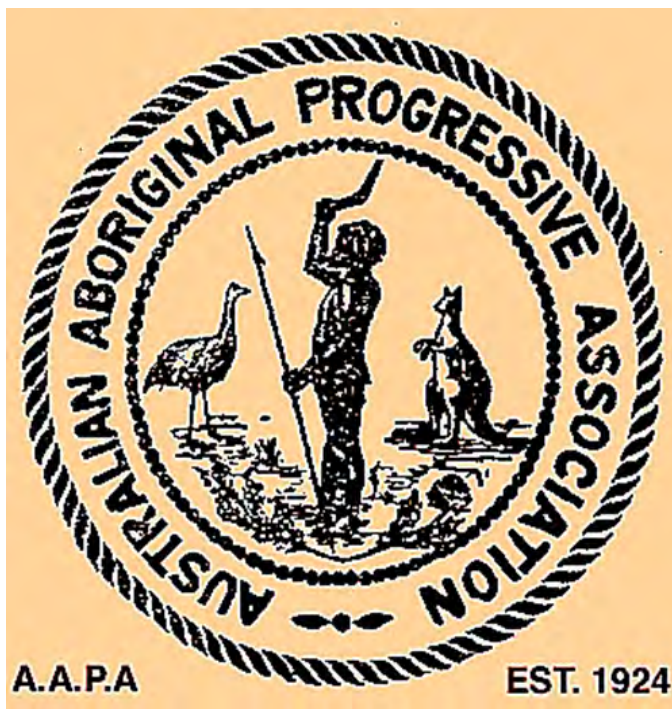


The Queensland Journal of Labour History

No. 26
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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: Greg Mallory, Phil Griffiths, James Morris
and Ross Gwyther**

**Design and Layout and Production:
Beverley Jeppesen**

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West End QLD 4101

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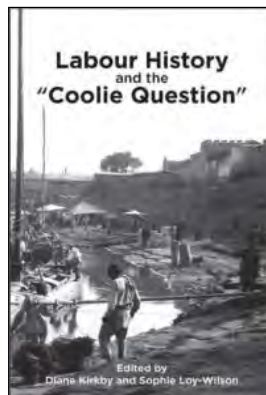
Labour History and the 'Coolie Question'

Edited by Diane Kirkby and Sophie Loy-Wilson

The globalisation of the modern workforce, for good and for ill, has become a central issue in political discourse, economic policy and social experience. The rights and status of workers in this context have also come to the fore, and are intertwined with concerns about immigration, acculturation and national identity. Yet this is a process with a long history, one which shaped Europe's relationship to Asia, Africa and the Americas, but a history which is little examined. In particular, the history of "indentured labour"—a semi-coerced, long-term contract labour system that succeeded slavery—remains poorly understood.

In this special issue of *Labour History*, a range of scholars examine the rhetoric, the realities and the conflicts over "coolie labour", and its legacies. Articles cover the experience of indentured labourers in a variety of situations—Pacific Islanders in Queensland, Chinese labourers in Cuba and the US South, Indians in Fiji and British shipping and Hawaiians indentured to work on a Hawaiian sugar plantation.

The politics of "coolie labour" are also re-examined; including the political crisis around proposals for indentured Indian labour in Queensland, debates within the Australian labour movement in the early twentieth century and everywhere, the resistance of indentured worker to their exploitation and oppression.



Editorial

It is easy to take for granted the work that happens behind the scenes, and so it is with this journal. For many years it has been edited and developed by Ross Gwyther, Howard Guille and Bob Russell. For both the BLHA Executive and the wider labour history community, it came out twice a year, on time, without fuss. Now Ross, Howard and Bob have decided to move on and passed the responsibility to others, and we take a moment to acknowledge their great contribution.

This issue has been edited by Greg Mallory, James Morris and Phil Griffiths, but we do not regard the editorial board as settled yet. In particular, we seek to find young labour activists and in particular, women comrades, willing to keep moving the journal forward and shaping its agenda.

The labour movement has had to constantly challenge itself to be a movement of all working class and ordinary people; that is a challenge that labour history also faces.

The major articles in this issue of the journal also remind us that working class struggle is so often a struggle for the most basic human rights.

John Maynard's article, "The men only worked when necessary, we called no man master and we had no King," shows us the importance of experience in the labour movement for the fledgling Aboriginal rights movement in Australia.

Professor Maynard is s a Worimi Aboriginal man from the Port Stephens region of New South Wales. He is currently a Director at the Wollotuka Institute of Aboriginal Studies at the University of Newcastle and Chair of Indigenous History. He has held several major positions and served on numerous prominent organizations and committees including as Deputy Chairperson of the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) and as a member of the Executive Committee of the Australian Historical Association.

John's article is the keynote he presented to last year's "Workers of the World" conference, which the BLHA hosted at Emmanuel College. It traces the activism that led to the founding of the Australian Aboriginal Progressive Association, whose leaders included his grandfather, wharfie activist Fred Maynard. The AAPA was influenced

by the Marcus Garvey movement in the United States, yet another example of the importance of internationalism in shaping our own movements against oppression and exploitation.

Stuart MacDonald is a retired organiser with the Queensland Teachers Union. For this issue he has written an account of the union's longest strike, in 1979, by teachers at the Hopevale Community School in far north Queensland. Hopevale was a strike to support a teacher who was forcibly transferred and punished for campaigning for the rights of Aboriginal people in a community under the thumb of the Lutheran Church and the Bjelke-Petersen government.

John McCollow, another retired organiser from the QTU, has given us a blow-by-blow account of the attempt by the Newman regime to destroy all that was valuable in Queensland TAFE, and the campaign of resistance waged by the union. He also reminds us that there is more that needs to be done to undo Newman's wrecking operation.

We have reports of two substantial conferences held in the last six months: the 15th Biennial National Labour History Conference, "Workers of the World", hosted by the Brisbane Labour History Association last September; and the "Fifty Years of Direct Action" conference, also held last September, to remember the start of the great civil liberties campaign that began by

defying Bjelke's ban on street marches, and grew into a much wider movement against oppression at the time.

Finally, we remember three stalwarts of the Queensland labour movement: Lindsay Jones, George Britten and Jim Sharp.

Hughie Williams

Hughie Williams passed away in October 2017. Hughie was a giant of the labour movement and held a variety of positions during his life. He was Secretary of the Transport Workers Union, a Vice-President of the Queensland Branch of the Australian Labor Party and an Olympic Wrestler. He was also Patron of the Brisbane Labour History Association for nearly 10 years, and a founder of the Paddington Workers Club (now known as the Brisbane Workers and Community Club). In the September edition of the journal we will publish a reflection on his life and contribution.

BLHA

President's Column

Greg Mallory

The 2017 National Conference was a great success with around 60 papers and over 100 in attendance. Ruth Milkman and John Maynard, our keynote speakers were well received. The venue for the conference was Emmanuel College at the University of Queensland and was an excellent venue for a conference. I would like to thank the College for their excellent support.

The trade union movement contributed approximately \$11000 towards the cost of running the conference and allowing us to charge pensioners and unemployed people a nominal sum to attend. The unions that sponsored 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 and United Voice as well as the QCU. On behalf of the Brisbane Labour History Association I would like to thank these unions for their support.

A number of union activists, mainly from United Voice, attended the conference and contributed to the discussion in the various sessions. This is a healthy sign and I thank them for their commitment. The conference theme was 'Workers of the World' which recognises the 100-year anniversary of the Russian Revolution as well as immigrant workers and globalisation. I would also like to thank Jason Thomas, our conference organiser for his excellent support in making sure the conference ran smoothly.

The QCU held a welcome for Ruth Milkman at the QCU Building the day before the conference. It was well attended by a variety of unionists. A Special General Meeting of the Federal body was held on the same day and the sole topic was the state of the Federal Journal *Labour History*. Monash have stopped funding it and there is a need to obtain other funding. Various ideas were discussed and an appeal has been made to the ACTU.

The MUA conference was held in November and a number of BLHA members took up an invitation from Bob Carnegie, the Queensland Secretary. I attended and was very impressed by the representation from both interstate and overseas delegates. This is a great testimony to Bob Carnegie for his organising ability.

In this issue of the journal we remember some significant labour movement figures who died recently. Our former Patron, Hughie Williams, passed away in November. Hughie was a long-term ALP activist and former Secretary of the TWU. Bob Reed has contributed a personal remembrance of Hughie in this issue of the QJLH.

George Britten, a Life Member of the Association passed away in October. George dedicated his life to the struggle of unionism and was a former member of the Communist Party. He attended virtually every activity held by the Association since 2000, and Snow Heilbronn has remembered him for us.

Lindesay Jones also passed away. He was a former ALP assistant Secretary and long-term ALP activist, and Kerry Rea, a close friend and comrade, has written an obituary.

Lastly Jim Sharp, former meat worker activist and a member of our association died in November. In this issue, Ross Gwyther has remembered Jim for his

left position and worked tirelessly for the cause of unionism.

The BLHA sends its condolences to the families of all these comrades.

At our AGM a number of changes to the make up of the Executive were made. I would like to welcome Dean Wharton who was elected to the Executive and thank Bob Russell who is stepping down as Vice President. The editorial committee of the Journal is changing with Ross Gwyther and Howard Guille stepping down. I would like to thank them for their hard work over the years. At this stage the editorial committee will be Phil Griffiths, James Morris and myself. Dean Wharton has agreed to be on the editorial board.

Lastly, I would like to thank the Executive for their work throughout the year and Craig Buckley's work as Secretary. Phil Griffiths receive special mention for his work on the conference.

Letters

Celebrating a highly significant egg and the fragile ego of a Prime Minister

100 years ago the police force, known today as the Australian Federal Police, was created at the direction of Prime Minister Hughes after he had had an egg thrown at him in Warwick. In November, several events were held in Warwick to commemorate the incident.

To the editor

I saw that your last edition featured a rather famous cartoon which included the caption: "Who threw that egg?"

Of course, the cartoon depicted former Labor prime minister, William Morris Hughes, in a rage as his hat had been dislodged with an egg thrown by an anti-conscription protester, Patrick Brosnan, at the Warwick railway station on the afternoon of Thursday 29 November 1917. "Billy" Hughes was further enraged when his command: 'arrest that scoundrel' was apparently ignored by Senior Sergeant Kenny of the Warwick police on the basis that the prime minister had no jurisdiction to give such a command to a Queensland police officer.

Newspaper reports of the egg throwing incident suggest that Senior Sergeant Kenny did his best to ensure the turmoil at the railway station did not get out of control and that "Billy" Hughes could continue to address the large crowd in support of the second conscription referendum.

At a later stage, Constable Dufficey, arrested Patrick Brosnan for causing a disturbance at the railway station. Brosnan pleaded guilty to a charge of disorderly conduct, under section 92 of the current Queensland Liquor Act. He was fined 10/- in the Police Court on 3 December 1917.

I was delighted to be present at the re-enactment of the "Warwick incident" on Saturday 18 November 2017 at the railway station. The Warwick Community Performing Arts Group in conjunction with the Southern Downs Steam Railway personnel gave an excellent performance. Although steady rain fell throughout the afternoon a large crowd had gathered by 2pm on the long platform and on the overhead railway bridge. An atmosphere of high drama prevailed.

When the steam train finally appeared from the north the crowd was on their feet pushing and struggling for the best positions and there was roar of excitement as “Billy” Hughes alighted to give his address. It truly felt that we were all indeed involved in those events of November 1917.

Adding to the atmosphere was the good-humoured presence of the ‘top brass’ of the Australian Federal Police together with local, state and federal dignitaries, and of course, many representatives of the extended Brosnan family.

A closing highlight of the afternoon was the official opening of the small, but very neat, “Billy” Hughes Park in front of the railway station and the unveiling by the Australian Federal Police Commissioner of the centennial monument to commemorate the formation of the Commonwealth Police Force in December 1917.

May I encourage readers to visit the Warwick railway precinct if they are ever passing through the Southern Downs. With a little forward planning, it may also be possible for some of your readers to take a trip on the historic Southern Downs Steam Railway — bon voyage!

Ken Ryan, Warwick

Patrick Brosnan was later given two months gaol due to an incident at an anti-conscription meeting in Warwick

the night after the egg throwing incident. He was convicted for the assault of an interjector by the Police Magistrate.

Dr. Jeff Kildea, an adjunct professor in Irish Studies at the University of NSW and Rod and Robin Sullivan of the University of Queensland also addressed a capacity crowd on the historical significance of the incident. Kildea’s presentation can be accessed at jeffkildea.com

The Combine Unions Choir performed songs at the event as well as at the re-enactment at the railway station.

James Morris

CORRECTION (QJLH No.25 September 2017): The reference to “Porky” in the quotation on p. 6 of my Alex Macdonald Lecture, “Labor, Labour and Australia in the 1980s”, is to Northern Territory Chief Minister Paul Everingham, who was sometimes known by this nickname, and not to Andrew Bolt, the author of the line. My thanks to Dr Lyndon Megarrity for pointing this out. Apologies to Andrew Bolt and, I suppose, to Paul Everingham.

— Frank Bongiorno, Canberra

Online archive of basic wage decisions

Fair Work Commission Deputy President, Reg Hamilton, writes:

It may be of interest to the readers of your journal that the Australian Basic Wage, National Wage Case and Safety Net decisions and orders of the Commonwealth Court of Conciliation and Arbitration and its successors 1907-2016 are now available online. These decisions and orders established and varied the Australian minimum wage. They can be accessed at:

<https://www.fwc.gov.au/documents/archives/exhibitions/minwage/exhibitionpaper-100yrsminwage.pdf>

Alternatively, the hyperlink can be found at www.fwc.gov.au, Cases Decisions & Orders, Historical Cases. It can also be found on the Waltzing Matilda and the Sunshine Harvester website, which can be accessed under the History section in About Us at www.fwc.gov.au.

Reports

Workers of the world conference report

Phil Griffiths, co-convenor

From 23-25 September 2017, the Brisbane Labour History Association convened the biennial national labour history conference.

