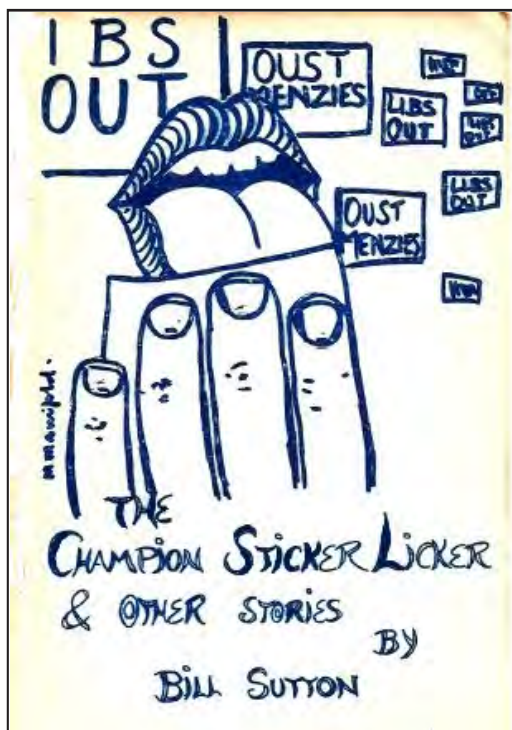


The Queensland Journal of Labour History

No. 31 Spring/Summer 2020

The Brisbane Labour History Association





Brisbane **L**abour **H**istory **A**ssociation

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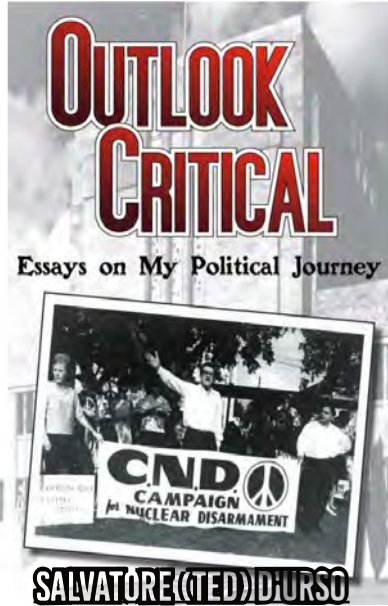
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Outlook Critical: Essays on My Political Journey

Salvatore (Ted) D'Urso

(Brisbane Labour History Association, 2020)



Salvatore (Ted) D'Urso grew up in the North Queensland town of Innisfail where his father, a Sicilian migrant, supported the family by cutting cane, playing cards and running a billiard saloon. Winning a scholarship to the University of Queensland, the young Ted moved to Brisbane in 1947 to commence a commerce degree. By his second year, he was mixing with members of the University's small but enthusiastic circle of radicals.

Ted joined the Communist Party of Australia while still an undergraduate but abandoned the CPA after the 1949 coal strike. He devoted most of the next four decades to other versions of socialism and social justice.

A non-aligned socialist, Trotskyist, peace activist and radical educationalist, D'Urso's political life spanned the Cold War and the authoritarian excesses and crackpottery of Queensland Premier, Johannes Bjelke-Petersen.

Outlook Critical: Essays on My Political Journey
is an inspiring account of political commitment and courage.

\$20.00 + \$5.00 postage

To order copies, email Jeff Rickertt,

blha.exec@gmail.com

President's Report

Jeff Rickertt

As we prepared this issue for print, news broke of the death of former state secretary of the Electrical Trades Union, Peter Simpson. This is a tremendous blow. On behalf of the BLHA, I extend our condolences to Peter's mother, his wife Penny, their children and grandchildren and the entire ETU family.

Many years ago, the BLHA organised a one-day conference on Labour and Labor, examining the historical and contemporary relationship between trade unions and the Labor Party. The morning sessions focused on the history, while the afternoon sessions homed in on contemporary issues with the relationship, culminating in a panel discussion. We invited serving Labor parliamentarians and union officials to participate. Peter Simpson, who had already clashed with the Bligh government over asset sales, was an obvious choice for one of the union representatives.

Simmo accepted our invitation with enthusiasm. For me, two things stand out about his contribution that day. First, his presentation and responses to the discussion were considered, insightful and comradely, revealing a leader who had thought deeply about industrial power and parliamentary representation. Second, he came for the day. Busy union secretaries and public

officials usually and understandably attend such events only for the duration of their required contribution. Peter had been invited to participate in the final panel discussion and we had made it clear he was under no obligation to attend any other part of the program. But there he was at the registration desk at 9.00am, and there he was at every session. Afterwards, he commented to me that he had found the conference very interesting and useful. He asked for copies of some of the presentations.

It struck me then that Peter was a leader with a deep commitment to the cause of organised labour, constantly on the lookout for new information and new perspectives that might advance the interests of ETU members and the wider movement. Peter's wholehearted participation indicated that he felt that historical information and an historical perspective were important. His comments affirmed for me that the most important role that the BLHA can play is to generate and share labour history as useful knowledge for the workers' movement. It's a goal we continue to pursue. Thanks, Simmo.

One recent 'new' piece of useful historical knowledge worth sharing and celebrating is the confirmation by Howard Guille that in 1944 the Queensland government officially conceded award wages to the 'Aboriginal

gang' employed by the Dunwich Benevolent Asylum on Minjerrabah (North Stradbroke Island). As far as we know, this makes them the first Aboriginal workers in Australia to win wage equality. A review of Howard's book on the Asylum is included in this issue. The BLHA hopes to partner with the Museum on Minjerrabah and the Quandamooka community to commemorate the historic equal pay victory in 2021.

On a related topic, the Australian Prime Minister, Scott Morrison, further demonstrated his profound ignorance and insensitivity some months ago by declaring that the campaigns in the United States to remove monuments to slave owners were not relevant here because Australia never experienced slavery. He then compounded the hurt by conceding that the use of indentured Melanesian labour in New South Wales and Queensland could be considered slavery, but failed to acknowledge the slave relations imposed on many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, in some places, well into the 20th century. Historians have a responsibility to challenge such lies and omissions. As Peter Simpson pointed out, history matters. For First Nations people in Australia, history is not in the past; its racism and violence dominate the lived experience of the present, as we recently saw in the Brisbane City Watchhouse. With this in mind, I am currently working on a proposal to organise a major BLHA event next year on the topic of slavery in Australia. I am

keen to hear from members with ideas and a willingness to help with this initiative.

With public events in 2020 in limbo due to the pandemic, the Association has been concentrating on publishing projects. In addition to our two issues of the journal, we have published a previously 'undiscovered' memoir of Brisbane-based socialist, trade unionist, peace activist and radical educationalist, Ted D'Urso. Written shortly after his retirement in the 1990s, Ted's manuscript was carefully preserved at his home, known only to immediate family and a close circle of friends until the BLHA was alerted of its existence by historian Ken Mansell.

Recognising its significance, the BLHA arranged with Ted to publish the work under the title *Outlook Critical: Essays on My Political Journey*. The result is a fascinating personal account of a life in Queensland Left politics from the last years of the Chifley government to the neoliberal administrations of Hawke and Keating, bridging the Red Scare under Menzies and the authoritarianism of Queensland premier Johannes Bjelke-Petersen. Ted's political journey took him into and out of the Communist Party, into the peace movement via early 60s Trotskyism, and on to a career as a radical education academic which saw him condemned in parliament for publicly supporting the rights of school students and teachers.

Copies of the book can be ordered from the BLHA by sending an email to: blha.exec@gmail.com.

The BLHA is also constructing a new website, which will feature back copies of the Queensland Journal of Labour History, recordings of oral history interviews, lists of labour history sources and information about past and future BLHA events. We hope to have the site ready by the end of this year. If COVID-19 permits, we might even launch it with a real gathering at a real venue. Such is the boldness of our ambitions in these cloistered times.

Since the previous issue of the journal, the BLHA has welcomed two new members to its management committee to fill vacancies: Corinne Harrison and Allan Gardiner. I wish to thank Corinne and Allan for coming on board. They are making important behind-the-scenes contributions to the Association in this difficult year.

Editorial

Dean Wharton

The last issue of our journal, published in April 2020, appeared during the Covid-19 lockdown in Queensland. The BLHA Executive ceased all meetings and cancelled all events planned for the rest of the year, including the annual Alex Macdonald Memorial Lecture.

Queensland has so far been steered relatively effectively through the current pandemic and the Executive began to meet face to face again in June. Whilst there are still no plans to hold any events this year, other than our AGM at some point, there has been much work done on the journal and the development of our new website.

Ross Gwyther and Howard Guille accepted the invitation from Greg Mallory and me to rejoin the editorial

team in June. Ross and Howard were joint editors of this journal from issues 14 to 28 (2012-2018). Even during their brief absence from the journal at least one article per issue was sourced by them. They have been joined on the editorial team by Corinne Harrison, an undergraduate student in History and Politics.

The other members of the BLHA Executive, Jeff Rickertt (QJLH editor between 2010 and 2012), Craig Buckley, and Allan Gardiner, provide valuable help in the form of articles and/or proofreading. All of us can be contacted with regard to the journal.

The cost of formatting, printing and distribution of some 200 hard copies of this journal continues to be a significant outlay for the BLHA. From this issue we

have decided to bring the formatting of the journal 'in-house'. Apologies are in order if the formatting is not up to the usual standard.

On behalf of the BLHA Executive I would like to thank Bev Jeppersen for the formatting work she has undertaken for us for more than ten years.

Ideas about how we can reduce our printing and distribution costs would be welcome.

Normally we include the text of our annual Alex Macdonald Memorial lecture in our Spring edition, but this event could not take place in 2020. In this issue our major article is Phillip Edmond's appraisal of Bill Sutton and the People's Bookshop.

Following Phillip's article is one of the humorous stories written by Bill that he collected together and published in booklet form in the 1960s and 70s. A number of these booklets will be available to read on the BLHA website in the coming months.

The BLHA Executive's plans for events to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the formation of the Communist Party of Australia and the 50th anniversary of the Vietnam Moratorium were of course scuppered by Covid-19. Instead, in this issue, Jeff Rickertt focuses on the events that led to the formation of the CPA in 1920 and Anne Richards relates her personal account of involvement in the Moratorium march in Brisbane in 1970.

In 2020 the BLHA published *Outlook Critical: Essays on my Political Journey*, the memoirs of Ted D'Urso. Ken Mansell's review of our book is one of three book reviews in this issue. Ken's review was prepared for the July 2020 edition of the newsletter of the Melbourne branch of the ASSLH, *Recorder*, which is obtainable from their website.

The other two reviews are by Jennifer O'Dempsey of Merle Thornton's autobiography and by Jeff Rickertt, of the history of the Dunwich Asylum by Howard Guille.

The obituaries in this issue are of Jack Munday and Jim Doyle.

Greg Mallory's obituary for Jack Munday is a personal reflection on a close friend and a good comrade.

Jim Doyle's obituary was prepared for a forthcoming issue of the newsletter of the South Australian branch of the ASSLH, *Labour History News*. This newsletter is available from the SA branch website.

On a separate note I would like to thank Associate Professor Andrew Bonnell of the University of Queensland for his continued support for the Queensland Journal of Labour History.

Articles

'The Good-Looking Bookseller and the Ugly Society' Bill Sutton and the People's Bookshop *Phillip Edmonds*

In response to the Russian Revolution, the Great Depression and two World Wars, communist and left-wing bookshops proliferated in Australia through most of the twentieth century. There were bookshops in all the capital cities, the largest of which were 'Intervention' in Sydney, the 'International' in Melbourne, and the 'People's Bookshop' in Brisbane. Here the focus is on the "People's Bookshop" and the role played by its last full-time manager, Bill Sutton, highlighting the particular and passionate nature of Queensland left-wing politics leading up to and after his appointment in 1966.

Existing research includes Mark Cryle's brief portrayal of the bookshop in his 'The People's bookshop/ Found in Fryer; stories from the Fryer library Collection.'¹ Connie Healy writes about the bookshop in her chapter on 'Radical Bookshops' in *Radical Brisbane* edited by Raymond Evans and Carol Ferrier, and in her lengthier study 'Left wing/ socialist bookshops in

Brisbane - The Anvil and the People's Bookshop (2003)². Bill appears to have not left diaries or discreet files of correspondence, so material can only be gleaned from the records of surviving family members, old Communist Party of Australia (CPA) comrades who shared activities and political struggles, and material in the Fryer library at the University of Queensland.

I first heard of Bill when as co-editor of an obscure 'little' (relatively apolitical) literary magazine in the mid-1970s called 'Contempa', I received a letter from him in Brisbane ordering copies. Hardly anyone had heard of us in Melbourne so it was exciting to hear from exotic Queensland. Who was this man? Was he as stupidly idealistic and utopian as us? I was to learn subsequently that the CPA had since before World War Two actively supported 'Australian' literature as an anti-imperialist gesture and that there were other evangelical people of various persuasions.

Bill started working at the bookshop in 1955 and was manager from 1966-1977. His tenure coincided with the fragmentation of the 'old left' and the rise of a 'new left' and its attendant social movements; the certainties of post-war Keynesian economics and cold-war antagonisms were being shattered by Australia's involvement in the Vietnam war and by the rise of racial and gender equality.

The People's Bookshop

The 'People's Bookshop' had a convoluted history. In March 1941, Dave Surplus and Jack Sweeney opened the People's Lending Library in Queen St which became part of a band of circulating libraries in the city and the suburbs selling communist pamphlets.³ Surplus then went on to rent the old Anvil bookshop premises for the People's Bookshop. In September 1942, the building was requisitioned, and the bookshop moved to 252 George St, this during a period of intense growing interest in socialist material all over Queensland because of support for our Soviet allies.

After leaving George St in 1946, the shop reopened at 205 Brunswick Street Fortitude Valley, where it had new challenges. Connie Healy recalled that,

'at the end of the war we were forced to move to the present premises in the valley which led to a downturn in business away from general traffic... the Cold War made it very difficult to carry on.'⁴

Another relocation of The People's Bookshop in 1966 was its last, to the CPAs offices in St Paul's Terrace, and a basement opening onto Barry Parade. Dave Surplus died that same year and Bill succeeded him as manager. Bill's long-time partner Lillian Excell worked with him in the shop, mainly in a voluntary capacity.

