

Solidarity Forever!

**...a part story of the life and times of Percy Laidler
– the first quarter of a century...**

Bertha Walker

First published 1972 by The National Press, Melbourne.

This electronic edition released 2012 by Alan Walker.

Copyright © the estate of Bertha Walker 1972.

Preface to the 2012 Edition copyright © Alan Walker 2012.

Alan Walker relinquishes all copyright in the photographs taken by him and used as illustrations. All other photographs and illustrations are believed to be out of copyright.

This electronic edition may be freely downloaded or printed for personal or scholarly use. Several electronic formats are available on the website <http://www.solidarityforeverbook.com/>.

All other rights are reserved.

Please direct any enquiries to Alan Walker,
mail@solidarityforeverbook.com.

Contents

<i>Preface to the 2012 Edition</i>	v
<i>About the author; about the book; from the reviews; about this edition; further reading.</i>	
<i>Acknowledgments</i>	xxiii
<i>Solidarity Forever Lyrics</i>	xxiv
PROLOGUE.....	1
1. BREAK O' DAY.....	3
Corindhap; The Family; Ballarat; Melbourne.	
2. TOM MANN.....	17
Tom Mann; Tom Mann in Australia—Social Questions Committee; The Prahran Free Speech Fight 1906; Socialist Sunday School and Dedication; The Socialist Band, Orchestra and Choir; Co-operatives; Socialist Education; <i>The Socialist</i> and other publications; Literature; Social life; Personalities; Socialist national organisations (The Circolo Democratico Garibaldi, The Verein Vorwärts, The Russian Association); Conferences—Interstate and International.	
3. LAIDLER IN THE VSP.....	61
Electioneering; With Ben Tillett; Leading the unemployed with Fleming; Interviewing Jack London.	
4. BROKEN HILL.....	76
The Lockout; 1909; Harry Holland convicted; Tom Mann committed; Tom Mann Train; Trial of Tom Mann; Unemployed struggle at the Barrier.	
5. DECLINE OF VSP.....	98
The Manns leave for home; Don Cameron.	
6. THE GROSS FAMILY.....	103
7. SYNDICALISM.....	109
8. WAR AND THE ANTI-CONSCRIPTION CAMPAIGNS.....	116
Reaction in the VSP; The Conscription Referendum; Boy Conscription; The Churches; Dr. Mannix; Trade Unions; Politicians; Women in the campaign; Geelong a battleground; Propaganda; Violence; Soldiers for "No"; The Soldier Vote a Revelation; White Australia; Australia One Bright Spot; Jubilee Commemoration; The Red Flag Campaign.	

9. THE INDUSTRIAL WORKERS OF THE WORLD (IWW).....	147
IWW Clubs; IWW; Release Work.	
10. ANDRADE'S BOOKSHOP.....	156
Thirst for knowledge on Russia; Shop as an organising centre;	
Popular publications; Guido Baracchi;	
Labor College and Frank Hyett; <i>The Proletarian</i> ;	
"Arbitration and the Strike"; The Friday night forum.	
11. POST-WAR RIOTS.....	178
Peace celebration and aftermath, Melbourne; Fremantle's Eureka;	
Brisbane's anti-Russian riots; Townsville's bloody Sunday.	
12. THE WORKERS' INTERNATIONAL INDUSTRIAL UNION (WIU).....	187
13. POST-REVOLUTION.....	198
14. A MAN OF PRINCIPLE.....	213
Michael Patrick Considine.	
15. PERCY BROOKFIELD.....	217
16. PROCESSIONS AND FORUMS.....	220
Prince of Wales; St. Patrick; Peace; Forums of the people.	
17. O'CASSIDY, A SUAVE SPY.....	225
18. THE TRADE UNION PERIOD.....	229
Shop Assistants' Union;	
The Trades Hall Council and the Labor Propaganda Group.	
19. THE POLICE STRIKE 1923.....	245
20. THE HANGING OF ANGUS MURRAY.....	260
21. THE COMMUNIST PARTY.....	268
The Red Flag flew for Lenin.	
22. EIGHT HOURS' DAY AND MAY DAYS REJUVENATED.....	275
23. BRIBERY — FITZROY.....	280
24. THE BRITISH SEAMEN'S STRIKE AND DEPORTATION ATTEMPT.....	284
Causes of the Strike; Strike in Melbourne;	
329 men march into gaol; New Zealand;	
Men's rations compared with NSW gaol rations;	
Deportation moves; J. T. Lang; H. E. Boote;	
Deportation Board Farce; Elections; High Court Judgment;	
The Press; Gains.	
25. EPILOGUE — 1925-1945 SUMMARISED.....	308
ABBREVIATIONS.....	320
SOURCES.....	322

Preface to the 2012 Edition

About the Author – Bertha Walker

Revolutionary activist turned labour historian, Bertha Walker née Laidler (1912-1975) was brought up in a radical household living above a left wing bookshop in the centre of Melbourne.