The theme, Workers of the World, was one of the easiest decisions we had to make. It referenced the growing globalisation of production and the angst felt in much of the labour movement about that, and our belief that the movement needed more clarity on issues surrounding immigration and racism. The conference also coincided with the centenary of the Russian Revolution, and the theme invited papers on the explosion of internationalism that the revolution inspired.

With that in mind, we invited two major scholars to present keynote addresses to the conference. The first was Professor John Maynard, a Worimi Aboriginal Man from the Port Stephens region of NSW and Chair of Indigenous History at the University of Newcastle. Participants were inspired

by his presentation which we have published in this issue of the QJLH.

We were also honoured to have Professor Ruth Milkman from the City University of New York, Research Director at the Joseph S Murphy Institute for Worker Education and Labor Studies, and past president of the American Sociological Association. Ruth has published pathbreaking studies of immigrant worker organising in the United States, in particular *LA Story* (2006).

Ruth was also invited by the Queensland Council of Unions to give an informal presentation to union leaders and organisers on the Friday afternoon before the conference, and the result was an inspiring and feisty discussion about Trump, neoliberalism, and union strategies in the US. At the conference itself, she outlined the way employer offensives, deregulation and deindustrialisation had contributed to deunionisation and the rise of low-wage, service jobs in their place. Far from being a problem for the labour movement, immigrants had shown themselves to be very open to being

organised, and she outlined some of the ways that was happening. As against this, Islamophobia was deepening suspicion of all immigrants.

As well as the keynote speakers, we had 54 individual presentations, and while many focused on the conference themes, many others reflected research into the bread and butter of labour organising, including a session on unionising and deunionisation in the Pilbara, sessions on strikes and union and labour activists and on changes to the structure and nation of union organisation. There were sessions on women in unions and the labour movement, intellectuals, socialist organising, culture and work and Indigenous Australians and the left.

Conference highlights for me included two panel sessions in which union activists described their activities alongside presentations on related issues from academics. Kevin Bates from the Queensland Teachers Union described the union's campaign for refugee rights and the activities of Teachers for Refugees, while Jon Piccini from the University of Queensland discussed Labour, refugees and Australia's human rights imagination in the 1940s. In the second panel, Craig Buckley from the Meatworkers Union described the way the union responded to the introduction of long-term temporary immigrant workers in the meat processing industry, insisting on both organising the immigrant

workers and fighting for the rights of locals whose needs were pushed aside by the companies. Imogen Beynon outlined how the National Union of Workers leveraged its strategic power in retail distribution in organising 417 visa backpacker workers.

Overall, we were delighted by the quality and range of papers that were offered. In one of my favourite sessions, Professor Diane Kirkby talked about seafarer support for the Indian Seamen's Strike in Australia in 1939; Jimmy Yan, a postgraduate student from Melbourne University described the solidarity campaign for two railway union activists who were sacked for attacking the murder, by Britain's Black and Tan terrorists, of two railway workers in Ireland; and Daniel Hannington-Pinto, another Melbourne postgraduate student, looked at the role of the Australian labour movement in assisting trade unionists in Timor Leste after independence as foreign businesses moved in.

Finally, the BLHA would once again like to thank the Queensland union movement for its financial support for the conference, which was extremely generous and allowed us to keep the cost to participants as low as possible. We also thank everyone who presented and everyone who attended and created such a vibrant atmosphere of discussion.

The 2017 Fifty Years of Direct Action Conference: Civil Liberties and Wider Frameworks of Political Activism in Queensland

By Robin Taubenfeld

As a (more) recent migrant to Queensland, I have taken great interest in the anti-uranium campaigns and the peace movement and their histories and also been heavily involved in helping coordinate community responses to the 2014 G20 meetings in Brisbane. It took my interest, then, when I heard that there was to be a conference organised that celebrated a well-known Brisbane march for civil liberties in 1967. I was eager to compare their experiences to my own.

To give a brief rundown of the events that lead to staging the conference: on 8 September 1967, 4,000 students marched from The University of Queensland to the city in defiance of a ban on marching. They marched without a permit and sat down and occupied Roma Street in central Brisbane. The police response was particularly brutal, hundreds were arrested, and the moment was pivotal for the campaign for civil liberties.

Though this civil liberties march concerned the right to protest, it signalled a new politics that with growing community support, would influence political movements in

Queensland and beyond. The march strengthened the opposition to Australia's involvement in the Vietnam War and conscription and was a harbinger of the future mass actions of the moratorium marches and the Springbok demonstrations in Brisbane. Ten years on in 1977, as the Cold War brewed, anti-uranium marches defied police brutality, Women's House had been set up, 4ZZZ was on air, HECATE was being published, a Queensland community development network had been established and the mostly-white movement had a greater awareness and understanding of the need to support the struggle for Aboriginal rights.

In a local sense, it was a part of worldwide movements that came to mark a new focus on gender and race equity and participatory forms of democracy. Participants not only celebrated the anniversary of the civil liberties march but also sought to question and explore its relevance in the *Fifty Years of Direct Action Conference*, held fifty years and one day after the big civil liberties march in 1967. Over three sessions, the conference aimed to celebrate the activism in a critical sense, to understand subsequent actions and how they affected the participants and

to explore how contemporary struggles can be more influential.

Not only did they start Brisbane institutions like the Whole Foods Coop and 4ZZZFM — out of need and protest — they published and distributed anti-war and anti-capitalist booklets such as: *How Not to Join the Army*, *The Little Red School Book* and *The Guide to Shoplifting*, held *False Registration Paper parties*, a Marijuana smoke-in on the UQ campus, developed radical theatre and art, explored women's empowerment and women's liberation, set up FOCO, once claimed to be 'Australia's most evil and repugnant nightspot', formed a National Liberation Front Regiment on the UQ campus, studied or taught, organized for students' rights, rioted on campus, and took to the streets in the highly repressive state of Queensland.

Aiming to remember the Civil Liberties March, take stock of its impacts, successes and failures, and to explore its relevance to contemporary activism, the day-long event brought key thinkers, activists and organisers from the 60s and 70s: Dan O'Neill, Peter Wertheim, Di Zetlin, Mitch Thompson (via video), Jim Prentice, Carole Ferrier, Cheryl Buchanan, Uncle Bob Anderson, Brian Laver (via video), to name a few, together with their more contemporary counterparts: Drew Hutton, Ian Lowe, Adrian Burragubba, Ellen Roberts, Bob Carnegie, plus more. Widely acknowledged at the

event was the predominance of men in leadership and white people at the core of the movement, a general — or at least initial — lack of the context to conceptualise solidarity between Aboriginal activists and the student movement and a similarly undeveloped understanding of the central role women could play, as the women's liberation movement began to manifest its agenda. One emblematic moment occurred when Rosalie Bognor and Merle Thornton chained themselves to the "Men Only" bar at the Regatta Hotel in 1965.

"I'm not a Communist; I'm a radical socialist!" UQ student activist Anne Richards tried to explain to her disapproving father. Fifty years on, it may be hard to imagine that people now in their late sixties or even older, were being disowned by their families for their "radical" behaviour, taking to the streets to protest without permits, exploring their sexuality, looking for ways to better integrate creativity into their political expression, skill-sharing, mentoring and educating each other, learning about land rights and invasion (if they weren't experiencing this first-hand themselves) — all while attempting to dismantle the dominant paradigm of industrial capitalism in all its racist, sexist, ecologically destructive and militaristic glory. In a digital age, where if it's not on YouTube it might not have happened — and if it is, it still might not have happened — who would know that people like Anne,

now a university lecturer, lived on the poverty line, putting their time and energy into opposing existing power structures and to creating alternatives?

For me, the most powerful voices were those of the First Nations and women speakers: Adrian Burragubba speaking for Wangan and Jagalingou Country and of the community's determination to stop the Adani Carmichael mine; Cheryl Buchanan reminding the audience that Aboriginal people "do not have what we fought for in the 70s" and challenging the audience to take action every day to make a difference in the world; and Di Zetlin exploring the "contradictions" that led to and gave form to the womens' movement. This included the emotional burden for women of living when abortion was illegal and contraception was impossible to get while there was a push for "sexual freedom that they were not really in a position to control." Jennie Harvey explained the power of story-sharing/consciousness-raising and direct action to set up structures that supported women, such as Women's House. Anne Richards, the radical socialist mentioned above, talked about the counterculture and lived experience of the time — and more. In fact, all of the speakers brought something new, special and important in their stories and analysis. And there are too many to mention here. Luckily, in this digital era, this event was recorded and videos of speakers are available online.

50 years ago, activists may have not use the terms "empowerment", "intersectionality", "structural violence," "privilege", yet is clear that the understandings behind these words commonly used today have evolved from the thought, work and action of the people involved in the 1967 March and their contemporaries.

To know where we're going, we need to know where we've been. The movement is ever-evolving. I encourage you to take the time to visit the Fifty Years of Direct Action Conference Archive Facebook page to check out the fascinating archival photos and footage and to watch the short videos of the speakers at this event.

<https://www.facebook.com/Fifty-Years-of-Direct-Action-Conference-Archive-198572730886973/>

The Battle for TAFE—Teachers and the Newman Government, 2012–2015: A Brief History

John McCollow

Refereed paper presented at the 15th Biennial Labour History Conference, “Workers of the World”, Emmanuel College, University of Queensland, 22–25 September 2017.

Abstract

The Liberal National Party (LNP) led by Premier Campbell Newman was elected to government in Queensland in a landslide on 24 March 2012 and embarked on an ambitious agenda of neo-liberal “reform”. From 2012 to early 2015, the Newman Government attempted to completely remake Queensland’s public system of technical and further education (TAFE) system, changing its values and modes of operation, reducing the size of its workforce, cutting back funding, hiving off TAFE assets and pursuing an ambitious industrial relations agenda to roll back working conditions and constrain the operation of unions. This was one front of a broader war against the public service. This paper examines the agenda, policies and practices of that government as these impacted on TAFE teachers and the responses of these teachers through their unions.

Introduction

The Liberal National Party (LNP) led by Premier Campbell Newman was elected to government in Queensland in a landslide result on 24 March 2012, ousting the Australian Labor Party, gaining 78 out of 89 seats in the state’s unicameral parliament and reducing Labor to seven seats. Confident that the victory provided them with a mandate for change, the Newman Government embarked on an ambitious agenda of neo-liberal “reform” across a number of policy areas. The Government’s agenda was pushed with such vigour and ruthlessness that, by the time the next state election was held, in January 2015, the electorate was sufficiently alienated to desert the LNP and return a Labor Government to power.¹

The battle for Queensland’s public system of technical and further education (TAFE) was one front of a broader war against the public service. From 2012 to early 2015, the Newman Government attempted to completely remake the TAFE system, changing its values and modes of operation, reducing the size of its workforce, cutting back funding, hiving off TAFE assets and pursuing an ambitious industrial relations agenda to roll back working conditions and constrain the operation of unions. This paper

examines the agenda, policies and practices of that government as these impacted on TAFE teachers and the responses of these teachers through their unions.²

2012: The election

By the end of 2011, it became clear that the State Labor Government was unlikely to retain office. A key theme of the 2012 state election campaign was that an LNP Government would “tackle Labor’s \$85 billion debt” and “return the budget to surplus by 2014–15” (LNP, 2012a, p.3). During the campaign, the LNP promised to appoint a “commission of audit to investigate the true picture of the state’s finances” (Hurst, 2012a). Did this concern for fiscal restraint foreshadow cuts to the public service? Statements by the LNP and Campbell Newman were ambiguous (LNP, 2012b; Hurst, 2012b).

Industrial relations issues did not feature at all in the 2012 LNP state election campaign. The LNP ignored a *Charter for Working Queenslanders* campaign organised by the Queensland Council of Unions but stated in its campaign documents that it would “work with” public sector unions (e.g. LNP, 2012a, p8; LNP 2012b, p. 2).

While TAFE was barely mentioned in LNP campaign materials, the LNP did promise to establish a skills and training taskforce to review Queensland’s

vocational education and training (VET) system (LNP, 2012a, p. 13).

It can be argued that there was little evidence in the 2012 state election campaign of the scale of the Newman’s Government’s intentions in industrial relations, the public service and TAFE. In assessing the subsequent defeat of the Newman Government in the 2015 state election, Downer (2015, p. 3) argues: “Voters ... didn’t get what they thought they were buying with Campbell Newman [in 2012]. And they weren’t prepared to make a repeat purchase [in 2015]”.

However, at least with the benefit of hindsight, there were signs that this would be an activist government. First, as Downer (2015) notes, the “can do” branding (a phrase that appeared in the title of almost all LNP campaign material) suggested that this was going to be a government that staked its reputation on getting things done. Second, the foreshadowing of the establishment of wide-ranging inquiries, such as the Queensland Commission of Audit and the Queensland Skills and Training Taskforce, is a well-established ploy used by incoming governments to provide a basis for considerable expansion of the agendas elucidated during an election campaign (Quiggin, 2012). Finally, the overwhelming majority enjoyed by the LNP in a unicameral parliament following the election, and the disarray in the Labor

opposition, may have presented as an opportunity too good to miss—a once-in-a-lifetime chance to prosecute the neo-liberal agenda. Writing in the immediate aftermath of the election, the General Secretary of the Queensland Teachers' Union (QTU) advised members:

At the time of writing, the LNP had up to 67 seats in an 89 seat parliament. Experienced political commentators say that, unless the LNP does something spectacularly foolish, this virtually guarantees a minimum of three terms [in office]. (Moloney, 2012, p. 12)

2012: Setting the scene in TAFE

In March 2012, there were 7,836 employees occupying 6,785 full-time-equivalent positions in the Queensland public TAFE system.³ In terms of industrial arrangements, TAFE employees could be divided into two main categories:

- Educational staff (teachers/tutors), who were covered by the TAFE Teachers Award—State 2003⁴ and the Department of Education and Training TAFE Educational Employees Certified Agreement (CA) 2009; and
- Administrative and general staff, who were covered by the Public Service Award—State 2003 and the State Government Depart-

ments [Core] Certified Agreement 2009.