Writing in 1977, the authors of *'Inside Brisbane's Bookshops'* noted,

'situated in a generous but unpretentious basement beneath the CPA headquarters, Brisbane's oldest 'alternative' bookshop was established in 1935 in George St. They specialise in politics but also overflow into related subjects... they boast Brisbane's most comprehensive collection of current Australian 'minimag's', poetry and some private press books...of particular interest is their unique, exhaustive stock of Australian labour history'.⁵

'Beefy' Sutton

Sutton came from Blackall in outback Queensland in 1949, and he became a change agent in the city through his strength of character, the way he promoted local and interstate authors through the shop, and his role in the anti-censorship struggles of the 1970s. The photo reproduced on the next page (May Day procession 1967) shows that Bill (wearing his hat and suit) had a tilt from deformed vertebrae which 'came from birth and (was) something they couldn't fix in those days.'⁶



Picture: Bill Sutton, May Day procession 1967, 6th from the front of the closest row; wearing hat and blazer.

Ted Reithmuller, a comrade from those days recalls him 'always wearing a suit'.

He was a loyalist, and he wasn't a dogmatist and was quite inclusive in his thinking...he had a big impact on me as he did on many other young people...⁷

Bill was of a generation who came to socialism through personal experience rather than abstract theory. In his case his father's suffering as a result of the human slaughter of the imperialist war in Europe which led to the Russian Revolution, and his own personal experience of the inequalities inflicted on the rural and urban working class in Queensland.

Charlie Gifford, the state secretary of the CPA at the time of Bill's death in 1977 recalled a revealing incident;

In 1946 an AWU organizer named 'Squizzy' Williams was trying to organize scabs to break a shearer's strike at Charleville in Western Qld, 'Squizzy' trying to get an 'in' with the local push, walked up to the swing door of a billiard saloon, saw someone he knew, put out his hand and said- 'Good day, Beefy'. 'Beefy' Sutton, a thin wiry bloke with deformed vertebrae, smashed the proffered hand aside and said: 'Don't talk to me you scabby bastard.'⁸

Leaving school at the legal age of fourteen Bill became a shearer's rouseabout, later a shearer's cook, drover (and drover's cook) then in Brisbane he worked at a meatworks and as a builder's labourer. In his early

days in the bush he was a cockatoo at two-up games, an amateur magician (see photo below), card sharp and racecourse tout. His quick wit endeared him to other workers and according to Gifford he was 'a fearless gambler who backed Berborough every time he raced - 16 bets, 16 wins, doubling up with each bet.'



Sutton is also emblematic of a generation of 'self-educated' men and women. Radicals, active in the Left Book Club, the Workers Educational Association, the Realist Writer's groups, and the New Theatre, part of a broader CPA cultural offensive of which 'their' bookshops played a central

part. People respected Bill's intellect; that 'he was a real intellectual you know', Connie Healy once said.⁹

According to Bob Sutton, his cousin, (who still lives in Blackall), Bill loved Henry Lawson which was pretty typical of a generation that regarded Lawson as a writer who captured the 'speech' and mannerisms of ordinary Australians, who wrote about working characters and knew they had to organize to survive. In Lawson there was a writer who was both 'down to earth' and 'literary.'

The CPA and Australian Cultural Identity

Bill, not unlike other more prominent figures, saw the ways in which the CPA's contribution to cultural life synchronised with his own literary interests. Ted Riethmuller observed:

Communist views on culture enjoyed wide support and more acceptance than CPA membership demonstrated. Menzies for instance expressed his chagrin that there weren't any right-wing writers to receive CLF grants. Communists punched above their weight. Trade unions promoted things including "Power Without Glory", folk music and the Australasian Books Society and Bill promoted the realist writers through the bookshop as a meeting place.¹⁰

In 1964 Bill became the secretary of the Brisbane Realist Writers group established by the poet John Manifold. At Nancy Wills' place (garden) in nearby Lota regular book launches and meetings of the Communist Arts Group (CAG) were held. Marianne Ehrhardt, who had joined the party after the war, told me that Bill 'was one of the friendly faces of the party', in fact that, 'Bill and John (Manifold) made Queensland communism more user friendly.'¹¹.

The CAG published collections of Bill's stories (as did the Realist Writers Groups); satirical observations which incorporated working class characters, and thinly veiled party functionaries. The preface to 'The Champion Sticker Licker – how we fooled the fuzz', (1974) states, 'although the struggle for socialism is a serious matter the stories indicate how comrades can and should be able to enjoy party life and laugh at their own mistakes.'¹²

Angus & Robertson had been the mainstay in publishing of Australian writers from federation through to the war, but the investment of multi-nationals was fitful at best and the communist bookshops, and in turn, the Australasian Book Society, took on the task of promoting left wing local writers in the vacuum. The work of Dorothy Hewett, John Morrison, and Gavin Casey among others were all published by the Society. Bill was always sending out circulars and letters from the bookshop advertising up-coming events involving authors, something characteristic of other left-wing bookshops.

The papers of Paul Tripcony (an active bibliophile and book collector) in the Fryer library reveal the extent of the Bookshop's activity; an invitation to meet Frank Hardy at the shop on 14/10/52, book launches throughout the sixties, and in the 70s circulars regarding the censorship debates over 'Portnoy's Complaint' and 'The Little Red Schoolbook.'

Bill was aware of cross fertilization, particularly as the first steps toward indigenous determination were pioneered by the CPA. There was cross involvement with other organizations such as the nascent Federal Council for the Advancement of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders, so he made overtures to Kath Walker (Oodgeroo Noonuccal) in March 1972 inviting her to read at a poetry reading at the opening of the 'new shop' and over the years she developed close links to individual members of the CPA.

The New Left

The visit to Australia in January 1967 of Air Vice-Marshal Nguyen Cao Ky, the Prime Minister of South Vietnam, to thank Australia for its involvement in the war was controversial and met by

'the most violent demonstration seen in Brisbane since Australian and American servicemen clashed in November 1942... 2,000 protestors from an alliance of anti-war organisations took part outside Lennon's Hotel in George St, with ASIO surveillance teams monitoring key individuals and other 'persons of interest.'¹³

Some members of the CPA including Sutton were aware of the changing political landscape. At a local branch meeting on the 25th of January, according to an ASIO informer, he said that, although it was 'the best demonstration he had ever seen', that:

'It was not the CPA that was giving the real backing...the show was organised by students and other organisations with no relationship to the CPA...they are not taking orders from communists, nor do they want us! Are we losing our leadership of these people? ...if we interfere, they will tell us to go to hell... have we missed the bus? Are we too narrow for these people?'¹⁴

Despite the absence of the Eureka Youth League and young CPA members from this protest and the emergence of the militant student movement at the University of Queensland, Bill's amiability and interests drew activists to the bookshop. Carmel Shute, who later became a union organizer in Melbourne, recalls her first introduction to the party as a student at the University of Queensland.

At 21 I became one of a handful of members less than 40 years of age in the Queensland party. For an entire generation the combined effects of the cold war, Hungary and the 'revelations' about Stalinism had stymied recruitment. Now there was a new generation, fresh from the battles over the Vietnam war, student politics and multifarious social movements, ripe for 'grown-up politics', green though we were...the CPA was the best alternative on the Left. It was

the first communist party to condemn the invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968 and appeared to have thrown off all the shackles of Stalinism. Sutton, the manager of the People's Bookshop personified the party's appeal and really deserves the credit for recruiting me... Bill possessed a remarkable facility for friendship and drew people from all strands of politics to the People's Bookshop.¹⁵

Humphrey McQueen also a former student at the university, has recalled,

At the People's Bookshop in Brunswick St, the Valley, Bill Sutton did everything he could to broaden the stock with poetry, music and the visual arts, as well as the widest range of work from allied publishers in the US and Britain... as Bill confessed, he had always been a shearing shed anarchist. From him I bought my first Gramsci.¹⁶

Carol Ferrier, who came to Queensland in 1972, became an academic in the English Department at the University of Queensland, and would later become heavily involved in student politics and the free speech movement against censorship, also recalls,

'Carmel Shute introduced me to Bill Sutton at the PB and a lot of old commies.'¹⁷

Far Right violence

The left-wing bookshop landscape was also changing and diversifying with the Red and Black Bookshop opening in 1968 and the East Wind bookshop (for the Maoist pro-Chinese Marxist-Leninist

party in 1969). The shareholders of the Red and Black were Brian Laver, Mitch Thompson and Dave Guthrie, who was the manager.

‘The shop stocked books of general interest as well as a range of anarchist publications.’¹⁸

The Red and Black, like the People’s Bookshop, threatened the authorities and right-wing groups.

‘The bookshop was a target for neo-Nazi elements as well as the police, who raided the shop and harassed the staff.’

1972 would prove to be a tumultuous year. Not only was the bookshop facing competition from other left shops

and legal challenges to its attack on censorship, it and the offices of the CPA were bombed by neo-Nazi elements on the night of April the 19th. *The Courier Mail* wrote, ‘a huge explosion blasted the CP headquarters and the People’s bookshop in the Valley at 7.45 last night. The blast shattered windows, tore off roofing iron, twisted steel filing cabinets and punched walls out of alignment. Forty-five minutes later, at 8.30pm, in an apparently connected incident, three shots were fired into the window of the East Wind bookshop in Elizabeth St, City’.¹⁹

Charlie Gifford was reported as saying,



'I can only think this is because of our involvement in the Moratorium in which we intend to march. It is also probably associated with the fact that we have made a declaration in favour of a National Liberation Front victory in Vietnam.'

The People's Bookshop and a printing press room of the CP took most of the force of the explosion.

Ross May, commonly known as 'the skull' threatened the bookshop in October 1975. Shute recalls,

'once I dropped in on a Saturday morning to find a photographer from the 'Courier Mail' waiting outside. He told me he was waiting for the Nazis to arrive. And arrive they did- in full regalia in a cab! We just had time to chain the gate before the Skull jumped out and started to wave an iron bar at us.'²⁰

Shute claimed that the CPA, then, was still a focus for all the left.

In 'Nazis in the North' Joyce Slater wrote about the Nazis hovering around the shop.

'Had it not been for the warning Joe Harris gave us and the quick mobilisation of a team who came around to defend our headquarters it could have been bad...'²¹

Censorship

The Queensland Literature Board of Review was established by the Gair Labour government in 1954. Healy claims that, 'it is important to be aware of the often hostile and aggressive cultural atmosphere in which (Queensland

bookshops) operated...a good case therefore could be made for seeing Queensland as one of most heavily censored capitalist society in the world by the mid-twentieth century.'²² 1972 was also the year when Bill and the People's Bookshop were prosecuted for selling the 'Little Red Schoolbook' by Søren Hansen and Jasper Jensen and 'Portnoy's Complaint' by Philip Roth. The Courier Mail said on April the 15th that the Literature Board of Review had banned the 'Little Red Schoolbook' without any detailed explanation. Straightaway, Bill announced that the bookshop would sell it, even though he and Vince Englart were under prosecution for selling 'Portnoy's Complaint' at a hearing in the Magistrates Court on the 3rd and 4th of May.

In the 'Good Looking Bookseller and the Ugly society' Bill was typically enigmatic,

'the bookseller is interested in selling as many copies of the banned best-selling book 'Portnoy's Complaint' by Phillip Roth...some thought it a dirty book about masturbation. Others thought it was a classic...but all readers were united against the book ban. In the story the narrator suspects he is dealing with an undercover cop'.²³

Bill was also summoned to appear in the Magistrate's Court for selling copies of Tribune containing an article entitled 'Female sexuality and education'. Yet he kept working in a co-operative manner. Brian Laver recalls,

'Sutton would come to meetings, open minded and he read assiduously. He was at the forefront of anti-censorship in

THE COURIER-MAIL SATURDAY APRIL 15 1972

REEL

THE LITTLE RED SCHOOL BOOK BANNED

by
"The Little Green Men"



**Board chief
refuses
to say why**

THE Little Red School Book has been banned in Queensland.

The ban — imposed by the Literature Board of Review — is announced in today's Government Gazette.

Queensland is the only State to ban the book.

... saying that the book would not be available commercially in the State.

FRYER LIBRARY, UQ
Copyright private
research only

THE LITTLE RED SCHOOLBOOK has been banned in Queensland by the plantation politicians at the top end of George Street. Queensland is the only Australian State to ban the book, which was passed by the Federal Minister for Customs and cleared by New Zealand's Indecent Publications Tribunal.

"THE LITTLE RED SCHOOLBOOK" is the latest of a long string of victims of Queensland's censorial axe. The list includes the African dance troupe (forced to cover up), the rock musical Hair and Philip Roth's novel "Portnoy's Complaint".

The latest book ban is clearly political, based among other things, on the allegation that the book takes a Marxist approach.

The People's Bookshop will be selling **"THE LITTLE RED SCHOOLBOOK"** despite the government's prohibition. We are also under prosecution for selling "Portnoy's Complaint" (come to Magistrates Court, 10 am, 3rd & 4th May).

Please fill in coupon below and mail to People's Bookshop, 291 St. Paul's Res., Fochy-ude Valley, 4006, with remittance. Ph: 5 4866.

**poster- press release "The Little red schoolbook banned' April 15, 1972.*

Queensland as only two bookshops sold 'Portnoy's Complaint', the People's Bookshop and the Red and Black...he was a hero of the anti-censorship movement in Queensland at that time'.²⁴

Finance

All of this meant that there was serious financial pressure on the bookshop, already having a difficult time surviving. Over the years Bill initiated several fundraisers for the shop to help restock it and cover long standing debts. Sutton appealed to party members and loyal supporters several times during the 1970s.

In an undated letter during that time to the CPA he noted,

'comrades buy elsewhere, even though most of the material sold is of a political or semi political nature... but the shop is operating with no capital...'²⁵

In June 1972 he wrote from the 'Right to Read Committee', regarding legal expenses over the Portnoy's Complaint case,

'though our legal expenses were kept down to a minimum we are still in debt for portion of the same. We thank those who have donated and ask people who have not yet done so to consider sending a donation to cover the deficit.'²⁶

Bill's generosity and inclusiveness, and a desire to work for a low wage, undoubtedly kept the bookshop operating as trading conditions became tighter. In late 1975 he sent a circular around to supporters advertising a fundraising night on August the 2nd, 'to raise funds to help restock and cover long standing debts of the bookshop.' He reflected on the history of the bookshop and its predecessor the Anvil bookshop established by Mick Healy in 1935.

Over these years many difficulties have been experienced. Raids by security when World War 2 broke out in which stocks were confiscated. A fire-bomb attempt. A gelignite bomb which shattered the shop and four raids by book burning secret police in recent years. None of these fascist acts were able to close us down. Each time we were attacked our supporters immediately came to our aid. We are sure that this support will continue.²⁷

He made every effort to widen the stock in the shop throughout the early to mid-seventies by adding feminist, 'new left', and environmental titles.

