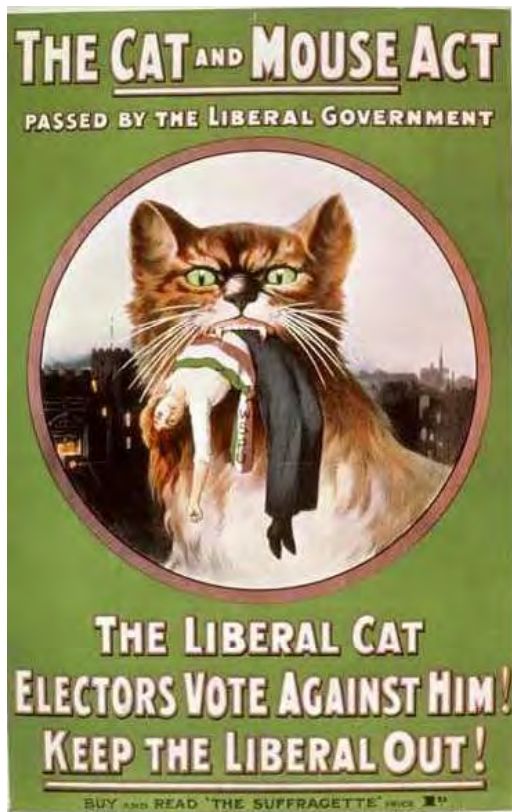


# The Queensland Journal of Labour History

No. 33 Spring/Summer 2021

The Brisbane Labour History Association





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**The Queensland Journal of Labour History**

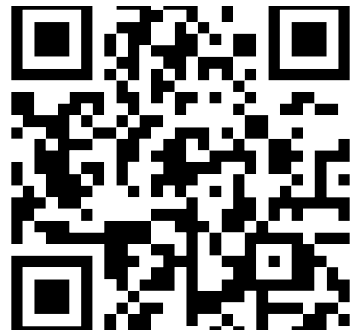
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The BLHA is the Brisbane branch of the Australian Society for the Study of Labour History. The BLHA organises seminars, lectures, meetings, conferences and publications on themes of labour history. Membership is open to all individuals and organisations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

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**Front Cover Poster:** 'The Cat and Mouse Act passed by Liberal Government'. The Prisoner's Temporary Discharge for Ill Health Act of 1913 meant that imprisoned UK Suffragettes on hunger-strike could be released because of ill-health but be re-imprisoned once they had recovered. This 'letting them go; then catching them again' earned the measure the popular title of 'The Cat and Mouse Act'. This poster first appeared in May 1914.  
c/o [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Cat\\_and\\_Mouse\\_Act\\_Poster\\_-\\_1914.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Cat_and_Mouse_Act_Poster_-_1914.jpg)

# The Queensland Journal Of Labour History

No. 33, Spring/Summer 2021

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**The Queensland Journal of Labour History** (QJLH) is published twice a year by the Brisbane Labour History Association (BLHA), the Queensland branch of the Australian Society for the Study of Labour History.

The BLHA seeks to assist rather than merely to document the activities of the working class. Neither is its conception of labour history narrowly academic, spanning, rather, all social aspects of the productive process. How were class relations formed? What was the role of the state and the production process? How does labour relate to race and gender? What were the industrial and political organisations created by workers and what struggles did they fight? What are the cultural expressions of class? How have these people, those who live by their labour, recorded, remembered, and represented their own history?

Although the BLHA has a particular focus on Brisbane and Queensland, we support the study of working-class history in its local, national and transnational settings. We also encourage the study of social movements in which workers have participated or which have affected workers' social, political or economic circumstances.

Material published herein does not necessarily reflect the views of the BLHA or the editorial committee of the BLHA.

### **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.

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](mailto: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.

The Queensland Journal of Labour History is compiled by The Brisbane Labour History Association which is a not for profit collective of volunteers.

Copyright of articles is retained by authors, but authors should be aware that the BLHA does allow the reproduction of the content of the QJLH, for research purposes, by online research databases. In consequence, the BLHA receives royalties for content access. All royalties received are used to cover the cost incurred in producing the journal or are used to cover the wider activities of the BLHA.

# Editorial

Dean Wharton

Despite the current pandemic the Brisbane Labour History Association (BLHA) ran a series of successful events this winter. Two of these we focus upon in this current issue of *The Queensland Journal of Labour History* (QJLH).

Howard Guille has been a joint editor of this journal since 2012. A former Queensland Secretary of the National Tertiary Education Union he is now active with the North Stradbroke Island Museum on Minjerrabah. In May he delivered this year's Alex Macdonald Memorial Lecture.

Alex is held in high regard by the BLHA. He was the Queensland Trades and Labour Council (TLC) Secretary between 1951 and 1969. He had a profound belief in the importance of labour history to the wider movement—some of the historical notes he prefaced TLC AGM minutes with may well be worth printing in future issues of this journal. He perhaps ascribed to our belief that the labour movement needs to know it's history in order to learn from past mistakes and successes.

Perhaps it was most fitting that Howard's lecture discussed how history is presented. Ignoring or denying the past is often a deliberate act to reduce the significance of history. Howard discusses this at length with regard to the Queensland heritage system.

In our last issue, Howard reflected on the unsuccessful attempt to heritage list the student complex at the University of Queensland. The University's arguments—restricting development would be detrimental to the University in terms of finance and academic prestige—were accepted by the Heritage Council. Only Covid-19 and a new vice-chancellor has saved the complex—for now.

In his lecture Howard explained how the heritage system in Queensland is essentially designed to ignore the history of the labour movement, the women's movement and the history of Indigenous Australians. An effective 'whitewashing' of the real Queensland historical experience—of colonial exploitation and rampant capitalism.

The full text of Howard's lecture is reproduced in the digital format of this issue. The printed issue—sent to BLHA members and available at bookshops—carries an abridged version. The digital format is available by emailing the BLHA Secretary or the journal editor.

Deborah Jordan's article makes the same arguments with her focus on feminist history. In June, Deborah led a well-attended walking tour of the Brisbane CBD, pointing out and discussing venues of importance to suffragette history. The documentation of that history, Deborah tells us, is sorely lacking, both in the historical record and the physical

evidence. In her article, Deborah also takes the opportunity to discuss the effectiveness of a walking tour as a method of passing on a history that is largely hidden.

Also mentioned in Howard's article is the lack of an official marker at the site of the Mount Mulligan mine where seventy-five miners were killed during an underground explosion there 100 years ago. The marker that does exist at the site was commissioned by the Mining and Energy Union. Sheryl Gwyther's article commemorates the disaster at the site, a place of personal significance to the author.

The personal experience of activists and leaders within the labour movement is something we obviously focus on in the QJLH. Wayne Cass was neither leader nor regular activist and his involvement in the political events in Brisbane in the late 1960s and early 1970s was only occasionally that of a fellow traveller. His recollection of those times is included as an example of how the activism of the labour and student movement impacted on the lives of those around them. In Wayne's case the fear of conscription was lifted.