All were employed by the Department of Education and Training (DET).⁵ Union coverage of teachers and tutors was split between the QTU (the principal union) and Together, the main union covering administrative and general staff.⁶ While there is an important story to be told about this latter group, this paper focuses primarily on the situation of educational staff. Unlike in the schooling sector, where membership density was very high, membership amongst TAFE teachers/tutors of the QTU and Together was a minority of eligible employees.⁷

Predating the election of the Newman Government was a proposal for the Central Queensland Institute of TAFE to be merged with Central Queensland University. This proposal was subsequently implemented from 1 July 2014 taking these TAFE employees out of Queensland government employment and the Queensland industrial relations system. This development is noteworthy but beyond the scope of this paper.

A fundamental characteristic of vocational education in Australia over the last twenty-five years has been the increasing use of market mechanisms, which allow a range of training providers to compete for students and government funding. A common theme amongst supporters of a market-driven industry-led VET system is that TAFE

is a bloated bureaucracy plagued by out of date industrial arrangements and low levels of productivity. The creation of a training market has been accompanied by a dramatic growth in the number of private training providers and of their share in government-sourced VET funding (which itself steadily decreased—see Long, 2010, 2011). This is true of all states and territories. The Newman Government would significantly expand the scope and pace of marketisation in Queensland but the journey down the track of marketisation was already well under way by 2012.

Another feature of VET in Australia is that since the early 1990s VET curriculum has been built around a competency-based model of training, using what are called “training packages”. In order to deliver a nationally recognised qualification, providers must use these approved packages and be a registered training organisation. There are some significant advantages to such an approach. However, its assumption that instructional strategies and curriculum flow more or less automatically from specification of learning outcomes has resulted in the marginalisation of VET teachers. From the introduction of the national training system, educators have been excluded from VET policy decision making forums. Here again, the Newman Government enthusiastically embraced an existing

approach to VET and pushed it to its logical extremes.⁸

2012: Getting started

Initially there were some indications that the Newman Government might adopt an incremental approach to reform. While the Commission of Audit was quickly convened, its deliberations took some time with the final report not being delivered until early 2013 (QCA, 2013). Similarly, while the Queensland Skills and Training Taskforce was relatively quickly established, its final report was delivered in November 2012. TAFE unions were pleased that the government offered to roll-over all existing conditions and provide a wage increase in an interim certified agreement for TAFE teachers pending the outcomes of the Queensland Skills and Training Taskforce review. The first round of industrial relations legislative changes was also relatively modest. The government also agreed to a revised version of the TAFE Teachers Award that had been negotiated between the unions and DET prior to the election and it was certified by the Industrial Relations Commission in October.

However, there were signs that TAFE employees and public sector workers in general were being steered into far more tempestuous seas. Interim reports from both the Commission of Audit (QCA 2012) and the Queensland Skills and Training Taskforce (QSTT 2012a)

laid the philosophical groundwork for extensive neo-liberal intervention. Public sector redundancies (including in TAFE) began in earnest in late June and steadily increased, and unlike the relatively benign approach taken in relation to the interim agreement for TAFE teachers, the government adopted an extreme hard-line position on enterprise bargaining for the “core” public service (which included non-educational staff in TAFE).

Commission of Audit

On 29 March, 2012, the government announced that former federal Liberal Treasurer Peter Costello had been appointed to head the promised Commission of Audit.

The Commission produced an interim report in June, which was described in the following terms by Treasurer Tim Nicholls (2012):

We knew the financial mess left by Labor was bad, but this mess is beyond all expectations ... The Commission has recommended some very strong medicine which we all must take to get Queensland’s finances back in the black.

The key recommendations with implications for TAFE included that:

- public sector employee expenses be capped,

- recurrent expenditure reflect government policy and value for money,
- asset management strategies (including outsourcing of management and asset sales) be considered,
- the government consider withdrawing or privatising some state services, and
- cost-shifting of some state government expenses to other levels of governments be pursued.

Public service staffing reductions were a significant feature of the cost cutting. From March to December 2012, TAFE staffing was reduced by 976 (head count) or 727 (full-time equivalent). This was a cut of well over 10 per cent of TAFE staff.

Skills and Training Taskforce

The Queensland Skills and Training Taskforce was established in June 2012. The taskforce undertook consultations and received submissions during the months of July to October, produced an interim report (QSTT, 2012a) in August and its final report (QSTT, 2012b) in November. The two reports dovetailed neatly with the ethos and content of the Commission of Audit reports, identifying the need for fiscal discipline and targeting the public sector as the source of fiscal problems. The report argued that:

urgent reform of the State’s VET sector is required ... there

are significant opportunities to reform TAFE Queensland ... starting with the fundamental and structural issues facing TAFE Queensland. (QSTT, 2012a, p. 6).

Key recommendations of the taskforce included:

- Creation of a fully contestable training market with no guaranteed funding for TAFE, other than “transition funding” for a period to be determined.
- The establishment of Queensland TAFE as a commercially-driven and relatively autonomous statutory authority, incorporating all current public TAFE Institutes (with exception of the Central Queensland Institute of TAFE). Staff to be directly employed by the authority.
- A rationalisation of the TAFE system, including the closure of a number of campuses and involving mergers, to create 6 regional TAFE institutes. It was recommended that up to 44 of the state’s 82 campuses could be shut, including 10 of 15 in Brisbane and 11 of 26 in far north Queensland.
- New industrial relations arrangements for TAFE, reflecting “an almost universal view that the current industrial arrangements restrict flexibility ... create uncompetitive costs and are ... out of date with current training arrange-

ments and strategies” (QSST, 2012b, p. 59).

- Creation of a separate commercially-focused entity to own and manage TAFE buildings and assets.
- Narrowing the focus of TAFE to courses that have direct links to industry needs and employment outcomes.

In the view of Forward (2013, p. 7), “the Taskforce is essentially proposing that the Queensland Government have no direct involvement in vocational education strategy, funding or management”. McCollow (2014a, p. 7) noted:

[T]he Final Report ... states that “ensuring the viability, including financial viability, of Queensland’s public provider of VET is at the core of [the Taskforce’s] considerations” ... and then in the course of setting out how its market-based recommendations will revitalise TAFE, expresses doubt that there is any inherent necessity for a public training provider and urges the government to continue to monitor whether it should have a role in the future.

The recommendations of the taskforce were largely accepted by the state government in its response (QG, 2012a) in November 2012.

Enterprise bargaining

Enterprise bargaining for a new certified agreement for TAFE teachers was due to commence in early 2012 but had been delayed by the change of government. In mid-2012, the Department of Education, Training and Employment (DETE) informed the relevant unions, that it expected that the report of the Skills and Training Taskforce would result in an extensive agenda for structural change in TAFE with significant implications for industrial arrangements pertaining to TAFE employees. On this basis, an interim arrangement was agreed whereby the TAFE Educational Employees Certified Agreement would be extended for a further 11 months providing a 2 per cent salary increase with no alteration of terms and conditions (a further 2.2 per cent increase on expiration of the agreement was agreed separately). This was agreed on the basis that “the proposed interim agreement is designed to allow the parties to explore common ground in the development of a new certified agreement based on the recommendations of the Skills and Training Ministerial Taskforce which are due to be announced in coming months” (QTU, 2012). This affected TAFE educational staff only, as general and administrative staff were covered by the core public service agreement.⁹

Industrial relations and other legislation

The Queensland industrial relations system’s coverage includes state and local government employees only; all others are covered by the federal Fair Work regime. This was another important area of reform for the Newman Government.

The first significant foray into industrial relations legislative change took place with the introduction into parliament in mid-May 2012 of the Industrial Relations (Fair Work Act Harmonisation) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill (QG, 2012b). The bill was subsequently passed in an amended form in early June. Key changes included:

- requiring the Industrial Relations Commission to take into account in making a wage determination the financial position of the state and the fiscal policy of the state government;
- allowing the government to brief the Commission on financial and fiscal matters with no provision for cross-examination of this evidence;
- provisions restricting access by employees to protected industrial action;
- provisions relating to the conduct of ballots for industrial action;
- allowing the Minister to terminate unilaterally protected industrial action;

- allowing employers to ballot employees directly on a proposed industrial agreement, without union involvement.

Assessing these changes at the time, McCollow (2012, pp. 26 & 28) observed:

[T]he announced changes fell considerably short of an all-out declaration of war ... Nevertheless ... a major thrust of the changes was to weaken the bargaining position of state employees ... Will [the state government] ... consider that these are enough? ... It appears that “the war against public sector collective bargaining” may just be getting started.

In August the government issued two Public Service Directives (PSC, 2012a; 2012b) that over-rode some provisions in industrial agreements. Provisions in the TAFE Educational Employees Certified Agreement that called on the employer to provide the names of new staff to unions, protected employment security and limited contracting out were neutered by this directive. Public service unions mounted a legal challenge but this was pre-empted by amendments to the Public Service Act which had the effect of retrospectively validating the Directives. The legislation also invalidated clauses in industrial instruments relating to organisational change and maximisation of permanency, and gave

the Public Service Commissioner the power to over-ride provisions of an industrial instrument.

The QTU notified a dispute in the Industrial Relations Commission asserting that the directives and subsequent legislation were a breach of the commitment made by the employer that the interim TAFE Teachers Certified Agreement would preserve all existing terms and conditions. The QTU was, however, in a no-win position. The agreement had been endorsed by a ballot of employees but had not yet been formally certified. A finding by the Commission that the government’s position had invalidated the agreement would doubtless have meant starting over, at best delaying and at worst eradicating the salary rise for its members. After a conciliation conference in the Commission, the QTU did not pursue the matter.

Two other legislative changes of note from late 2012 were amendments to the Industrial Relations Act to expand parties’ rights to access legal representation in the Commission (in line with the government’s preference for a legalistic approach to industrial relations) and the movement of the Labour Day holiday from its traditional date in May to October (a figurative thumbing of the nose to the union movement).

2013: Getting stuck in

By the end of 2012, the government had not yet revealed its sweeping industrial relations agenda, but its anti-public-sector orientation and its intention to marketise and downsize TAFE were clear. In relation to TAFE, Queensland's approach was not entirely unique, rather it was a more robust version of a national TAFE agenda to "enact policies that fostered privatisation—a voucher system; contestable funding; and entrenching income contingent loans in the system" (AEU, undated). The QTU and its TAFE members participated actively in the Australian Education Union's national *Stop TAFE Cuts* campaign (which is still ongoing as of 2017), engaging in activities such as lobbying, rallies and public information sessions. These activities had a strong focus on developments in Queensland.

Restructuring TAFE

Following the government's response to the Queensland Skills and Training Taskforce Report in late 2012, the 2013 year saw implementation of TAFE reform begin in earnest. Consistent with the recommendations of the taskforce, TAFE was treated essentially as one of a number of VET providers. TAFE was depicted as in desperate need of improved efficiency and cost-effectiveness. The year saw a number of TAFE campuses amalgamated or closed.

Legislation to give effect to a restructured TAFE Queensland was introduced in April, 2013 and passed in June (QG, 2013a). TAFE Queensland was established as a commercially-focussed statutory authority on 1 July, but for the time being, TAFE employees continued to be employed by DETE.¹⁰ The Act empowered the relevant minister to make regulations to give effect to the transfer of (some) assets¹¹ and employees to the new body. The wording of the relevant section of the Act was extraordinarily sweeping, for example, it provided that "a thing may be done under this part despite any other law or instrument" (QG, 2013a, p. 35). TAFE employees expressed fear that the minister might use the transfer regulation to over-ride existing awards and agreements and unilaterally impose conditions such as those sought in the certified agreement negotiations. Despite union requests to do so, the minister refused to rule this out.

From mid-2013, the government began to put in place mechanisms to wean TAFE from TAFE-specific funding programs in preparation for conversion to fully-contestable VET funding. The VET Investment Plan agreed to between the state and commonwealth governments on 7 June included a "severe reduction in the student contact hour price [that] will continue to drive structural change in TAFE Institutes" (QTU, 2013, p. 3).

Downsizing of TAFE continued with a loss of 891 full-time equivalent positions from December 2012 to December 2013, including 565 “voluntary redundancies”.¹²

Enterprise bargaining—TAFE Educational staff

The parties to the TAFE Educational Employees Certified Agreement commenced negotiations for a new agreement in April 2013. At the second meeting of the Single Bargaining Unit, held on 19 April, the QTU tabled its log of claims¹³ and DETE tabled its offer in the form of a replacement agreement.

The QTU proposed an “interest-based”, non-adversarial approach to bargaining. To this end, the QTU log sought to identify issues for discussion/negotiation rather than to provide a specific set of claims. Issues identified by the QTU included: remuneration; the salary classification structure; role statements; teacher professionalism; and non-attendance time.

Interest-based bargaining is meant to provide an alternative to the traditional position-based approach to bargaining in which each side sets out in detail its preferred ideal outcome and tries to “win” as many of its expressed specific objectives as possible. It involves the following steps:

- Describe and define the issues/problems to be solved,

- Each party identifies its interests and explores the interests of the other party,
- Possible options/solutions are generated for consideration,
- Criteria for evaluating options are developed,
- Preferred options are selected,
- Options integrated into comprehensive agreement. (Stepp, et al. 1998)

DETE rejected an interest-based approach and set out an ambitious set of desired outcomes, including:

- removal of entitlement to 5 weeks per annum non-attendance time;
- an increase in the spread of working hours from 8am to 9pm Monday to Friday to 6am to 10pm Monday to Saturday;
- restrictions on overtime relating to rates and eligibility and mandating that it be paid in the form of time off in lieu;
- removal of inclusion of 11 hours non-contact time and 4.25 hours discretionary time from the 36.25 hour working week (i.e. teachers could be required to teach up to 36.25 hours);
- removal of class size maximums and programming guidelines from the agreement; and
- replacement of the incremental salary scale (from \$45,564 to \$85,027) with a flat salary structure with three categories of employee (tutor—\$50,000; assessor—\$60,000; trainer \$70,000).

