

LABOUR DAY - ITS SIGNIFICANCE

AND

THE LIFE AND TIMES OF E.J. HOLLOWAY

(1979 Labour Day Oration by Bill Richardson,
Federal Secretary, Australian Council of
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Comrade Chair & Comrades,

In the first instance I want to thank the Australian Society for the Study of Labour History (Melbourne Branch) for the invitation to present this address today.

The Australian Council of Salaried and Professional Associations (ACSPA) is proud that the Society has asked its Federal Secretary to speak today on this special occasion in the history of the labour movement. 1979 will see the disappearance of ACSPA as we become part of the ACTU later this year. However our representatives will continue to attend this ceremony each year and honour the pioneers of the Shorter Hours movement.

My contribution will be in two parts : Labour Day - its significance and then the Life & Times of E.J. Holloway.

LABOUR DAY - ITS SIGNIFICANCE:

Due to a combination of circumstances unionism in Australia developed in a freer atmosphere, and more rapidly, than in many other lands.

From about 1825 combinations of workers began to develop and strike struggles took place. Sydney had about 25 unions by 1850. The discovery of gold in Victoria in 1851 had a profound effect. The population grew rapidly. Almost the entire male population of Melbourne went off to the diggings. The Superintendent of Police offered higher pay to his 55 constables but only 5 remained on duty. Governor LaTrobe complained that he had only 44 soldiers left. On January 6, 1852, 35 foreign ships lay off Melbourne and only 3 had full crews. The wealth from gold discoveries led to a big demand for building workers in particular. Wages rose in the boom atmosphere.

The Operative Stone Masons Society (formed in 1851) was revitalised in 1855 after thousands had returned from the gold-fields. The demand for an 8 hour day was advanced by the Society in February 1856 (Stonemasons alone, among building workers won this objective in Sydney that month).

In the industrial relations atmosphere of today it is hard to believe the series of events that followed. The employers agreed with the claim, and paid all expenses of a public meeting of contractors and all workers in the trade held on March 31, 1856, in Melbourne. The Stonemasons secretary moved, and an employer seconded, a motion that the 8 hour day commence on April 21.

Several unions were formed in order to be organised for the big day. On the day itself all workers in the industry downed tools and marched through Melbourne because two contractors had refused to agree to the claim. They caved in that night after the workers carried a resolution not to return to work till they came into line.

The workers involved won a REDUCTION OF 12 HOURS PER WEEK - a six day week of 10 hours to one of 6 of 8 hours. It was an exciting time for the unionists of the day.

Within days an 8 Hours League was formed with the aim of extending the victory to all workers. In May 1856 a march was organised to celebrate the event, and this became a feature of life in Melbourne each year until 1951.

The movement extended to the other colonies where the strongest organised won the demand in subsequent years.

The annual Labour Day holiday in each State had its origin in this movement.

Arising directly out of the events of 1856 the Melbourne Trades Hall (consisting of a large wooden lecture hall with class rooms on each of the wings) was opened in May 1859. It was the first building of its kind erected in any part of the world.

At the opening ceremony the toast of the evening was the "The 8 Hours System: may its physical, intellectual, moral, and social advantages be extended to every member of the human family."

1000 people sat at tables in the hall while many others congregated outside, according to newspaper reports at the time.

By 1879 the movement had reached the level where it was possible to organise the first Inter-Colonial Congress (Sydney, October 1879). It is significant that the first decision taken was a political one concerning the 8 hour working day, so politics and unionism have been linked for very nearly 100 years in Australia. At the third Congress (October 1885) a plan for the Federation of all unions, and the setting up of Parliamentary Committees was adopted but never implemented. Had these decisions been carried into effect the shape of the labour movement would be considerably different today.

In all eight Inter-colonial Congresses were held before Federation and many after, leading up to the decision in 1927 to form the Australasian Congress of Trade Unions (later re-named the Australian Council of Trade Unions).