Dale Jacobsen is a life-member of the BLHA. She was joint editor of this journal between 2006 and 2011. In 2011 the biography of her grandfather, *Union Jack*, was published. Jack O'Leary was an activist in the ARU during the interwar period. On the 10th anniversary of the publication, Dale reflects on her experience of researching and publishing

the book, and has made available copies of the book to support the work of the BLHA.

Our first book review is by Greg Mallory of Max Bannah's book, *Wharfie Animator: Harry Reade, The Sydney Waterfront and the Cuban Revolution*. Max tells us that Harry Reade was an animator who worked with the Waterside Workers Federation Film Unit in Sydney after World War II. His anarchist upbringing led him to take unusual pathways in life and via the Sydney Push and Russia, he was eventually in charge of the Government's animation unit in post-revolutionary Cuba.

In early 2020 the BLHA decided to organise a book launch for Terry Irving's recently published *The Fatal Lure of Politics: The Life and Thought of Vere Gordon Childe*. Covid-19 put paid to these plans and lockdowns made even web-conferencing a problem. Instead, in this issue, we have included two articles about the book. Raymond Evans reviews the book and Howard Guille discusses the fatal lure that Childe identified—the problem of labour in government—in the context of Childe's experience.

The obituary of John Coombs has been written for us by his MUA colleague Col Davies.

On a personal note I would like to welcome Allan Gardiner as joint editor. He made an enormous contribution in ensuring that this issue was ready for publication.

# President's Report

Jeff Rickertt

2021 has been more favourable to the BLHA than 2020. After pausing membership fees last year in response to the challenges of the pandemic, memberships from individuals and unions have strongly rebounded this year. We are grateful for this support. Our stable financial position enables us to organise events, publish this journal and maintain our website, all important areas of activity for disseminating historical knowledge to the labour movement and the community at large.

As foreshadowed in my previous report, the BLHA has held three events since the Autumn/Winter issue of the journal went to press: a one-day conference in March, organised in partnership with The Cloudland Collective, on the history of colonised labour in Queensland; the annual Alex Macdonald Lecture, delivered this year by Dr Howard Guille on the topic of workers' heritage; and a walking tour about the campaigns for women's suffrage in Queensland, conducted by historian and BLHA Committee member Dr Deborah Jordan. All three events attracted excellent attendances.

We also continue to provide a monthly guest for 4ZZZ's Workers' Power program (at 102.1FM), where we

discuss historical topics relevant to unions and working people. The BLHA spot goes to air around 10.30am on the first Tuesday of each month. Links to the podcasts of previous broadcasts can be found on our website.

Another important development for the BLHA this year has been the strengthening of ties with our federal body, the Australian Society for the Study of Labour History, and the ASSLH's other branches. From a discussion initiated by the Federal Executive about how to improve the national standing of labour history, especially with respect to our core constituencies – workers, trade unions and political parties aligned with the cause of labour – it was resolved that each branch would fund and contribute articles and news to a centrally-coordinated social media platform for Australian labour history.

By featuring material from around the country, the ASSLH's social media will draw attention to the national and transnational contexts of labour history, and position labour history as a nationally significant field of knowledge. The BLHA has endorsed this initiative. Arrangements for launching the new social media

presence are being finalised as we go to print.

The ASSLH has also launched a new-look website -

<https://www.labourhistory.org.au/> which I encourage all readers to visit. It currently features news of the next national labour history conference, titled 'Fighting for Life: Class, Community and Care in Labour History', which will be held in Bendigo on 9–12 February 2022.

Meanwhile, we continue to add resources to our own website –

<http://brisbanelabourhistory.org/>.

On our site you will find back copies of our journal, oral history recordings, 4ZZZ podcasts and lists of labour history sources with particular reference to Queensland. It is also an excellent source of information about the Association itself and includes a downloadable copy of our membership application form.

While the BLHA has had a strong year, we face challenges. Like unions and many other organisations, we confront the age-old problem of too much work falling on the shoulders of the Executive, the general Committee and the journal editor. For an organisation of volunteers, most of whom have other demands on their time, this is not a sustainable model. We need more members to step up.

Even a small regular (or even irregular) contribution of time and skills will make a big difference. I am keen to hear from anyone who can help with basic event organising chores, proofreading, publicity creation, social media posting and website maintenance. People willing to share stories about past union or political struggles might consider being interviewed on our 4ZZZ spot. If you prefer the written word, our journal editor welcomes submissions of articles, book reviews or short fictional stories on labour history themes.

Of course, we are always delighted when someone is willing to take on Executive roles as well. But I want to assure members thinking about helping us that small roles won't necessarily lead to big ones. If you can play any active part, it will be appreciated. Please get in touch.

In mid-October we held our public forum commemorating the landmark 1944 equal wage victory of Quandamooka workers employed at the Dunwich Benevolent Asylum. We were honoured to partner this event with the Quandamooka community and the North Stradbroke Island Museum on Minjerribah.

Our AGM will take place in November/December.



# Vice-President's Report

## Greg Mallory

On Wednesday 10 March I attended the State Memorial for Jack Munday held at the Sydney Town Hall. After a music interlude by Mozart the proceedings were opened by the Master of Ceremonies the Honourable Bob Carr. A Welcome to Country was given by Yvonne Weldon from the Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Land Council. A number of tributes followed: David Noonan, National Secretary of the CFMEU Construction and Energy Division. Other tributes were from Meredith Burgmann, Former President of the Legislative Council of New South Wales, Clover Moore, Lord Mayor of Sydney, Lee Rhiannon, Former Senator for the Greens, NSW, Mr Peter Watts, Emeritus Director of the Historic Houses Trust of NSW. The personal tribute was given by Jack's wife Judy Munday.

All these tributes mentioned Jack's contribution to the trade union movement and the green movement. It was a very moving ceremony with music at the beginning and the end. There was also a reflection with an excerpt from the film by Pat Fiske, *Rocking the Foundations*.

A few months later I attended the Green bans reunion on 17th June, the event coincided with the 50 year anniversary of the first green ban at Kelly's Bush. The event was organised by Meredith



Burgmann and was held at Diethneses restaurant, a place where Jack Munday and the Builders Labourers used to eat. There were a lot of people there who were involved with green bans and the NSW Builders Labourers Federation. A number of ex-politicians were also in attendance including Robert Tickner, former minister in the Hawke and Keating governments, Jeanette McHugh, former minister in the Keating Government, and Lee Rhiannon, former senator for the Greens NSW. Other attendees were Vince Ashton, former builders labourer, Wendy Bacon, former green bans activist, and Pat Fiske.

Judy Munday spoke about the significance of the day. The day was a fitting tribute to the NSW Builders Labourers Federation and to Jack Munday in particular.