From an early age she took part in communist and working class movements in Australia, Britain and New Zealand. In London she helped organise the hunger marches during the Depression. In 1943 she was the first woman endorsed as a Communist parliamentary candidate in Victoria. Following the Second World War she helped produce the only newspaper in the Northern Territory, for the North Australian Workers' Union.

In the 1950s she started assembling information about the radical political career of her father, Percy Laidler, and the turbulent times he lived through in the early 20th century. Her researches culminated in the 1972 publication of her book *Solidarity Forever!*



Bertha Laidler, later Bertha Walker, in the early 1930s.

• • •



Bertha Laidler

Bertha May Laidler was born in Richmond on 8 July 1912, the first child of socialist couple Thomas Percival (Percy) Laidler and Christiane Alicia Laidler, née Gross.

For most of her childhood the family lived above Andrade's Bookshop, at 201 Bourke Street, of which her father, Percy, had become the manager. She grew up in the midst of the radicals of all kinds who visited the bookshop. Her outlook on life was formed as she listened to revolutionaries discussing the latest ideas with her mother over coffee in the kitchen, and accompanied her father to the Yarra Bank and socialist meeting halls, where he was frequently the featured speaker. The shop also sold theatrical supplies and conjuring tricks, and Percy Laidler became an accomplished amateur magician and ventriloquist.



Bertha Laidler as Queen of the May for the 1924 Eight Hours Day procession.

Looking back on her childhood later in life she wrote, "The bookshop was open at nights, when I was very young. All the IWW chaps used to come in and meet each other at the shop. Most of them made a fuss of me. They nursed me and picked me up and put me on a narrow ledge where books were displayed, so that I would be level with them. My nickname was Bubbles. The amount of attention I got then was greater than at any other time in my life and I think it was effective in giving a certain amount of assurance, which probably helped me through life." The nickname "Bubbles" stayed with her into adulthood.

She attended the Queensberry Street State School in Carlton until 1924, then spent a year at business college, learning shorthand and typing. Her first job was in the Motor Registration Branch.

At 16 she started attending classes run by the recently-formed Communist Party and assisting in some of its activities, although she did not join the party at this stage.

When she was 18, she travelled to Europe with the writer Judah Waten. In Britain, she joined the Communist Party and worked in the office of the National Unemployed Workers Movement, helping to organise some of the "hunger marches" and other responses to the Depression. After two years in Britain and France she returned to Australia in 1933.

During the 1930s she worked for a number of unions, including the Ironworkers' Union, in Melbourne, Sydney and Newcastle, and took an active part in Communist activities.



Bertha Laidler in the 1930s.

She was a member of the circle of radicals, intellectuals and bohemians who gathered at the Swanston Family Hotel, on the corner of Swanston and Little Bourke Streets in Melbourne: people such as the

historian Brian Fitzpatrick, the violin maker Bill Dolphin and the artist Noel Counihan.

In 1939 she went to New Zealand, joining Judah Waten and Noel Counihan, who had travelled there earlier in the year. Bertha got work in a union office in Wellington. She was active in the Communist Party and the peace movement during the early months of the Second World War. She returned to Australia in 1940.



Front page of a pamphlet for Bertha Laidler's state election campaign in 1943.

number of votes gained by Miss Bertha Laidler, the Communist candidate."

In 1945 she enlisted in the Women's Auxiliary Australian Air Force, and served in Melbourne for a year.

In late 1946 she travelled to Darwin to take up a job with the North Australian Workers' Union. In December 1946 she married the union secretary, Joe (Yorky) Walker. (For information about Yorky Walker and the book that *he* later wrote, see the website

She became a member of the Victorian State Committee of the Communist Party, and Chairman of its Eastern District. In June 1943 she was the Communist candidate for Richmond in the state elections. By this time the Party was fully supporting the Allied war effort, and she campaigned for unity with the Federal Labor Government, and support for rationing and reforms designed to speed victory, coupled with planning for a "new Social Order" after the war.