A significant proportion of the TAFE educational workforce was on salary levels near or above the proposed trainer salary. “Grandparenting arrangements” were proposed for those whose current salaries exceeded the proposed maximum salaries (their salaries would be frozen until such time as the new salary exceeded them).¹⁴

The sole proposed provision that could be construed as a “sweetener” was an additional remuneration payment of up to \$24,000 for the performance of additional duties. These payments were not available to employees on grandparented salaries and eligibility was to be determined solely at the discretion of the TAFE institute director. DETE negotiators acknowledged that only a small minority of employees would receive additional remuneration payments and none of the exemplars of how additional remuneration payments could apply showed an employee earning more than an additional \$6,000 per annum.

The scale of the changes sought and the significant reductions to TAFE educator conditions were unprecedented. With the debatable exception of additional remuneration payments, there was no attempt to provide trade-offs or incentives to TAFE educators to accept a radical restructuring of their working conditions. The line of argument put by the DETE negotiators was that TAFE needed to become significantly more efficient (i.e. less expensive) in order

to compete in a competitive training market with private VET providers who had significantly lower costs, including employee costs. Either the proposals put forward would be accepted or public TAFE would die. Union negotiators pointed out that the decision to remove TAFE-specific funding was a government decision which they strongly opposed and which should be re-considered. They also pointed out that it would be impossible to sell the government offer in its present form to their memberships.

Single Bargaining Unit meetings continued through May and early June, but unsurprisingly, little progress was achieved. Unions were mindful that they needed to continue to negotiate in good faith to secure the wage increase (due on 30 June) agreed to when the existing certified agreement had been extended—this increase was included in a letter of understanding rather than in an industrial instrument, so was potentially vulnerable.¹⁵ Then, in mid-June, DETE withdrew its original offer and set forth a revised claim, which sought to create one certified agreement covering all TAFE staff (educational, administrative and general). The purported rationale for this was that, as TAFE was moving out of the public service to become a statutory authority, it was no longer appropriate for administrative and general staff to be covered by the public service core agreement. However, there were other possible motives.

For TAFE educational staff the revised claim basically incorporated all the features of the previous claim. For general and administrative staff (who outnumbered educational staff), the revised log basically preserved existing working conditions but offered a wage increase of 2.2 per cent. Employees covered by the core public service agreement were at that time without benefit of a pay increase since late 2011. Thus, there was a strategic advantage for DETE in that although the offer would almost certainly be rejected by TAFE educational staff, it might be sufficiently attractive to administrative and general employees to gain majority support if a ballot on it were to be held.

The TAFE unions rejected the idea of a combined agreement.¹⁶ The QTU balloted its TAFE members on the following questions:

- Are you in favour of accepting the Department of Education, Training and Employment proposed certified agreement for TAFE educational staff?
- Do you support incorporation of educational and non-educational TAFE staff in one agreement? (QTU, 2013, p. 2)

The response: 99 per cent of members who returned ballots voted “no” to the first question and 98 per cent voted “no” to the second question (QTU, 2013, p. 2).¹⁷ Following this result, in late July the QTU applied for Industrial Relations Commission

assistance in the making of a certified agreement for TAFE educational employees. After conciliation sessions in the Commission, the QTU made application to have the matter arbitrated. The Commission determined that there was no likelihood of the parties reaching agreement and referred the matter for arbitration.

In early August, DETE appealed the Commission’s decision to refer the matter to arbitration to the Industrial Court, mainly on the grounds that the Commission member who had made the decision had erred by referring the TAFE-educator-only certified agreement to arbitration without properly considering their alternative application for a “whole-of-TAFE” certified agreement.

The effect of this appeal was to put the determination of a certified agreement for TAFE educators (and for other TAFE staff) in limbo for an extended period. The President of the Industrial Court, who would hear the appeal, had recently resigned and had not yet been replaced. A replacement justice was not appointed until December, 2013; a hearing of the matter and a decision would not occur until 2014.

The decision to appeal is an interesting one and may be seen as an indication of the government’s “all or nothing” approach to reform. While arbitration would have meant that they would have had to abandon the goal of a

single certified agreement for all TAFE employees and some watering down of their bold plans, it almost certainly would have delivered sweeping changes to TAFE educators' working conditions. In the absence of a new certified agreement, the conditions of the existing certified agreement remained in place. The passage of amendments to the Industrial Relations Act in November and developments arising from it in 2014 would delay even further the employers' attempts to change dramatically the working conditions of TAFE teachers.

Industrial relations legislation

The second major alteration of the Industrial Relations Act was passed in June, 2013 (QG, 2013b). The Bill was 148 pages in length. Significant provisions included:

- more stringent financial management, reporting and audit arrangements for industrial organisations;
- increased penalties for infringements;
- requirements for industrial organisations to conduct ballots of their members before undertaking political expenditure (expenditure to be authorised by at least 50% of valid votes); and
- disallowing or restricting provisions in industrial instruments that relate to union preference (including leave for union training), payroll deduction of union dues, union right of entry, policy

matters (managerial prerogative), contracting out, and consultation about organisational change.

Unions (including the QTU and Together) launched a High Court challenge to the provisions relating to balloting of members for political expenditure. Following the success of this challenge, these provisions were repealed in June 2014.

The government continued to tinker with industrial relations legislation throughout 2014. For example, further provisions restricting union right of entry were introduced in August. The most sweeping changes wrought on the Industrial Relations Act were introduced in October and passed in November (QG, 2013c). The Bill was 255 pages in length. Significant provisions included:

- creation in the Industrial Relations Act of *core employment standards*; restricting the scope of certified agreements to matters "linked directly to the employment relationship and improvements in productivity and performance";
- specification in the Act of "required", "permitted" and "non-allowable" content in awards and certified agreements;
- provision for individual employment contracts for high income employees;
- (further) restrictions on industrial action; and

- provision for fixed term appointments of industrial commissioners. The effect of the legislation on public sector workers in Queensland was to expand the capacity of the employer (i.e. the government) to unilaterally dictate working conditions and remuneration levels/arrangements.

The provisions of the legislation with the most immediate and specific impact on TAFE teachers were those establishing an award modernisation process to be applied to all state awards, and which would restrict the scope of awards to specification of a “minimum safety net of enforceable terms and conditions” (QG, 2013d, p. 1) or, as the QTU put it, “to strip away the employees’ rights and conditions” (McCollow, 2014b, p. 12).

2014: TAFE on the brink

Restructuring TAFE

During 2014, restructuring of TAFE into *TAFE Queensland* with six regional institutes (and the transfer of Central Queensland Institute of TAFE to Central Queensland University) proceeded.

In March, the Queensland Training Assets Management Authority Bill was introduced in parliament (QG, 2014a). The Bill sought to transfer ownership and management of TAFE facilities to a separate commercially-oriented entity. Private VET providers would gain

access to public training facilities to address an alleged “public perception that TAFE Queensland has an effective monopoly within the Queensland VET system through exclusive access to public infrastructure” (QG, 2014b, p. 3). Profits generated would go to general revenue, not to TAFE or VET generally. In the view of the QTU, the effect would be that “TAFE institutes will become “itinerant” providers—virtual institutions without classrooms and facilities competing with private providers for space” (QTU, 2014, p. 3).

On 1 July TAFE employees were transferred from DETE to the statutory authority (TAFE Queensland) on their existing salaries and conditions. This meant that they were no longer public servants subject to the Public Service Act and public service directives.

Also on 1 July VET funding became fully competitive. Changes to government funding that had been phased in over 2013–2014 saw dramatic increases in fees for many TAFE courses. Government funding for over 180 qualifications had been phased out over that period.

TAFE downsizing continued with 473 voluntary redundancies over the course of 2014.

Enterprise bargaining—TAFE Educational staff

The DETE appeal of the Industrial Relations Commission’s referral of the

TAFE educators certified agreement was heard in February and the decision was brought down in May. The Court upheld the appeal, essentially on the grounds that the referral was premature as it pre-empted DETE's intention to conduct a ballot of employees on their alternative proposed certified agreement. The matter was referred back to the Commission, where conciliation conferences between the parties were held in Commission in June. Unsurprisingly these were unsuccessful. In July, the QTU again applied for the matter to be referred to arbitration. Hearings in the Commission on the application were held in August.

The passage of new industrial relations legislation in late 2013 that called for the modernisation of state awards, and the Attorney-General's formal request for modernisation to proceed in February created some uncertainty about the status of certified agreement negotiations. The legislation specified that no new certified agreements could be agreed to or certified until their underlying award had been modernised. The QTU argued that it was re-invigorating the application that had pre-dated the legislation's enactment so the legislative restrictions did not apply.

The Commission rejected the QTU application in October and the union appealed to the Industrial Court.

Hearing of the matter was scheduled for January 2015.¹⁸

Overtime dispute

With the creation of TAFE Queensland as a statutory body, conditions previously covered in public service directives were incorporated into its human resources policy. As noted above, one particular directive over-rode provisions in the TAFE Education Certified Agreement relating to the payment of overtime. While legislation passed by the LNP government specifically allows public service directives to over-ride the provisions of an industrial instrument, at law policy cannot. In August the QTU wrote to TAFE Queensland advising that, in its view, there was no legal basis for its overtime policy and that it should therefore observe the provisions in the certified agreement.

The TAFE Queensland response was dismissive, stating that the policy was not "less favourable" to employees than the certified agreement provisions. The QTU notified a dispute in the Commission. A difficulty for the QTU was that, where an employee refused to undertake overtime for remuneration only as time off in lieu, the offer was withdrawn. This meant that there were no instances of employees who had performed overtime for pay but had been compensated in time off in lieu, or of employees who had been "forced" to perform overtime for time off in lieu (since all had "agreed" to the

arrangement). The Commission found for TAFE Queensland.

Award modernisation

In February the Attorney-General issued a formal request to the Industrial Relations Commission to commence the award modernisation process provided for in the industrial relations legislation of late 2013. Originally, all awards were to be modernised by the end of 2014. However, in May this was changed to the end of 2015. The request specified industries that were to be prioritised and set target completion dates for these industries. The TAFE Award was in a group of second-level priority industries with a target completion date of 30 April 2015.

The aim of award modernisation was to significantly reduce the scope of award content by specifying matters that were not allowable.¹⁹ Among the matters thus specified were provisions dealing with:

- contracting out of services;
- employment security;
- union encouragement;
- organisational change;
- training;
- workload management;
- service delivery;
- resource allocation;
- right of entry;
- workforce planning;
- rostering;
- employee engagement; and
- policy.

Public sector unions met on a regular basis to discuss a coordinated approach. The Public Service Award was one of the first to undergo modernisation and Together provided briefings on the progress of negotiations in the Commission. In relation to the TAFE Award, the QTU developed a schema categorising clauses in the award as either: those which were strongly arguable for retention in a modern award; those for which a plausible case could be argued for retention, and those which were at severe risk of being found non-allowable. For each category, arguments and possible alternative (more likely to pass scrutiny) versions were developed.

In November, TAFE Queensland made a submission to the Commission to have an entirely new (modern) award created for TAFE employees (incorporating many of the provisions of its proposed certified agreement). This proposal departed from the award modernisation process as it had been described and implemented by the Commission which was limited to reviewing existing award provisions, not to the creation of new provisions. The QTU, supported by Together, objected strongly to the TAFE Queensland application. A full bench of the Commission heard the TAFE Queensland application in early December. Once again, the tactics of the employer can be questioned. TAFE award modernisation (as a review of current provisions) was scheduled to be completed by the end of April,

2015; a process dealing with TAFE Queensland's new award with its multiple controversial clauses would undoubtedly extend the process.²⁰ Further, a successful TAFE Queensland application to the Commission would be open to a union appeal to the Industrial Court (extending the timelines yet again).

The Commission delivered its decision in favour of TAFE Queensland on 22 December. The QTU considered appealing but the holiday season and subsequent political events overtook these considerations. On 6 January, Premier Newman confirmed that writs had been issued for an election on 31 January.

Industrial action

In late 2014, members of the QTU TAFE Executive and TAFE Council expressed a view that while the *Stop TAFE Cuts* campaign, the industrial and legal tactics, and the lobbying undertaken by the union continued to be valuable, they did not adequately reflect the outrage and anger of TAFE teachers. It was decided that only a strike would convey this adequately. The strike would have a political, rather than industrial, purpose (and thus would be unprotected action). It was intended to send a strong message to the government and general public in the lead-up to the state election expected sometime in early 2015. As it turned out, the date selected,

29 January, fell almost on the eve of election day.

On that date, QTU TAFE members staged a one-day strike—the first industrial action in TAFE for 20 years. Rallies were held outside the Executive Building in Brisbane and in Cairns, Townsville, Toowoomba, Ipswich, Logan and the Gold and Sunshine Coasts. The turn-outs were generally small but enthusiastic. Participants reported significant pressure and threats from management, who characterised the unprotected action as “illegal”.

2015: Labor returns

The election of a Labor government did not, of course, usher in a “golden age” for TAFE, its teachers and their unions. The deeply problematic national training agenda remains in place, VET funding continues to be inadequate, and TAFE Queensland continues to operate as a commercially-oriented authority in a contestable training market. On the other hand, since 2016 TAFE-specific funding for core community services has been restored; the Queensland Training Assets Management Authority has been abolished with the restoration of TAFE assets; and industrial laws have been revised to restore some balance. As of 2017, a modernised award and new certified agreement have been negotiated and certified. TAFE Queensland achieved its goal of whole-of-TAFE Award (though not certified agreement), while unions were

able to protect a number of conditions that were previously at risk. These are matters, however, for analysis in another paper at another time.

Conclusion

As the full extent of the government's agenda rolled out, TAFE teachers and their unions faced bleak prospects: the reconstitution of TAFE as a corporatised, marketised entity; severe cutbacks in staffing levels and working conditions, and considerable constraints on the capacity of unions to exercise influence on behalf of their members. Given that commentators expected the government to enjoy at least two to three terms in office, no relief was in sight. A further concern for TAFE unions was that the rising

level of redundancies was claiming some activist members and creating uncertainty and fear amongst the workforce. This had implications for levels of membership and activism, and together with low membership density, made industrial action problematic.