# The Alex MacDonald Memorial Lecture 2021

## Howard Guille

### Let's Make Unions - and History - Everyday

*Howard Guille was Queensland Secretary of the National Tertiary Education Union from 1993-2006. Retired from paid work, he is active in community issues including the North Stradbroke Island Museum on Minjerribah. His latest book Paltry Paradise: A History of the Dunwich Benevolent Asylum was published in 2019.*



This version of Howard's lecture is abridged for printing.

For the full text, see the digital edition of this issue available from the editor or the BLHA Secretary.

I am seeking to rescue the poor stockinger, the Luddite cropper, the “obsolete” hand-loom weaver, the “utopian” artisan, and even the deluded follower of Joanna Southcott, from the enormous condescension of posterity.<sup>1</sup>

Heritage protection in Queensland and Australia has two big problems. One is that First Nations' cultural heritage is

often debased or destroyed. The other is that much of the heritage of workers, women, LGBTIQ+ and people from non-English speaking backgrounds is not recognised or recorded. The current heritage system concentrates too much on property and insufficiently on the stories of people, their organisations, and associations.

## **The Failure to Protect First Nations Heritage**

The heritage and land rights of First Peoples are under severe and sustained attack. Much of the damage to First Nations' heritage is approved through the heritage system including via the well-funded efforts of mining companies and developers to manipulate and divide native title holders and claimants. Juukan Gorge in Western Australia is just one recent episode of heritage destruction without informed prior consent of the First Nation owners and custodians. The first imperative of socially useful heritage is to remedy this failure to protect.

## **The Missing Heritage**

The current post-colonisation heritage system excludes too much. It is big on churches, war memorials and grand buildings. The stories of the underlings are under-represented. Unions and organisations of workers have been a major part of Queensland since the mid-nineteenth century but only six trade union places are heritage listed out of the 1,791 places on the register. There is nothing on the heritage register about the mining disasters at Mount Mulligan or Moura and nothing about the 1912 General Strike or the major rail and meat industry disputes of the 1940s.

Stories of labour and other subaltern heritage are either not collected or are 'written-out' of the histories of the places on the Heritage Register. The silences about workers in post-colonisation heritage warrants a state-wide labour Heritage Study to identify places which ought to be on the heritage list (and similar studies for women's, LGBTIQ+ and NESB people's heritage). All the current entries on the Queensland Heritage Register need to be audited to ensure adequate

recognition is given at each place to the involvement and activities of workers, the labour movement, First Nations people, women, LGBTIQ+ and NESB people.

## **An Inclusive Heritage**

An inclusive heritage is needed that will share everyone's stories. It will make history an everyday matter - in school curricula, tertiary education, in workplaces and in community spaces. An inclusive heritage will allow the lessons—good and bad—from our history to inform the present. It might help us make better choices about the future and better understand the complexities of living a shared collective life.

An inclusive heritage will recognise that World War One memorials are important—but so too is recording and remembering the Frontier Wars. Churches and grand buildings are no more important than factories, railways, and mines. But the stories and memories of those who built them, worked in and used these places are the most fundamental including how people got on together—as women and men, as workers of differing skills and attributes and as old and young.

## **A Preamble in Heritage and History**

As Michel-Rolph Trouillot states 'during the production of history power operates in a way that silences subaltern groups'.<sup>2</sup> It is crucial to combat this because as Paul Shackel says, 'Those who control the past have the ability to command the present and the future'.<sup>3</sup> My argument is that we need to assert *our* (labour and subaltern) stories to contest conservative uses of the past. One task is to fortify the

legitimacy of solidarity and collective action—getting labour, health, education and well-being ‘out of the market’. Another is to demonstrate continuing injustices such as stolen land and labour, stolen wages, and wage theft. And third is to admit our mistakes including racism, misogyny, national and occupational chauvinism.

These are matters for the *present*—as Terry Irving stated about the book *Radical History of Sydney* he wrote with Rowan Cahill:

We write a history in which ordinary people have agency as well as identities, and we want to know why agency in the past has sometimes worked and why at other times interests and structures have defeated popular action.<sup>4</sup>

In a more cogent phrase, the question for the lecture—and hopefully to be given wider purposes beyond the lecture—is how to establish a ‘socially useful heritage’.<sup>5</sup> The phrase is used by Barbara Little who expands on it as:

helping to create a useable, broadly conceived past that is civically engaging, that calls a citizenry to participate in debates and decisions about preservation and development but also, more importantly, to appreciate the worthiness of all people’s histories and to become aware of historical roots and present-day manifestations of contemporary social justice issues.

In brief, a socially useful heritage will help the labour movement to advance economic, civic and social justice. It is a very different thing to what, for a lack of a more felicitous term, will be called ‘official or sanctioned heritage’; for convenience denoted as ‘Heritage’ and/or the ‘Heritage System’. A socially

useful heritage is needed as an antidote to issues arising from the Heritage System. I think three of these are:

- The destruction of First Nations’ heritage is facilitated by the heritage system.
- The contribution of the labour movement to social progress is being diminished because its heritage is not encompassed by the heritage system.
- The heritage system is a force for gentrification and the displacement of working-class residents.

Heritage is utilised in three ways in the commodity economy and society. One is as evidence from the past that shows the supposed beneficence and superiority of the ruling elite. Second is as a patina for tourism. Third is as an aspect of ‘improving’ neighbourhoods and, in part, gentrifying them. The latter two bring commercial advantage.

### **Destroying First Peoples’ Heritage**

The heritage and land rights of First Peoples are under severe and sustained attack. There have been four recent episodes of heritage destruction without informed prior consent: Bootu Creek manganese mine, Juukan Gorge, Lake Bolac and Frieda River in Upper Sepik.

The Pilbarra may be well on the way to what Sarah Holcombe and Bronwyn Fredricks describe as ‘desecration zones, or “sterilisation” zones’.<sup>6</sup> Jon Altman, writing after Rio Tinto blew up Juukan Gorge, says:

reformed heritage laws will assist in the protection of Indigenous cultural heritage. But a fundamental restructuring of native title law to include a right of



<https://theconversation.com/juukan-gorge-how-could-they-not-have-known-and-how-can-we-be-sure-they-will-in-future-151580>

veto is far more important.<sup>7</sup>

The destruction of the heritage of First Nations is occurring despite the Heritage System(s); indeed, much of the damage is approved through that System including via the well-funded efforts of mining companies and developers to manipulate and divide native title holders and claimants.<sup>8</sup>

### **The Official Heritage Framework**

The heritage of the labour movement and other subaltern groups is very under-represented in the Heritage System. Understanding this requires a brief account of the system.

While ‘heritage and history both reconstruct the past’,<sup>9</sup> heritage, especially when applied to places and artefacts, involves identifying some degree of specialness. This is shown by the conventional definitions of the term heritage. One example is ‘valued objects and qualities such as historic buildings and cultural traditions’ and ‘relating to things of special architectural, histori-

cal, or natural value’.<sup>10</sup> The test is being *historic* not historical.

