominent Australian identities. These were firstly Patrick White who he worked with when a green ban was placed on Centennial Park. The other figure was Dick Dusseldorp whom he worked with when a green ban was placed on the Theatre Royal that was planned for demolition. Dusseldorp instructed the architect Harry Seidler to redesign his site to incorporate a theatre. Munday and Dusseldorp addressed a meeting and together put forward a motion that the green ban be lifted. All were happy with the outcome. Munday developed a good working relationship with Harry Seidler. Another prominent individual who was influenced by Munday was Ted Mack who had a strong conservation profile having held the position of Mayor, State member and then Federal member for the North Sydney area.

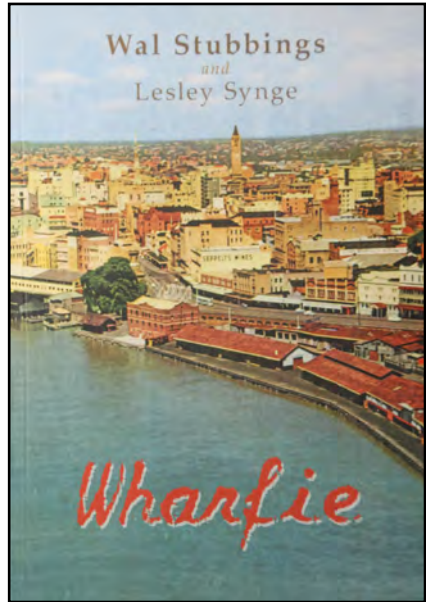
The strength of Colman's work lies in his ability to bring the activities of Munday into a broader conservation perspective. There are numerous conservation actions that Munday indirectly influenced including the formation of the West German Greens when Petra Kelly took the green ban message back to Germany after meeting with Munday in Sydney.

Munday has a long list of accomplishments including an Order of Australia, Honorary Doctor of Science from the University of NSW, Honorary Doctor of Letters from the University of Western Sydney, and an Honorary Master of the Environment from the University of Sydney. He is also a National Living Treasure in which he was nominated by the National Trust. He also had two positions over his career, Alderman for the Sydney City Council and Chair of Historic Houses Trust of NSW.

The book concludes with Munday's current day involvement in conservation movements in Sydney notably the Barangaroo development and other planned demolitions of historic buildings. There are also two testimonials from prominent Australians; Joan Domicelj and Meredith Burgmann

The book is highly recommended for those who are interested in biography, the history of green bans and the conservation and green movement in Australia.

**A review by Ted Riethmuller
of *Wharfie* by Wal Stubbings
and Lesley Synge published
by Zing Stories**



I first came across Wal Stubbings in the early sixties at meetings of the Queensland Council for the Advancement of Aborigines and Torres Straight Islanders (QCAATSI). I believe I was encouraged to become involved by one of the founding members of the BLHA, Manfred Cross, who was the Member for Brisbane at the time. QCAATSI played an important part in the history of indigenous advancement and readers will learn something of that history in this book. A more extensive coverage may be obtained by reading Kathie Cochrane's *Oodgeroo*.

These meetings were the battleground between the left and the Groupers and it was an eye-opener for that callow youth I was then, experiencing the allure of radical politics for the first time. Wally, a representative of the Trades and Labour Council, was a very influential participant in these tumultuous meetings. He was the *Wharfie* which the title of this book refers to.

I can picture him now, standing up straight and tall, speaking calmly, avoiding rhetoric and appealing to people's good sense. I found him very impressive. With his lantern jaw, his seriousness and evident honesty and steadfastness, I was reminded of the illustrations of idealised class-conscious workers in Soviet magazines and other Marxist publications.

But what sort of man was he really? What was his background that led him to become a militant trade unionist and a communist? What about his inner life? His family? He was obviously steeled in the struggle, but what of finer feelings? What was the culture that nurtured him? He as a communist and his comrades had a beneficent impact on Australian life far in excess of their numbers. What qualities did they share? All these questions. Some of them are answered in this memoir which deals, not only with his political and trade-union activity, but with the whole man.

On reading this memoir we are struck by his modesty and yet I, for one, on reading his story see his life as cast in a heroic mould. We are fortunate that Wally, who had a sense of his life existing in an historical epoch, committed himself to recording his life. And writing about his life, inevitably he wrote about the period he lived in. Thus, this book is a welcome political, industrial and social history of Australian society seen from the perspective of an intelligent, thoughtful working class militant.