THE LIFE AND TIMES OF E.J. HOLLOWAY (1875 - 1967)

(It is obvious that in the preparation of any oration such as this that the end result is not the work of one person. I would therefore like to express appreciation to the following people who have provided me with information about E.J. Holloway: John Arrowsmith, Tom Audley, Bob Brodney, Wendy Davern, Philip Deery, Tom Gill, Rees Williams).

Edward John Holloway was born in Hobart on April 12, 1875. His father, Joseph Holloway, was a stonemason, which is of special significance since stonemasons led the 8 hour day campaign. Holloway married Edith Clarke in Melbourne in 1904. They had a daughter and a son.

(As usual in respect to the role of women in our history - although recently steps were taken to correct this - there is no historical record of the part played in the labour movement by Edith Holloway, although it is known that Holloway's neice was on the Executive of the Clothing Trades Union).

Holloway had little schooling in Hobart. He came to Melbourne with his widowed mother, at the age of 15. He worked with a shoemaking firm. He spent some years in Broken Hill and on the W.A. goldfields. He returned to Melbourne, worked as a boot machinist in Collingwood and became an official of the Boot Trades Employees Association.

In the early part of this century establishing co-operatives was one way of assisting members of the Victorian Socialist Party. One such co-operative was a boot store with E.J. Holloway in charge; it was located at 283 Elizabeth Street in the city, next door to the Socialist Hall.

The 1908 Victorian State Elections were held in December 29 and the Socialist Party nominated Percy Laidler for Collingwood on a socialist program, in opposition to Labour Party candidates. Holloway was a principal speaker at Laidler's first meeting.

According to my reading the next period in which Holloway was prominent was from 1914. By that time he had obviously joined the Labor Party.

In July 1914 Holloway was installed as President of the Melbourne Trades Hall Council. World War 1 commenced shortly afterwards. The Fisher Labor Government, returned to office in the September 5, 1914, elections decided that Australia should plan for the organisation and training of an expeditionary force to serve overseas. A pledge had been made in the election campaign that "Australia is in the war to the last man and the last shilling". It was later said: "They didn't get our last man but they did get our last shilling"!

Trade unionists responded in their thousands to the call for volunteers for overseas service. In 1915 Fisher resigned and William Morris Hughes assumed the leadership.

In 1916 the suspicions of the labour movement in regard to conscription were confirmed and in the words of Holloway ("The Australian Victory over Conscription, 1916-1917"):
".. and so, in the very early years of my leadership of the industrial and political wings of the Victorian labour movement, I was thrust also into the leadership of the greatest and most bitter battle in its history. That was the fight to prevent that evil thing from the Old World conscription of human life for wars beyond one's own frontiers".

A number of labour movement conferences were held, culminating in an All-Australian Trade Union Conference, which Holloway had been instructed to convene in Melbourne. The conference met on May 10, 1916.

That conference resolved:

"That this conference records its uncompromising hostility to conscription of human life and labour on behalf of the industrially organised workers of Australia, resolutely declares its determination to resist any and every attempt to foist it upon the people of Australia"; and,

"That a referendum of union members be taken for instructions as to the willingness to declare an Australia-wide general strike in the event of an attempt being made to enforce conscription".

On September 1, 1916, Hughes, with the agreement of the leadership of the Victorian Labor Party Executive, addressed the State Executive. Of that occasion Holloway records:

"He concluded his address by saying that he was going to travel from one end of Australia to the other urging a "YES" vote. He said he was going to fight as though he were fighting for his very life. "And," he wound up, "if you men have the courage to come with me, ninety per cent of the Australian votes will come with us." We knew that on the last point he was probably right.

But, to our everlasting credit (as I still firmly believe) no converts were made that night. Not a single man was impressed in the slightest degree and it became apparent to the Prime Minister that his mission was a miserable failure.