She received over 30 percent of the votes cast, in a two-way contest with the Labor candidate. The local paper commented: "The poll was surprising for the large

www.nosunlightsinging.com.) She remained in Darwin for about a year, working in the union office and on the *Northern Standard* newspaper, published by the union. Towards the end of 1947 the Walkers resigned from their union positions and left the Northern Territory.

By 1950 the Walkers had settled in Melbourne and had a son, Alan. During the 1950s and 1960s Bertha Walker worked at non-political jobs, as a stenographer/typist, often in solicitor's offices.

Though continuing to support the communist cause, she drastically reduced her involvement in current political activities, and began to take an increasing interest in radical history. She was especially concerned to record the memories of her father, Percy Laidler, and other campaigners of his generation. She continued her researches after her father's death in 1958.



Bertha Walker, left, in the 1960s, sitting with Neura Hall (former wife of Guido Baracchi—see Chapter 10 of Solidarity Forever!) and Muriel Heagney (see Chapter 13). The men are Mike Hall and Bertha's husband, Yorky Walker. (Photo Alan Walker)

She was a foundation member of the Melbourne branch of the Australian Society for the Study of Labour History, and contributed several articles to its publications. To mark the 50th anniversary of the First World War anti-conscription victories, she wrote a booklet, "How

to Defeat Conscription: a Story of the 1916 and 1917 Campaigns in Victoria", published by the Anti Conscription Jubilee Committee in 1968.

In 1972 her account of the radical struggles of the early 20th century was published under the title *Solidarity Forever! ...a part story of the life and times of Percy Laidler — the first quarter of a century...*

In the years following the publication of *Solidarity Forever!* she completed a book on the Great Depression, including reminiscences of activists and others who lived through that period, but was unable to find a publisher. She also began work on an autobiography.

In May 1975 Bertha Walker died from acute liver failure and other ailments. A secular funeral service at Fawkner Crematorium on 27 May was addressed by some of her comrades.

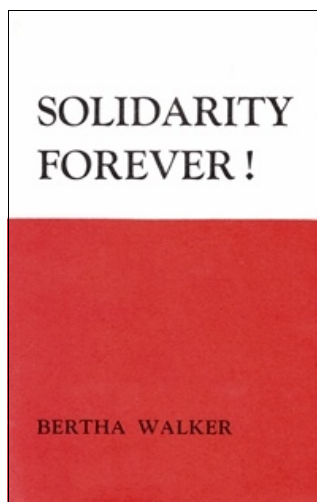
In 2012 *Solidarity Forever!* was reissued in a free online edition, forty years after its first publication, and in the centenary year of the author's birth.

About *Solidarity Forever!*

Bertha Walker's 1972 book *Solidarity Forever!* draws on the life of her father, socialist organiser and orator, **Percy Laidler (1884-1958)**, together with the recollections of dozens of the people who took part in the radical struggles of the early 20th century in Australia.

Described by a journalist in 1909 as "about the best mob orator that has struck Melbourne for many years", Percy Laidler continued for decades as a prominent speaker at left wing meetings and on the Yarra Bank. His life links many of the most colourful personalities and events of the early 20th century in Victoria and elsewhere.

As the manager of Andrade's Bookshop, he played a key role in distributing radical literature, and published Australia's first Marxist journal, the *Proletarian Review*. The shop was a meeting place and informal organising centre for many years. Percy



Cover of the 1972 hardback edition of Solidarity Forever!

Laidler resisted sectarianism and was on good terms with the full spectrum of radical groups of his day: socialists, anarchists, syndicalists, Wobblies, Communists, trade unionists, pacifists . . .

In 1918 he wrote the first major revolutionary analysis of Australia's industrial arbitration system, in a booklet called "Arbitration and the Strike". He concluded the booklet by quoting from a song that was then only a few years old — "Solidarity Forever":

*They have taken untold millions that they never toiled to earn.
But without our brain and muscle not a single wheel can turn. . .*

However, the book *Solidarity Forever!* does not focus on Percy Laidler as an individual, but aims to tell the story of the movement he was part of. As the author pointed out, some chapters do not even mention Laidler.