Final years

There were indications in 1976 that Bill's health wasn't good. A piece in Tribune in August by an unnamed correspondent noted that Bill 'was crook' and in response concerned comrades 'cooked meals and tried to save him from the stairs, but Bill ran the bookshop, nine hours a day, six days a week' and suggested that despite efforts to diversify his workload, he found it hard giving things up.

'In practice, the bookshop was more than the shop: it was comrade Sutton and the shop'. Efforts were made to restructure the bookshop as a collective, even though Bill thought that would create 'unnecessary bureaucracy'.²⁸

Bill died on the 25th April 1977 in 'harness' from a sudden heart attack in a lift while setting up a bookstall in the Trades Hall. It is believed he was fifty-six years of age.

He had worked for the bookshop in one capacity or another for twenty-three years. As Charlie Gifford explained after his death at the memorial service,

'he was invariably optimistic, confident and young in outlook even when his health was poor. It often was - from asthma, the aftereffects of the Q fever which he contracted in the meat industry, and latterly from heart illness'.²⁹

Writing just after his death, Lillian Excell said of the service,

'the purpose of the service was to pay tribute to a great comrade. It was the biggest gathering here for such a service that I had ever seen. People came from all walks of life and many warm tributes too. He was a great and good man and a mighty comrade. I carried his flag in the Labour Day march. He would have wanted me to.'³⁰

After Bill's death it was an even harder time for the bookshop. Lillian toyed with continuing but resigned from the CPA in November of 1977. The shop needed \$150 week in wages and overheads to survive, and in

January 1978 a draft bookshop statement was presented to the branch where problems were discussed, including issues around staff dissent. On April 13th 1980 a general meeting of Brisbane cadres considered the question as to whether the shop could continue. The minutes recorded these thoughts,

‘the shop can continue in its present form, or should be modified, but it does not justify the time and expense as it cannot compete with shops that are better situated.’

Finally, in 1983 the bookshop closed down. According to Connie Healy, a

‘contributing factor to its demise was undoubtedly the continuing divisions within the ranks of the Communist Party ... the People’s Bookshop had depended to a large extent on support from members and supporters...In 1991 the CPA, without a coherent ideology, eventually ceased to exist as a political party.’³¹

How closely he was seen as being the heart of the shop is exemplified by a poem in Nancy Wills’ papers, entitled ‘The Poets Corner- at People’s Bookstore in Bill Suttons Joint’ by ‘Kay’ in rhyming couplets which describe a friendly space and the characters that frequented it.³²

‘It’s here you will find John
Manifold, shaped in Geelong
Grammar and Cambridges mould.
You are almost true blue, but we
don’t hold that against you.
Dear Kat, with K, you come from
Stradbroke Island, a tiny black pearl

glomming in the white sand,
you live with one foot
somewhat in the past and one in
the present, trying to stand on
both to the very last’.

The bookshop had always battled against the odds; it was just that it was kept alive by the idealism of a Bill Sutton, (among others) the like of which we may never see again in this time of neo-liberal individualism, and, as has been the story of radical parties and marginal organizations in Australia, too much was left to too few.

Notes

¹The People’s Bookshop/ Found in Fryer; stories from the Fryer library Collection’ Mark Cryle.

²Connie Healy’s section in ‘Radical Bookshops’, *Radical Brisbane, an unruly history*, pp 200-201 and ‘The Anvil and the Peoples Bookshop’ (2003) UQFL 191, Box 17, Folder 8.

³Connie Healy, ‘Radical Bookshops’, *Radical Brisbane, an unruly history*, eds, Raymond Evans & Carol Ferrier with Jeff Rickertt, Vulgar Press, 2004, p 200.

⁴Connie Healy papers, UQFL 191, Box 17, folder 8, Fryer library, University of Queensland.

⁵Judy Matthews and Christine Tilley, *Inside Brisbane’s Bookshops, including the Gold Coast*, Second Back Row Press, Sydney, 1977, p 3

⁶Interview with Bob Sutton, Bill’s cousin, Blackall, 26/10/ 2017.

⁷Interview with Ted Riethmuller, 21/11/2017.

⁸Charlie Gifford, ‘A Tribute to Bill Sutton’, *Tribune*, May 25, 1977, p2

⁹Interview with Simon Farley, 25/11/2017.

¹⁰Interview with Ted Riethmuller, 21/11/2017.

¹¹Marianne, Ehrhardt, interview, 16/11/2017.

¹²Bill Sutton, 'The Good Looking Bookseller and the Ugly Society,' CAG, 1975.

¹³Phillip Deery. 'Lock up Holt, throw away Ky: the visit to Australia of Prime Minister Ky, 1967, *Labour History*, no 109, November 2015, 55-74, p 66.

¹⁴ASIO surveillance report, no 132/67, 26 Jan 1967, a6122, 2642, folios 60-61, NAA. Quoted in Deery, p68.

¹⁵Carmel Shute, 'Best of the Old, Best of the New - the Queensland CPA, 1974-76', *Tribune*, 31/10/1990.

¹⁶Humphrey McQueen - foreword, 'A chance to stray', *Radical Brisbane, an unruly history*, eds Raymond Evans & Carol Ferrier with Jeff Rickertt, Vulgar Press, 2004, pp 10-11.

¹⁷Carol Ferrier, afterword, *Radical Brisbane, an unruly history*, eds Raymond Evans & Carol Ferrier with Jeff Rickertt, Vulgar Press, 2004, p 318.

¹⁸Connie Healy, 'Radical Bookshops', *Radical Brisbane, an unruly history*, eds Raymond Evans & Carol Ferrier with Jeff Rickertt, Vulgar Press, 2004, p 204.

¹⁹'Red H.Q. Blown Up', *The Courier Mail*, Brisbane, Thursday April 20, 1972.

²⁰CPA Queensland Branch files, UQfl 234, Box 18, Fryer library, University of Queensland.

²¹Joyce Slater, *Tribune*, 15 October 1975 no 1923, Tribune Papers AN 302 1975 no 1885-1928, Fryer library, University of Queensland.

²²Connie Healy, 'Radical Bookshops', *Radical Brisbane, an unruly history*, eds Raymond Evans & Carol Ferrier with Jeff Rickertt, Vulgar Press, 2004 p 204

²³Bill Sutton, 'The Good Looking Bookseller and the Ugly Society,' CAG 1975

²⁴Interview with Brian Laver 15/10/2017.

²⁵CPA Queensland Branch files, Box 4, UQfl 234. Box 7, Fryer library, University of Queensland

²⁶Ibid.

²⁷Ibid.

²⁸'A Revolution in Bookshops', *Tribune*, 4/8/1976 p8.

²⁹Charlie Gifford, 'A Tribute to Bill Sutton', *Tribune*, 25/5/1977 p2

³⁰Letter from Lillian Excell to Sutton family from the People's Bookshop, 13/5/1977

³¹Connie Healy, 'Left wing bookshops in Brisbane; the Anvil and the People's Bookshop, UQfl 191, Box 17, p14, Fryer library, University of Queensland

³²Nancy Wills papers, UQfl 304, Box 1, Fryer library, University of Queensland

'Hard Work Never Hurt Anybody'

Bill Sutton

Grandfather went crook when he found out I was on Compo.

“The country's going to the dogs,” he said. “In my day,” he continued, “when we hurt ourselves we worked harder – I remember a job I once had, felling timber, we swung that old axe from daylight till dark. No television for us when the day's work was over, we used to just drop on to our bunks and sleep pretty sound I can tell you. One day I made a swing with the old blade at a green limb, the axe glances off, bang, right into me foot. Me mates pull that old blucher boot of mine off mighty quick, and there was a gash about four inches long – Did it bleed -. The boys got me back to camp, we bathed her with Condy Crystals, then back on the old kelly again. I've still got a bit of a limp, and in rainy weather the old foot plays up so bad that I can't sleep. Still it taught me a lesson.”

The old fellow took a draw on his pipe and went on, “Then there was the time I sliced the top off my little finger when I worked in a slaughter yard – The boss here was a mighty old bloke. He done me work for me till I got right, course he docked me pay for the time I missed but then that's fair enough. This boss told me he had it on good authority, that if you lost some part of yourself, that you develop some other part of your body, for instance, he said if you went deaf,

your eyesight would most likely become keener – so he worked it out that maybe now that I had lost a finger on one hand, the rest of the fingers would get stronger. I found this to be a very wise statement, as I quickly learned to use the other fingers well. However one day off went the top of another one. The boss told me he could stand this no longer, as eventually I must run out of fingers and be no good to him. I was sorry to have to leave this bloke after all the good turns he had done for me. Having those two fingers off made it a bit harder for me – but I soon got round that, when I was applying for a job I would keep the old dook in me pocket – quite casual like. In those days the bosses were a bit particular who they employed. I was off work for quite a while, when at last I cracked it for a good job - making bricks - I was lucky to get this job because the bloke who had the job before me died with some disease he had, some of the union blokes were kicking up a hell of a fuss, claiming that the dusty conditions of the place had been the cause of his death – The boss told me this was a lot of rot – he also told me that the last bloke (now deceased) was not much of a worker and that it was commonly known that this particular dust would not affect strong working blokes. 'A fair day's work for a fair day's pay,' he said.

“I was there for about a year when I started to feel crook – I knew it could not be the dust as I was working hard – I took big doses of salts, but to no avail. One day after I had a bad coughing attack, the boss called me over and told

me he was very sorry but the brick trade was terrible and that as he was reducing staff he would very reluctantly have to let me go – he would give me the very best references – he heard they wanted fruitpickers at a town 200 miles away, and he strongly urged me to go there – I appreciated this kind information.

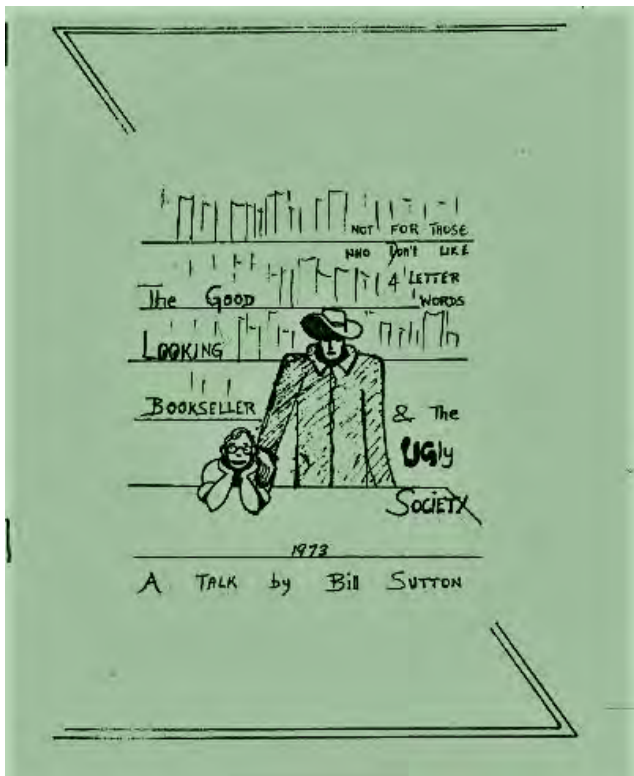
“As I was leaving this place I saw about twenty blokes queued up outside – They said they were waiting for a job. I told them about the bad position of the brick trade – They told me they would stick around as there had been an ad in the local paper saying this brickworks wanted a labourer. I was a little puzzled to think that the trade could have picked up so quickly.”

Grandfather's pipe had gone out. His eyes stared as he concentrated on his reminiscences.

“Yes, times have changed,” he said, “a nation of softies, painless childbirth - picture shows - compensation - what next? As I said before who did hard work ever hurt? By the way, is it ten o'clock yet - I've got to see the quack at eleven - the old hernia's playing up again - Got it cutting cane up north.”

Reproduced from:

Leave the Heads on 'em and Other Short Stories by Bill Sutton, Bowen Hills, [1964] (p.19-20)



A Street Called Protest: The First Vietnam Moratorium

Anne Richards

It was the Vietnam War, 1962-1975 or more correctly 1955-1975, a war and a peace movement, a peace movement to end the war. By March 1970, 400 Australians had died in Vietnam with 2,473 wounded.¹ A Moratorium, a national day to mobilise opposition to this war, was announced for 8 May 1970.

High profile politicians including Labor MPs Dr Jim Cairns (Chairman of the Moratorium Committee), Tom Uren, Gordon Bryant, Senator Lionel Murphy and Queensland Senator George Georges joined with anti-war activists, trade union leaders and the Save Our Sons mothers. The call was for the immediate and full withdrawal of troops from Vietnam. The Moratorium in Australia also opposed conscription, arguing that there was nothing participatory in a democratic government drafting 20-year-olds who didn't have the right to vote for another year.

The first Moratorium protest was stamped from the beginning as a march for peace, a peaceful protest. However, the media pushed the argument that the Moratorium was led by 'card carrying Communists,'² Labor MPs, Communist unions and other organisations 'laced with Communists'.³ The Moratorium was a betrayal of democracy that amounted to 'blatant sabotage of Australian troops.'⁴

The many anti-war supporters I knew were not angry with soldiers fighting in the name of their country. They were simply obeying the law and doing their duty as Australian citizens. Our actions were not meant to demean them. The cry was to bring troops home from this war fought in a small, undeveloped Asian country that had not aggressed our nation and had no historical links to Australia, or to the United States for that matter.

Billy Snedden, Minister for Labour and National Service went a step further. He proclaimed that protesters were 'political bikies who pack rape democracy.'² That statement took students by surprise. It didn't surprise me though. In Brisbane my father had issued an ultimatum. If I marched in that protest, I was no longer a member of my large family, a family I loved. He refused to have a Communist living under his roof. Not that I ever thought of myself as a communist. On so many levels, I supported the Vietnam Moratorium, but the decision to march became an unsolvable personal dilemma.

Yet the stories splashed across newspapers, TV and radio updates in that final week before the 8 May Moratorium only emphasised to me the importance of making a stand. Despite the US announcing the gradual withdrawal of troops from

Vietnam, the next headline announced the blitzkrieg bombing by a hundred US planes of two North Vietnamese provinces.