Towards the end of his life he ended up with a whole mass of material that badly needed editing. Lesley Synge, an established poet and writer came to the rescue. She was sympathetic to what he was attempting to do and shared his values. Together they produced this very fine memoir.

The year of his birth was 1913, ancient history for most of us, and he lived for over a hundred years, his life spanning the tumultuous period of the twentieth century. The events of that century, the Great War, the Russian revolution, the Great Depression, the rise of fascism and the Second World War, had an impact on his life, directly or indirectly. He was born to a working class family on the West Coast of Tasmania, a rigorous environment, even today noted for its harshness. This area, the only significant settlement being Strahan, was very much isolated from the rest of Australia. Notwithstanding

the remoteness outside events impacted on their lives. As a little boy he saw his dad get into fisticuffs with a neighbour. They were arguing about conscription. The Stubbings family supported the No vote. He remembered his father as an idealistic man who hated wage-slavery and when he could, chose contract work as a timber-getter. He said his father had a hard exterior but with a soft heart and this memoir shows Wal was a sensitive man with a soft heart like his father.

The family moved to Hobart when he was twenty-six. A lot had happened to him. Although he excelled at school he had to leave at the age of 14 because his parents couldn't afford to send him to high-school. He was disappointed, but looked forward to joining his father working in the timber industry, wood cutting, sleeper cutting and general timber getting. Men's work. It was hard yakka in the terrible wet conditions of the West Coast but he revelled in it. No chainsaws; instead, axes and crosscut saws. Horses instead of caterpillar tractors. What Australian workers achieved by the sweat of their brow in those days was truly Herculean.

Men took pride in working hard. It was a measure of their manhood. The IWW was correct when they claimed the harder the wage slave worked the greater the exploitation. *Fast workers die young*, was their slogan, but invariably it fell on unreceptive ears because it ran counter to the creative

imperative that work incorporates. The only way to resolve the contradiction is to do away with capitalism.

Young people at that time had no sex education. His parents knew they should tell him about the birds and the bees but they were too shy and didn't get around to it. However, the twenty year old young Walter discovered all about it himself and as a consequence he and Ada, the neighbour's girl whom he'd been keeping company with, became pregnant. A Methodist minister, with whom he'd become friendly, quietly married them.

When he was away in the bush working he had news of his father's suicide. This was a great blow to the family. This was not the only family tragedy that blighted his life.

It was 1939 when the family moved to Hobart. Wal and Ada were able to buy a large house using as a deposit the money they got when a restaurant they'd built up in town was sold. This house was large enough to house other family members. The minister who'd they befriended in Strahan had also moved to Hobart and Wal attended the leftish discussion circle he held and borrowed his books. This was what caused him to embrace socialism. He got a job on the wharf; no problems with employment with war on the horizon. It was there he met communists whom he found to be hard working and principled and developed a sympathy for their ideas.

As like many of the wharfies, Big Jim Healy, the communist leader of the Federation, became his hero. He tried to enlist but failed the medical. He attended a crash trade course at the Technical College and became a metal worker and worked in war production. He answered the call for skilled workers to go to Brisbane for war work. It was in Brisbane where he became friendly with well known communist Bob Myles who got him to join the Party. Wal later returned to the wharf and became active in the union. When containerisation was introduced in the late sixties, Wally was one wharfie who saw it was inevitable and worked to protect his workmates from its consequences.

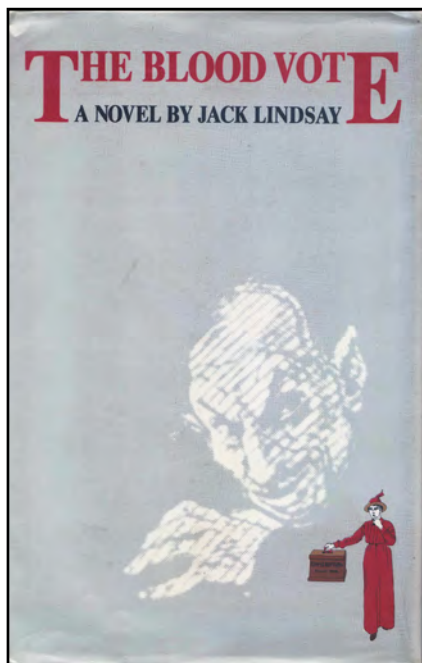
He also engaged in dramatic political and industrial struggles, such as the Rail Strike in 1948. As a participant in

the St Patrick's Day march by unionists supporting the striking railway workers, he like Fred Patterson and others, were bashed by police. That wasn't the last time he was attacked by the police and stories of his first hand experiences in Queensland political struggles will bring back memories to many of our members. The struggle against the war in Vietnam, against the Springboks, in support of East Timor, were some of the battles he was engaged in—and not only as a foot soldier.