Among the dramatic events covered in the book are:

- the Prahran free speech fight of 1906
- the Victorian Socialist Party
- Tom Mann in Australia
- the invasion of parliament by the unemployed in 1908
- the 1909 Broken Hill miners' strike and unemployed struggles
- the victorious anti-conscription struggles of 1916 and 1917
- the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW)
- Andrade's Bookshop
- the birth of the Communist Party
- the Victorian police strike of 1923
- the British seamen's strike of 1925 which led to a snap Federal election in Australia

The book also tells about colourful personalities such as:

- **Tom Mann**, the English socialist who, having led the London dock workers' strike of 1889, helped build a socialist party in Victoria in the 1900s.
- Anarchist **Chummy Fleming** who distributed 300 bottles of champagne to the unemployed on behalf of the Governor, Lord Hopetoun.
- Railways union leader and interstate cricketer **Frank Hyett** who was struck down by the influenza pandemic of 1919.

- Intellectual, socialite and communist **Guido Baracchi** who had been thrown in the University lake for his comments on the 1914-18 War.
- **Percy Brookfield**, the radical parliamentarian who was shot dead by a "deranged Russian" in a railway station.
- The mysterious **John O'Casidy**, who shrugged off accusations of being a police spy and took part in left wing organisations for twenty years.
- English socialist debater **Moses Baritz** who startled his Melbourne comrades by cooking them a banquet.

SPONSORS .. The Launching of
"SOLIDARITY FOREVER"

JOHN ARROWSMITH, Trade Unionist.
THOMAS AUDLEY, Veteran of Labour Movement
GUIDO BARRACHI, Marxist - one of the
Founders of the Communist Party of
Australia.
LILLIAN MC KENZIE BROWN, Anti-War Activist
ROY CAMERON, Secretary-Miscellaneous
Workers Union
LLOYD CHURCHWARD, Labour Historian
NOEL COUNIHAN, Artist
CR. FRED FAREALL, J.P., Councillor -
Prahran City Council
JAMES GARVIE, Irish Freedom Activist
DOROTHY GIBSON, Anti-War Activist
KATH GLEESON, Book Seller
ISAAC GUST, Anti-War Activist
STAN JOHNS, Member Trades Hall Council
in the 30's
JACK MORRISON, Book Seller
WILLIAM O'BRIEN, Assist. Secretary,
Australian Railways Union.
H. (Bert) FAYNE, Ex-Mayor of
Broadmeadows
GEORGE OVEMEN, Member of the Victorian
Socialist Party
DR. H. SAFFIN, Labour Historian
MRS. EDITH TAYLOR, Member of the Vic-
torian Socialist Party
DR. IAN TURNER, Labour Historian
JUDAH WATEN, Author
BO. WILLIAMS, Secretary, Ballarat
Trades and Labour Council
STAN WILLIS, Vice President Metal
Workers' Union.

C.A.C. Duplicating & Offset
Printers 62 4005


BOOK LAUNCHING

"SOLIDARITY FOREVER"

by
BERTHA WALKER

A description of the life and times of
PERCY LAIDLER

Date: FRIDAY, 2nd MARCH, 1973
Place: ISOBEL YOUNGER ROSS HALL,
110 Keppel Street, Carlton.
Time: 6. p. m. to 10. p. m.
Cost: \$1.00



1940

Flyer advertising the Solidarity Forever! book launch.

The official launch of *Solidarity Forever!* was held in Carlton in March 1973. The major speakers were Communist Party veteran Ralph Gibson and historian Brian McKinlay. Bertha Walker also spoke, noting that the book would not have been possible without the cooperation of the numerous people she interviewed, many of whom were present.

Percy Laidler played a central part in the radical movement in Victoria for half-a-century.

Using Andrades Bookshop, of which he was manager as a base, he was a counsellor, a supporter, or a leader in the activities of the Victorian Socialist Party, I.W.W., Trade Unions, Anti-Conscription campaigns and major strikes and progressive causes of his time.

SOLIDARITY FOREVER is a description of the life and times of Percy Laidler by Bertha Walker. It deals with radical events in Australia - mainly Victoria - from early in the century to 1925.

This is a record of a most vital period in the trade union movement.

BOOK LAUNCHING
"SOLIDARITY FOREVER"

Program:

Chairman: John Arrowsmith

Speakers: Ralph Gibson
"The Life and Times of Percy Laidler"

Brian McKinlay
"Solidarity Forever"


Songs: Doug. Horsbrough will sing songs of the I.W.W. and socialist movement.
He will be accompanied by Bert Cameron.