In closing the meeting I asked Hughes a question. "Mr. Hughes, we too are going around Australia and we too are going to seek the people's vote against conscription as though we too were fighting for our very lives. If we succeed in winning a majority vote for "NO" what will you do then?" In answering my question, Hughes said this:

"If the people of Australia do not want conscription, I will not force it on them." And to his everlasting credit he faithfully carried out that promise, though I know a good deal of pressure was used to try to get him to do it by legislation or regulation or whatever method was feasible." (1)

The decisions of the Trade Union Conference and the ALP Executives of Victoria and New South Wales to oppose conscription led to the meeting of representatives of the political and industrial wings. At such conference an executive was elected and entrusted with the work of unifying and inspiring the fight against conscription. Holloway was elected Secretary. He was secretary of the Melbourne Trades Hall Council at the same time. When the anti-conscription work developed, a young John Curtin was engaged as full time secretary, to concentrate upon the conscription fight. Many years later Holloway said of Curtin:

"He was a colleague of mine in both the industrial and political fields for the next 30 years and a warm and intimate personal friend until he died." (2)

The national anti-conscription Executive printed a Manifesto as well as organising thousands of meetings throughout the country. Of the Manifesto, Holloway says in his Anti-conscription publication:

"The Manifesto we quietly and quickly got printed and some hundred thousand of the first issue planted in an empty building not far from the printing office which produced it. We already had reason to know Hughes' somewhat limited notions about free speech and free press. Despite all our precautions, on the night of the day when we got the first packages of copies wrapped and addressed there was a military raid on the printing office. The type was destroyed but all efforts to find the bulk stocks of the Manifesto failed. After the type at the "Labour Call" printing office had been destroyed, the armed guard marched to the Trades Hall. They had information that there were some packages there - how, is a mystery; but it looked as though "enemy" agents, then as now, can be found in every camp.

Lieutenant Taylor, who was in charge of this raid, on finding the office locked up, sent Detective Bell, by military car (complete with armed guard) to my home in William Street, Abbotsford. He urged me - for his sake as well as mine - to accompany him back to the Trades Hall so that he could introduce me to Lieutenant Taylor! I had been in bed, but quickly dressed and accompanied him. When we arrived Taylor asked me to open the door so that he could get the parcels which he had been informed were there and take them to Victoria Barracks. I refused to open the door and he then showed me his warrant, which read:

"To enter and search, if needs be by force." I still refused, on the ground that the property did not belong to me and I had no authority to open doors or give him parcels. When he replied that he would have to ask the soldiers to break down the door with the butts of their rifles if I continued to refuse to open it, the caretaker opened it because he said it was at any rate his duty to protect the property. Taylor, who was originally a gentleman as well as an officer, took the packages - about ten thousand copies of the Manifesto, wrapped and addressed (the men of the Railways Union were to deliver them for us), gave me a receipt for them, and never attempted to touch any other papers in the office. I went home to bed again.

Then the Minister for Defence banned the Manifesto. The raid and the ban were damn from Heaven for our Executive. Indifference in many was suddenly turned to curiosity and interest. All the world wanted copies. We and our work and our Manifesto all took on an air of martyrdom in spite of ourselves. I even sent copies to interested newspapers in Britain which printed it in full without hindrance from the British Government." (3)

and

"Meanwhile, the military raids continued upon our printing offices. On August 5, the premises of the Victorian Socialist Party in Elizabeth Street, Melbourne, were the target; a few days later it was the "Worker" office in Sydney. On August 11, a deputation from the Melbourne Trades Hall Council, the Victorian Labor Party and Victorian Federal Parliamentarians waited on the Minister for Defence to protest against the raids, the seizure of our literature, and his own recent charges that we were guilty of sedition and disloyalty.

We pointed out that half the rooms in the huge Trades Hall building already had Honor Boards hanging on their walls and gave him the statistics of trade union enlistments. Pearce denied that he had made his charges against men at the Trades Hall and promised to make inquiries into the raids. He said we could print the Manifesto as it had been altered by the Censor, but I pointed out that only the title and printers name were left.