I have only mentioned some of the themes his memoir covers, whereas the book deals with the whole man; his family life, his sporting prowess, his travels, his response to the upheavals in the world communist movement, his friendships. All in all his story is one that deserves to sit alongside Bert Facey's *A Fortunate Life* on the book shelf.

**“A ferocious struggle of murder... being waged here, here”:
Re-visiting Jack Lindsay’s *The Blood Vote***

Deborah Jordan



One hundred years ago, Brisbane became the centre of the movement against militarism in Australia; the two referenda on compulsory conscription were one of Australia’s most divisive—and successfully fought—crises. Perhaps the most interesting history of this extraordinary story is still Ray Evans’ *Loyalty and Disloyalty Social Conflict on the Queensland Homefront, 1914–1918* published in 1987 (even as

it is, somewhat gender blind),¹ but *The Blood Vote*, a novel, by Jack Lindsay, is a book that every Queenslander, every Brisbane resident should read, as one of the most important books of our cultural and political heritage (even as it is, somewhat gender blind). Illuminating the ‘human aspects behind the facts of history’, is how Lindsay describes his fiction, and that’s exactly what this novel does as it provides a bridge for contemporary readers from the dry newspapers of Trove through to the time of war. Lindsay was living and breathing the vibe in Brisbane in 1917.

The Blood Vote is about the developments leading up to the second referendum on the 20th December 1917, in Brisbane. (And even that date, why it was chosen, is contextualised in a believable manner, just before Christmas, on a day when the workers and farmers would find it hard to vote and more). It’s a story about eighteen-year-old Tom Grant, a boiler maker, who having lost one brother killed in action and a second who has lost his legs, seeks to come to terms with his and his family’s grief. Dwelling in crisis, he must choose between the humane response of the International Workers of the World (Yes, we meet the human face of the IWW!) and the machinations of Clode, an astute and bitter anarchist, who wants to force the crisis of capitalism to bring on the revolution. Tom also has to confront the undercurrents in his own family, his domineering mother who championed

the war; a sister, Lily, who is sacrificed to the family dynamics of grief; his father who turns to drink; in what is a very interesting rendition of the sexual politics of the time of manipulating disempowered women with children, of exploited young women, and the occasional Norman Lindsay nymph. Lindsay's long involvement with Vitalism makes his characters complex and compelling.

Through the character of Tom, we can begin to understand something of the deeper emotional impacts of World War One and how they played out. Through Tom's involvement with the working people and union movement we have various points of view and positions expressed. Tom, for instance attends the very public meeting when the Labor premier, R J Ryan, addressed the crowd repeating his parliamentary speech published in the banned Hansard that the prime minister Billy Hughes sought to suppress through the War Precautions Act. There's the ring of authenticity; was Lindsay actually in the audience at the time? For those of us who have worked closely on the *Worker* and the *Daily Standard* the novel is a delight in its use of the vernacular. We meet the 'Fat' man straight out of the anti-Capitalist *Worker*. Here's Lindsay's description of the prostitutes in Albert Street, when an estimated 12% of the AIF were infected with venereal disease:

The girls had already put out the bench, and several were sitting on it, in petticoats and chemises, all painted up, all glistening stockings and gaudy garters... the next girl... her hair in a coil round her head, fine corngold hair; her eyes small and greedy. But the eyes of the nearer girl were different. They were real harlot's eyes. Infernal eyes. You'd remember them for days. No good saying the girls enjoyed themselves, not with eyes like that. Yet somehow the eyes, so glassy-blue, so burning, reminded him of Lil [Tom's sister]. There was a kinship... ²

Whether Lindsay had access to back-copies of the Labor press while living in England, where he wrote the book, seems unlikely, but he is right about many details of the time. Important themes are addressed in *The Blood Vote* about the persecution of men and women union leaders, the repression of freedom of speech, and the function of the war in breaking up the trade unions. And Lindsay makes important connections about the results of the conscription referendum that raise interesting historical questions. The success of the 'Noes' on the 20th December, for instance, Lindsay attributes to the Hughes' blundering through 'an exhibition fore-taste of what a full surrender to militarism meant', that was the establishment

of the federal police force to enforce Commonwealth control over the state; the out manoeuvring by Ryan and Theodore; and the anti-conscriptionists' [let's also include the ACCC] 'propaganda'.