The QTU's TAFE Executive and TAFE Council (composed of rank and file members) were experiencing first hand the effects of TAFE funding cuts and restructuring, and would receive with dismay regular reports from QTU officers about industrial developments. It seemed that the *best* that could be hoped for was to delay full implementation of the government's agenda to preserve members' conditions for as long as possible. The approach adopted was to challenge the

Working in the new TAFE



Thanks to QTU TAFE members Scott Tibaldi and Hannah Day, who put together this insight into the impact of the state government's attack on Queensland's public vocational education and training provider, not just on its employees but also their family and friends.

Figure 1: Scott Tibaldi and Hannah Day, *Queensland Teachers' Journal*, 119 (3), April 2014, p. 16

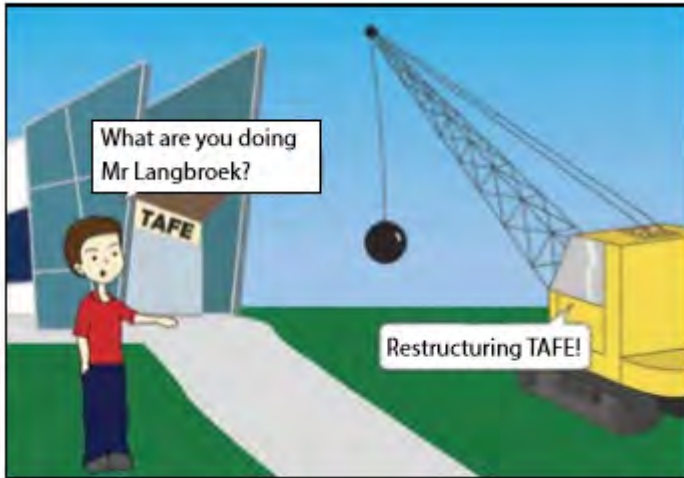


Figure 2: Scott Tibaldi and Hannah Day, *Queensland Teachers' Journal*, 119 (6), August 2014, p. 19.

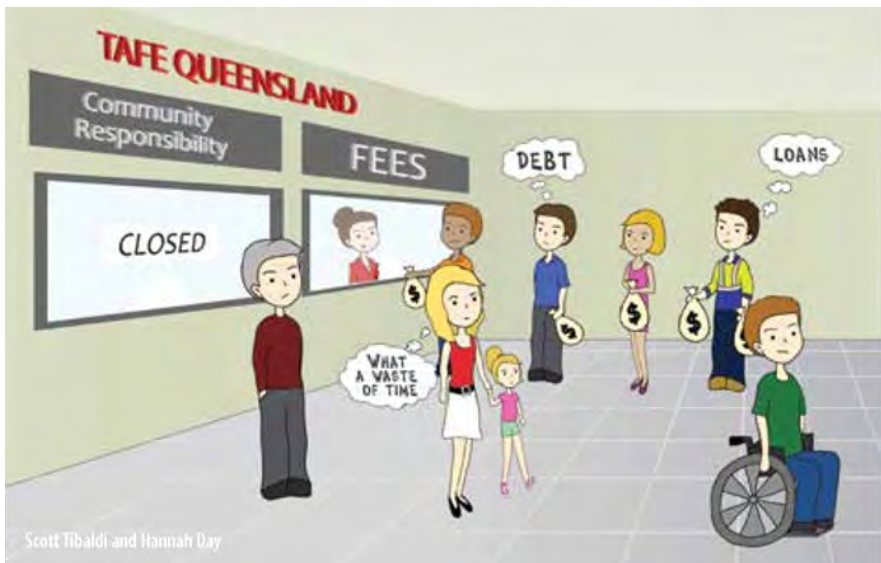


Figure 3: Scott Tibaldi and Hannah Day, *Queensland Teachers' Journal*, 119 (7), October 2014, p. 21.

government in every available forum, at every stage, over every aspect of its agenda. Rank and file activists actively questioned and challenged speakers at management-arranged briefing sessions on the “new TAFE” and wrote articles critiquing developments for the QTU journal. Two even created a series of cartoons for the journal lampooning the government’s approach to TAFE (see Figures 1–3).

The battle for TAFE during the Newman years pitted, on the one side, a government attempting to completely remake TAFE, changing its values and modes of operation, reducing the size of its workforce, cutting back funding, hiving off TAFE assets and pursuing an ambitious industrial relations agenda to roll back working conditions and constrain the operation of unions; and on the other, a beleaguered workforce and their unions. As in all battles, there were casualties, in particular the many TAFE employees who lost their jobs. The resistance mounted by the TAFE teacher workforce, in the face of what seemed inevitable defeat, was remarkable. The fall of the Newman government was the result of a wide variety of factors but the struggle of TAFE teachers deserves to be recognised as playing its part.

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Notes

- 1 This paper focuses on LNP policies and practices that had implications for the Queensland TAFE teachers. There were a wide range of reasons why the electorate became alienated by the Newman Government. Analysis of these reasons, and of the role that policies and practices bearing on the TAFE workforce played in influencing the election result, are matters beyond the scope of this paper.
- 2 The author was a long-term research/industrial officer with the QTU; from 2013 to 2015 this included responsibilities for TAFE.
- 3 The data identified 2,785 full-time equivalent educational staff and 3,416 public service

- staff. Data on staffing levels throughout this paper was provided by the Queensland Department of Education, Training and Employment (DETE) for 2012 until July 2014, and by TAFE Queensland for after 1 July 2014.
- 4 For historical reasons, a small group of teachers and tutors were covered by the Senior College Teachers Award – State 2003. The same certified agreement applied to these employees and those covered by the TAFE Teachers Award. By 2012, this award was substantially identical to the TAFE Teachers Award.
 - 5 Later re-organised as DETE.
 - 6 Small numbers of employees were covered by United Voice, the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union, the Queensland Nurses Union and the Australian Workers Union.
 - 7 And, in the case of both unions, TAFE employees constituted a small minority (less than 4 per cent) of their membership.
 - 8 It was a point of concern amongst TAFE educational staff that, in addition to proposing the removal of many conditions, DETE’s 2013 Enterprise Bargaining (EB) offer sought to remove the word “teacher” from employment categories.
 - 9 The developments relating to TAFE general and administrative staff in the period 2012-2015 are beyond the scope of this paper.
 - 10 The transfer of TAFE employees from the Queensland Public Service to a statutory authority would ordinarily have meant their transfer to the federal industrial relations system, but the government announced its intention (as allowed in the federal Fair Work Act) to seek exemption from this requirement.
 - 11 As per the recommendations of the taskforce, most TAFE assets would be assigned to a separate entity.
 - 12 192 educational staff and 373 administrative and general staff.
 - 13 Together relied, in the main, on the QTU log.
 - 14 These high-end salary employees would be vulnerable in a context of staff cost-cutting through downsizing.
 - 15 The pay increase was subsequently delivered as agreed.
 - 16 Together, on behalf of administrative and general staff, challenged the capacity of an employer, in the midst of legal and industrial proceeding relating to the existing core certified agreement, to exclude a specific group of employees covered by that agreement from the effects of those proceedings.
 - 17 The response rate from members was 73 per cent.
 - 18 Due to the state election, the action was discontinued.
 - 19 Many of these provisions also applied to any certified agreements certified following the modernisation of the underlying award.
 - 20 It is worth noting that, as specified in the legislation, a “modern award” does not come into effect until a new (post-modernisation) certified agreement is certified.

‘The men only worked when necessary, we called no man master and we had no King’

Keynote presentation to the 15th national labour history conference, Workers of the World, held in Brisbane, 25–27 September 2017.

Professor John Maynard

The conference theme stated that the Australian working class are workers of the world, and this working class are a predominantly immigrant working class (or the descendants of relatively recent immigrants); and in the sense that workers from so many of the world’s nations, languages and cultures have made their homes here. Whilst I acknowledge this sentiment my paper comes from a vastly differing angle in that we as Aboriginal people are not an immigrant working class—from an Indigenous perspective we have always been here. Only recently science has pushed back the Aboriginal place on this continent to 65,000 years. The time period has constantly changed from ten thousand, twenty thousand, thirty thousand, forty thousand, fifty thousand and now sixty-five thousand years. An Aboriginal elder over thirty-years ago when informed that scientists had recognized Aboriginal people as a part of the Australian continent at that time for fifty thousand years. The old man pondered the question and made reply:

They say we have been here for fifty thousand years, it is much longer, we have been here since the time before time began, and we have come directly out of the Dreamtime of the Creative Ancestors and have lived and kept the earth as it was on the very first day.

“We have lived and kept the earth as it was on the very first day” an important statement and lesson in this current world facing catastrophic rising sea levels, climate change and bizarre and wild weather patterns!

My discussion takes us back over ninety years ago to the birth of the modern Aboriginal political movement with the establishment of the Australian Aboriginal Progressive Association (AAPA) in Sydney in 1924. The AAPA were led by a remarkable Aboriginal patriot Fred Maynard, my grandfather. Many of the early Aboriginal activists were workers in the Sydney railway yards, returned soldiers and like my grandfather wharf labourers. The railway workshops and the docks were hotbeds of political agitation. The railway and dockyard, sheds and workshops enabled Aboriginal people to get training, employment and to raise a voice. The railway workshops were the site where

the 1917 Great Strike started. In these environments, Aboriginal workers recognized a connection with the trade union demands and their own plight.

Aboriginal people demanding justice and recognizing a sense of sovereign rights is not just a recent phenomenon. Aboriginal workers were a part of a miners' rebellion on the Bendigo goldfields in the 1850s. Increased police and legal restrictions over mining licenses had incensed the miners and it was noted that:

There were four or five natives working together, and they made a good bit of gold. They were asked if they had a license, and they said no, the country belonged to them, and they were not going to pay a license. They were all ordered off the diggings.

Aboriginal men were later noted amongst the crowd at the Bendigo demonstration.

Aboriginal militant workers would become more commonplace in the twentieth century. There was a global surge of unrest in the wake of World War I with oppressed groups around the world including India, Egypt, Ireland, Russia and Africa clamoring for self-determination and the right to take charge of their own destiny. In Australia, the time period witnessed the rise of a vibrant pan-Aboriginal political movement intent



Fred Maynard, inaugural president of the Australian Aboriginal Progressive Association

on demanding Aboriginal rights to land, protecting their children from government removal policy, defending an Indigenous cultural identity, demanding self-determination and citizenship rights in their own country and that Aboriginal people should be placed in charge of Aboriginal affairs.

It is important to consider that over 1000 Aboriginal men had enlisted and fought for their so-called country in WWI. These men returned to the enforced injustices of newly introduced draconian government controls and they were vocal and bitter over these

decisions. The records of the hundreds of Aboriginal men that enlisted for the First World War reinforces the idea that Aboriginal people prior to WWI had considerable freedom of movement and a capacity to make their own life decisions. On the forms, they completed when enlisting, these men all stated that they were employed, with many naturally being listed as stockmen, labourers, shearers and farm hands. But men also listed such diverse occupations as truck drivers, fitters, dairymen, clothing cutter, mason, miners, clerk, jockeys, contractors, glass worker, machinist, lime burner, butchers, musician, fishermen, blacksmiths, baker, plumbers, railway clerk, nurseryman, train engine drivers, oyster merchants, pattern maker, railway porter, motor mechanic, merchant sailors, mechanical draftsman, student, orchardist, warehouseman, process engraver, dental mechanic and a journalist, to name but a few. The records highlight the high employment of Aboriginal men and challenge the idea that the prospect of a wage was the major motivation behind enlistment. Clearly Aboriginal men did not go to war simply because they lacked options or choices. Importantly it also reveals that prior to WWI Aboriginal people were not yet welfare dependent on the government or under its control.

There were several critical issues that incited Aboriginal political revolt. These included the tightening control

over Aboriginal lives including restrictions on their movement and freedom to choose their own ways and means of gaining a living, the revocations of tens of thousands of acres of independent and successful Aboriginal farms and the sudden acceleration of a policy to remove Aboriginal children from their families. Thousands of Aboriginal kids would be removed and institutionalized. Many never returned to their families and the intergenerational trauma of that sickening policy continues to impact even today.

The formation of the Australian Aboriginal Progressive Association in 1924 was in direct response to the enforced inequality and injustices forced upon the Aboriginal population. The AAPA membership in Australia were greatly inspired and influenced by Marcus Garvey and his ideology of self-determination and cultural pride. Garvey had established the Universal Negro Improvement Association in Harlem in 1916 and the UNIA in seven short years had attracted millions of followers across the globe. Today Garvey and the UNIA are recognized as being the biggest black movement ever established in the United States. Oppressed groups around the globe interacted, communicated and established long-standing connections and affiliations with each other. These networks offered support, encouragement and, importantly, a sense of communal strength and unity.

This global movement demonstrates the level of mobility and political exchange among oppressed activists.

As early as 1902 an organisation called the Coloured Progressive Association (CPA) was established in Australia. The organisation was comprised mainly of members from the 'Black Commonwealth' that included people living in Australia and other visiting West Indian, Indian, African, Maori and Islander merchant sailors. But additionally, some visiting African Americans and Aboriginal dockworkers were also a part of this group. The CPA was apparently formed to offer support after the establishment of the 'White Australia' policy and a very inhospitable Australian environment. In 1902 members of the CPA sent correspondence to the British House of Commons beseeching assistance. They wrote to the Secretary of the Colonies, Joseph Chamberlain, protesting the newly introduced White Australia policy:

The administration of the Bill is vile, and also the general effects are undoubtedly cruel. Aliens of all kinds can enter the Commonwealth, whether they can read or write, as long as they are not black.