The test of being historic and special is mandated in the legislative frameworks for Heritage. Thus, the Queensland Heritage Register is a list of post-colonial places which have been demonstrated to have some special quality such as being an important example of their type, the site of a significant event or activity or closely associated with a person of importance in Queensland’s history.<sup>11</sup>

Heritage in Europe and the United States originated in the late nineteenth and the first part of the twentieth centuries. The start of ‘Heritage protection’ was closely associated with nationalism and protection was provided for ‘national heritage.’<sup>12</sup> The Whitlam Government of 1972-75 was crucial to the heritage system in Australia.

Heritage protection was introduced in Queensland by the Goss Government with interim measures in 1990<sup>13</sup> and the Queensland Heritage Act in 1992. Queensland was the last mainland state



*Construction workers watch the demolition of the Bellvue Hotel, Brisbane, April 1979.  
State Library of Queensland negative number: SLQ 79158.*

to enact substantial heritage legislation, around 15 years after the equivalent Commonwealth legislation.<sup>14</sup> At the 25<sup>th</sup> year anniversary the Minister Stephen Miles said:

Had these laws existed in the 1970s, the cultural vandalism that led to the demolition of the Bellevue Hotel, Her Majesty's Theatre and Cloudland Ballroom could not have occurred...By contrast, the CSR Refinery at Newstead, the Petrie Terrace police barracks, the former School of Arts in Rockhampton, and St Paul's Uniting Church in Mackay are among the places that have been saved since the Heritage Act came in.<sup>15</sup>

The legislation made it an offence to

'carry out development affecting a place on the Queensland Heritage Register without approval'.<sup>16</sup> The Queensland Heritage Council was established as an independent body, that 'does not represent the State' and is required to act independently, impartially and in the public interest.<sup>17</sup>

In the 1990 and 1992 arrangements the Heritage Council determined what places went on the heritage register and made determinations about what kind of development could occur at a heritage place<sup>18</sup>. Amendments to the legislation in 2007 transferred decisions on development on private properties to the Department of Environment. It also required Local Authorities to maintain a local heritage register.



*Queensland Heritage Register: Maryborough Waterside Workers Hall*  
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=53196274>

## The Political Processes of Heritage

Somewhat dismissive comments about the ‘elite’ nature of heritage places are not uncommon. For example:

Until relatively recently, most attention was given to the older, mainly sandstone government buildings, salubrious housing in the ‘better’ suburbs, bridges, and other public infrastructure.<sup>19</sup>

Laurajane Smith argues that the definition of what constitutes heritage is determined by power relations and is inherently political. What she calls ‘heritage managers’ are “governing” the cultural and social values, meanings and associations of others’. Put another way, the managers are defining people’s ‘heritage experiences’.<sup>20</sup> This is a strong and subtle argument that the elite nature of heritage is not so much in the places but in the way that those who authorise

and manage ‘heritage’ are able to dictate what is important not just in the past but in the present.

These observations are backed up by Peter Spearritt who asserts that money and taste rather than historical or cultural significance frequently determine which industrial sites survive.<sup>21</sup>

Having so little labour heritage on the record diminishes labour and its organisations in the present. In Queensland only six places are on the Heritage Register on grounds of links with organised labour. These are the Shearers’ Strike Camp Site, Barcaldine, Australian Meat Industry Employees Union (Queensland Branch) offices in Townsville, Lilyvale Stand Monument, Capella, Fallon House in Bundaberg, Maryborough Waterside Workers’ Hall and Toowoomba Trades Hall.<sup>22</sup> What needs to be asked is whether there are so few sites of labour heritage in the state or whether the heritage custodians find them of little ‘appeal’.



*Toowoomba Trades Hall*

<https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=36687588>

## **Buildings and Fabric**

Tim Wright argues that the heritage system became ‘fabric-centric’ from the 1950s under the influence of the Western heritage movement.<sup>23 24</sup> As a textbook on heritage conservation puts it, all rests upon ‘the fabric of buildings as a physical expression of the cultural values of the place as well as a source of education and understanding.’<sup>25</sup> The implication is no fabric; no heritage. Rachel Donaldson says ‘many sites of labor lack physical structures to tell their stories’<sup>26</sup> and quotes other commentators that:

Few structures with architectural integrity remain on the national landscape to remind the public of the contributions of workers and unions.<sup>27</sup>

The Australian ‘Heritage System’ relies on physical and material evidence. This excludes some stories from the heritage system. One of the complexities of dealing with anti-establishment and protest activities is that the most-recollected parts of such activity often do not give identity to a particular place. This is clear for many strikes and pickets. Power poles at which demonstrators were arrested during the SEQEB lockout have no special significance; the spot on George Street where Emma Miller was arrested for ostensibly using a hat-pin on Commission Cahill or his horse bears no mark of this; nor the place in Upper Edward Street where Fred Paterson MLA was bashed by police.<sup>28</sup> These events—exceptionally significant to industrial and political history—do not ‘qualify’ as



official heritage.

The emphasis on the physical in the Heritage System extends to requiring that associations with events, people and groups need to be ‘demonstrated’ in the fabric of the buildings that are being considered as a heritage place.

Lucy Taksa has examined how heritage and history is represented at four former State Railway Workshops (Eveleigh, NSW; Inveresk, Tasmania; Midland, WA; and Ipswich, Queensland) all of which are heritage listed. She concludes that the presentation focuses on industrial history with little if any reference to labour history:

By discarding stories of struggles to improve working conditions, and to preserve the places in which those struggles occurred, individual workers, their trade unions, and their families are excluded from public memorialising. As a corollary, the social inequalities, conflict, oppression, danger, and industrial pollution that were, and continue to be, part and parcel of industrial life are exorcized from the collective memory.<sup>29</sup>

It is almost as if history is being airbrushed.

### **Queensland Examples**

The diminishing or even complete absence of workers’ voices along the lines described above is, in my view, common with places on the Queensland Heritage Register. Four examples are:

#### **The Commissariat Store, William Street, Brisbane**

The history section of the register names the designer of the original building, William John Dumaresq, and states

about the work force that:

The excavation work was heavy and carried out by the Gaol Gang of convicts as a specific punishment, but the masonry and other construction work required skilled labour and was most likely supervised by Lieutenant Thomas Bainbrigge, sent especially from Sydney with suitable workmen in 1827.<sup>30</sup>

This is the only mention of workers in the extensive history on the Register. There is more detail on convict labour, treatment and punishment in an Australian Curriculum Teacher Pack produced by the Royal Queensland Historical Society who operate the Commissariat Store Museum.<sup>31</sup> However, this includes a remarkable cautionary note:

Most of what we know about the Moreton Bay Penal Settlement comes from the official government records. This is supplemented by first-hand convict accounts of the period which must be used cautiously, given the likely bias underpinning these works.<sup>32</sup>

‘*Likely bias*’ in the above quote can be translated as you cannot trust the workers—they do not tell the ‘truth’—almost a lashing offence under Captain Logan’s regime. The official Government records are (of course) above any bias at all!