Then the front page of the Saturday papers, 2 May 1970, headlined President Nixon sending 15,000 US troops into Cambodia as well as the

YOU MUST STOP THIS WAR



This rag was a man a young Vietnamese an Asian neighbour. Photograph reproduced by Tribune from Japanese paper Asahi Shimbun, showing the result of Honeywell-type anti-personnel bombs and aerial gunfire ripping through the bodies of hapless villagers.

TO THE STREETS ON MAY 8!

END THE WAR!

SUPPORT THE MORATORIUM!

'A pamphlet distributed in the lead up to the first Moratorium protest. The photograph shows the remains of a man after a cluster-bomb strike and was one of the most graphic images during the Vietnam War. All major Australian newspapers refused to print it (Tribune)' (From A Decade of Dissent by Greg Langley (1992) p92

blanket bombing of Cambodian targets.³ By Tuesday it was 30,000 troops, with proudly captioned photographs.⁴ From any angle I looked at it, this was escalation into another poor, undeveloped Asian country. Alongside this news, Nixon confirmed the need to draft 150,000 more US soldiers for Vietnam stating that, 'We will not be humiliated ... We will not be defeated ... The United States will not act like a pitiful helpless giant.'⁵

Again, the Australian government accepted the invasion of Cambodia unquestioningly. Crowds gathered at the university forums. Students around the refectory tables and in the library lifts asked each other, 'How can our government accept this so passively?'

'Surely there must be some debate?'

The silence, the compliance was deafening.

Wednesday's headlines shouted the next tragedy: Four killed and nine injured at Kent State University when the Ohio National Guard opened fire on unarmed students during an anti-war protest on campus.⁶ It was 6 May 1970 and it was incendiary. Riots erupted on campuses across the US. Four million American students went on strike; hundreds of universities, colleges and high schools were closed.

So, at eighteen, I took my place in the front lines of the Moratorium march that Friday as I knew I would. Demonstrators gathered on the road alongside the UQ library. The road became cramped as the numbers grew. I greeted and hugged my old and new friends as we grabbed flags or placards,

posters and badges from the tables.

All the publicity, Jim Cairns and company, those uni forums and guest speakers, the constant stream of leaflets caught the attention of a diverse campus audience. The dismay behind the escalation in Vietnam and Cambodia followed by the shootings in Ohio generated wider support from the Young Ladies Liberal Club to the Engineering faculty.

Over three thousand university students and staff walked off the UQ campus through the watching police line. This time we were allowed passage to the open streets. This time the march did have a permit.

It was a long walk from St Lucia to the city and the streets overflowed with protesters. Looking back towards

campus as the first marchers turned the corner, I could see groups on the higher ground still joining the backlines. It was exhilarating.

A surge of energy reached into me through the ground. My heart and my feet were happy to be walking this road on this day. I knew there was a dark side that would hit me later, but it was totally right that I should march. I had to live the day all the way through, the rightness of the 'now' and the dark 'later'. Each step I took was a step into an unknown and exiled tomorrow.

I watched the hundreds of walking feet surrounding me. Barbie's green suede boots, Chrissie's black Vinnie boots, Tony's worn-down camel-coloured shoes. Homemade leather sandals walked alongside black business shoes, sensible good girl shoes and dirty Dunlop Volleys. The hands were all



Moratorium protest march, Brisbane, 1970. Grahame Garner Collection, University of Queensland E-space F3400, Folder 19, item 8.

moving, bodies twisting around looking forwards, backwards and sideways. Thousands of eyes scanned each other, a restless crowd drawn together in this united Moratorium protest that was the end of a long line of individual decisions.

As we approached the city, a buzz moved through the lines with reports of a big crowd of supportive unionists and protesters waiting for the UQ brigade at Roma Street. The dampener was the varying estimates of police numbers, with busloads of police still arriving. Moving towards the William Jolly Bridge, everyone started running, racing that last leg, shouting slogans. Outspoken leaders Jim Beatson and Jim Prentice roused the crowd:

'Hey, Hey, LBJ. How many kids did you kill today?'

'Ho Ho Ho Chi Minh. The NLF are going to win!'

Hundreds joined in, then thousands as we ran under that bridge. Our chants ricocheted off the stone walls with their arched roof and echoed back to us. For those few minutes, the mood was almost jubilant, a shoulder-to-shoulder kinship. The excitement of meeting up with other protesters at Roma Street added to the momentum. I hope they heard us coming!

As we rounded the corner into Roma Street a large crowd was waiting, spread across the natural parkland amphitheatre. The long lines of UQ protesters merged with the thousands



Moratorium protest march, Brisbane, 1970. Grahame Garner Collection, University of Queensland E-space F3400, Folder 20, item 9 .

waiting there, people completely filling the semi-circular slopes around the stage, welcoming smiles all around.

Senator Georges took the stage and spoke eloquently as always. He quickly hit the key points.

‘This will be a peaceful protest. I have to underline this point. It has to be peaceful, so Australia is not distracted from the message of this Moratorium. The message is ‘Bring all Australian troops home!’

The crowd cheered.

‘The Moratorium is calling for people across Australia to occupy the streets, to ‘Stop the Country to Stop the War’! We’re calling for an end to Conscription. We must bring our young men home and end the war in Vietnam.’

The Senator was starting to outline the

planned march through the city when Brian Laver, ever ready, tried to take the podium to push for more radical action. Union heavies, determined to control the agenda, muzzled and forced him from the podium. He had no chance to speak. Most of the crowd didn’t see this sideshow though.

Close to six thousand people then moved out to occupy the streets of Brisbane. We marched through the city waving flags; black for mourning, red for revolution. The NLF red-and-blue flag with the yellow star was deliberately provocative, to scream that Australia shouldn’t be fighting in this unjustifiable war. Just to emphasise this point, there was the added chant – ‘One side right, one side wrong, Victory to the Viet Cong!’ – as we waved the NLF flags across the helmets of police on the sidelines.



Brian Laver attempts to take the podium from Senator George Georges, Brisbane Moratorium March, May 1970. Picture credited to Grahame Garner, reproduced from The Workers Bush Telegraph website: The Brisbane New Left, published 28th May 2020

The march took us up Adelaide Street, along the top of George and down the main strip of Queen Street. It was almost surreal passing the shopfronts I'd known since childhood: Finney's (now David Jones) with its beautiful old lifts, Prouds, the Commonwealth Bank, Allen & Stark and the new QBD Bookstore with the hyper busy bus stop outside its double doors.

Crowds lined the street, small groups clapped, some held supportive placards. There were hecklers too, shouting abuse. They were answered by resolute chants of defiance: 'Hell no, we won't go!' or 'One, two, three, four / we don't want your fucking war!' In many ways, it could be explained that simply. This time, the opposition to Australia's involvement in the Vietnam War and to conscription was united, loud and assertive.

People were hanging from office windows and balconies. Cheers greeted those who broke through the onlookers to join the lines of protesters. Two girls ran from the QBD bookshop to join their friends, leaving behind their bags and their jobs. Not to worry. Many bridges were burnt that day.

The police stood just an arm's length away, sizing us up, while Special Branch heavies wove through the protest lines, grabbing stabs of conversation. Cheeky buggers! Motorcycle police stood tense and threatening on the sidelines. Special Branch were taking photos, TV crews too. I was glad I wore the hat and sunnies.

The first Moratorium was a non-violent demonstration as prescribed, impressive numbers and peaceful – an all-round good

outcome. This time, there were no arrests. The large protest headed back to Roma Street for more speeches, with protesters slowly blending back into the city as the day closed.

Across Australia, the Moratorium was considered a great success, although the end of my 8 May was not as successful or as peaceful. More than one hundred thousand protesters filled the streets of Melbourne and twenty-five thousand in Sydney.⁷ The nation-wide estimate was that 200,000 people had taken to their city streets - a collective call to end the war in Vietnam.

Australia's participation in the Vietnam War formally ended in January 1973. The fall of Saigon to North Vietnamese and Viet Cong tanks and troops on 30th April 1975 marked the last day of war as Saigon was renamed Ho Chi Minh City.

This should be a national history lesson.

Notes

¹Mansell, Ken, 2020, '8 May 1970 Moratorium: A Chronology of Protest'. Labour History Melbourne.

<https://labourhistorymelbourne.org/chronology-of-protest-8-may-1970-moratorium>

²Snedden, Billy (MP), 7 May 1970 'Parliamentary Speech', House of Representatives, 27th Parliament, 2nd Session, Hansard

https://historichansard.net/hofreps/1970/19700507_reps_27_hor67/#subdebate-14-0-s1

³Courier Mail, 2 March 1970, p1

⁴Courier Mail, 5 March 1970, p1

⁵Courier Mail, 5 March 1970, p2

⁶Courier Mail, 7 March 1970, p1

⁷Courier Mail, 9 March 1970, p1

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'What is good enough for the Bolsheviks is sure good enough for me!': Founding the Communist Party of Australia, October 1920 *Jeff Rickertt*

This article started life as a public presentation delivered in Brisbane on 29 October 2017 to mark the 100th anniversary of the Russian Revolution. It has been revised to commemorate the centenary of the founding of the Communist Party of Australia three years later.

In October 1920, some 60 socialists, representing most of the socialist groups and factions scattered across Australia, received an invitation from the Australian Socialist Party (ASP). The letter read:

In an endeavour to bring about the unified action of all who stand for the emancipation of the working class by revolutionary action, we have decided to arrange a conference to be held on Saturday 30th October, 1920 at the ASP Hall, Liverpool Street, {Sydney} City. We have much pleasure in inviting you to appoint a delegate to attend same.¹

On the day, 26 delegates and at least one baby made the effort to attend. Six of the adults were members of the ASP, some were from a dissident branch of the Socialist Labor Party (SLP) and a few were ex-members of the

Victorian Socialist Party (VSP), including Adela Pankhurst Walsh, Carl Baker and Guido Baracchi. The founders of the New South Wales Labor College, Bill Earsman and Christian Jollie Smith, attended, as did Jock Garden, the secretary of the New South Wales Labor Council and self-styled leader of the 'Trades Hall Reds'. The Wobbly Tom Glynn was there, as was the Secretary of the Seaman's Union, Tom Walsh.

Regroupings within the complicated and frequently disputatious world of Australian socialism were not uncommon. But this attempt held out particular promise because it drew upon the unprecedented authority and prestige of the Communist Party in Russia, the party that had led the world's first successful workers' revolution only three years earlier. To understand the Liverpool Street gathering, we need to go back to 1917 and the reverberations felt in Australian from those ten earth-shaking days in Petrograd.

At the time of the Russian Revolution, Australia hosted no less than eight distinct socialist groups of some significance, in addition to the socialists independently active within the Labor Party. In Melbourne there was the VSP led by R.S. Ross. Its main

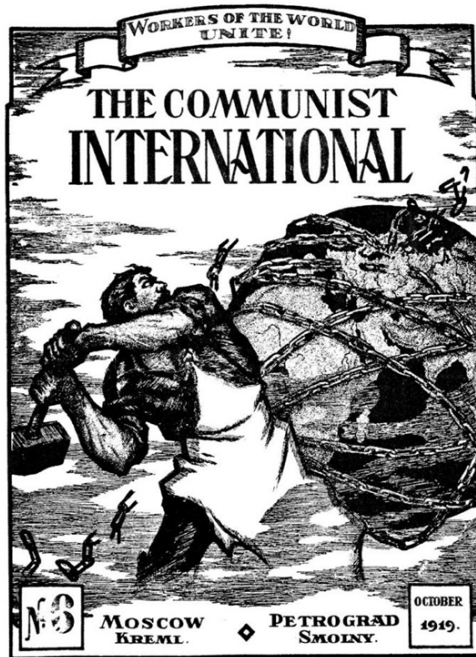


*Chris Jollie Smith (co-founder, and unlike many of her contemporaries, lifelong member of the Communist Party of Australia)
Unknown photographer, photo appeared 6/1/1913 in Everylady's journal, article by Edith Wardell on 'Australia's Lady Lawyers: The Bar as a Profession for Women'*

rival was the ASP, which had its centre in Sydney and branches in a number of cities around Australia, including in Brisbane and Ipswich. In April 1917 the ASP had split over a decision to run parliamentary candidates against the Labor Party. The splitters formed a new group, the Social Democratic League, in Sydney. Early in 1918 a similar organisation, the Queensland Socialist League, was launched in Brisbane. Western Australia also had a Social Democratic League.

If that wasn't enough, the ASP also had a long-standing rival in the Socialist Labor Party, a Sydney-based outfit which had begun life as the

Australian Socialist League in 1887. Brisbane, meanwhile, also boasted the Union of Russian Workers, an organisation of émigré revolutionary Russians, refugees from the Czarist regime, many of whom had ties with the Bolshevik Party. At least one of them, Artem, was a personal friend of Lenin's. And finally, of course, there were the Industrial Workers of the World, the Wobblies, whose organisation and press had been outlawed by the Hughes government, but who still organised in various guises, especially in Queensland, where they were the backbone of an outfit called the Universal Freedom League.



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All of these groups were active in word and deed. But in the years following October 1917, none of them succeeded in capitalising on the success of the Bolsheviks. In fact, with the possible exception of the IWW in North Queensland, none of them grew appreciably at all.

Paradoxically, the Russian Revolution sparked enormous interest and enjoyed widespread sympathy throughout Australia. This enthusiasm can be gauged in both event attendance and literature consumption. On 24th March 1918 the ASP held a meeting in the sizeable Guild Hall in Swanston Street, Melbourne, featuring Peter Simonoff, the Bolshevik Consul

General for Australia as the keynote speaker. Such was the interest in the speaker and the topic, the ASP completely filled the venue. Seven months later, on the first anniversary of the revolution, the turnout to an ASP commemorative event in Broken Hill was so large that the crowd not only packed the hall but spilled into the middle of the street, forcing the ASP to reconvene the meeting outdoors. In Brisbane, a large crowd of Russians and others wishing to commemorate the first anniversary were denied access to Centennial Hall, despite a valid booking. They defiantly marched across Victoria Bridge to South Brisbane, where, depending on

which report you read, at least 1000 and up to 1500 of them assembled in South Brisbane Council's market reserve to celebrate one year of workers' rule in Russia. Two nights later 2000 supporters of the revolution gathered outdoors in William Street to celebrate the anniversary.²

The scale of these events reveals a well-spring of interest in, and sympathy for, Soviet Russia. Perhaps an even better illustration of the enthusiasm is the explosion in Australia of literature on the subject. Late in 1918 the Proletarian Publishing Association in Melbourne published and circulated no less than 2,500 copies of Zinoviev's speech, Lenin

His Life and Times. The Australian edition predated the arrival of the British edition by several months.