The CPA may well have disappeared from historical memory except for the visit of African American boxing sensation Jack Johnson to Australia in 1907 and 1908. The CPA held a

farewell function in Sydney to honour Johnson in 1907. Jack Johnson was not just a great boxer but also a highly politicised, charismatic and inspiring figure. Future Aboriginal political leader Fred Maynard was present at that farewell function. Johnson would win three fights easily on his 1907 visit and returned in 1908 to fight Tommy Burns for the Heavyweight Championship of the World. The formation of an organisation such as the CPA was very important in helping to define the spaces in which Aboriginal people moved, and the identifications and alliances they formed with other oppressed groups. These connections were forged between displaced people, engendering the mobility, not just of black populations, but, importantly, of black transnational politics. Aboriginal political resistance in the twentieth century emerged, in part, in response to the white, colonial, paternalistic civilising mission particular to the Australian context but it also developed, in concert with international black influences. Like North America and the movement of black people to New York and Harlem, a similar migration to the urban space was witnessed in Australia. The wake of WWI witnessed Aboriginal people fleeing the increased governmental control and heading to the capital cities for greater working opportunities and greater freedom. They were refugees in their own country but the city space offered a heady mix of urbanisation and radicalisation.

Marcus Garvey's impact upon Aboriginal Australia witnessed a radical shift and awakening awareness of Aboriginal Australians of their national and global political challenges. The establishment of a Sydney chapter of the UNIA in 1920 draws reference back to the earlier CPA, as the Secretary of the UNIA Sydney branch was one Robert Usher. Usher, a West Indian, had previously been an office bearer of the CPA during its known years of operation 1902—1912. In reports covered in Garvey's *Negro World* newspaper, Usher could not contain his enthusiasm on the impact of Marcus Garvey and the UNIA in Australia and that the message was 'resounding throughout the length and breadth of this small continent'. He revealed that the black population of Australia were suffering low self-esteem and confidence 'but there are some of us who are doing our best to not only keep ourselves out of the mire, but to pull our brothers out as well'. Aboriginal activists, including Fred Maynard and Tom Lacey, were members of the Sydney UNIA branch. Marcus Garvey had recognised, and directed his energies towards, the notion that all black people were 'part of a transnational "nation", a global race with a common destiny'. The ideology of 'Garveyism depended on activities that could restore both self-respect and a sense of community—essentially the development of a united black culture'. The sudden rise of Garvey and Garveyism was only

possible 'because blacks retained a healthy consciousness of identity and community. What Garvey did was to provide a political channel and a global perspective for that consciousness'.

At the head of this network was a global maritime culture and history that connected black and oppressed groups across the global waterfront. The world's wharves, including Australia, proved to be pivotal in the establishment of a highly effective worldwide network of information—it was via the maritime industry that Garvey was able to send out agents (generally merchant sailors) to spread the message. Connection between sailors and wharf labourers at ports facilitated the weaving of this sophisticated communication system across the sea-lanes. These black mariners carried news and political reading material between Western Europe, the US, Caribbean and Pacific in fact, to all corners of the globe. Garvey's newspaper, *The Negro World*, played a significant part in this process. It established a global circulation and like elsewhere was eagerly sought after in Australia.

There are several accounts of international black newspapers being sought, and made available on Australian docks, including the *Crisis*, *Brownies Book*, *Crusader*, *Journal of Negro History*, *Negro World* and *Emancipator*. Tom Lacey, a member of the Sydney UNIA branch and later

treasurer of the AAPA, wrote to the *Negro World* editor in 1924: 'I would be very grateful to you if you could advise me how to get some of your American papers, the *Negro World* and other papers, so that I could distribute them among our people as it might help to enlighten them a bit'. Australian archival sources also indicate the fear on the part of authorities of the spread of what was termed 'seditious literature' influencing Aboriginal people. Lacey's letter to the central UNIA branch and published in *The Negro World* in 1924 pledged the support of ten thousand Aboriginal people in New South Wales and sixty thousand Aboriginal people nationally to Marcus Garvey and his movement. Lacey stating that the Sydney UNIA branch had 'not had the time to organize in the other four states yet' but was intent in pushing the message across the country. Lacey pointed out that he had been a UNIA member for four years and had only recently been elected as the Sydney Branch organizer. He revealed that Aboriginal people in Australia were now being held under tight control by government authorities and departments with many of the people confined on tightly controlled Aboriginal reserves:

I hope before long you will be able to send us a delegate down here to Australia and it would mean a great help to us... We have a bit of trouble to see some of our people, as the

missionaries have got the most of them, and we have great difficulty in reaching them. The authorities won't allow us to see them unless we can give them (the Aboriginal Board) a clear explanation of what we want them for.

Robert Usher was aware that Marcus Garvey was intending to undertake a world tour in 1923 and expressed the hope that Garvey would include a visit to Sydney on his itinerary. Garvey himself publicly acknowledged the Sydney branch:

The moment I landed in New York I received a cable from Sydney, Australia, where we have a division, who manifested their loyalty 100 per cent, after hearing and reading in the Sydney papers of my arrest here a few weeks ago.

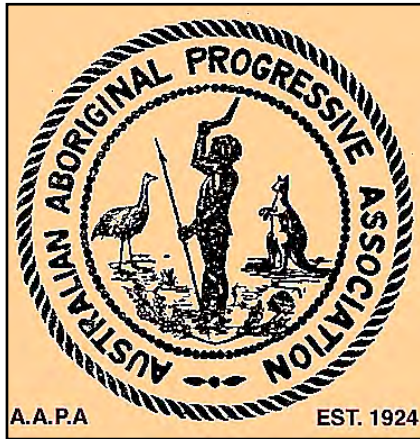
Garvey was most certainly undermined with opposition and resentment from the black intellectual middle class elite highly jealous of Garvey's success with massive grass roots support and they clandestinely sided with J. Edgar Hoover and the FBI in bringing about Garvey's downfall. He was gaoled in 1923 on trumped up mail fraud charges and not released until 1927 when he was deported from the USA and never allowed to return. Whilst there is no surviving evidence of why the Sydney UNIA branch suddenly ceased operations in 1924 we can surmise

that the Aboriginal activists had recognised the importance of forming their own organisation and agenda. Nevertheless, the AAPA would remain greatly influenced by Garveyism including a platform that promoted self-determination and focused on economic, social and political reform and connection to country.

As a leader, Fred Maynard was lauded: ‘as a public speaker he has few equals in the Commonwealth’ and described, as ‘an orator of outstanding ability, and in the not far distant future will loom large in the politics of this country’. Maynard’s years on the wharf and close connection with visiting black sailors and the availability of black newspapers and manifestos including Garveyism clearly influenced his ideology greatly. Self-educated on a wide variety of topics, and a voracious reader who continued to educate himself, Maynard’s awareness of international—particularly black—issues and his association with African American influences and his links to the Garvey movement may have influenced the New South Wales Aborigines Protection Boards attempt to discredit and defame Maynard’s Aboriginal background and character. In correspondence from the Board to Premier Jack Lang, the inference made was quite explicit: he could not possibly be Aboriginal and his representations ‘should not be allowed to unduly occupy the Premier’s time. Mr. Maynard is a full blooded black

(either American or South African) whose voluble manner and illogical views are more likely to disturb the Australian Aborigines than achieve for them improvement of conditions.’

The Australian Aboriginal Progressive Association (AAPA) that formed in Sydney in 1924 would eventually hold four conferences in Sydney, Kempsey, Grafton and Lismore. They attracted widespread support from Indigenous communities, establishing thirteen branches and four sub branches with a membership that exceeded six hundred. Considering that the entire Aboriginal population of NSW at that time on government figures numbered less than 7000 and with the greater majority of Aboriginal people now confined on more restrictive reserves with denied mobility, this was a staggering achievement. They opened their own offices in Crown Street Sydney with the phone connected. News of the AAPA spread rapidly through an established and active Indigenous community network. The formation of the organization filled Aboriginal people with hope and inspiration with the knowledge that some of their own were now speaking out against the oppressive policies that confronted Aboriginal people and communities. One old man ‘wrote from a far back settlement, asking that someone should come and tell them about the “Freedom Club”’.



In April 1925, the AAPA held the first Aboriginal civil rights convention ever staged in Australia at St David's Church and Hall in Surrey Hills, Sydney. In his inaugural address as President of the Australian Aboriginal Progressive Association (AAPA) my grandfather outlined the hopes and dreams of Aboriginal people:

Brothers and sisters, we have much business to transact so lets get right down to it. We aim at the spiritual, political, industrial and social. We want to work out our own destiny. Our people have not had the courage to stand together in the past, but now we are united, and are determined to work for the preservation for all of those interests, which are near, and dear to us.

The AAPA were instantly front-page news with headlines trumpeting "On Aborigines Aspirations—First Australians To Help Themselves—Self Determination". Over 200 Aboriginal people were in attendance and many had travelled great distances and 'they heartily supported the objectives of the association'. The newspaper coverage highlighted the large enthusiastic cross-section of the Aboriginal community present:

the old and young were there. The well-dressed matronly woman and the shingled girl of 19. The old man of 60 and the young man of athletic build. All are fighting for the preservation of the rights of Aborigines for self-determination.

The Aboriginal activists were articulate, eloquent and educated statesmen and women far removed from the wider misconceptions of the time that portrayed Aboriginal people as belonging to the Stone Age, unable to be educated and a dying race. The second conference in Kempsey in late 1925 attracted over seven hundred Aboriginal delegates and ran over three days. All the papers were written and delivered by Aboriginal people on the major issues of land, children, housing, education, health and employment. Highlighting the significance of a cultural grounding it was noted that several of the papers were delivered in Aboriginal lingo. Fred Maynard closed the conference with the following

powerful resolution that was dispatched to all levels of Australian government.

As it is the proud boast of Australia that every person born beneath the Southern Cross is born free, irrespective of origin, race, colour, creed, religion or any other impediment. We the representatives of the original people, in conference assembled, demand that we shall be accorded the same full right of privileges of citizenship as are enjoyed by all other sections of the community.

Despite the tightened government control Aboriginal people were clinging and fighting for their hard-fought independence. At a meeting in 1925 the AAPA repudiated claims that Aboriginal people were lazy and would not work stating: 'they had been in close touch with the people, and all of those they knew worked, the women as well as the men'. At another meeting in 1927:

Where about 200 men and women were gathered in the interests of the A.A.P.A the question was put for a show of hands of those receiving government help, and to our surprise... only half a dozen hands went up. The others were working; timber-getting, scrub cleaning and other rural employments. In most cases earning the basic wage.

In 1927 the AAPA released a manifesto of their demands. It was sent through to the Jack Lang state government in NSW and Prime Stanley Bruce and the Commonwealth government. Additionally, they mounted a media campaign and the manifesto was published widely across the entire state of NSW, as well as gaining coverage in Queensland, Victoria and South. The manifesto grounded the Aboriginal demands on three main points. (1) A national land rights agenda demanding 'enough land for each and every Aboriginal family in the country' and my grandfather added 'we have overriding rights over all others in our own land'. (2) Stopping the horrific policy of removing Aboriginal children from the care of their own families. Finally, they wanted the state Protection Boards abolished and an all Aboriginal Board established to sit under the Commonwealth Government to take charge of Aboriginal policy and directives. The latter gains greater prominence through the recent Uluru statement of the Heart which called for 'an Indigenous voice, an Indigenous body, almost certainly elected, to provide advice and recommendations on proposed policy affecting Indigenous Australians' to the Commonwealth government. Amazing ninety years on basically the same demand.

Sadly, the NSW State government dismissed the AAPA manifesto and additionally advised the Commonwealth government to ignore

APPEAL

To Men and Women of New South Wales.

We implore your generous assistance in our effort to obtain simple justice for the aboriginals of this State. Our requests are few and their equity cannot be denied. We are only asking for citizen rights as set out in the following request made to the State Government, viz.:—

- (a) That all capable aboriginals shall be given in fee simple sufficient good land to maintain a family.
- (b) That the family life of the aboriginal people shall be held sacred and free from invasion and that the children shall be left in the control of their parents.
- (c) That the incapables of the Aboriginal Community (the direct liability of the Government consequent upon neglect in the past) be properly cared for in suitable homes on reserves, the full expense of such establishments to be borne by the Government.
- (d) That the supervision of all such aboriginal Homes, Hostels or Reserves be entrusted to the educated aboriginals possessing the requisite ability for such management.
- (e) That the control of aboriginal affairs, apart from common law rights, shall be vested in a board of management comprised of capable educated aboriginals under a chairman to be appointed by the Government.

We confidently anticipate your kindly endorsement of this just request. Feeling sure that it is your desire to give our people and their children every reasonable opportunity in our own land. We are only asking to be given the same privileges regarding our family life as are being freely offered to people from other countries.

Committing our plea for assistance to your characteristic love of fair play, we are,

Gratefully yours,

F. G. MAYNARD, President.
T. LACBY, Hon. Treasurer.

For and on behalf of the members of
The Australian Aboriginal Progressive Association.

the AAPA demands adding that Aboriginal people were being kindly administered and cared for by the NSW Protection Board. When Fred Maynard was notified of the dismissive response, incensed he penned a powerful three-page response to Premier Jack Lang:

I wish to make it perfectly clear, on behalf of our people, that we accept no condition of inferiority as compared with the European people. Two distinct civilizations are represented by the respective races. On one hand, we have the civilization of necessity and on the other the civilization co-incident with a bounteous supply of all the requirements of the human race. That the European people by the arts of war destroyed our more ancient civilization is freely admitted, and that by their vices and diseases our people have been decimated is also patent, but neither of these facts are evidence of superiority. Quite the contrary is the case... The members of the [AAPA] have also noted the strenuous efforts of the Trade Union leaders to attain the conditions which existed in our country at the time of invasion by Europeans—the men only worked when necessary—we called no man “Master” and we had no king.