#### **Collinsville Cemetery, Whitsunday Regional Council**

This entry has a detailed and extensive account of the explosion and deaths of seven miners at the Collinsville State Coal Mine at 13 October 1954 and of the aftermath.<sup>33</sup> The listing of this cemetery on the Heritage Register exposes the absence of any mention of the Mount Mulligan Mine where 76 lives were lost in 1921. This was the largest loss of



*Former Commissariat Stores building in Brisbane, ca. 1928  
State Library of Queensland negative number: SLQ 103466*

life in any Queensland mine accident; the Mining and Energy Union had a plaque erected in the Mount Mulligan Cemetery in 1996.<sup>34</sup>

Similarly, there is no mention in the Heritage Register of the Moura mines and three mine accidents: Kianga, 1975, with a loss of 13 miners; Moura No 4, 1986, 12 miners lost; and Moura no 2, 1994, 11 miners lost. All deaths were caused by underground explosions. A memorial statue and a memorial swimming pool were funded by unions and local people.

There is a story to be recorded about the adequacy and secrecy of the reluctance of mine operators Thiess Peabody Mitsui to contribute.<sup>35</sup> Unresolved and serious issues about the cause of the disasters,

the management of the mine and the conduct of the subsequent inquiries are even more important.<sup>36</sup>

### **Cane-cutters Memorial, Innisfail**

This is a statue in Innisfail erected in 1959 by the Italian community of the Innisfail district to commemorate the centenary of the State of Queensland.<sup>37</sup>

There is no argument about the importance of sugar in North and Far North Queensland. But the only reference to workers in the Heritage Register history is that Italian workers replaced Islanders. Even that sanitises things saying 'the state government adopted a policy of gradual repatriation of South Sea Islanders'. There is nothing

about the AWA strikes of 1911 nor the Weil's Disease strike of 1935, nor the anti-fascist marches or of the influence of the CPA in these. <sup>38</sup>

### **Ormiston House Estate, Redlands** <sup>39</sup>

Ormiston House was built between 1858 and 1865 for the Hon. Louis Hope; the first sugar crushing mill in Queensland was built on the site and in the 1860s the estate was the largest area of sugar in the colony.

Sugar production used Pacific Islander labour. The history on the Register entry for Ormiston House records this in a single sentence; 'From September 1867 Hope was employing South Pacific Islanders in his cane fields and producing 50-60 tons of sugar in a season'.

Louis Hope is portrayed by Ormiston House in its material as the 'Father of the

Commercial Sugar Industry' including for 'his sterling efforts to foster the industry in Queensland'.<sup>40</sup> All the website says about Islander workers is:

As was common at the time, several South Sea Islanders were brought to the Ormiston property in 1864, where they lived in separate accommodation on the property for many years. <sup>41</sup>

Ormiston House is very heavily promoted for its heritage buildings and gardens and champagne teas. The 'public history'—that is the material that is provided for public use about Ormiston House—verges, in my view, on covering-up the use of Pacific Islanders. Ormiston was, at the time, the largest sugar plantation in the colony and the Islanders were brought there before the passage of the 1868 Polynesian Labourers Act (Queensland) which, as limited as it was, was the first legislation introduced to regulate labour trafficking



*Ormiston House*

*image clo <https://www.mustadobrisbane.com/visitor-info-arts-culture-history/ormiston-house-ormiston>*

of Pacific Islanders and aimed to stamp out the practice of kidnapping.<sup>42 43</sup>

According to recent scholarship, Louis Hope was ‘the first person in Australia to employ a large Pacific Islander workforce’. His family had been very sizeable slave owners and traders in the Caribbean and the fortune gained from slave trading, including the compensation paid by the British government to slave owners on the abolition of slavery, may well have been used to establish the Ormiston estate. Caribbean slavery and the Queensland sugar industry which started at Ormiston were ‘much connected’.<sup>44</sup>

The absence of workers’ voices in the Heritage System needs to be seen as systemic if not necessarily deliberate. This is because the research and discussion is dominated by architecture and planning law. The historical and geographical content is descriptive and about individuals or families which finds little space for collective action that occurs outside or at least in opposition to the orthodox market and authority relations. Put plainly, a heritage professional raised in architecture will simply name the designer not the craftsperson or the labourer. They do not ask about accidents, disputes or control of the work and jobs.

Heritage is about the ‘grand’; to take the example of the University of Queensland, the Great Court is more recognisably ‘heritage’ than the Student Union. Sandstone buildings and salubrious houses are easier to justify for protection. This is likely to be most important when heritage managers have to consider the possibility of defending their decisions against well-resourced developers or against governments with an ethos of economic growth and development and ‘jobs, jobs, jobs’.

There is a deliberate opposition to giving space to worker, First Nation and subaltern stories. Alan Tudge and Barnaby Joyce have certainly demonstrated such opposition in recent (2021) comments about possible changes to the teaching of Indigenous history in the National School curriculum. In response to the idea that First Nations people experienced British colonisation ‘as invasion and dispossession of land, sea and sky’, Education Minister Alan Tudge said any changes ‘should not come at the expense of dishonouring our Western heritage.’ Barnaby Joyce is said to have ‘savaged the changes’ as ‘driving history through the guilt-ridden lens of revisionism.’<sup>45</sup>

## Where We Are

The failure of the Queensland Heritage Council to list the University of Queensland Union Complex on the State Heritage Register is, I think, both a mark of its timidity and of the overall ethos of the heritage system. In the view of those wanting to protect the place, what happened there was a substantial part of the defeat of authoritarian regimes in Queensland. It was part of a national revolt—led by students and some university staff—against the racist rugby tours and the Vietnam War. It was the genesis of getting First Nations, women’s and LGBTQI+ issues on the political agenda.

‘Officially’ at least, the Heritage Council did not reject the listing because it disagreed with the history. It quite simply did not engage with the history. Perhaps since social conflict, demonstrations and strikes are not regular fare for middle-class professionals they found it ‘political’ and discomfiting. The sense is that the Council is more at ease conversing with and in the language

of architects, designers and planners than with radicals and unionists. This conclusion fits with the more analytical ones made especially by Laurajane Smith that:

Principally, it is architects, historians and archaeologists who act as stewards for the past, so that present and future publics may be properly educated and informed about its significance.<sup>46</sup>

These 'stewards for the past' know their way through and round the 'system', by writing and then following:

the 'rules of the game' or those facets of power that allow expertise to suppress, thwart or obscure some heritage issues, while drawing others to the foreground.<sup>47</sup>

So far as Queensland goes, the promise and the energy that fed the Goss-Comben action to protect heritage has, in my opinion, dissipated. This seems to be shared by Richard Allom who was involved in the Goss-Comben initiatives in 1989–1990. He has complained about what he says is the 'bureaucratisation of heritage where everything has to be ticked off'.<sup>48</sup>

The heritage regime of the 2010s and 2020s seems to be over-cautious, taking few risks and imbuing little adventure. There is no proselytising of heritage nor much celebration and questioning of public history. Schools and railway stations are safe to put on the heritage register; the 'respectable' is favoured over the edgy.