The print runs of this literature were astonishing. In March 1920 Andrade's Bookshop in Melbourne published 7,500 copies of Professor William Goode's book *In Russia*. Another title, *The Soviets at Work*, came out under two separate imprints. Andrade's Books published it in Melbourne, while the ASP published their own edition in Sydney. The ASP's version derived from copies of the work smuggled into Australia by radical seafarers in November 1919. Andrade's was also one of the first publishers in the Anglophone world

BOLSHEVISM AT WORK

BY

WM. T. GOODE, M.A. (LOND.)

*Hon. M.A. (Manchester), Principal of Grayside Place
Training College, London; Sometime Head of the
Men's Training Department, Owens College,
Victoria University, Manchester; Special Cor-
respondent of "The Manchester Guardian"
in Finland in 1918, and in Finland, the
Baltic Provinces & Russia in 1919*

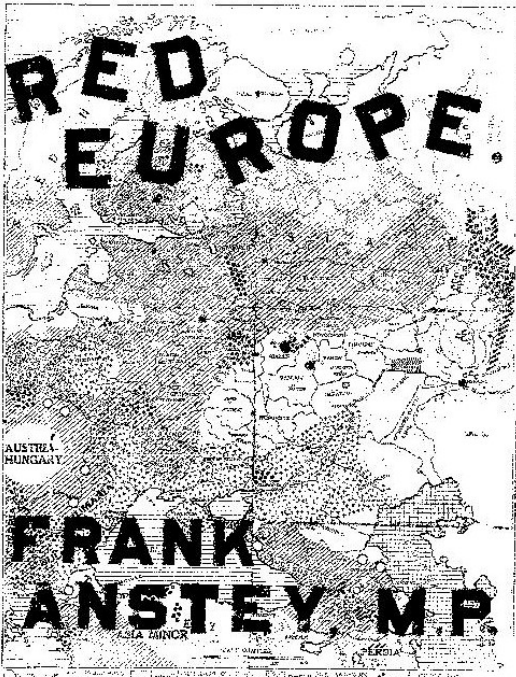
First published . . . February 1920
Reprinted . . . March 1920

" . . . nothing extenuate,
Or ought set down in malice."

LONDON: GEORGE ALLEN & UNWIN LTD.
RUSKIN HOUSE, 40 MUSEUM STREET, W.C. 1

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available from <https://archive.org/details/RedEuropeByFrankAnsteyp/mode/2up>

to publish Karl Radek's pamphlet, *The Russian Revolution*. Not to be outdone, Melbourne socialist printer R.S. Ross published *Inside Soviet Russia* in January 1920 and an Australian edition of *Red Russia* by British Labour Party leader George Lansbury two months later.

Some of the titles were homegrown. Probably Australia's first locally-authored publication on the revolution was Maurice Blackburn's pamphlet, *Bolsheviks*, which came out at the end of 1918 or early 1919. And the biggest-selling Red read of them all was by another Australian Labor parliamentarian, Fred Anstey. His book, *Red Europe*, was published in September 1919 following Anstey's tour

of Europe. It covered the revolution and the diplomatic intrigue and brutality associated with the Allied intervention. The first edition sold out in weeks, leading to the release of a second edition in November 1919. A third edition appeared in March 1920. It went on to become a global blockbuster. By 1922 the shelves of Andrade's bookshop in Melbourne carried no less than 30 titles on the Russian revolution. And judging by the print runs, those titles enjoyed a readership well beyond the membership of the small left groups.³

Whether the measure is books and pamphlets printed and distributed or public gatherings attended, there was clearly a significant appetite for information about Soviet Russia. Although

it did not translate into socialist recruits for the various sects, a general interest in socialism flowed through the working-class communities of Australia, a kind of subterranean stream of fascination expressing, one suspects, a deep yearning for freedom and liberation amongst Australia's working population. Looking back from his vantage point in 1939, Brisbane socialist Ernie Lane recalled that the news from Russia was a revelation. 'The triumph of the Russian workers,' he wrote, 'lit a torch that flashed a light across the world.'⁴

This appetite for fundamental change was not created by the news from Russia; it was already there. From the 1890s, union newspapers and union meetings in Australia were littered with strident criticisms of the wage labour system and calls for a just alternative. The anti-capitalist impulse found expression in various political programs. By the mid-1890s the dominant scheme in labour circles was to elect Labor governments to nationalise and run industry. Bill Davis, a labourer who was employed in the freezer room at Ross River Meatworks in Townsville in the 1910s, has left us a tremendously evocative fictionalised account of what this idea of 'state socialism' meant to many workers. In one passage, the manuscript describes the reaction of the fictionalised version of Bill to the news that the Labor Party was on track to win the 1910 federal election:

This glorious news acted like a tonic on Bill, who now had visions of the Cooperative Commonwealth being ushered in in the not far distant future, where poverty and riches would cease to exist, and misery and degradation would be relegated to the limbo of the forgotten past.⁵

A little later, after Labor's victory is officially declared, Bill writes

This announcement was met with wild scenes of approval among the workers in all parts of Australia, especially the industrial centres. (The workers) now settled down to await the new government's legislative program.⁶

These passages evoke the hope, the radical hope, that many workers in these years placed in the Labor Party.

Seven years later the picture was quite different. In April 1911 a referendum to give the Commonwealth powers to nationalise industry was defeated and the federal parliamentary Labor Party washed their hands of the idea. Then in 1914 Labor Prime Minister Fisher supported the war and his successor, Billy Hughes, tried to introduce military conscription. In this he was backed by the Holman Labor government in New South Wales.

In Queensland a Labor government came to power in 1915 under the leadership of T.J. Ryan, but despite introducing progressive reforms and commencing a program of state-run enterprises, Ryan's Cabinet made no serious effort to curtail the power of private capital.

In its first term, it refused to concede the demands of railway workers who were, as state employees, the theoretical beneficiaries of state socialism. As for the ALP's industrial arbitration system, Queensland's militant unions such as the Australian Railways Union and the Australasian Meat Industry Employees' Union quickly formed the view that they could achieve better results without it.

In New South Wales, meanwhile, the push for Taylorist methods of labour control in the workplace was led not by employers in private enterprise but by bosses in the state-run railway workshops. Their attempt to introduce the card system sparked one of the largest general strikes in Australian history.

By late 1917, then, both the program of state socialism and the Labor Party as a party of socialism had lost most of their gloss. As Bill Davis disdainfully concluded after witnessing the Ryan government's efforts, 'they opened state butcher shops and started a state lottery and called it socialism.'⁷ Many workers like Davis turned away from the ALP towards more direct methods of achieving a just society. Many of them embraced the Wobblies' anarcho-syndicalism, believing that One Big Union with revolutionary intent could sweep away the capitalist class and impose direct workers' control.

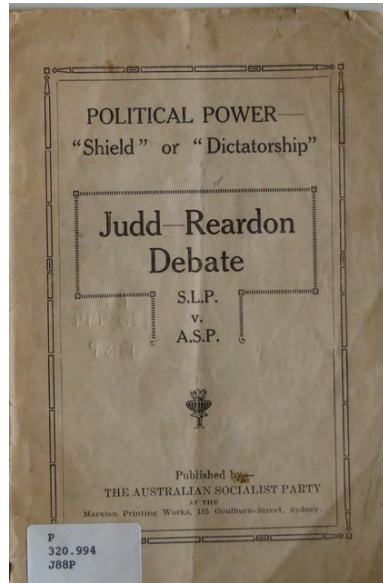
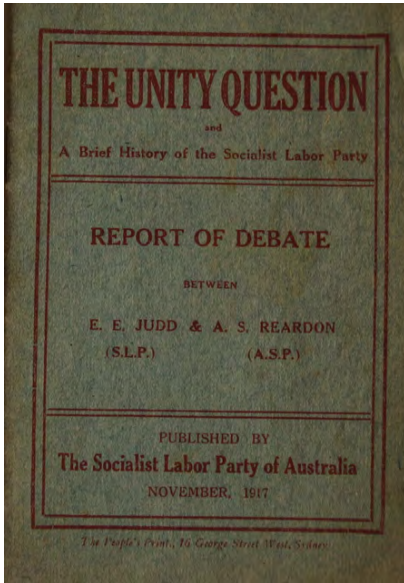
But this, too, was seeming doubtful. Efforts to build One Big Union in Australia were being co-opted by the Australian Workers' Union (AWU) for its own conservative purposes.

And in 1917 both the IWW and the New South Wales general strike were ruthlessly crushed, suggesting that industrial organisation alone could not overcome capitalist state power.

The socialist cause in Australia had reached something of a crossroads. Certain ideas had been tested in practice and had fallen short. On the other hand, workers had seen in two successful anti-conscription campaigns that mass political movements drawing on the strength of organised labour could be effective. Yet workers were evidently not thronging the current crop of socialist organisations. What was to be done?

It was against this backdrop that news arrived of the triumph of the Russian workers. The immediate effect was to give the Bolshevik Party unassailable prestige as the party of socialism. As A.S. Reardon, the leader of the ASP, put it, 'what is good enough for the Bolsheviks is sure good enough for me'.⁸ The wellspring of community sympathy for the Russian Revolution seemed to confirm that many working-class Australians agreed with him. For the revolutionary Left, the scramble was on to recreate Australian socialism in the Bolshevik image.

But here was the rub. What in fact was good enough for the Bolsheviks? What was the Bolshevik image? The organisation created by the Russian communists to coordinate revolutionary socialism globally, the Third or Communist International (Comintern), declared that only one communist party in each country would be recognised. In Australia, the groups that had little in common with the Bolsheviks' approach



The long-standing conflict between the Australian Socialist Party and Socialist Labor Party predated the formation of the Communist Party of Australia and led to factionalism of the party during its early years.

to politics either fell away or drew closer to the reformism of the Labor Party, leaving the two parties that were revolutionary in outlook, the ASP and the SLP, to fight over which one offered the purest embodiment of the Bolshevik program. In February 1920 the ASP even accepted the SLP's invitation to debate the proposition, 'That the Socialist Labor Party is the only scientific revolutionary socialist party in Australia with a clean record.' Not surprisingly, both sides claimed victory at the end of the night.

Unilaterally declaring that it was already Australia's one and only Communist Party, the SLP national leadership snubbed the ASP's invitation to the unity conference in October 1920. Perhaps encouraged, and certainly not

deterred by this rejection, the ASP conference went ahead, the 26 adults and the baby gathering in the Liverpool Street Hall on 30th October to thrash out their differences and find a common platform acceptable to the Comintern. After a day of deliberation, the delegates resolved "That this conference now form a Communist Party."⁹ The excitement was palpable and the sense of occasion genuine but this only served to highlight the underlying tensions as the ASP leaders found themselves in a minority within the new organisation.

Squabbles and divisions erupted almost immediately and within weeks, two parties, each claiming the title of the Australian section of the Comintern,

formed around the Sydney branch of the ASP, on the one hand, and a core of the remaining founding members, on the other. A united party would not emerge for another 18 months. Comintern recognition was eventually granted on 9 August 1922.

Despite this messy beginning, the Communist Party of Australia would enjoy a continuous existence for another 67 years, rising to prominence within many trade unions, leading many working-class struggles and stamping its mark on Australia's

MANIFESTO

THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF AUSTRALIA, together with the Communist International, accepts a scientific theory that the Capitalist System of production and distribution has outlived its usefulness and become reactionary and destructive to humanity. We realise that this system has in its development and maturity done great service to humanity by bringing about extensive and efficient social production and distribution of necessities, and by introducing wonderful labor saving devices. But the Capitalist System itself presents the fundamental contradiction of Social Production and individual or private ownership both of the means of production and the products. From this fact arise the two classes of modern society, the Bourgeoisie and the Proletariat. The bourgeoisie, by virtue of its being in possession of the state power, established and maintained itself as the dominant class and it was thereby enabled to shelter behind the empty phrases of popular democracy. By monopolising and holding by any and every means of skill, cunning, deceit and even terrorism, all the means of subsistence, a dominant class perpetuates the existing form of society, whilst the Proletariat, deprived of everything, sometimes even of bare subsistence, is subject to degradation and most humiliating slavery. Thus does modern society present itself a system wherein one class provides all things, and owns nothing, whilst the other class own everything and produce nothing. The Communist Party recognising this contradiction sets itself to abolish the system, to overthrow this class monopoly and to abolish the private ownership of the means of production. Its aim is to establish a system, public ownership of the means of production, thereby making the ownership coincide with the social process of production.

First Statement of the Aims of the C.P.A., 30 October 1920

from **THE BITTER FIGHT** — Joe Harris

cultural life. Its creation marked a new phase in the history of Australian socialism, with three characteristics of the early CPA signalling a clear break with the socialism of the past. First, the consolidation of Bolshevik politics as the pre-eminent form of socialism in Australia eliminated racism as an acceptable position within socialist circles. Never again would a racist like William Lane be able to claim legitimacy as a spokesperson for socialism. The CPA was unequivocally opposed to the White Australia policy and said so, again and again. It supported the development of the Red International of Labor Unions, which saw Australian Communists working alongside trade unionists from Asia. It gave principled practical support to the struggles of Aboriginal people. In North Queensland the party organised immigrant workers from southern Europe and led the opposition to the officially-sanctioned racism of the Australian Workers' Union.

Second, on the fundamental question of how socialism would be achieved and indeed what socialism actually was, the early CPA put the case for a new form of workers' power, not a form of power centred on parliament, not one based on trade unionism, but a form of power residing in the self-organisation of working people in councils or soviets. This formulation effectively dissolved the old debate between supporters of industrial action and supporters of political action, recasting it into a new polarisation: soviet power versus parliamentary power.

Third, along with this bottom-up conception of socialism came a new approach to the tasks of the socialist party. It would not be a party fixated on winning seats in parliament. Nor would it merely serve as a source of propaganda, struggling at the level of ideas to convince workers of the merits of socialism. Propaganda was still considered important but as the party grew it was anticipated that its role would become more direct. It would organise workers as a socialist political force. As the ASP put it, not long before it called the 1920 unity conference:

The Australian Socialist Party is not a party in the sense that other parties are. It is in politics for the purpose of wresting out of the hands of the capitalist class the power which is used to oppress and rob the workers. It is also in politics for the purpose of reorganising society.¹⁰

None of these elements of Bolshevism was completely foreign to Australian socialism prior to October 1917. But the Russian Revolution gave these ideas unprecedented authority and clarity amongst the most politically advanced layers of the Australian working population. And it linked these ideas to an international movement. A movement which at the time seemed unstoppable. In those heady days, no matter how rocky the road in Australia, to be a socialist of the Bolshevik type was to believe you were on the side of history. To be a member of a party of Bolshevism was to see the future in workers' hands.