Pearce said he did not believe that representative men with official positions in the trade unions or political executives would sign such a document, to which I immediately retorted that he well knew I was the Victorian President of the Labor Party and Secretary of the Trades Hall Council, while Frank Anstey (also in the delegation) was a Federal Member and we had both signed it. Frank had been on the drafting committee, while I was secretary to the Executive. He would not raise the ban; it did us more good than harm." (4)

Holloway goes on to record:

"From the non-Labor press we received no co-operation, even at a commercial level. It is however, pleasant to recall that on one occasion during the second referendum of 1917 we approached the advertising chief of the Melbourne "Herald" a fine man by the name of Davidson, and asked him for a quote for a full page advertisement in three daily issues commencing the following Saturday. He gave us the quote and agreed to handle an advertisement for which we would take the usual responsibility. He said that as far as he was concerned the whole affair was purely a business transaction.

We gave him our cheque and when Saturday's issue appeared he had been as good as his word - there was a well set-up full-page advertisement presenting conclusive proof that Senator Pearce had lied about the existence of a Sixth Division. This caused such a stir that on Sunday people at the Varra Bank kept asking us whether the "Herald" had come over to our side. But that was the end of it. Though I am sure he did not suffer for his action, Davidson had to toe the line and no more such advertisements appeared. But that one issue on that Saturday evening had been worth its weight in gold.

And so the 1916 fight reached the last round, a fight which had not only split the Australian Labor Party but the whole nation. Hughes and some 24 Federal Members left the Party on the morrow of the referendum, as did some labor Premiers and Ministers in some of the States. Outside Parliament, too, a small proportion of members of the movement broke away. Labor suffered from the split for years as far as electoral fortunes were concerned.

But on October 28, men and women went to the ballot box and voted as their convictions and their consciences told them to do. We were not allowed to know the result until the Monday morning but then we knew that the victory lay with us. The figures we read were as follows:

State	For Conscription	Against Conscription
New South Wales	356,805	474,544
Victoria	353,930	328,216
Queensland	144,200	158,051
South Australia	87,924	119,236
Western Australia	94,069	40,884
Tasmania	48,493	37,833
Federal Territories	2,136	1,269
	<hr/> <hr/> 1,087,557	<hr/> <hr/> 1,160,033

And so we thought the great fight against conscription for overseas service had been fought and won. We felt that the people of Australia were entitled to breathe a sigh of relief that this disrupting issue of conscription was dead. Nor did we feel that, in view of the wonderful success of the voluntary system in Australia there was any reason for anything but satisfaction at its passing from the scene." (5)

Hughes and those who had left the Party with him merged with Labor's opponents to form the Nationalist Party and they made a further bid for conscription in 1917. This time the conscription was for single men only. As Holloway said "Every effort was made to break down the opposition, to make one section enslave another." It was 1916 all over again!

The vote on December 20, 1917, resulted in a vote against conscription. Of course, not all Labor Party members or politicians supported the anti-conscription campaign and Holloway in his booklet describes the heart-burnings of a few. One example is described as follows:

"I had other painful moments of this sort, though there were, of course, political Labor men who were solid, as well as those who left us. The decision of the Party was conveyed about the same time to Victorian Members of the Federal Parliament and Federal Labor Cabinet. At first our Victorian Executive in consultation with Frank Tudor and Senator E.J. Russell, decided that these two Victorians should not withdraw from the Hughes Cabinet until the die was irrevocably cast.

When the time seemed ripe, I, as President, was instructed to meet Tudor and Russell at the Federal Treasury and advise them to put in their resignations. I can still recall how relieved and happy Frank Tudor was to get the word. He said he was anxious to make his position clear at the earliest moment and would hand Hughes his resignation as soon as Cabinet convened that day. But what of Senator Russell? He took up a different attitude. He simply said, "All right E.J., I know your wishes, but I do not think the position has quite crystallised." I could sense at once that he had already made promises to Hughes.