Lindsay explains that the book was written in 1937, in the lead up to the 2nd World War, when compulsory conscription was being debated in Britain. Born in 1900, the eldest son of Norman Lindsay, Jack Lindsay had moved to Brisbane in 1909 with his mother when his parents separated. Living in Britain from 1926, he became a communist in 1936; the novel could be called Marxist realist, but it's more than that. It is a piece of Brisbane. Although a highly successful and prolific writer, Lindsay could think of no publisher who would be interested in the manuscript. And he was probably right, given the history of colonial publishing in Australia. How then did the novel appear? 1984 was the last year the visionary Frank Thompson was in charge of the University Queensland Press, in the halcyon days of Australian publishing.

Recently, in 2015, the novel has been analysed in context of the Anzac tradition in an important article by Christina Spittel. She describes Australia as a 'commemorative superpower' investing a record \$A561.8 million for 'exercises and displays of collective remembrance, more than any other nation'.³ Virtually

all of this funding has gone into military history and on those serving the military and none for the history of the anti-war, anti-militarism, or peace movements. Yet the issue of military training and compulsory conscription is still a global concern. Spittel reclaims *The Blood Vote* for a history of Australia's World War One that reveals the 'diverse ways' in which Australians have 'engaged imaginatively' with war, and how literature can challenge Anzac orthodoxies. She takes as Lindsay's central message about war in *The Blood Vote* when Tom's crippled Anzac brother tells him: "'And war's just one black foulness... Don't you ever believe otherwise. If anyone talks to you about how war brings out good qualities, stick a bayonet up his entrails, see?'"⁴ Yet when we read this novel with an understanding of Queensland politics, and of Brisbane as the centre of Australia's opposition to World War One, and as a much more nuanced critique of war and militarism, and of military conscription globally, the critical scene of the book is earlier at the workplace:

'It's here!' he cried.

'What's here?' said Doe, the crane driver.

'The war,' said Dent, 'The bloody war.' And he said bloody in a way that did not suggest swearing in the slightest. Everyone hushed. 'It's here, I tell you,' he said... 'The blood...

it's streaming on the ground. You wade deep in it. The dead, the dying, the wounded men, they are here. You tread on them with every step you take. Here!' he screamed... Then Dent started talking about his Lord and Master, and Blake woke up and became sarcastic... Strange that the possessed eyes of Dent should suggest the eyes of the girl on the sale bench, with their cold burning sheen.

What follows, when Tom Grants ruminates, is the central issue addressed by Lindsay:

Now he [Tom Grant] suddenly understood... It was so easy to evade responsibility for the war in Australia, to think of it as only as something written up in the newspapers. Dent had been right. It was a ferocious struggle of murder, and it was being waged here, here... The murder had been plotted, perpetrated, here, under these lights, while the lovers whispered among the glasscases.

Well, what are you going to do about it?⁵

Notes

- 1 Ray Evans, *Loyalty and Disloyalty Social Conflict on the Queensland Homefront, 1914–1918* (Sydney, London, Boston: Allen & Unwin, 1987).
- 2 Jack Lindsay, *The Blood Vote*, (St Lucia, London, New York: University of Queensland Press, 1985): 11.
- 3 Spittel, Christina "'War's just one black foulness': Jack Lindsay's *The Blood Vote* and the Orthodoxies of Anzac", *Australian Literary Studies*, Nov 2015, 30 4:70–85.
- 4 Lindsay, *The Blood Vote*: 251.
- 5 Lindsay, *The Blood Vote*: 18–19.

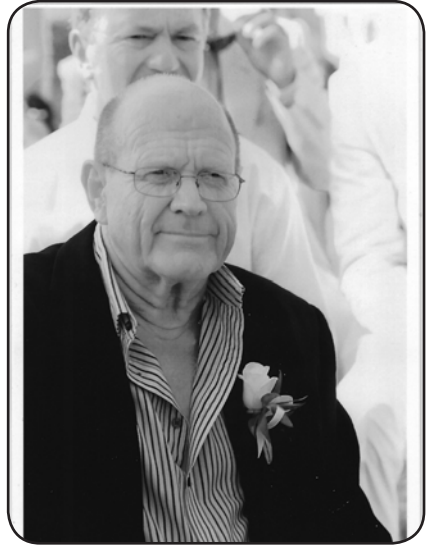
In Memorium

**Jack Saunders, ALP
stalwart, Unionist, BLHA
activist and South Sydney
Supporter**

**Ron Whittington,
Greg Mallory**

**Jack Saunders: Born 22 May 1950
Albury NSW
Died: 16 March 2017 Brisbane**

Jack Saunders was a larger than life Brisbane character who passed away on 16 March 2017. He is best characterised as “someone whose presence lit up a room.” A journalist, union organiser, public servant, ALP stalwart and avid South Sydney supporter, Jack attended Junction Park State School, St Peters Lutheran College and Ipswich Grammar School. He began at the University of Queensland at the age of 16 where he was involved in the radical student movement as a member of the University of Queensland Labor Club and worked on the university union publication *Semper Floreat*. Jack worked for a while in the family business before going back to



university to study journalism. His first job was as the editor of *The Coal Miner* for *Queensland Country Life*.