We encounter this optimism and confidence in the manuscript of our northern meatworker, Bill Davis. Having led strikes, campaigned for the ALP, experienced Labor in power, followed events in Russia and discovered the writings of Marx, Engels and Lenin, both the fictional and flesh-and-blood Bill Davis departed North Queensland in the early 1920s with a new political focus:

With his eyes fixed in the direction of where the greatest experiment in the world's history was taking place, and being confident of the ultimate success of the experiment, Bill left Townsville, the scene of many of his ups and downs on life's journey, more determined than ever to continue to play his part according to his ability in bringing about the end of a system which was responsible for the misery and degradation of millions of human beings throughout the world. 'Au revoir, Townsville,' he said as the train pulled out of the station, 'someday I hope to return.'¹¹

Bill would not return to Townsville but many others with a similar outlook would rise in his place, within 15 years building North Queensland's reputation as the 'Red North'. By the eve of World War Two, the Communist Party of Australia could boast over 4400 members nationally, the largest socialist organisation Australia has ever produced.¹²

Notes

- (1) Quoted in Stuart Macintyre, *The Reds: The Communist Party of Australia from Origins to Illegality*, St Leonards, Allen & Unwin, 1998, p.12.
- (2) *International Socialist*, 6 Apr 1918, 23 Nov 1918; *The Queenslander*, 6 Nov 1918; *Daily Standard*, 9 Nov 1918, 21 Nov 1918.
- (3) For information on early Australian publishing about Soviet Russia, see Bertha Walker, *Solidarity Forever! A Part Story of the Life and Times of Percy Laidler - the First Quarter of a Century*, Melbourne, National Press, 1972. For information on the publishing history of Frank Anstey's *Red Europe*, see Peter Love, 'Frank Anstey: A Political Biography', PhD Thesis, Australian National University, 1990, pp.335-37.
- (4) E.H. Lane, *Dawn to Dusk: Reminiscences of a Rebel*, Brisbane, William Brooks & Co., 1939, p.194.
- (5) MS, W. Davis, 'In Pursuit of the Millennium', p.21. In possession of author.
- (6) *Ibid.* p.22.
- (7) *Ibid.* p.189.
- (8) *Australian Socialist Party, Political Power – Shield or Dictatorship?: Judd-Reardon Debate, SLP v ASP*, Sydney: Australian Socialist Party, c1920, p.13.
- (9) Quoted in Macintyre, *The Reds*, p.22.
- (10) *Australasian Socialist Party, A Manifesto to the Working-Class Electors of NSW*, Sydney, Australasian Socialist Party, 1920, p.4.
- (11) Davis, 'In Pursuit of the Millennium', p.191.
- (12) Macintyre, *The Reds*, p.351.

Retired Unionists Network

VINTAGE REDS

STRENGTH IN UNITY!

Vintage Reds is an activist group based in Brisbane of retired trade union members.

We seek to

- promote and support the interests of trade unionism and retired unionists,
- provide forums for political discussion, education and camaraderie, and
- participate in industrial campaigns, social justice forums, debates, demonstrations and rallies.

Under the ACTU across Australia retired unionist networks (R.U.N) are being formed and some have already begun meaningful activities and actions

In Brisbane we have an elected Committee who organise activities for our regular monthly meeting, as well as publicising Union actions which our members might like to attend in support.

Would you like to join our mailing list?

Retired union members who are interested in joining Vintage Reds can email
Barbara Williams

barbararwilliams@gmail.com

- or look for our banner at various union rallies and pickets.

We usually meet on the 1st Thursday of each month at the QCU building, 2nd Floor at 10:00am. For details of meetings during the COVID period, email Barbara at above email.

Come along and join us - its free!



Book Reviews

**Bringing the Fight: A
Firebrand feminist's life of
defiance and determination.**

**Merle Thornton
and Melanie Ostell**

**2020. Harper Collins
Publishers. 275 pp. \$29.99**

**Reviewed by
Jennifer O'Dempsey**

Firebrand feminist Merle Thornton remains a passionate woman. Notorious for leading the 1965 protest for equal rights for women at the Regatta Hotel in Brisbane, Merle Thornton and colleague Ro Bogner walked into the public bar, padlocked and chained their ankles to the footrail and ordered a lemonade. Thornton's recently published autobiography, *Bringing the Fight: A Firebrand feminist's life of defiance and determination*, brings her life-long activism alive. Thornton is best known for her protest at the Regatta Hotel in Brisbane, but she achieved so much more.

This book is divided into five parts. The first few chapters deal with her family and her childhood, experiences



of her school days and anecdotes of life in the 1930 and 40s. Her high school, university and early working life is next, followed by sections on experiences as a woman, on career and motherhood and her political awakening before expanding on her activism. Interspersed within are two chapters of "Indelible Moments" that affected Merle and two chapters of important "Bookish Influences".

Merle Thornton introduces herself by claiming that she was always precocious, had a temper, refused to

back down in an argument and was determined to persuade others to her point of view. She explains that she was the definitive only child, yet she was blessed with extra parental attention which instilled curiosity and a thirst for understanding that knowledge brought opportunities.

This memoir is an interesting and engaging light read. Yet there is nothing light-hearted about the content. The book presents as something of a juxtaposition; at times it is light and fun reading, at other times it reverts to the experiences, influences and issues that concerned, and still concern, Merle. One thing that is very valuable is the way that the author returns to context and explains how her life in her formative days differed from now, how she wound and found her way through various 'isms', influenced by the Free Thought Society, the University Libertarian Society, the ALP, working with the Queensland Aboriginal Advancement League. This journey began in Sydney, and together with husband Neil, they finally settled on and always regarded themselves as Libertarians. Sensitive readers, however, might be warned that swearing became important to the libertarian life Merle led, and Merle demonstrates that in this publication.

The chapter 'The public service', should be compulsory reading for every girl and boy, man and woman in Australia, as a reminder of how precariously situated were the lives of women, for much of the twentieth century.

Unmarried women were invisible, unable to inherit, condemned if they had children and were barely recognised legally. Married women were also invisible and only able to inherit if it was granted so. They received some provision for their children while in the marriage but could be liable to lose all if they left the marriage. For some, marriage was a haven; for others a nightmare, trap, prison, a place of never-ending work in a home that was not their own, controlled by a man, without income of their own. Married life was without choice but filled with responsibility. Married women were required to obey and were always liable to suffer criticism and corporal punishment.

When Merle began work in the Commonwealth Public Service in 1951, in a position with the Department of Social Security, she faced situations in which she learnt valuable lessons that moved her inexorably to becoming Merle, the committed feminist activist. Many Queensland women followed Merle's journey of activism, and her memoir is of significance to the history of the protest movement. In today's world, Bringing the Fight reminds us of the need to be vigilant, and that, in the lives of women, further progress needs to be made, not least regarding the gender pay gap and disparity in superannuation. Indeed, Merle urges us "to become curious and engaged about fairness and equality issues" and "to speak up and speak out and to bring the fight."(p4)

**Outlook Critical – Essays on
My Political Journey
Salvatore (Ted) D’Urso**

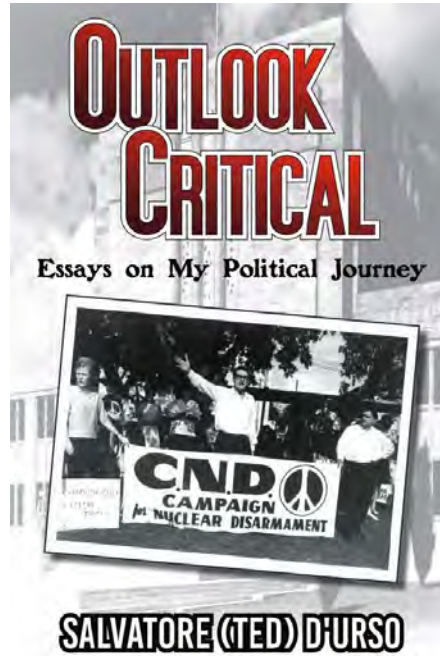
**2020.Brisbane Labour History
Association -
InHouse Publishing.
124 pp. \$20.00**

**Reviewed by
Ken Mansell**

Reproduced from the July
2020 issue of *Recorder*,
newsletter of the Victorian
branch of the ASSLH

This remarkable publication consists of three memoirs written after the author’s retirement from the University of Queensland in 1993 and ‘re-discovered’ only last year. Aided by reference to his own sizable archival collection, the writer plots the steady rise of a disadvantaged young Italian migrant to his eventual status as one of Queensland’s most influential left-wing intellectuals. The memoir ‘My Political Journey’, set against the background of life on the North Queensland cane fields and the vicissitudes of the Brisbane left, is the story of a strong and determined individual who refused to be cowed by adversity, prejudice and victimisation.

Salvatore (Ted) D’Urso was born in Sicily (1928) and grew up in ethnically-diverse Innisfail (North Queensland) where his family settled in 1931. The family endured hardship and prejudice. Ted’s father Alfio, who cut cane and ran a billiard saloon, was arrested and interned in 1942, leaving



young Ted carrying partial responsibility for managing the saloon. Ted attended primary schools in Innisfail and Charters Towers, secondary school in Cairns, and earned a scholarship to study commerce at the University of Queensland in 1947.

An introduction in his course to Marxism combined with resentment at the injustices inflicted on himself and his family ‘kindled the seed of youthful idealism.’ In his second year Ted joined the Radical Club and frequented the lively student newspaper (Semper Floreat) office. In September 1948 he joined the Communist Party and its University of Queensland cell. Ted was appalled when the CPA leadership proclaimed the 1949 coal strike defeat as a victory

for the Australian working class. Increasingly critical, he was threatened with expulsion but refused to recant. Ted resigned from the CPA mid-1950 but never 'ratted' and continued to adhere strongly to classical Marxism.

In 1957 Ted became the Brisbane representative of the recently-launched 'New Left' journal *Outlook* and was involved with the Brisbane *Outlook* discussion circle until it folded in 1962. By then he had been drawn into the orbit of Trotskyist groups emerging in Brisbane and Sydney. (Ted's memories of Nick Origlass, Izzy Weiner, Wal Suchting, Bob Gould, Alan Roberts, and George Petersen are brief but intriguing). In late 1962 Ted's wife Janet Lewis launched a CND branch in Brisbane. The members were interrogated by Federal Police when a reprint of the British 'Spies for Peace' pamphlet (an exposure of how Britain would be administered in the event of a nuclear attack) appeared in Brisbane. Brisbane CND had declined by early 1965 and attention shifted to the Vietnam war.

Ted and Janet relocated to Armidale in late 1965 when he was appointed to a lectureship in Education at the University of New England. There the couple joined a small band of campus anti-war activists. They returned to Brisbane in 1970 when Ted took up a senior lectureship (Education) at the University of Queensland. It is not surprising, given Ted's own experience of victimisation (for example his virtual banishment in 1951 to the most isolated school on the Atherton Tableland), that he would

strive to diminish the power of the bureaucratic administration of education in Queensland and reform secondary schooling, with a particular emphasis on the rights (and responsibilities) of students. Ted, labelled a 'dangerous agitator', was the driving force behind the Council for Democracy in Schools (CDS), an influential watch dog against abuse of regulations by school authorities until its demise in 1975. 'My Political Journey' concludes with the unrepentant Marxist's interesting reflections on post-1975 conservatism and 'the ecological unsustainability of industrial capitalism's growth imperative.'

The book also includes three smaller essays - 'The Billiard Saloon', 'Kelvin Grove Teachers College', and 'An Interpretation of Liberty' (published in 1949 after Ted had joined the CPA). There are eight pages of photos. Ted D'Urso, 92, is still very much alive. Though now physically confined to his flat in Indooroopilly, his intelligence is undiminished.

*Outlook Critical is published by the
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*Copies can be ordered by emailing
Jeff Rickertt,
blha.exec@gmail.com
(\$20 plus \$5 postage)*

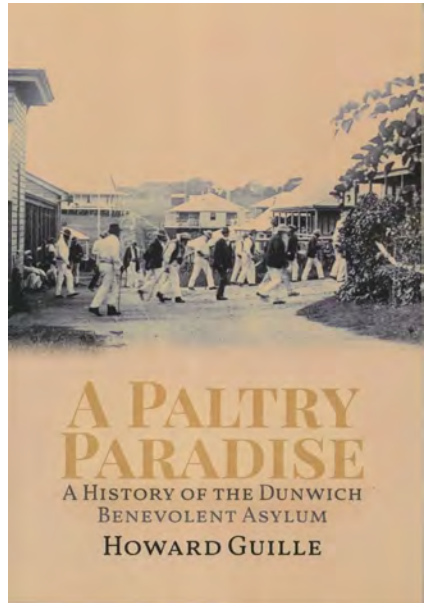
**A Paltry Paradise:
A History of the Dunwich
Benevolent Asylum
Howard Guille**

**2019. Boolarong Press.
316pp \$40.00**

**Reviewed by
Jeff Rickertt**

Howard Guille's book *A Paltry Paradise* begins with a startling fact. In the 1890s and early 1900s, one in four of all Queensland men over 65 years of age were residents of the Dunwich Benevolent Asylum on Minjerribah (North Stradbroke Island). By this measure alone, the Asylum was one of Queensland's most significant institutions, at least as important as any major hospital or prison. It ran from 1865 to 1946, and over the decades was home to 21,000 men and women. The majority of them were there due to age and poverty, but for a time the Asylum also housed the largest leprosarium in Queensland and the only institution in Queensland for inebriates. Vagrants brought before the courts were regularly sent there as an alternative to goal.

The history of such a prominent institution warrants substantial attention. But until now, it hasn't been forthcoming. While over 100 books of history have been written about Queensland hospitals, and more than three dozen publications deal with Queensland prisons (mostly Boggo Road), only one postgraduate dissertation and two books other than this one have ever examined the history of the Dunwich Asylum. The reason for



this lacuna is not difficult to fathom. Hospitals make for celebratory stories of service, progress and community pride, while prisons encourage voyeuristic tales of the macabre and the transgressive, a subset of the popular true-crime genre. Institutions for the indigent and inebriates, however, are, like the inmates themselves, an awkward topic, with little to offer readers in the way of visceral thrills or celebratory self-affirmation. The Asylum was a stain, best hidden away. So, too, its history.