By 1927 the AAPA had established a widespread Aboriginal network of information that flowed into the central offices. Maynard was notified of a horrific crime against a young Aboriginal girl and he penned a letter of comfort and support to this young girl. This letter would signal and intensify the New South Wales Aborigines Protection Board’s directed hostility against the Aboriginal leadership. The AAPA had received notification that a young Aboriginal girl removed from her family had been placed into the apprenticeship scheme. The correspondence indicated that this girl, aged only fourteen years, had been raped at her place of employment in Western NSW and when diagnosed pregnant was put on a train at Protection Board directive and sent to Sydney. She had her baby, which apparently died at birth. Incredibly and callously the Protection Board put her back on a train and sent her back to the very place where these assaults had been committed. When news reached Fred Maynard he wrote immediately. His compassion and anger at the sickening tale are self-evident.

His heart-rending letter began with an opening of comfort, ‘my darling little sister I am speaking to you now as a big bro’:

my heart is filled with regret and disgust. First because you were taken down by those who were supposed to be your guide

through life. What a wicked conception, what a fallacy, under the so called pretence and administration re the Board, governmental control, etc I say deliberately, the whole damnable thing has got to stop and by God[s] help it shall.

He was incensed that the law condoned attacks against Aboriginal girls and allowed the perpetrators to escape without penalty. He indicated that this process was about to change, and he would take legal action against the man responsible in this case:

I will do my very best to ventilate the whole case. But, first of all, my dearest, I may tell you and, listen, girlie, your case is one in dozens with our girls, more is the pity, God forbid, those white robbers of our womens virtues, seem to do just as they like with down right impunity and mind you, my dear girl, the law stands for it. There is no clause in our own Aboriginal Act which stands for principles for our girls, that is to say any of these white fellows can take our girls down and laugh to scorn yet? with impunity that which they have been responsible for they escape all their obligations everytime.

Maynard was scathing when he warned that sinister motives lay behind the New South Wales Protection Board's

policy and intentions. 'Make no mistake. No doubt, they are trying to exterminate the Noble and Ancient race of sunny Australia'. The vitriol and contempt in his message of the Board and Act could not be contained: 'What a horrible conception of so called legislation, Re any civilised laws, I say deliberately stinks of the Belgian Congo'. He revealed the Board's malicious intentions were hiding behind 'these so called civilised methods of rule, under Christianised ideals, as they claim of civilising our people under the pretence of love'. Maynard felt the whole process had to be confronted:

these tyrannous methods, under the so called administrative laws re the Aboriginal Act, have got to be blotted out as they are an insult to intelligent, right thinking people. We are not going to be insulted any longer than it will take to wipe it off the Statute Books. That's what our Association stands for, liberty, freedom and the right to function in our own interest.

He drove it home that Aboriginal people had been pushed too far:

Are we going to stand for these things any longer? Certainly not! Away with the damnable insulting methods which are degrading. Give us a hand, stand by your own native Aboriginal

officers and fight for liberty and freedom.

Sadly, Maynard's letter never reached the young Aboriginal girl. The manager of the station opened the letter and on reading its contents and noting the AAPA logo sent it directly to the Board highlighting that 'when I saw the heading on the paper I glanced through it I then considered it my duty "to send it on to you to let you see what is doing"'.

Police harassment after this incident rapidly escalated and they were fully intent on smashing and breaking up Aboriginal political resistance. The opposition to the AAPA particularly through police threat, intimidation and constant surveillance was responsible for the organisation being driven underground and the AAPA slipped from public view in 1928. The big question remains why did the AAPA so suddenly disappear from public view in early 1928? It seems hard to fathom especially with press reports only just before this abrupt end indicating exciting new initiatives that included a new newspaper to be called the *Corroboree*. The demise of the AAPA can be linked to the onset of the Great Depression and the difficulties Aboriginal men had in maintaining work. Unquestionably the main cause of the demise of the AAPA was through the activities of the NSW police force. It is important to understand that the Chairman of

the NSW Aborigines Protection Board was the NSW Police Commissioner. A revealing 1927 newspaper interview with Fred Maynard indicates the level of intimidation he was subjected to at the time. Maynard stating:

he had been warned on many occasions that the doors of Long Bay [Gaol] were opening for him. He would cheerfully go to gaol for the remainder of his life, he declared, if, by so doing, he could make the people of Australia realise the truly frightful administration of the Aborigines Act.

Fred Maynard had also married in 1928 and for a very outspoken Aboriginal activist to marry a white woman in 1928 was not the done thing. These threats only intensified after his marriage and the arrival of children. David Huggonson has speculated on the level of intimidation that 'officers of the Board may have made in relation to taking Maynard's children into state care if he continued his agitation'. The 1931, Australian Communist Party publication on the Rights of Aborigines revealed that the AAPA was destroyed through a coalition of opposition formed between the NSW State government Aborigines Protection Board, the missionaries, and the police.

In conclusion, it is amazing that the history of the Australian Aboriginal Progressive Association for a long period lay forgotten and erased from

Australian history and memory. We are left today to recognize and remember the early Aboriginal freedom fighters that were prepared to bravely step forward to challenge the tight government control over Aboriginal lives in the early decades of the twentieth century. It was the connection of Aboriginal people with African American visitors, literature and manifestos and the inspiration of Marcus Garvey that left an indelible

imprint on their political thinking and strategies. The organisation they formed the Australian Aboriginal Progressive Association remains as the first united all Aboriginal political organisation to form in Australia. Knowledge of these courageous individuals and their demands provides inspiration for our future generations that they have a proud history with heroes and heroines of their own.



Fred Maynard and his sister, Emma, at Sydney's Rocks in 1927.

The Hopevale Community School dispute, 1979: An issue of human rights

Stuart MacDonald

In 1979 six teachers employed at the Hopevale School undertook twenty days of industrial action, the longest stoppage in the history of the Queensland Teachers' Union (QTU). They acted in support of a colleague who had been transferred out of the area as a punishment for his involvement in local Indigenous community issues.¹ As well, several other North Queensland schools undertook industrial action in support of the campaign, with thirteen stopping for 24 hours. This dispute involved the human rights of teachers, students and the local indigenous community to speak up for themselves and the right to a public education free from the interference of outside non-education political and religious authorities.

Hopevale is located 52 kilometres north west of Cooktown in Far North Queensland. In 1979 the local School was on an Aboriginal Reserve subject to strict Queensland government legislation under the control of the Bjelke-Petersen state government. It was also a Lutheran mission with influential church authorities having a say over school staffing and education programs.

Unlike most other Queensland state schools at the time, authorities outside the Education Department had influence over the running of the school. The most powerful authority was the Queensland Department of Aboriginal and Islander Affairs (DAIA). In 1979 the School was in a transition process from a Church controlled mission school within an Aboriginal Reserve to a state school within the normal government education processes.

My involvement in this dispute arose from my appointment, in August 1979, as the QTU North Queensland Organiser based in Townsville and covering teacher members across all of Northern region, including Hopevale. I worked closely with the teachers to assist in promoting their message to the wider teacher and Queensland communities.

The motivation for recalling and writing about this matter is to ensure that the teachers directly involved in this dispute, both in Hopevale and beyond, receive greater recognition and praise for their actions; and to restore this dispute to its rightful place in the history of the QTU.

The teacher at the centre of this dispute was in his 30s and had been appointed to the school (with Lutheran Church

approval) at the start of the 1978 school year to teach Year 7 students. He was a competent teacher respected for his education work by the principal, fellow staff, students and the local community. As an outspoken and mature age teacher he was supported by his younger colleagues for his willingness to stand up against the unfairness of the authoritarian Reserve system at Hopevale.

Concerns existed in the Hopevale community regarding various aspects of life including the local farming and work arrangements, the Cape Flattery silica mines with its discriminatory employment policies (including the lack of suitable worksite accommodation for Indigenous workers) and the inadequate mining royalty payments for the local communities,² the ignoring of the concerns of the Hopevale Indigenous people and the external influence and control of the community authorities and management.

There was a long history of neglect of Hopevale community concerns by the external authorities, particularly the DAIA and their local management representatives. Evidence for this was provided in reports provided by the Lutheran Church of Queensland in 1978 and the Queensland Department of Education in 1979.

In 1978 the Lutheran Church's Queensland Council sent a task force of representatives to Hopevale (as

well as Bloomfield and Cooktown) to investigate and report on concerns within the various communities and congregations.³ The group of three Lutheran ministers visited Hopevale on 12–15 and 21–28 June 1978.

The investigation arose out of concerns raised by local people including a lack of consideration of community needs by the authorities, too much external State government control and a lack of employment and other opportunities for the local indigenous people.⁴

The major issue raised by the local people in the Report was “revolved around the management.”⁵ The Aboriginal Community Council was perceived as “subservient” and “a puppet of the Government.”⁶ Also, “[I]ittle or no incentive was given to the local people to succeed in industry and administration. Some had been so discouraged through lack of trust and incentive as to have abandoned their task.”⁷

Recommendations made in this Report included improved communication lines, greater attention to the concerns of the Hopevale community, acceptance of visits by people of various political persuasions and better contact between non-indigenous staff and the local people. Also recommended was the greater use of local Indigenous people as the management staff.⁸

The teacher at the centre of this dispute had strong convictions about justice, human rights and community advancement. He became concerned with the reserve administration and the lack of attention to the needs of the local people. As a result, he became involved in Hopevale community activities.

One area of involvement was the regularly held community administration meetings. These meetings were meant to be advisory to the Aboriginal Community Council. One specific area of concern raised at these meetings was the work of a recently appointed farm supervisor who was attempting to improve productivity, community involvement and outcomes.

On 10 July 1979 an evening administration meeting was held and this matter was discussed and the minutes were subsequently published. A number of people (including the teacher and the school principal) who had been at the meeting agreed that the part of the minutes negatively referring to the farm supervisor were grossly inaccurate. The teacher and other community members attempted to remedy the situation by calling another meeting to rectify the minutes. The subsequent meeting was held (24 July 1979) and the references to the farm employee were corrected. Local management authorities referred to this meeting as “illegal” (despite the

advisory nature of it) and complaints were made to external DAIA authorities.⁹

On 31 August 1979 the teacher attended a public Council meeting before school. The teacher sought and received the permission of the principal to allow Years 6 and 7 to attend as a Social Studies activity if they wished to do so and some did attend.

At one stage of the meeting police removed an Indigenous man who was attempting to speak in support of the recently dismissed farm supervisor. The teacher asked the police what authority they were using. There was no reply and the man was removed to a police lockup but he was neither arrested nor charged.

Following this meeting the teacher was again subject to management complaints to the DAIA and Lutheran Church authorities. Four days later he was advised by the Education Department of his transfer to Gladstone West School. This was despite his Year 7 class having only a little over one term to go at the school and the fact that his wife was a Health Department employee in Cooktown.

On 12–13 September 1979 the Northern Regional Inspector (Primary) visited the Hopevale community and School to consider the grounds for the transfer of the teacher.¹⁰ Initially the Inspector was accompanied by a QTU

official but he had to withdraw on the first day due to a serious illness.

In his report the Inspector noted that the community management was seen “in a poor light”.¹¹ Also he mentioned concerns that the Lutheran authorities (with the exception of one pastor) and the DAIA seemed more anxious to solve their own problems and “thought little about the welfare of the children at the school.”¹²

The Inspector commented that the teacher was “doing a creditable job at the school” and that local citizens “expressed the hope that he be not transferred because he was performing well at the School.” He noted as well that “teachers steadfastly believe that he has been treated unfairly.”¹³

This evidence was backed up by the petition signed by 201 members (out of the 210 adults) of the Hopevale community (including 3 of the 5 members of the Aboriginal Council) requesting that the transfer not be proceeded with.¹⁴

The Inspector recommended that the teacher’s transfer be delayed until the end of the School year out of concern for the students and to show some compassion rather than it be perceived as solely “punitive”.¹⁵ The Education Department under pressure from the DAIA (Pat Killoran Director) and State government politicians (the Premier Joh Bjelke-Petersen and the

Minister for Aboriginal and Islander Advancement Charles Porter) rejected the recommendation.

The Education Department Director General (Clyde Gilmour) at the time conceded that the transfer was made at the request of the DAIA and some Lutheran Church authorities.¹⁶

Following refusal of the Education Department to postpone the transfer to the end of the year the teachers voted to go on strike. The strike began on 4 October 1979. Soon after the teacher and myself (as the QTU Regional Organiser) were given notice of eviction from the community by the Aboriginal Council. It was clear that the evictions were demanded by the DAIA and State Government politicians in Brisbane.

The teachers also left the community in response to the evictions. The teachers returned to work on 1 November 1979. The teacher at the centre of the dispute reluctantly had to accept a later transfer but was also further punished with a pay reduction for his defiance of the authorities.

Teachers from 13 other North Queensland schools, many of whom had direct experience or were aware of the conditions in Reserve communities across the Northern Region, undertook industrial action (24 hour stoppages in the September—October 1979 period) in support of the Hopevale teachers. Ballots were arranged by the QTU in

these schools and the school union representatives or myself as the Union Regional Organiser helped organise the voting.

Understandably concerns have been raised at the costs of such a prolonged and uncompromising school dispute. Of particular concern was the effect on the education of the Hopevale students.

It should be noted however that the then Hopevale teachers, the QTU and an Education Department inquiry recommended to the political hierarchy compromises in the dispute but they were all refused. For example, the request to delay the teacher's transfer until the end of the school year (recommended by an Education Department Regional Inspector who visited the community at the time and supported by the QTU) to minimise the disruption of the Year 7 class program was rejected by the Government.

Also, jointly offered was a transfer of the teacher to the nearby Cooktown School. The teacher's wife was employed by the Health Department in Cooktown. Again, this was refused by the State authorities. As well somewhat overlooked in this dispute was the extra outside-of-school lessons that the teachers provided for the students during and following the strike action.

In the longer term much was gained from this difficult dispute. The direct involvement of outside religious and

political forces in indigenous public education was removed.

The Incentive Transfer Scheme was expanded to encourage increased stability and quality at remote area schools.

Appeal procedures were put in place for transfers likely to cause excessive hardship for a teacher and their family.

The right of entry of union officials to all education worksites was maintained. Overall the acceptance of teachers' normal civil rights and improved conditions within Indigenous communities was granted.

We must thank the 1979 Hopevale teachers and their supporters for these outcomes.