Note:

- * Light refreshments including tea and coffee will be served.
- * B. Y. O. if so disposed.
- * Parking space behind the Hall.
- * Those using public transport take tram 1 or 15 in Swanston Street, alight at Stop 11, walk one block.
- * It would be useful to have an indication of the numbers attending the launching.

Phone or write:-
Kath Gleeson,
International Bookshop, 17 Elizabeth St.
Melbourne. Phone: 61 2859

Lloyd Edmonds, 93 Roberts Street,
Essendon. Phone: 337 7554



1908

Flyer advertising the Solidarity Forever! book launch – inside pages.

There was a display of historic photographs and leaflets, which would be the source of many of the illustrations in the 2012 digital edition of the book. At the conclusion of the musical segment of the evening everyone joined in the singing of "The Red Flag" and "Solidarity Forever". The event was very well attended — a copy of *Solidarity Forever!* was signed by about 170 attendees.

From the reviews of the book...

The following extracts from reviews of the first edition convey the range of responses to the book.

J D Blake in *Tribune* (Communist Party of Australia), January 16-22, 1973:

[. . .] Agitation for militant unionism, tenacious strike struggles, spectacular unemployed demonstrations; the fight for democratic rights and liberties — combined with a moralist socialism often fitted to religious canons like the ten commandments; the strong influence of Tom Mann on the Australian Labor Movement; passionate support for the Russian revolution and the Soviet Union: all these strands are documented in this book by Bertha Walker on the life and times of her father.

[. . .] The record of Percy's life gives us the essentials of the main trends of the Australian militant working class. He was an active and leading figure in them all, but rarely a member of an organisation.

[. . .] Percy was one of those rarities who came through the early socialist sects, the Tom Mann syndicalism and the IWW intolerances, a revolutionary firm of principle but equally firm in his tolerance and acceptance of the movement with all its differences and difficulties. This was the more surprising in view of his active involvement in these movements.

Solidarity Forever! is mainly concerned with the first twenty-five years and the summary treatment of the second twenty-five years cannot do justice to the period. one would have liked more about Chris Laidler (Gross): a subject touching the relations between men and women in the Australian socialist movement - and consequently the problem of political culture. A talented woman . . . 'She subordinated her potential to the needs of the family, allowing Perc free rein to his political activities.' (p.95.)

Some may feel that there are too many details, but these will prove a quarry for those seeking more information about the period. Some of the names, without further references, will appeal mainly to old-timers.

But none of this detracts from the value of Bertha Walker's book. She has been content to tell the story of the times, the events, and

the people with a minimum of critical analysis. In some ways this is one of the strengths of the book. The author is an evangelist joyfully celebrating the ethos. She tells the story with gusto and because of this she Helps the reader to see the story from the inside, to know what made these people of the militant labor movement tick.

Those who are interested in our past, and particularly those interested in making a critical analysis and interpretation of that past, will find it essential to read and study Bertha Walker's book.

Brian McKinlay in *Direct Action* (Socialist Workers League), February 22, 1973; same review also appeared in *Labor '73* (Australian Labor Party, Victorian Branch), March 2, 1973:

To an earlier generation of Australian radicals no song was more loved or more moving than "Solidarity Forever". Appropriately, Bertha Walker has chosen this title for the book she has written about the life and times of her remarkable father, Percy Laidler. Appropriately, because it was a song her father loved, and also because he was a man who devoted his life to socialist and radical causes, and who genuinely believed, in the words of "Solidarity Forever" that . . . "we can bring to birth a new world from the ashes of the old".

[. . .] In 1902, while living in Melbourne, Laidler became involved with the visit and the socialist campaigns of Tom Mann, probably the most successful and remarkable of the early socialist agitators to visit Australia. Mann came to Australia with a name already famous in British socialist circles from his involvement with the great London Dock Strike of 1889. Mann, and the other dockers' leaders had never forgotten the "miracle" of a £30,000 donation from Australian workers which had saved the dockers from starvation and helped them win their great strike in 1889. Mann's visit to Australia had an immense impact on the rising labour movement. A brilliant orator and organiser, Mann spearheaded a dozen great campaigns and strikes which developed the political consciousness of the Australian working class. In an age of deepening social and economic strife Percy Laidler was deeply influenced by Mann. Like Mann he embarked on a lifetime of political struggle.