Senator E.J. Russell was the youngest member of Cabinet, a popular and capable young man, for whom the Party had done much to secure a future political career. But at the first test of Party solidarity which threatened him with a little temporary loss of privileges and income, he refused to accept the majority Party decision.

It was a great pity from every point of view. He was never a happy man again. He turned away from his friends and not long afterwards became mentally unbalanced. To the genuine sorrow of his relatives and friends of earlier days he never recovered. I had grown up with him - we had attended the same study circle at one time - and knew him well. I am sure he really hated conscription as I did, but he was over-persuaded and enticed away from his own.

Of just one more for whom I felt and have continued to feel great sorrow, I must say a word. W.G. Spence, M.H.R., was a real Labor man and a founder and stalwart of the A.W.U. and its Federal President; a tireless organiser, a powerful writer and one whose whole life had been spent in and for the Australian Labor Movement. He was a very old and close colleague and friend of W.M. Hughes. I am certain it was his strong personal attachment to that enormously strong-willed man which overrode his judgment and his attachments to the Union and the Party he had done so much to build." (6)

The conscription struggle had a shattering effect on the political wing. On July 1, 1916, Labour commanded a majority of Federal and State Governments. Six months later only Queensland had a Labor Government. In the Federal sphere Labor did not regain power again for more than a quarter of a century (although it held office from 1929-31 and from 1941-44 without majorities in both Houses).

Holloway records:

"For all that, there were compensations. The ranks were closed and we sensed a purifying effect: in the wilderness we looked to higher standards of unity and solidarity as we set about rebuilding. It was decided, as early as December, 1916, when a Special Federal Conference was convened in Melbourne to deal with the crisis, that a firm and lasting basis for the future should be laid by constitutionally defining the extent of the purge which had actually occurred. I was in the chair on that occasion and presided over a long and business-like discussion of a resolution moved by the future Labor Prime Minister, J.H. Scullin, and seconded by my old colleague, Arch Stewart, who was both Federal and Victorian State Secretary of the Australian Labor Party:"

"That as compulsory military service is opposed to the principles embodied in the Australian Labor Party's platform, all Federal Members who supported compulsory overseas military service, or who left the Parliamentary Labor Party and formed another political party are hereby expelled from the Australian Labor Party." (7)

For an insight into E.J. Holloway's attitude to many questions, I quote from the last page of his booklet:

"I had suggested that in most crises such as those I have described in this chapter, outside pressure and enticements play the role of Party wrecker. I am sure this is so. I cannot speak from firsthand experience in the sense of having ever been subject to it personally. No overtures have ever been made to me over all my years in the Movement. Perhaps this is because I have never been a member of any society or organisation, religious, social or economic, other than the Labor Movement itself. This has made me more difficult to approach, or (and I hope this was the case) they knew beforehand what my reaction would be. My knowledge of the process of wrecking have been based rather on close-up observation and proofs supplied me by colleagues and friends. Encumbered by outside affiliations and sitting so long at the centre of political and industrial Labor, I have been able to tell in advance in nine cases out of ten how my colleagues would react when the pressure of a crisis was on.

Such knowledge has been anything but a consolation. Politics, which should be the noblest of all callings because of the great power which it affords to determine the happiness or otherwise of our people, and of other peoples, has been all too often degraded by these miserable little demonstrations of disloyalty or worse. Such personal frailty saps the faith and confidence of people in their institutions. Such a reaction of course, could, if sufficiently developed, undermine democracy itself." (8)

Bertha Walker in "Solidarity Forever!" records that "E.J. Holloway, secretary of the THC was a sincere and honest man, but he was a conciliator. He endeavoured to keep a balance between right and left and please both." She went on to say: "During the four years that Percy Laidler was on the THC whenever anything new was raised in a motion, the policy was to set up a committee Reading the minutes today it seems evident that the Executive was always playing for time."

On the other hand, Ian Turner ("Industrial Labour and Politics") when referring to Holloway in the context of 1918 indicates that he was "prominent on the left wing of the movement."