Thanks to Howard Guille this is no longer the case. At over 300 pages, *A Paltry Paradise* is a substantial work. Each of its 13 chapters addresses a different aspect of the Asylum's history, including its purpose, its infrastructure, its governance

and funding, the formal staffing arrangements, the backgrounds and daily routines of its inmates, and its relationship with the local Quandamooka people. Many institutional histories make for dour reading, a catalogue of successive administrators and administrative changes, enlivened by an occasional anecdote. *A Paltry Paradise* is not one of these histories. Adopting an easy-to-read style, complemented by a rich array of photographs, Guille draws on meticulous documentary, newspaper and oral history research to dissect both the inner world and the broader context of the Asylum.

With so many inmates, the very presence of the Dunwich institution suggests that poverty, homelessness and alcoholism were not aberrant

conditions, the sad fate of the unfortunate few, but widespread social ills, threaded into the very weft and warp of Queensland society. As Guille observes, the two peak periods of the Asylum's intake, 1895-1905 and 1915-1920, coincided with severe drought and economic depression, and the influx into Queensland of deeply traumatised returned soldiers, scores of whom were admitted to the Asylum for alcohol abuse. Unemployed and destitute or shell-shocked and self-medicating, these men found themselves on Minjerribah because the employing class of Queensland no longer found a use for them either as workers or soldiers. As one inmate wrote to *The Worker* in 1898,



Dunwich inmates waiting for a meal, 1938. SLQ Neg 67206

We are treated more like prisoners than free men, who in our time have contributed largely to the revenue and assisted in the development of the resources of the colony (p.72)

For every one of these inmates there were thousands more with similar experiences on the mainland. This, then, is a history of the realities of economics and war and government as much as it is, as the Introduction puts it, 'an account of place, people and organisation.'

Guille's chapter on the purpose of the Asylum delves into the official thinking behind the facility. He points out that the policy makers and administrators drew inspiration from the model of the English workhouse, where the 'respectable' poor were cared for after a fashion, but only if they contributed to their keep. Anticipating the ideology of 'mutual obligation' by some 130 years, Queensland pastoralist and President of the Legislative Council, Sir Arthur Palmer, summed up the prevailing attitude towards the Dunwich inmates in 1888:

Many people went to Dunwich, thinking they had a right to stay there at the expense of the colony, and the sooner they were undeceived and shown that the superintendent had the power to make them work, if they were able to do a little work, or turn them out if they refused, so much the better, (p.33)

On the 'liberal' end of the parliamentary spectrum, Premier Samuel Griffith offered a more nuanced approach:

If a man can work and will not, I would not say that he should not be allowed to eat, but he should only have sufficient to keep life in him. (p.33)

Such were the parameters of compassion for the working-class poor in the colony of Queensland.

Throughout the chapters, and especially in the chapters on inmates, inebriates and returned soldiers, Guille has endeavoured to give a voice to the men and women who lived in the Asylum, recording some of their stories and their perspectives on the experience of institutionalisation. Over the years their number included ex-convicts, union activists from the great strikes of the 1890s, a seafarer who had served under Lord Nelson, at least one ex-soldier recognised for 'conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty' on the Western Front, and a former Queensland Labor Deputy Premier.

Downtrodden these men and women may have been, universally compliant they certainly were not. One 1874 Report commented:

These old gentlemen at Dunwich do not as a rule approve of being asked to work. They meet every quest to do so categorically - 'Why should I work? If ... I could work, why be I sent here?' (p.84)

The quantity, variety and standard of the food was a regular source of complaint, as was the quality of the tobacco. In 1915, 78 inmates petitioned Dave Bowman, the Home Secretary in the new Labor Government, demanding better pipe tobacco to replace the current 'rubbish'

on offer. (p.95) One 'Old Croak from Dunwich' wrote to the press complaining that, although the Asylum boasted 16 or 17 milch cows, the inmates never got a drop of milk in their tea, not even at Christmas: 'only the usual dry bread and pannikin of black tea. Tea! -ugh!' (p.68) Perhaps the overall situation and the inmates' attitude to it is best summed up in the black humour of the Asylum's unofficial motto, 'Blessed is he who expects nothing, for he'll surely get it.' (p.72)

At times, the neglect and cruelty by the local administrators became too severe for even the government of the day to ignore. One particularly notorious Medical Superintendent, Dr James Stockwell, was eventually dismissed for neglect of duty and maladministration. Labor Party leader Dave Bowman alleged that Stockwell's treatment of the sick was so bad that 'more consideration [was] given to the livestock than was given to the inmates.' (p.107) The Worker concluded that under the management of Stockwell and the matron, 'Dunwich has been a veritable inferno.' (p.105)

Inadequate funding was a constant theme of the Asylum's history. Guille discusses the political economy of the facility at length, highlighting that most of the day-to-day labour that kept the Asylum functioning was provided by the island's Aboriginal community. Essential outdoor labour was the preserve of local Aboriginal workers, organised into what was called the 'Aboriginal gang'. Aboriginal workers with trade and other skills were employed as plumbers, engineers, laundresses, nurses and wardsmasids, whilst Quandamooka men served as

skippers and crew on the supply steamer, Karboora.

Most significantly, Guille documents the Aboriginal gang's long campaign for equal pay and award wages. After 26 years of industrial action and political pressure, their struggle culminated in a claim sent directly to the Government in 1944 by 19 members of the gang, demanding 'the Basic Wage and entitlements enjoyed by all workers of the AWU'. The AWU used its influence to pressure the Labor Cabinet, and in September 1944, Award rates of pay were formally granted, making the Quandamooka the first Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people in Australia to win equal pay. As Guille argues, this historic victory deserves much wider recognition.

The Dunwich Asylum closed in 1946 but the ghosts of Sir Arthur Palmer and Dr James Stockwell still haunt us. The 2019 Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety heard evidence that 22-50 per cent of people residing in Australian residential aged care facilities were malnourished. The average daily food spend per resident was \$6.08. These places are not benevolent asylums on the 19th century model. The hardship at Dunwich was the product of government parsimony; the suffering exposed by the Royal Commission has an altogether different cause: the pursuit of corporate profit. With state encouragement, private capital has transformed the aged, the infirm and the unemployable from burden into bonanza. The austerity documented in A Paltry Paradise is now a business model.



GETTING EQUAL

AUSTRALIA'S FIRST SUCCESSFUL ABORIGINAL WAGES CASE

In 2021, the North Stradbroke Island Museum on Minjerribah will launch 'Getting Equal' an exhibition that shares the story of the 'Aboriginal Gang' of the Dunwich Benevolent Asylum and their fight for equal wages. It was a 25 year campaign, and achieved successfully almost 20 years before anywhere else in Australia. The Asylum closed shortly after and the story of 'Aboriginal Gang' will now be told, 77 years later.

Getting Equal

The Benevolent Asylum was at Dunwich for 80 years. It was the sole public institution providing shelter and care to the poor and needy of Queensland from 1865-1946. Over its life, 21,000 inmates were taken across Moreton Bay to the Asylum.

The Asylum relied on the labour of Aboriginal workers. They campaigned industrially and politically for cash wages not rations and for equal pay.

In 1945 Aboriginal workers at the Dunwich Benevolent Asylum got the Queensland Government to agree to pay them according to the awards applying to non-Aboriginal workers. This was the first time Aboriginal workers anywhere in Australia got equal pay.

North Stradbroke Island Museum on Minjerribah will stage a major exhibition and associated Sharing the knowledge events. The exhibition will include interviews with today's family members of those who struggled for fairness in the 1920-1940s.

The aim is dialogue and sharing; mixing scholars, practitioners and, and most critically, the community whose families experienced the Asylum. The tone is inquisitive; across a range of topics including work and labour, aged care, social equality, race and racism.

More details info@stradbrokemuseum.com.au or

<https://stradbrokemuseum.com.au>

In Memorium

John (Jack) Bernard Munday 1929-2020

Towards a Red-Green Future by Greg Mallory

Jack Munday's death notice in the Sydney Morning Herald on 23 May stated:

Political activist, trade union leader, communist, environmentalist, instigator of Green Bans, Member of the Greens, socialist and fighter for social justice.¹

This well sums up Jack's extraordinary life.

Jack was born in Malanda on the Atherton Tableland in 1929. He was related to my godfather John Byrne who had played for the Atherton Rugby League Club. My father John Mallory was an official of the club and knew Jack well.

Jack was an accomplished rugby league player, representing Eacham in the Foley Shield. He also boxed and played cricket. In 1951 when Jack was in his third year as an apprentice plumber, he was recruited to go to Sydney



*pic c/o
<https://www.auscp.org.au/vale-jack-munday>*

to play for the Parramatta Club. At Parramatta Jack was coached by the legendary Vic Hey and he played for three seasons mainly in reserve grade. He went on to captain/coach Wentworthville and Riverstone. At Wentworthville he was succeeded by the famous Welsh captain/coach Lewis Jones.



Jack speaking at the BLHA Red-Green conference, Brisbane 6/2/2010

In Sydney, Jack initially worked as an ironworker and joined the Federated Ironworkers Association (FIA). In 1953 he was involved in his first political activity - Ban the Bomb. In 1955 Jack joined the Communist Party of Australia (CPA) because, he said 'they were people who wanted to make life better for ordinary workers.'² In 1956 he became a builders' labourer and joined the NSW branch of the Builders Labourers Federation.

The working conditions for building labourers were atrocious. In the words of Darcy Duggan:

...make-shift bloody ladders, the likes of toilets of which there were only four posts with a bit of hessian around, the state of the sheds was bad, just made out of corrugated iron.³

When workers tried to improve these conditions, they found the union was run by a gangster element. In opposition, a rank and file committee had been active since 1951 led by Harry Connell. Jack worked with Harry Connell and in 1958 Jack was elected leader of the rank and file committee.

The group began to take union leadership positions with Mick McNamara becoming Secretary of the BLF in 1961 and Jack becoming a temporary organiser. Jack replaced McNamara in 1968 when Mick resigned due to ill health. In 1969 Bob Pringle became President and Joe Owens a temporary organiser.

One of the main jobs of this new leadership was to 'civilise the industry'.

Two campaigns enhanced the status of the builders' labourers; the Accident Pay Strike and the Margins Strike. Their industrial militancy laid the platform for the union to move into other areas, easily summarised by Jack when he said:

If it wasn't for that civilising of the building industry in campaigns of 1970 and 1971, well then I am sure we wouldn't have had the luxury of the membership going along with us in what was considered by some as 'avant-garde', 'way-out' actions of supporting mainly middle-class people in environmental actions. I think that gave us the mandate to allow us to go into uncharted waters.⁴

On June 1971 a group called the 'Battlers for Kelly Bush' approached the NSW BLF to help them preserve the last remaining bush in Hunters Hill. AV Jennings had planned to clear the property and build a high-rise development on the site. The Battlers approached the BLF and after a meeting with the local community, the union decided to place a black ban on the site. In 1973 Jack coined the term 'Green Ban' to describe the union's actions. From then on actions held in support of the environment were described as Green Bans.

The important aspect of the Green Bans was that they were established

by the union in response to local community action and democracy. Green Bans saved various suburbs and buildings; the Rocks and Woolloomooloo among others. In Glebe a Green Ban saved the suburb from an Expressway: Victoria Street was saved from high-rise development. At the Opera House a Green Ban saved the fig trees in the botanical gardens from being turned into a car park, and a Green Ban saved the Theatre Royal from demolition. Another ban saved the Pitt Street Congregational Church. It was estimated that there were 49 Green Bans in the Sydney Metropolitan area by 1974.

The Green bans encouraged a rise in resident action groups and drew international attention. Petra Kelly took the word 'Green' back to Germany and insisted on the use of the term by (what became) the West German Green Party. The term 'Green' was adopted by environmentally focused political parties worldwide. Jack was indirectly responsible for naming the Australian political party he himself joined in 2003.

Joe Owens described these Green Bans as environmental, social and political action. Some of the political/social were at Macquarie University and Sydney University. The Green Ban at Macquarie University was in response to the expulsion of Jeremy Fisher and Penny Short for declaring their sexual preferences. The other was to introduce a women's course at Sydney University.

It has been argued by Verity and Meredith Burgmann that Munday's position was to some extent syndicalist and incorporated aspects of the new left.⁵ Munday's relationship with the Communist Party of Australia (CPA) is important to note here as changes in the CPA were occurring such as the rejection of Stalinism. Jack argues that he went beyond the CPA mainstream. The changes in the Communist Party, of which Jack was a leading member along with Laurie and Eric Aarons, coincided with Jack's view on limited tenure of office and a new way of thinking in the union movement. Limited tenure of office was that union officials should return to the rank and file after some time in their position. Green Bans represented a social responsibility position.

From 1974, under the leadership of the Federal Secretary Norm Gallagher, the federal body of the BLF, with the support of the building employers, attacked the NSW branch. Many of the democratic structures of the branch and Green Bans were rescinded, and Munday and Joe Owens, as well as other members of the NSW BLF, were suspended. Jack and others fought unsuccessfully against these suspensions.

Jack became an advocate for urban environmentalism for which he received accolades. He served for 20 years on the Executive of the Australian Conservation Foundation and became a Life Member. He also served on the Sydney City Council in the early 1980s. He was appointed Chair of the Historic Houses Trust by Premier Bob Carr in

2000 and awarded with an Order of Australia the same year. He became a National Living Treasure in 1999. In 1998 he was awarded an honorary Doctor of Letters from the University of Western Sydney and an honorary Doctor of Science from the University of New South Wales. In 2000 he was awarded a Masters of the Environment from the University of Sydney. He received an invitation to speak at the University of Wollongong and he told me with his dry sense of humour he would go to Wollongong, "as long as they don't award me with another Doctorate".

I first met Jack in 1977 and remained a friend ever since. Every time I visited him in Sydney, we would meet up on a Friday night at the Coronation Hotel with his builders labourers mates. Then down to the Criterion where we would drink with members of the remnants of the Sydney Push and then on to Diethnes for dinner. A few years later we would meet at the Teachers Club and go on to Diethnes. Jack was a very affable person, he always showed interest in who he was mixing with.

My book *Uncharted Waters* was partly based on the experiences of the NSW BLF in broadening the social responsibility of Australian trade unions and Jack wrote the foreword and launched the book in Brisbane. At the event he made sure he met my mother, my sister and brother-in-law, mentioning them in his speech. He signed the book 'towards a red-green alliance'.