He has also worked for the Albury-Wodonga Development Corporation as a media officer, for the Commonwealth Department of Industrial Relations as a media officer and speech writer, for the Australian Services Union as a media officer/publications officer and organiser, and ended his career with a number of peak body publications. As a union organiser in the local government sector, Jack was responsible for many work places including local authorities

as diverse as Roma, Charleville, Ipswich and the Gold Coast.

As a member of Young Labor from 1970 Jack maintained his membership of ALP until 2011, holding honorary positions in the Kurilpa/West End area. With his good friend Tony Reeves, he formed the South Brisbane Branch at the Sly Fox Hotel, and they produced an in-house publication called *Keep Left* full of the latest scandal and political intrigue.

Jack stood for the state seat of Carnarvon based in Warwick in 1974 before running for Kurilpa in 1977 when, he lost by a handful of votes. He was a member of the Electrical Trades Union faction who had supported his candidatures for state parliament, and felt the wrath of the ‘Old Guard’ when he supported federal intervention into the Queensland branch. He was a founding member of the socialist left

faction. In 2011, he and Tony Reeves publicly resigned from the ALP over the Bligh Government’s support of privatisation of Queensland Rail.

Jack was an active Executive member of the Brisbane Labour History Association and played a significant role when it was under threat from a rival organisation. He organised a conference on the ALP with Barry Jones as the guest speaker.

He was a member of the Brisbane-based Queenslanders For South Sydney fan club and attended as many games in Sydney as he could. He was a regular attendee of the Redfern Warren. He proudly attended the last South Sydney Grand final win. He possessed 61 South Sydney jerseys.

Jack is survived by his wife Joanne, his four children, Scott, Ben, Peter and Kimberley and three grandchildren.

Contributors

Greg Mallory has been a high school teacher, trade unionist and an academic at both Griffith University and the University of Queensland. In 1999 he was awarded a Doctorate from the University of Queensland for his work on the political dimensions of trade unionism in Australia. He subsequently published this work. Greg has also written books on the Queensland coal miners and the Brisbane rugby league. He is currently President of the Brisbane Labour History Association.

Frank Bongiorno is Professor of History at the Australian National University and President of the Canberra Region Branch of the Australian Society for the Study of Labour History and of Honest History. He has previously taught at the ANU, Griffith University, the University of New England and King's College London. He is the author of *The People's Party: Victorian Labor and the Radical Tradition 1875–1914* (1996) and co-author, with Nick Dyrenfurth, of *A Little History of the Australian Labor Party* (2011). His more recent books have been *The Sex Lives of Australians: A History* (2012) and *The Eighties: The Decade That Transformed Australia* (2015), which was released in a paperback edition early in 2017. He is currently working with a group of colleagues on a biography of the economist, public servant and academic, Sir John Crawford, and is also preparing a political history of Australia from earliest times to the present.

Lyndon Megarrity has a PhD in history from the University of New England (2002) and is a professional historian and tertiary teacher based in Townsville. He has published widely on Australian and Queensland history and is currently writing a history of the politics of Northern Development.

Deborah Jordan a Senior Research Fellow (adj) National Centre for Australian Studies, Monash University, works as a historian, writer and skipper. Her report on *Climate Change Narratives in Australian Literature* was published in 2014; her research on the digitalisation of the Queensland women's suffrage petitions is to be published in the *Women's History Journal* this September. She is currently researching Queensland women peace makers during World War One with the Women's International League of Peace and Freedom.

Ron Whittington worked for the ASU as an organiser/advocate for 25 years. He now works as an "advice worker /advocate" for the Tenants Union. He has been a member of ALP since 1970 and is now a life member of the ALP. He was a life long comrade of Jack Saunders.

Ted Riethmuller is a retired electrician who is very keen that the experiences of ordinary workers be documented as well as the work processes, material and equipment they use—especially now in a period of rapid change. He encourages workers to document their life and to tell their story. No one else can.

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.

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