The 1920 44 hour week Case:

In 1920 unions sought a 44 hour week. Mr. Justice Higgins, the then president of the Arbitration Court (as it was then called) presided over the inquiry. As Secretary of the THC, Holloway, presented the case "on behalf of the Australian Trades Union Movement." I am informed that other persons were also very active in the inquiry, from the union side, but in a "backroom sense." They were Charles Munday, Charles Crofts and Harry Gibson.

The Court, although without the benefit of any views from the Federal Government on the subject, granted a 44 hours working week to Timber Workers and some six months later (May, 1921) extended it to engineers.

The economic situation in Australia deteriorated and the Court at the close of 1921, reinstated the old 48 hours as its standard. In 1927 the Court in the Main Hours Case once more allowed a 44 hours working week to engineers and others.

(For a synopsis of the 1920 44 - Hour Week Enquiry you are invited to read the documents in the LaTrobe Library).

The Murray Hanging

In 1924 an escapee from Geelong gaol, was sentenced to death for a murder the previous year. At the time Holloway said the THC believed capital punishment was brutal, and the carrying out of the terrible work was more awful than the act of murder.

Holloway and J. Morse, President of the 8 Hours Committee, were speakers at rallies attended by an estimated 12,000 people.

These activities did not save Murray, who many believed was innocent. He was executed on April 14. Thousands gathered outside the Old Melbourne Gaol. Bertha Walker records:

"Women - working class women - were probably in the majority. In those poor days a man in employment could not afford to take a day off and it was left to housewives, old men, unemployed, criminals and union officials to pay their last respects and enter protest."

(Perhaps union officials would not agree with that order!-W.R.)

Walker further records:

"After the execution the crowd jeered at the Police and showed a great desire to do something. A march on Parliament House demanding resignation of the Government was proposed."

"Meanwhile Ted Holloway had telephoned Laidler and asked him would he come up and address the crowd to calm them An eyewitness said that Holloway was nearly in tears. Holloway was a very sensitive and compassionate man and had he attempted to address them himself there is little doubt he would have broken down." (9)

ACTU Formed:

In 1927 the Australasian Council of Trade Unions was formed, the Melbourne THC (with Holloway as Secretary), having formally convened the congress which established the ACTU.

The 1929 Timber Workers Strike.

On January 23, 1929, Judge Lukin of the Arbitration Court gave a decision involving an increase of hours from 44 to 48 (and a reduction in wages) for 20,000 timber workers, which met with prompt resistance of the unions. First in Melbourne and then in Sydney and Adelaide the workers refused to start at the earlier hour necessitated by the new award, and the employers refused to engage them, and proceeded to apply to the Court for a declaration that a strike existed, in order that the Arbitration Amendment Act passed the year before might be invoked against them.

The timber workers thereupon called out the carters and crane drivers, and the Central Strike Committee of the A.C.T.U. summoned a special conference on February 7, at which representatives of over thirty unions agreed -

1. to extend the strike to a general movement in favour of a 44-hour week;
2. to boycott the Federal Industrial Court; and
3. to entrust the conduct of the strike to the A.C.T.U.

Prime Minister Stanley Melbourne Bruce threatened to maintain the legislation and insist on its observance.

A further development of the struggle was its effect on the Industrial Peace Conference, which had been set up on the recommendation of the British Economic Mission during its recent visit to Australia. Preliminary meetings had been held, and things were going fairly smoothly, until the outbreak of the timber strike, followed by the threat to dismiss over 10,000 N.S.W. miners, brought the protest of the militant workers to a head. The conference was adjourned, a result which was generally welcomed by rank and file workers.