### Lagging The 'Field'

The sense that the Queensland 'Heritage System' is under-whelming in regard to labour, First Nations, women, *et*

*al.* is reinforced by looking at other anglophone countries.

### Manchester, Engels & Networking

The credo of *The Manchester Centre for Public History & Heritage* is:

Our strengths in community histories and oral history-based research bridge the gap between academic history and the public, encouraging people to join in a process of co-production *whereby they are engaged in producing history as well as consuming it.*<sup>49</sup>

To give some idea of its scope DigiFest2020 was a collaborative programme to mark the 50th anniversary of the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970, pioneered by the late Lord Alf Morris, and 50 years of Disabled People Rights. This was a collaboration including the City Council, universities, unions, and groups representing the disabled.<sup>50</sup>

Notably, the *Manchester Centre for Public History & Heritage* celebrates 'progressive Manchester' describing it as a 'hotbed of leftist activism' in the 1970s and 1980s. This arose because 'the trade union movement, Peace Movement, the Gay Liberation Front, and the Women's Liberation Movement all enjoyed strong support in the city and political groups led by a new generation proliferated'.<sup>51</sup>

A recent project complete with exhibitions, events and publications is a 'look at how the city's progressive political climate shaped the experiences of donors and lesbian mothers in the city'.<sup>52</sup> The Centre has even imported and re-erected a discarded statue of Friedrich Engels from the Ukraine.<sup>53</sup> Its People's River project was, in part, to commemorate the 1845 essay '*The*



*Statue of Frederik Engels recovered from Ukraine and placed in Tony Wilson Square in Manchester to commemorate his links to the city. (c/o <https://morningstaronline.co.uk/article/c/marxism-makes-monumental-mark-manchester>)*

*Condition of the Working Class in England*.<sup>54</sup> Perhaps one day there will be a statue to Tom Mann in Gympie or Brisbane.<sup>55</sup> Mann was very observant; in 1909 he wrote that ‘During the past five or six years the various Labour Parties of Australia have shown but little disposition to travel in a Socialist direction’.<sup>56</sup> There is something to learn from history!

### **Plaques and Inclusive Heritage**

English Heritage is another useful example.<sup>57</sup> This organisation operates the *London Blue Plaques* scheme; the first were erected in 1867 and as of 2021 there are more than 900.<sup>58</sup> Criteria for getting a plaque include that figures should be understood to have made some important positive contribution to human welfare or happiness and have a demonstrable association with a surviving London home or workplace.<sup>59</sup> The range is remarkable—from Napoleon III through Peter Kropotkin, Jennie Lee (Labour Government

Minister), Eleanor Marx, Mary Macarthur (National Federation of Women Workers), Emmeline Pankhurst (Women’s Social and Political Union), Ruth First and Joe Slovo (ANC). Online information is available for a proportion of the plaques and an ‘app’ (presumably with QR code) is now available.

The immediate reaction is why such a simple and straightforward scheme is not undertaken in Queensland/Brisbane. Perhaps widened from dwellings to all available locations. It could ‘solve’ the absence of public markers about the likes of Emma Miller or Fred Paterson and their doings. The information needed is readily available, it simply needs some plaques or notices, an online site and a mobile phone ‘app’. And some organisation to organise.

A second feature of English Heritage is that it is seeking to redress underrepresentation of women and minorities in its presentation of heritage and history. It has adopted an approach of



*Plaque erected in 1989 by English Heritage at 6 Crescent Road, Sundridge Park, BR1 3PW, London Borough of Bromley. Image c/o English Heritage:  
<https://www.english-heritage.org.uk/visit/blue-plaques/prince-peter-kropotkin/>*

‘Inclusive Heritage’ in order it says to:

explore how important aspects of our past, such as the transatlantic slave trade and its abolition, attitudes towards disability, and the changing role of women, are reflected in the buildings of our towns and cities.<sup>60</sup>

Its public webpage strongly and clearly announces the position of English Heritage about the heritage of women, LGBTQ, less-abled people, Black and Asian people.<sup>61</sup> ‘Inclusive Heritage’ is recent and is an active effort to change from the ‘original’ heritage story ‘born out of the need to create a nation state with one unifying identity’. English Heritage claims to have ‘taken bold initiatives to broaden its heritage interest. A new category of ‘under-represented heritages’ has emerged...; the aim is to ‘broadcast the alternative voices; the diverse and complex stories that together make up our history’.<sup>62</sup>

My comments are based on what English Heritage is stating in its own on-line materials and I may be gullible. Even so, I am unaware of statements like the above in Australian official heritage.

### **What to do**

My aim is a socially useful heritage that will help the labour movement to advance economic, civic, and social justice. Some of the ways to get there are set out below.

### **First Nations Matters**

Preventing the destruction of First Nations’ heritage must be a priority for the industrial and political labour movement. Some suggested steps (but which need to be agreed with the appropriate representative First Nations organisations) are:

- Ensuring that the principle of free, prior and informed consent applies

to all matters of First Nations' heritage. The principle is Article 19 United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.<sup>63</sup>

- Unions and left political parties should campaign to achieve legislative and administrative changes to embed the principle in laws and processes.
- This would mean that places and artefacts of cultural heritage significance could only be modified or moved with express authorisation made by the relevant First Nations' people through their processes.
- The changes must include a restructuring of native title law to include a right of veto over mining and other 'development' whether done by private capital or public agencies.
- Strengthening the enforcement arrangements for sites and artefacts under the Queensland Cultural Heritage Acts including adopting the principle that 'the starting point and end point for defining Aboriginal cultural heritage should be that Aboriginal cultural heritage is what Aboriginal People say it is.'<sup>64</sup>
- Recognising Aboriginal custodianship of all aspects of Aboriginal cultural heritage, tangible, and intangible, and including living heritage and cultural landscapes, in accordance with Aboriginal Law relating to caring for heritage and country.<sup>65</sup>
- Moving to a position where land users are required to demonstrate that their development will not harm Aboriginal cultural heritage rather than having the onus on the Aboriginal party to prove that cultural heritage will be harmed.<sup>66</sup>
- Unions should work with First Nations members to develop

and negotiate with employers so that agreements such as ones on Indigenous employment strategies extend to training and education for and facilitation of protection of Country.

## Post-Colonial Heritage

The silences and absences about labour and subaltern heritage need to be addressed. This could include:

- Endorse the current position where the Queensland Council of Unions has a nominee as a member of the Queensland Heritage Council.
- Improve resourcing for unions to be more involved with the heritage listing and development approval processes of the Heritage Council and the Heritage Branch including:
  - \* Having secondees, nominated by the QCU, who become staff members of the Heritage Branch for a fixed period and serve as a resource for the QCU nominee and to be involved in listing, revision of register entries and development applications.
  - \* Asking State Government to fund a Labour Heritage Study under the guidance of a Steering Group agreed by the QCU. The purpose of the study to recommend entries to the Heritage Register.
- Seek an audit of entries on the Queensland Heritage Register to assess whether, for each specific place, they give adequate recognition to the involvement and activities at the place of workers, the labour movement, First Nations people, women, LGBTIQ+ and people from non-English speaking backgrounds. Note the intent of the audit is to record the stories of these



groups *at all places* on the register—not just the few listed on the express account of ‘association’ with these groups.