[. . .] In "Solidarity Forever" Bertha Walker uses simple direct prose to give a direct and at times moving account of the

struggles of the times, and the very real hazards and hardships which the pioneers of the labour movement faced in Victoria. She captures also the rich diversity of the early socialist movement, and the large and often vigorously nonconforming characters who made up its ranks.

When she recounts Laidler's work in Broken Hill in 1909, she gives us a sharp and dramatic account of the events which culminated in one of the most fundamental strike-confrontations ever to occur in Australia. Broken Hill, long a centre for radicalism, and one of the most politically conscious cities in Australia, was gripped in 1909 by a strike of such scope and bitterness as to be revolutionary in its implications. The struggles of 1909, involved a lock-out by the mine management who hoped to reduce the low level of wages even further. The miners reacted with picketing and sympathy strikes among other unions. Significantly, one great workers' procession was headed by a banner reading: "Behold, The Workers Think". Of another "The Argus" said: ". . . there were massed bands, and at the rear of the march a regiment of women with three red flags". The Broken Hill dispute saw Mann and other socialist leaders gaoled, but generated an immense wave of radical concern in Australia. One of the gaoled leaders, Harry Holland, later became Opposition Leader in New Zealand's parliament.

[. . .] Later in life, Percy Laidler was to manage Melbourne's most famous radical bookshop, that of Will Andrade.

In the decade before WWI, Laidler became involved with the new ideas and theories of the Syndicalists, and later still with the work of the Industrial Workers of the World. Yet for Laidler, as for most of the labour movement, the great political crucible was the war and the anti- conscription struggles. For Laidler as for many others, the defeat of conscription and resistance to the war and its effects became the central activity of their lives, Flowing from the war, Laidler, like many others, was at first puzzled then fascinated by the events of the Russian Revolution. He was one of the first people to see the fundamental political importance of this vast event.

While a tireless worker for social change at home, Laidler was unusual in the breadth of his international view, at a time when many in the labour movement were parochial if not downright racist in their world view. He raised support for British seamen

during the international seamen's strike in 1925, he worked to raise political consciousness among Melbourne's Italian, Spanish and Aborigine communities. He aided victims of fascism and raised the banner of the Spanish Republic, working to send aid to Republican Spain.

"Solidarity Forever" is a remarkable account of an involvement in radical political activities extending over a lifetime, and touching on some of the most fundamental events in Australian history. Future labour historians will owe a debt to Bertha Walker, for she has given to them a valuable source-book, which will serve as a starting point for future research in a host of areas, some hitherto neglected or forgotten [. . .]

Len Fox in *Common Cause* (Miners' Federation), November 21, 1972:

Here is a book that is well worth reading!

Tom Mann in the Broken Hill lockout of 1909, Archbishop Mannix in the anti-conscription campaigns of 1916-17, the early days of the IWW in Melbourne, the shooting of waterside striker Tom Edwards in Fremantle in 1919, the riots in Brisbane the same year, the little-known work of the Workers' International Industrial Union and the Labor Propaganda Group, the death of Percy Brookfield on Riverton station, the Melbourne police strike in 1923, the early days of the Communist Party, the attempted bribery in the Fitzroy by-election of 1925, the British seamen's strike of 1925 and the attempted deportation of trade union leaders. . .

These are a few only of the many exciting happenings described by Bertha Walker in "Solidarity Forever!" which tells the story of the life and times of her father, Percy Laidler.

[. . .] Some readers may feel at times there is too much detail, and at other times not enough, but this is bound to happen in any book covering such a number of happenings. And in the main the detail is important in reminding us of how our early socialists thought and felt; it is interesting, for instance, to read the "Ten Commandments of Socialism" taught in Socialist Sunday Schools sixty years ago: "Love your schoolfellows who will be your fellow workers in life. Love learning. . . Do not think that he who loves his own country must hate or despise other nations. . ."

[. . .] Particularly vivid are the descriptions of the Melbourne police strike and the British seamen's strike.

It is good also to see the stress laid by the author on unity of action, on the need for socialists to approach people tolerantly and humbly, to win them rather than antagonise them. But this is natural in a book about Percy Laidler. The fact that "Solidarity Forever" was his favorite song was typical of the man.

This book is a fitting tribute to him, and more than that it is informative and interesting reading.