Other sources

- WF Kohlmann, Report on Investigation at Hopevale State School 20 October 1979.
- Stuart MacDonald (Queensland Teachers Union Northern Regional Organiser), Report on The Hopevale Dispute, 12 October 1979.
- Queensland Teachers Union, "Hopevale Dispute Unresolved", News Flash, 16 October 1979.
- Queensland Parliamentary Debates, Transfer of Teacher from Hope Vale Mission School, Question Time, 16 October 1979.
- Debbie Camden, "My Husband Paid Price", *Telegraph*, 25 August 1980.
- Ross Peake, "Row as Mission groups put ban on Union Official", *Courier Mail*, 10 October 1979, p. 3.
- NR Andrews (solicitor), Letter to the Chairman of the Queensland Public Service Board on behalf of Hopevale teacher, 14 December 1979.

Notes

- 1 The teachers are not identified in this paper as I have been unable to contact them to get their permission.
- 2 Concerns included the lack of accommodation on site for the wives of aboriginal employees as compared to the arrangements for non-indigenous employees. Also issues with the inadequate payments to Mission authorities by the Japanese mining company and the role of State government politicians in the mine's approval and entitlements. See Senate Debates, 23 November 1979, p. 91.
- 3 HPV Renner, KH Kirsch and GL Rose, Report of Hopevale – Bloomfield – Cooktown Visitation, 11–29 June 1979, Qld Lutheran Church.
- 4 *Ibid*, p. 1.
- 5 *Ibid*, p. 8.
- 6 *Ibid*, p. 8.
- 7 *Ibid*, p. 8.
- 8 *Ibid*, pp. 80–82.
- 9 *Ibid*, p. 3.
- 10 NR Town, Report of Investigation at Hopevale State School by Regional Inspector (Primary) Northern, 12–13 September 1979, Qld Department of Education.
- 11 *Ibid*, p. 8.
- 12 *Ibid*, p. 8.
- 13 *Ibid*, p. 8.
- 14 Petition signed by members of the Aboriginal Community of Hope Vale re teacher transfer, September 1979.
- 15 Town, *op cit*, p. 8.
- 16 Admissions by Qld Education officers including George Berkeley Assistant Director General, Qld Conciliation and Arbitration Commission hearing, 6 September 1979.

In Memorium

Lindesay Jones

Lindesay Gordon Bauer Jones was born in Blackall on 19 December 1939. He attended Blackall Primary School and Rockhampton Grammar School where he became a highly successful track and field star, turning professional in 1962. He was devoted to sport and became a master athletics coach and Rugby League conditioner.

The son of a shearer, he was the fourth generation of his family to become a member of the ALP when he joined in 1959. He served as an Alderman on the Toowoomba City Council for about 6 years in the late 1970s and ran as a state candidate twice. A simple chronology of Lindesay's life, in itself an impressive tale of achievement, only provides a superficial view of the impact Lindesay made on the sporting and political arenas.

His guidance of many successful athletes stemmed from his innate ability to connect with people and motivate them, teaching them to use their emotional intelligence and "dig deep". This combined with his eternal optimism, gave many "kids from the

bush" the belief that they could mix it with the best and they did.

After a successful coaching career Lindesay turned his unique abilities to politics. Having lived through the split of 1957 and experiencing firsthand the attacks on democracy and accountable government by the Bjelke-Petersen government, Lindesay devoted the rest of his life to three things:

1. reforming the outmoded policies and rules of Queensland Labor;
2. campaigning to preselect progressive and capable ALP candidates;
3. organising successful campaign strategies to elect Labor governments.

His formidable campaigning and organising skills earned him the respect that saw him fight back from imminent expulsion to become assistant state secretary. He was a key activist in the internal struggles of Queensland Labor that led to intervention by the National Executive in 1980 and was a founding member of the Socialist Left faction.

His reputation as a factional warrior, however, was never about personal gain. It was always driven by his

determination to make Labor a more progressive, relevant and representative organisation. He was not one to sit and lick his wounds or crow over a victory. Whatever the outcome of any internal battle it was accepted, hostilities put aside, and he would work tirelessly on the next election campaign. Whilst he inevitably had his critics, this deep loyalty to the labour movement as a whole earned the respect of many across all sectors of the party, and more broadly as evidenced by those who attended his memorial service in October last year.

Kerry Rea

George Britten

Snow Heilbronn



At the risk of being somewhat romantic, if there was an award to be given for a working-class hero, it would go to George Britten.

George was born 1926 in Essex and went to school and worked in Ilford, in the East End of London. The whole family worked in one of the chemical factories, and at the age of 14, George joined them. He completed his plumbing apprenticeship when he was 21.

After being knocked back trying to join the union at 14, they finally allowed him to join at 16.

George was horrified by the poverty in the East End of London during the Great Depression and by the hardship

experienced by working people through the war years 1940-45.

He decided to emigrate to Australia in December 1949 and arrived in Adelaide 6 weeks later. He told me he enjoyed the trip out, particularly the food — he had never eaten so much, unlike London where there were always shortages and restrictions on everything.

He decided to go to Mt Isa as he had a brother working there and found accommodation in a sort of boarding house. He told me they had ant bed floors, which was not uncommon at Mt Isa and the flies and ants were in plague proportions.

He started work as a plumber underground, installing ducting to supply clean air to the underground miners. He was involved in his first industrial dispute in Australia when mine management decided to take the plumbers off the duct work and hand it over to AWU workers at a lower rate of pay. George was elected by the men to be their job union rep.

He made a lot of friends at the “Isa”, including our family, a friendship we have retained all these years.

Mt Isa at the time had a good network of rank and file union members. In 1948 they had won the “Lead Bonus”. In early 1952 George and about 200 other workers were sacked. This included my dad. The company’s aim was twofold: firstly, to rid their workforce of all the union activists,

and secondly to pressure the industrial court into halting increases to the lead bonus. This was worth about £17 per week when the weekly wage was about £12 per week.

George then headed for the coast, and for the rest of his working life he applied the principle of workers organising to attain a fair share of the wealth this country produces.

George became a member of the Plumbers Committee of Management, and a federal committee member. George and Rupert Provan became Plumbers Union reps on the Trades and Labour Council. He was later made a life member of the union as well as the Brisbane Labour History Association.

Building union officials always knew that the job was easier if George was the job delegate. He attended all the May Day Parades and in 2017 marched with long-time friend Merv Duggan, both in their 90s.

George’s wonderful wife Imelda died after a long illness on 19 October 2017. George passed away on 10 November 2017.

Jim Sharp

By Ross Gwyther



Many of us in the Brisbane labour and social justice movements have lost a close and dear friend and comrade in Jim Sharp, who died on 6 November last year.

Jim was born in Rotherham, Yorkshire in 1933 into a struggling family of coal miners. His father had left the family before Jim was born and his mother died during childbirth, so he was raised by his grandmother, Ester Sharp. She described herself as a “Christian communist”, and one of his lasting memories was of himself at age 5 and granny Ester selling paper roses for the “Aid for China” fund to help the

Chinese people following the Japanese invasion.

His early years were spent during World War II and when he left school he was apprenticed as a butcher. Contracting TB at age 18, he spent six months recovering in a sanatorium. An early childhood lived in extreme poverty meant it was almost natural that he would develop a strongly socialist outlook that grew more definite as he grew older.

In his early thirties, he was heavily influenced by his old friend from school, Mike Haywood, who introduced him to the more formal aspects of Marxist theory and gave him a love of music and poetry, as well as spending many weekends tramping through the Yorkshire countryside together.

With his wife Hazel and daughter Jane, Jim emigrated to Brisbane in 1961 as a “ten-pound pom”. He started his Australian working life in the meat industry as a boner at Borthwick’s, and quickly became involved in many struggles for better conditions. His principled approach to unionism and working-class solidarity won him the admiration of his mates on the factory floor, but it also earned him a reputation as a trouble maker.

The meatworks in Queensland in the 1960s and 70s were centres of intense industrial struggle on an almost daily basis. The union had been built on the

backs of IWW influence, and as a result grass roots democracy was a real and influential force, possibly more than in most other unions at that time. Jim was one of the vocal and respected workers at the regular works committee and mass meetings of meatworkers. In 1985, during one of their many layoffs, he travelled to the Northern Territory to join meatworkers picketing in the Mudginberri dispute.

His working life was cut short due to both the heavy toll that boning work in the meat industry takes on workers' bodies, and as a result of an industry blacklist that prevented him from gaining employment in any meatworks in the country. However, his passion for working class politics, and the peace and environment struggles that have grown out of those politics, meant that he threw himself into full time political activism. He spent many years in the 1970s and 80s active in the Australian Independence movement, campaigning for a greater awareness of the role of multinational capital in Australia. In 1982 he was one of the original committee members who helped build the largest mass movement in the past forty years, People for Nuclear Disarmament, and he was centrally involved for more than 20 years. He maintained an enthusiasm for the path that China under Mao and the Communist Party took in building socialism and was active in the Australia China Society.

In 1989 he was one the original group to establish Rainbow Alliance, which developed into the Australian Greens party. In the aftermath of the 9/11 tragedy and the horrific "war on terror" launched by US President Bush, Just Peace was established to provide a counter voice for the broader community, and Jim was again one of the founding members.

Jim left school unable to read or write, so he taught himself. He turned to poetry as the ultimate way to express himself, writing more than one thousand poems — on love, working life, politics, and on people's struggles and interactions. Four of his close friends, Jen Kwok, Rhodes Hart, Adrian Pollock and myself worked with him to publish some fifty of these poems in an anthology entitled *Leftside*.

Jim has left a considerable body of writing on his own working life, and on working class experience and struggle. He emphasised the importance of collective dialogue and struggle, as against individual approaches, and this gained him respect amongst a wide range of community activists. Out of his trade union and movement experiences, he developed an analysis of an underlying feature of people's organisations in a capitalist world, which he termed "the triad of power, authority and domination". People are elected to leadership positions with good intentions, and thereby gain the authority that comes with leadership.

However, too often that leads to an assertion of power in that organisation, and to domination of those in the grass roots. His argument was that working class leaders need to be aware of and guard against this process.

In his Foreword to *Leftside*, Humphrey McQueen wrote “Jim’s own translation from illiteracy into art speaks to his trust that all of life might be transformed through the self-emancipation of his class.” Jim’s philosophy can be well summed up in the words of one of his favourite writers, Berthold Brecht, in a poem entitled “In Praise of Communism”:

*It’s sensible,
anyone can understand it.
It’s easy.
You’re not an exploiter,
so you can grasp it.
It’s a good thing for you,
find out more about it.
The stupid call it stupid
and the squalid call it squalid.
It is against squalor and
against stupidity.
the exploiters call it a crime
But we know:
It is the end of crime.
It is not madness, but
The end of madness.
It is not the riddle
But the solution.
It is the simple thing
So hard to achieve.*



T.A Fields Meatworks Dispute 1985

Contributors

Phil Griffiths teaches Political Economy at the University of Southern Queensland, Toowoomba. He has published a number of articles on the ruling class agendas behind the development of the White Australia policy, including in Labour History.

Ross Gwyther was an organiser with the National Tertiary Education Union for ten years, after an earlier career as a research geophysicist, and some years working in factories and on the Queensland railways. He is closely involved in a working group of unions called “Peace and Justice is Union Business”, and is developing ideas with others for a union based workers education network.

Adolph “Snow” Heilbronn is retired. He, too, was awarded life membership of the Plumbers Union. He was fortunate to have been able to associate with Rupert Provan, Alan Anderson, Merv Duggan, and of course, George Britten.

Dr John McCollow has been a teacher and a long-time union officer. He is a life member of the Australian Education Union and the Queensland Teachers’ Union. His research interests include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education, the funding of education, vocational education and training, and teacher unions.

Stuart MacDonald was born in Townsville and did his Education degree at James Cook University where he was President of the Student Union. He began teaching at Barcaldine State School, then in 1979 he became the Queensland Teachers Union North Queensland Organiser, and in 1983 QTU Industrial Officer. In 1987 Stuart chose to return to teaching, becoming Head of Department (Social Sciences) at Clontarf Beach State High School in 1990. He held this position until his retirement in 2014. In 2015 Stuart was granted Life membership of the QTU. He is active in retirement as a volunteer JP and at the Redcliffe Museum.

Professor John Maynard is a Worimi Aboriginal man from the Port Stephens region of New South Wales. He is currently a Director at the Wollotuka Institute of Aboriginal Studies at the University of Newcastle and Chair of Indigenous History. He has held several major positions and served on numerous prominent organizations and committees including as Deputy Chairperson of the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) and as a member of the Executive Committee of the Australian Historical Association. He was a keynote speaker at the “Workers of the World” conference, hosted by the Brisbane Labour History Association in September 2017.

Kerry Rea was a Labor Councillor for Brisbane between 1991 and 2007. She resigned from Council and successfully contested the federal seat of Bonner in 2007 and was the MP for Bonner until 2010. Kerry is now the Volunteer Coordinator for Australia’s largest education-oriented charity.

Robin Taubenfeld is a nuclear-free spokesperson with Friends of the Earth Australia, a mother, teacher, artist, writer, media maker and community worker. Like many of her generation, Robin became involved in the Australian anti-uranium movement in the 90s when the Mirrar people called for support to stop the proposed Jabiluka mine. Since that time, Robin has focused on linking campaigns around militarisation, nuclearisation and colonisation in Australia and the Pacific.

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 each year. Articles of any length up to 7000 words are invited; shorter contributions are encouraged.

First person accounts of trade union, social movement and progressive political struggles and organisations are particularly welcome. Reports on exhibitions, seminars and research projects are sought, as are book reviews and photo essays.

Contributions can be submitted either as hard copy (posted to The Secretary) or as an electronic file, emailed to journal@blha.com.au. Please use Styles rather than character formatting from your article as it interferes with the laying out of the journal. Please ensure that your name, any relevant organisational affiliation, and all contact details are included in the article itself, as well as in the covering email.

Please also send details of any graphics, photos, maps, drawings, cartoons etc that might accompany your article.

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