### **A Public Heritage Network**

A new organisation charged with asserting heritage ‘from below’: that is heritage stories of workers, the labour movement, First Nations, women, LGBTIQ+ and those from non-English speaking backgrounds. *The Manchester Centre for Public History & Heritage* is the inspiration but not necessarily the template.

The network should be a distinct operating entity but built by and responsible to organisations which represent the above groups. It should be an equal partnership between First Nations and the other groups, and this would be explicit in its governance and indicated by having an Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal name (if permissions could be gained from families perhaps the Ruth Hegarty-Alex MacDonald network).

The network should:

- Work with Local Governments to place commemorative markers on sites and places of relevance in the history of people from the various groups and have these linked to virtual and hard media sources of pertinent information.
- Liaise with and establish sharing arrangements with information and research sources such as State Library of Queensland, Australian Workers Heritage Centre, regional and local museums, and galleries, Queensland Speaks, Working Women’s Centre, Indigenous Centres at Queensland Universities, Heritage Branch of DES.

- Facilitate the celebration of heritage and history and its relevance to the current ‘every-day’ by:
  - \* Holding and sponsoring festivals, exhibitions, events.
  - \* Getting heritage and history into everyday work-experiences such as through a revisited ‘art and working life’ program.
  - \* Producing and distributing education resources especially for schools and tertiary education.
  - \* Maintaining high quality, comprehensible and readily accessible information in multiple formats.

The network should also be a resource for those advocating about history, heritage and social justice as these affect the various subaltern groups.

The resources might include:

- On-tap and on-call assistance with running a campaign such as one about threats to First Nation’s Country or using historical accounts to inform an industrial dispute or about planning and development issue. This would include assistance with preparing and distributing campaign materials from the straight-forward matters like printing and copying, slightly more complex ones of setting up a webpage and on-line distribution to more complex ones of formulating campaign themes.

- Research and policy assistance and liaison with authorities and ‘significant’ others.

The most substantial questions will be about funding:

- A sustained base funding is needed to employ permanent staff (funding and staff numbers will be a dialectical matter in the first instance).
- A recurrent source is required to cover this base funding—ideally this would be linked to some form of regular levy such as the Heritage Levy by the Sunshine Coast Regional Council or to a ‘charge’ placed by co-operating Local Governments and/or State Government agencies on things like planning and development applications.

## A Reprise

This intention of ‘making history everyday’ is to help unions to change the world. To advance today’s social justice. The labour movement should not seek a monopoly of history and must continuously earn its credentials to partner with First Nations people and organisations.

Most of all, those participating in the effort to achieve socially useful heritage need to avoid the reverse Faustian bargain. Do not give up the present to get a past!

## Endnotes

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- 2 Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and Production of History*, Boston, Beacon Press, 1995; cited by Shackel, Paul, Public memory and the search for power in American historical archaeology *American Anthropologist*;102, Sept 2001; 665-670 at p656,
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- 4 Terry Irving, ‘A radical history book: how we came to write it’, *Illawarra Unity - Journal of the Illawarra Branch of the Australian Society for the Study of Labour History*, Volume 10, Issue 1, 58-65. Available at: <https://ro.uow.edu.au/unity/vol10/iss1/7>
- 5 Barbara J Little, ‘Archaeology and Civic Engagement’ in Barbara J. Little and Paul A. Shackel (eds) *Archaeology As A Tool Of Civic Engagement*, Altamira Press, Lanham, 2007, ch 1.
- 6 Holcombe, S. and Fredricks, B, (2021). ‘Destruction by a thousand cuts’: the relentless threat mining poses to the Pilbara cultural landscape. *The Conversation*. Available at: <https://theconversation.com/destruction-by-a-thousand-cuts-the-relentless-threat-mining-poses-to-the-pilbara-cultural-landscape-155941>
- 7 Jon Altman, The Native Title Act Supports Mineral Extraction and Heritage Destruction, *Arena* online, 16 Jun 2020 <https://arena.org.au/the-native-title-act-supports-mineral-extraction-and-heritage-destruction>
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- 9 Jessica Moody, ‘Heritage and History’ in Emma Waterton & Steve Watson, *The Palgrave Handbook of Contemporary Heritage Research*, London, Palgrave Macmillan, 2015 pp 113-129
- 10 <https://www.lexico.com/definition/heritage>
- 11 Application Guide: Entering a State Heritage

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12 Emma Waterton and Steve Watson 'Heritage as a Focus of Research: Past, Present and New Directions' in Emma Waterton and Steve Watson (eds) op cit p3

13 The Heritage Buildings Protection Act 1990 was interim protection and gave protection to the National Trust of Queensland's list of 970 heritage places. See Queensland Government Submission to the Productivity Commission's Inquiry into the Conservation of Australia's Historic Built Heritage Places, October 2005, <https://www.pc.gov.au/inquiries/completed/heritage/submissions/queensland-government/subdr195.pdf>

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15 Minister for Environment and Heritage Protection and Minister for National Parks and the Great Barrier Reef, 'More heritage buildings protected for future generations', <https://statements.qld.gov.au/statements/82398> Published Thursday, 24 August, 2017

16 See Caxton Legal Service, *Cultural Heritage*, August 2020, <https://queenslandlawhandbook.org.au/the-queensland-law-handbook/living-and-working-in-society/laws-affecting-the-environment/cultural-heritage/>

17 Queensland Government Submission to the Productivity Commission op cit, p6

18 To be explicit, while development decisions about private places are binding, in regard to publicly owned places the Council recommends to the relevant Minister whose has the final decision.

19 Ben Boer and Graeme Wiffen, *Heritage Law in Australia*, Oxford University Press, Victoria, 2006, p 18 quoted in Gastaldon op cit.