From this point official coercion increased, and the Arbitrator proceeded to take his revenge on the workers who had flouted his award. On February 25 Judge Lukin ordered a secret ballot of the timber workers in Victoria and New South Wales. On March 1 he imposed the maximum fine of £1,000 under the Arbitration Amendment Act on the Timber Workers Union, and this was followed up by a fine of £50 against E.J. Holloway, the Secretary of the Melbourne Trades Hall, for encouraging the officials of the T.W.U. to "do something in the nature of a strike!" Holloway records in his booklet: "I refused to pay and have never paid to this day." Demonstrations and conflicts with the police became more frequent as time went on.

The strike came to an end on June 24, after five months. The terms included resumption on the basis of a 48-hour week, pending an independent inquiry into the financial condition of the industry. The employers undertook to employ as many unionists as the state of the industry permits, but "the interests of the volunteers (scabs) are to be safeguarded."

The strike was noteworthy for its defiance of the Arbitration Amendment Act, which revealed the impotence of the Government to enforce its recently enacted anti-labour legislation. Following upon the imposition of the £1,000 fine on the Timberworkers Union, 38 strikers were charged with absenting themselves from work, and were ordered to return under penalty of £100 fine or three months imprisonment, but for five months, in spite of fines, prohibitions and threats, the strikers refused to go back, and the Government was powerless to make them.

The results of the secret ballot ordered by Judge Lukin under the Act also proved a victory for the strikers. The figures in Victoria and New South Wales were 5000 - 700 against acceptance of the award.

But even these figures did not fully represent the feeling of the strikers. At a demonstration on March 25, 25,000 trade unionists gathered at the Sydney Trades Hall to protest against the Lukin award and against the first attempt to enforce a secret ballot. As the 3,000 strikers gathered at the Trades Hall they threw their ballot papers into kerosene-soaked sacks, which were publicly burned. A procession was then formed which marched to Hyde Park and burned an effigy of Judge Lukin.

Throughout the strike solidarity prevailed; picketing was good and scabs were few, while as much as £3,000 a week came to the Disputes Committee from other unions. The women were especially active. Weekly meetings of the strikers wives were held, and a number were prosecuted and sent to gaol for collecting.

A month after the strike was at an end, seven trade union leaders, including the Secretary of the N.S.W. Labour Council, the Secretary of the Timber Workers Union and the Chairman of the Disputes Committee, were charged with "unlawful conspiracy by violence and threats of violence" to prevent the timber workers from continuing work. A jury subsequently released the union leaders.

In the same year (1929) Holloway stood against Prime Minister Bruce in the 'blue ribbon' seat of Flinders and defeated him - the only occasion to date that a Prime Minister has been swept not only from office but from Parliament itself.

In 1931 the Scullin Labor Government was re-elected; Caucus met on March 2 and decided for a Cabinet "spill". Scullin and Theodore were re-elected Prime Minister and Treasurer/Deputy Leader. On the third ballot E.J. Holloway was successful and was given the portfolio of Assistant Minister for Industry and Assistant to the Treasurer.

Premiers' Plan:

By June, 1931, agreement had been reached by all Government leaders on the general application of what became known as the Premiers Plan.

The following 5 measures were central to the plan:

1. A great conversion loan to secure reduction of 22½% to the internal interest burden;
2. Reduction by 20 per cent (against 1929-30) of all adjustable government expenditure (wages, salaries, materials, social services, pensions, etc.);
3. Additional revenue to be obtained from both Commonwealth and State Taxation;

4. Reduction of bank interest on both deposits and advances.
5. State Parliaments to give relief in respect of private mortgages.

So much for the hopes of the Commonwealth Labor Ministers who on March 19, 1931, recorded this minute: "Cabinet definitely declared against any cut in old age and invalid pensions and war pensions," and on May 27, for the guidance of Scullin and Theodore, away at the financial conferences then in progress, they reaffirmed that they were "adverse to reductions in pensions and ... the basic wage in the Commonwealth Public Service."

In June, 1931, the Government legislation to put the Premiers' Plan into effect was introduced. The Lang Labor Group and ten other Labor members of the House of Representatives voted against it, but the measure was passed with the support of the Opposition. Holloway resigned his portfolio because of opposition to the legislation.