To give an example of his broad reputation as an advocate of the red-green alliance he launched the book on the communist Fred Patterson by



Jack Munday and Greg Mallory at the Woolongong Launch of Greg's Book. Reproduced from QJLH issue 1, September 2005

Ross Fitzgerald and a book on the history of the green movement by Drew Hutton and Libby Connors. To recognise Jack's contribution to saving The Rocks there is a section called the Jack Munday Place. There is also a giant mural of Jack at the entrance to the Rocks. In recognition of his rugby league playing days he received honorary mention on the NSW Rugby League website on his death. The NSW Labor Council lowered its flags to half-mast on the day of his passing.

Jack was a friend of the Brisbane Labour History Association. He came to Brisbane on three occasions to support the Association's activities. Firstly, in 2003 he opened the Association's seminar on the Communist Party. Secondly, he was guest speaker at the Association's conference in 2005 on the ACTUs Your

Rights at Work campaign. Thirdly, he was guest speaker at the Association's conference on the theme of the Red-Green alliance in 2010.

In 1965 Jack married his second wife Judy Willcocks after the early death of his first wife, Stephanie. Judy, who became National President of the CPA, remained his partner for over 50 years. Jack's son Michael died when at the age of 22.

I will miss Jack enormously. Jack's hope for the future is stated in his book *Green Bans and Beyond* -

*we need a socialist world with a human face, an ecological heart and an egalitarian body.*⁶

Notes

- (1) Sydney Morning Herald, May 23-24, 2020 p. 37
- (2) Colman, J, 2016, *The House that Jack Built: Jack Munday Green Bans Hero*, Angus & Robertson, Sydney, p.2
- (3) Mallory, G, 2005, *Uncharted Waters; Social Responsibility in Australian Trade Unions*, Greg Mallory, Brisbane, p.100
- (4) Ibid.
- (5) Burgmann, M & V, 1998, *Green Bans, Red Union: Environmental Activism and the New South Wales and the New South Wales Builders Labourers Federation*, UNSW Press, Sydney
- (6) Munday, J, 1981, *Green Bans and Beyond*, Angus and Robertson, Sydney, p.148

Jim Doyle

13 July 1918 – 15 August 2020

From a forthcoming issue of Labour History News, the newsletter of the SA branch of the ASSLH

by Allison Murchie
and Les Birch

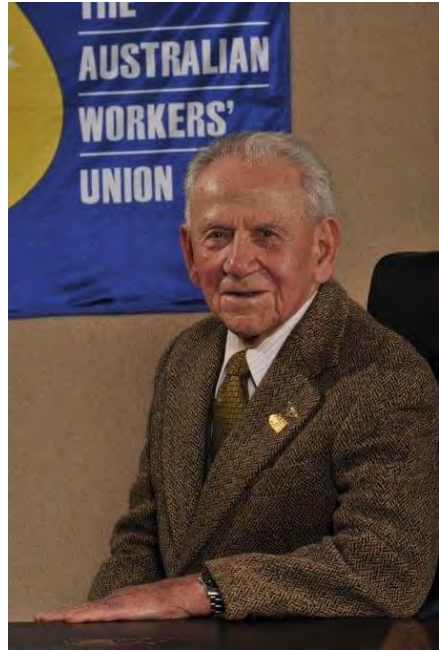
Jim Doyle was born in Rockhampton, Queensland and grew up in Longreach, the eldest of seven children. His father was a teamster who drove a wagon of 12-16 horses and carted wool from Longreach pastoral stations.

Jim left school in 1932 at the age of 14 and got work pulling thistle weeds along the course of a river. He started shearing in 1939 and worked in shearing sheds all over Queensland and later in New South Wales, Victoria, Tasmania and South Australia.

Jim had tried to join the Army at the beginning of the Second World War but shearing was a reserved occupation. After Pearl Harbour he was allowed to join. He volunteered to drive trucks and was accepted even though he did not have a driver's licence. He was eventually posted to Geraldton where soldiers were spread along the WA coast as they were expecting the Japanese to attack.

As there was a shortage of shearers Jim was pulled out of New Guinea by the Army to return to shearing as they needed the wool of the sheep for the war effort. He was eventually discharged in 1944.

Jim got his education in the shearing sheds. In Jim's words,



Photos: Courtesy of Allison Murchie and Wayne Hanson

“...the important thing about the conditions in that period was the debate that took place in the shed, because the circumstances were conducive to shearers debating how things were going. Usually there would be one shearer or another who might have a little portable wireless in the shed although portable wireless in those days, you couldn't listen to them much or very rarely of a daytime. There were only a few stations you could pick up around Longreach at that time on the portable. One of the best stations was a Victorian station

3AW. For some reason it came through of a night and generally that's where they got the news. Shearers were always keen to be kept up to date with the news and in particular politics of the day. They'd get the papers out every week and shearers were always carrying a fair bit of reading material with them on their travels from shed to shed. The level of the debate was energetic to say the least. This was a time with the rise of fascism in Europe, the civil war in Spain. Shearers were taking a very keen interest in this as well as the revolution in Russia in 1917. There was a spin-off in all of these things washing over into the debates taking place in the shearing sheds. So, shearers were pretty well-informed and, on the whole had a very definite attitude to where they stood. Moscow also had a radio station that used to broadcast in English too. They used to be able to get it on occasions and it was well listened to."

This formed the background of Jim's education in the shearing industry.

Jim continues,

"That period was probably the most important period in my life in my education. At this time there were quite a lot of communists in the shearing industry and the Labor Party people that were there, in a lot of cases the older ones, and I

can still remember some of these older ones who were bitter on the outcome of the big strike in the 1890s. I can remember one old bloke, and I'll probably never forget him, old Ted Dean. It still makes me emotional how bitter he was on this period, on the big strike."

The big strike in the 1890's led to the formation of the Australian Workers' Union and the Labor Party.

In 1946 Jim was shearing at Carandotta Station near Mt Isa and was heavily involved in the industrial action to win the 40-hour week in the industry in Queensland so that shearers would no longer have to work on Saturday mornings.

Throughout his long career as a shearer he was regularly elected as the shed representative. He was always militant but also strategic in how he operated and was often off-side with the bosses. In the 40-hour week campaign they took on the large pastoralist first and Jim demonstrated this approach. Shearers are piece-workers so they are only paid for the hours they work but others in the shed were waged employees. Jim agitated for the support of the other workers to go to the shed on Saturday morning while the shearers stayed in their quarters. There was no work if the shearers did not work. The other workers still had to be paid and the bosses caved in. The 40-hour week was on its way to be won.

During the 40-hour week campaign Jim met Jack Wright and they became firm friends and often worked together. Due to the activity of the rank and file members of the AWU the leadership of the Union had to take the case to the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission and Queensland became the first state to win the 40-hour week in the pastoral industry.

Being so militant led to Jim missing out on many jobs in some of the big sheds but there was always plenty of work. He bought his first Union card on 7th March 1933 and was a financial member continuously for the rest of his life, a period of 88 years continuous membership. Surely a world record! He always believed that the best place to educate workers was to be among them.

Before he became an organiser in the SA Branch of the AWU in the West Darling including Broken Hill he also organised on the West Coast and Northern parts of SA. He was the Secretary of the AWU Barrier Committee. He was instrumental in getting the 40-hour week in the pastoral industry for NSW.

In 1961 Jim was invited to attend the World Federation of Trade Unions Conference in Bulgaria. The conference was attended by delegates from all over the world and they discussed the problems of their countries. Some of them invited Jim to visit their countries and he went to Hungary, East Berlin, Poland and Russia, stopping for several weeks in Indonesia on the way home. He visited many farms and factories in these countries and was very impressed by what he saw and learned.

While working in Broken Hill Jim got a Certificate in Engine Driving which led to work in Whyalla for BHP and later in New Guinea at Bougainville Copper Mines. He also spent time working as a driver at Moomba when shearing work was not available.

Jim had a lifelong dispute with Clyde Cameron who was very influential in the AWU. Clyde opposed Jim being a union delegate in the AWU as Jim always did what was best for the working class. Cameron stopped him from being a delegate to ALP conventions. Cameron supported AWU officials Dunnery and Tinson and the Catholic Right. When the AWU amalgamated with the Iron Workers Union Jim supported and helped the campaign for Wayne Hanson for position of Secretary. Hanson was elected by a large margin. Cameron, Dunnery and Tinson also opposed life membership of the AWU for Jim. Bill Ludwig, the AWU Secretary from Queensland nominated him and it was endorsed by the National Executive.

Jim became an Organiser for the Union from 1972 to 1982 and he was Vice President of the AWU where he was elected unopposed. As an organiser he would travel 90,000-1,000,000km a year and was hardly ever home. He was based in Port Pirie and later in Port Augusta. He had a good sign up rate of new members and he covered everyone in country towns from shearers to fruit pickers.

Jim attended May Day marches whenever possible and talked of the big marches in Melbourne after WWII where thousands of rank and file gathered on the banks of the Yarra. He

was a regular attendee at many Adelaide marches and May Day celebrations.

On 8th July 2011 the AWU opened a new office complex in Port Pirie and named it “Jim Doyle House” in recognition of his life-long commitment to the Union movement and the working class. Three hundred people marched down the main street as part of the celebrations. A moving speech was made by Wayne Hanson and the building was officially opened by the then National Secretary of the AWU. Wayne said,

“He is unique in many ways, but in this instance, he is a stand-out, a one-off living example of the longevity and history of the Australian Workers Union. At 93 he is a walking, talking history of his union.”



Sources: Oral History interview by Allison Murchie, OH 963 SLSA, Speech by Wayne Hanson at Port Pirie 8.11.2011.

Jim was forced to retire in 1986 due to reaching retiring age but he continued to advise, educate and agitate. This included publication of his newsletter “The Plod” which had a wide circulation. He was a regular visitor for lunch at Parliament House in Adelaide to have “a chat” with local Members of Parliament.

Jim was a much-loved life member of the SA Branch of the Labour History Society.

We will miss you Jim.



Photos: Jim with Sally McManus, Secretary of the ACTU, Greg Combet, & Bill Shorten at his 100th birthday celebrations



Contributors

Les Birch has been a unionist and political activist since first taking out his first AWU ticket at the age of 15 whilst rouseabouting in shearing sheds in and around Longreach, Queensland. He was a shearer for 17 years following shearing work in QLD, NSW, Victoria and Tasmania. In the early 1970s he spent one year in Brisbane as a BLF member whilst working as a builders labourer.

He was Secretary of the AWU Barrie Local Committee Broken Hill 1974-1979 where Jim Doyle and Mick Young were predecessors. He was an organiser for the AWU from 1979 to 1990, an Industrial Officer for the ARU from 1991-1992 and a workers compensation advocate for the Vehicle Builders Union 1992-1993. From 1993 to 2019 he was the CFMEU's Manufacturing division's workers compensation advocate, looking after timber, glass and furniture workers. On 1st May 2019 he retired, for five weeks. He then took up an offer from the United Firefighters of South Australia to use his skills and experience in the field of workers compensation and now represents firefighters for 20 hours a week.

Phillip Edmonds was a member of the CPA in the 1970s. He has lectured in Australian literature at Griffith and at the University of Adelaide and was editor of *Wet Ink: The magazine of new writing* between 2004-2012. He is author of the book *Tilting at Windmills: the literary magazine in Australia 1968-2012*, as well as three collections of short stories.

Greg Mallory is vice-president of the BLHA after spending 17 years as President. He is a Life Member of the BLHA. Greg has published three books: *Uncharted Waters: Social Responsibility in Australian Trade Unions*, *The Coalminers of Queensland, Vol 2 The Pete Thomas Essays*, *Voices from Brisbane rugby league, Oral Histories from the 50s to the 70s*.

Ken Mansell is an independent labour historian specialising in the documentation of the sixties 'new left' social movements. Some of his finished work can be read on the website of Labour History Melbourne. His oral history collection of Australian communists is available at the SLNSW. Ken has been active as a socialist and anti-war activist since 1965.

Allison Murchie has been an active member of Labour History SA for well over 20 years and most of that time as an Executive member. She has produced all but one of their newsletters over that time. She recently retired from the Executive but continues to assist at public events and do oral recordings of all our speakers. At this year's AGM she was awarded life membership. As a life-long union member she has always had a commitment to the working class and proudly calls herself a comrade on the left. She has lost track of how many marches she has participated in but her first and the beginning of her political awakening was as a 16-year-old in the Vietnam Moratoriums. She was active in the May Day movement and a member of the committee for about 10 years. She is a proud feminist and after 50 years of fighting for equality the struggle continues. Her biggest passion is oral history interviews of activists from trade unions, the women's movement, politicians and working-class activists. Her other interests/passions are as a volunteer at the State Library and Zoos South Australia, as well as being a keen photographer.

Jennifer O'Dempsey is completing her PhD (The Roles and Visibility of Women in Brisbane's Social Protests) in the School of Humanities and Social Sciences, Faculty of Arts and Education at Charles Sturt University. Her research interests include women in politics, protest and activism.

Dr Anne Richards teaches at Griffith University. Her memoir, *A Book of Doors*, is based upon the radical political and cultural movements at the University of Queensland and inner city Brisbane in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Anne received a Griffith Review Fellowship with her novella *Demonstrating Defiance* being published in Griffith Review 62: All Being Equal (2018).

Jeff Rickertt is a longstanding member of the BLHA and has served on its management committee and as an editor of this journal. He is a librarian, an archivist and a labour historian with research interests in the history of working-class movements and socialist politics in Queensland. His most recent publication is *The Conscientious Communist: Ernie Lane and the Rise of Australian Socialism*. He is currently writing a history of Queensland's meatworkers.

LABOUR HISTORY

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The BLHA is the Queensland branch of the Australian Society for the Study of Labour History.

The QJLH is a journal of labour and social history with a emphasis on events with a Queensland connection.

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.

Material published herein does not necessarily reflect the views of the Association or the Editors.

Notes for contributors

The QJLH is published in Spring and Autumn each year. Articles of any length are invited. Contributors will receive one year membership of the BLHA as a thank you.

First-person accounts of trade union, social movement and progressive political struggles and organisations are particularly welcome. We encourage oral histories.

Reports on exhibitions, seminars and research projects are sought, as are book reviews and photo essays.

Contributions can be submitted either as hardcopy (posted to the Secretary) or as an electronic file emailed to qldlabhist@gmail.com or other BLHA email addresses. 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, photographs, maps, drawings, cartoons etc. that might accompany your article.

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