Though they hedge their opinion by going on to say

*These registers not only record the products of the*

*grand visions of the colonial governors, such as the buildings of Lachlan Macquarie and his convict architect Francis Greenway, or the mansions and churches of colonial entrepreneurs in metropolitan areas, but also include the humble cottages, shops, and streetscapes of suburban and small-town Australia.*

20 Laurajane Smith, *Uses of Heritage*, Taylor & Francis e-Library, 2006, at p2

21 P. Spearritt, 'Money, Taste and Industrial Heritage', in J. Rickard and P. Spearritt (eds), *Packaging the Past? Public Histories*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1991, p33 cited by Alexander Trapeznik. 'On The Waterfront: The Historic Waterfront Precinct, Dunedin, New Zealand'. *Public History Review* Vol 18 (2011): 65–82

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23 Tim Winter, 'Clarifying the critical in critical heritage studies', *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, 2013 Vol. 19, No. 6, 532–545, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13527258.2012.720997>

Winter is explicitly critical of the ideological underpinnings of heritage which he says is a consequence of 'Nationalism, imperialism, colonialism, cultural elitism, Western triumphalism, social exclusion based on class and ethnicity, and the fetishising of expert knowledge' (ibid p542)

24 Wright ibid p542 He also argues for a 'post-western perspective' and the 'democratising of heritage' with 'an academic approach' to *the array of issues heritage is now enmeshed in, such as poverty reduction, climate change, sustainability, human rights, democracy, the future of the state and of course the protection and preservation of cultural heritage itself.*

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32 Teacher Pack p7

33 Heritage Register 602730 <https://apps.des.qld.gov.au/heritage-register/detail/?id=602730>

34 <http://www.mbahistsoc.org.au/monuments/mount-mulligan-mining-disaster.html>  
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39 Heritage Register 600775 <https://apps.des.qld.gov.au/heritage-register/detail/?id=600775>

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*When the first Islanders were brought to Queensland in the early 1860s, there were no laws or labour contracts to protect them from the most extreme kinds of exploitation by their employers. Many were abducted then paid nothing for their labour and were effectively treated as slaves.*

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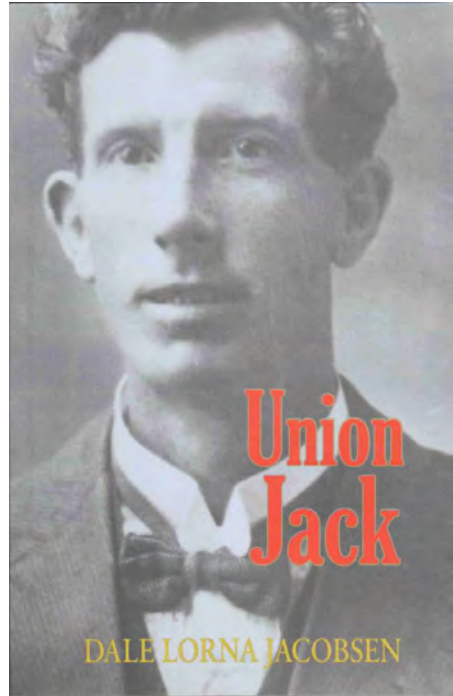
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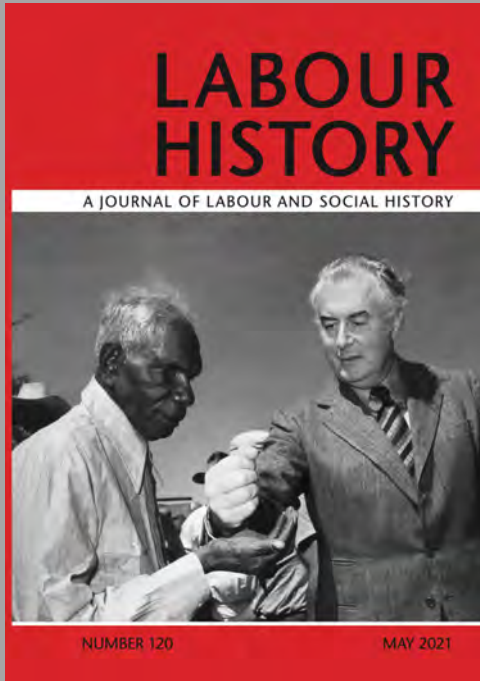
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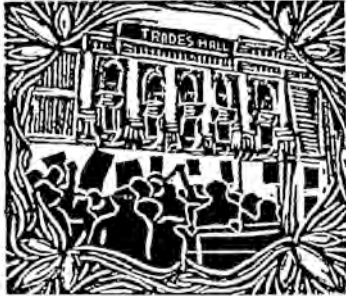
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# **B**risbane **L**abour **H**istory **A**ssociation

## **Stella Nord Bursary**

The bursary honours Stella Nord (1920-2009), a worker and campaigner whose research reflected her commitment to the labour movement.

Mindful of Stella's example, the BLHA wishes to assist emerging or established researchers whose circumstances make it difficult for them to carry out a labour history project.

The BLHA undertakes to provide to the successful applicant:

- a grant of up to **\$1000**
- mentoring on historical research and writing if required

Applicants will:

1. outline a viable and original research project in the field of Australian labour history, and
2. explain how the bursary would alleviate the circumstances which limit their opportunities for undertaking historical research; for example, by assisting travel to relevant archives and libraries or by defraying costs of oral history recording.

The project should be completed within 18 months, and the results will be presented in a format agreed to by the BLHA. Presentation formats may include but are not limited to a journal article, a talk at a BLHA event, or an audio-visual work suitable for online publication.

**Applicants who identify as First Peoples and/or People of Colour are especially encouraged to apply. Women, queers, trans, and non-binary folk are also specifically encouraged to apply.**

Details of the application process and the timing of submissions are available at [brisbanelabourhistory.org](http://brisbanelabourhistory.org) and by emailing the Stella Nord Bursary Administrator at

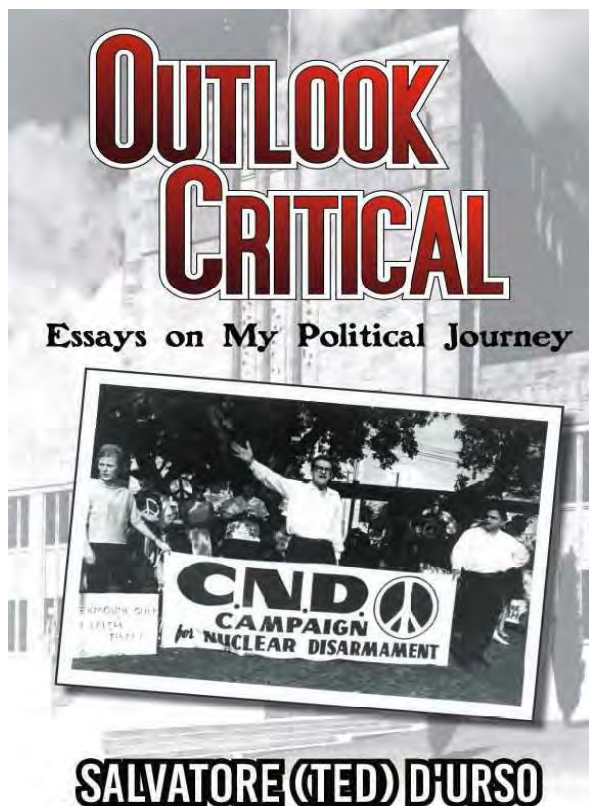
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Salvatore (Ted) D'Urso

(Brisbane Labour History Association, 2020)



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*Howard Guille*

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*Deborah Jordan*

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