At the end of the year the Government was forced to an election, having been defeated on the floor of the House. Labor was defeated. Holloway, however, won his seat, which was then Melbourne Ports; he held that electorate until 1951.

1941 - 1949

In the 1941 Curtin Cabinet, only Chifley, Forde, Beasley and Holloway had previous experience as a Cabinet Minister. Curtin and the other 14 members of his team were completely untried as Ministers. In this ministry Holloway held the portfolio of Minister for Health and Social Services (1941-1943). Eddie Ward held the portfolio of Labour and National Service (a new Department created in 1940). However, in 1943, after Ward was suspended from Cabinet (the background to such action being too lengthy for my contribution today) - Holloway was temporarily appointed to the Labour & National Service portfolio, as well as retaining the Health and Social Services cabinet position.

He retained the Labour & National Service portfolio until 1949 when the Chifley Government was swept from office. Information provided to me indicates that Holloway was acting Prime Minister in April-May, 1949; my reading to date, limited because of other commitments, has not been able to confirm this.

As a further insight into Holloway, I now turn briefly to a period under Chifley.

The Bretton Woods International Agreement provided for the establishment of two international monetary institutions: an International Monetary Fund and an International Bank for Reconstruction and Development to assist devastated or under-developed member nations requiring longer-term loan capital.

The Agreement touched a particularly sensitive area of Labor convictions and emotions. To many Labor stalwarts it smelt of international financiers, Wall Street, "The Money Power" - the ultimate forces of capitalistic evil which Labor had felt itself to be fighting right down the years.

In the minds of its overseas sponsors the Agreement was plainly hailed with further schemes being evolved in the field of international commercial policies and these were seen by most Labour people as a threat to their Party's traditional protectionism and, potentially, to Australia's employment levels and living standards. Holloway was one of these people.

Chifley was Prime Minister then and in November/December, 1946 the Labor Caucus was debating the Agreement again. As L.F. Crisp records in his book "Ben Chifley": "Chifley had to contend not only with the Wardites but also with a more formidable and decisive - because of middle of the road - group headed by such widely respected men as his cabinet colleague Holloway, who was one of Chifley's most respected colleagues. On the final day of the debate Holloway made a fervant appeal for rejection and when the vote was taken Chifley had suffered a reverse by 3 votes." The question was referred to the A.L.P. Federal Conference. Subsequently the Party supported the Agreement. Holloway accepted the Party's decision and voted accordingly.

That sums up my reading of the life and times of E.J. Holloway, a loyal, active and devoted member of the labour movement. However to complete the picture it is recorded that Edward John Holloway died on December 3, 1967, which was the 113th anniversary of the Eureka uprising. His funeral service was conducted by the Unitarian Church.

Concluding comment:

The period during which Holloway lived, and was active in the Political and Industrial Movement, provided many lessons for the labour movement of today.

One can draw parallels between the actions of Bruce and the actions of Fraser. Incidentally, in February 1929, Bruce asserted:

"Conditions have greatly improved and there are encouraging indications that the coming year will witness a return to normal prosperity."

Fifty years later, in February, 1979, Fraser asserted:

"I believe that 1979 is the year in which the fruits of our policies will become clearly apparent, a year in which the economy will take a further step on the road of recovery." !!!!

Perhaps the Trade Union Movement can learn from the demands of the pioneers who sought a reduction in the working week as an immediate goal not some apparently illusory shorter working life - then again, with a united movement, perhaps both are attainable?

These lessons of the past are worth remembering on this Labor Day. It is by learning from the the past that we will make progress in the future.

Thank you

1. "The Australian Victory over Conscription.
In 1916 - 1917 " P5. E.J. Holloway (1966)
2. Ibid, P6.
3. Ibid. P7.
4. Ibid. P10/11
5. Ibid. P12.
6. Ibid. P16/17
7. Ibid. P17/18
8. Ibid. P19.
9. "Solidarity Forever!" - Bertha Walker.