Bruce Muirden in *Nation Review*, January 26 - February 1, 1973:

[. . .] In uneven style Ms Walker covers a sweep of years not yet tackled, outside professional journals, by anybody else. But although she does it with evidence of extensive industry and is motivated by partisan sympathy, she does it without much insight or power of synthesis. This is probably a little churlish because she has done a good stroke within her own limits but unfortunately she has moved into purist territory; Labor historians, like all historians, must be purists.

Her list of authorities shows she has drawn not only on established works like George Dale's *Industrial History of Broken Hill* and Dr Jauncey's study of conscription, but also on some fugitive radical literature and on the memories of some sixty witnesses (a few of whom have since died). The problem is that the reader can never be sure of the origin of any particular incident [. . .]

Tom Audley in *The Seamen's Journal*, January-February, 1973:

[. . .] One of the largest chapters in the book describes the British Seamen's strike of 1925, as it happened in Australia. The strike began in Adelaide, when the men walked off the *Balranald*, and then spread over the globe with ships tying up in every port of the world, including the home ports.

The Australian Seamen's Union supported the strike and rallied sufficient money to keep approximately 2,500 men for 15 weeks.

At the same time the Bruce Government tried to deport Tom Walsh, General Secretary and Jacob Johnson, Assistant Secretary of the Union, alleging they were responsible for the strike, even though it was world wide. This caused a great storm in trade union and labour circles. A huge campaign was mounted and the deportation defeated.

[. . .] This book might be called a history, but it is not such in the usual sense, it is rather an easily read story about the early part of this century, as it affected the working class [. . .]

Melbourne Times, January 17, 1973:

[. . .] Taken as a reference book, 'Solidarity Forever' may be valuable for the genuine scholar of the growth of the socialist movement in Australia. In small doses it would probably be interesting and informative — though one often doubts the impartiality of facts posited.

The division of the book into many chapters and sub-headings renders it very effective as a historical dictionary, although it cannot really be regarded as gripping for the general reader.

J.M. in *Socialist* (Socialist Party of Australia), March 1973:

It's nearly too late for some people to "take time off" to document with personal knowledge and feeling the rich story of the Australian labour movement. Much of the detail will be lost or forgotten; perhaps only the bare salient facts will be researched by future historians who will give a more or less accurate general picture.

For this reason alone Bertha Walker's book is of tremendous value and interest.

[. . .] Her writing is at times a little rough because of an obvious haste to "get it down on record" before it is lost . . . And more power to her for a painstaking job of accumulating the wealth of facts and personalities which make up the story [. . .]

About this Edition

This digital edition has been released by the author's son, Alan Walker. The text of the original, 1972, edition of *Solidarity Forever!* is reproduced here without any changes of substance.

No doubt some of the information in the book could be expanded or amended in the light of historical research over the forty years since the book's first appearance. However, the intention of this edition is to make available again the account of these events written by Bertha Walker, embodying her own memories of the times, the results of her interviews with many of the people directly involved, her gleanings

from newspaper archives, books and pamphlets, and her conversations with the central figure in the book, her father, Percy Laidler.

Occasional references to the current situation are therefore references to the early 1970s, when the writing of the book was completed.

A few new footnotes have been added, mainly providing additional information about Laidler family members. The two footnotes to the 1972 edition have been retained, identified as such.

The original edition of the book contained only two illustrations: head and shoulders photographs of Percy Laidler in 1908 and 1940. This electronic edition is much more lavishly illustrated, with about seventy photographs and other images.

Many of the illustrations come from a display that Bertha Walker assembled for the book launch function in March 1973. Unless otherwise stated in a caption, all illustrations are from this display or from family photographs and other materials collected by Bertha Walker. All captions are by Alan Walker.

The structure of headings within chapters has been slightly adjusted in some cases, and a few new headings introduced. All of the original headings have been retained.

A minor error, covered by a correction slip enclosed in the book, has been remedied, along with a handful of obvious typographical errors and misspellings. There have also been a few stylistic changes—principally the use of italics rather than quotation marks for the titles of books and periodicals, and expressing some numbers in words rather than numerals.

Further reading about Percy Laidler

These are some books, in addition to *Solidarity Forever!*, that refer to Percy Laidler.

Andrew Reeves, "Laidler, Thomas Percival (Percy) (1884–1958)" in *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, MUP, 1983. Available online at the Australian National University website at <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/laidler-thomas-percival-percy-7010/text12189>.

The website *Reason in Revolt: Source Documents of Australian Radicalism*, <http://www.reasoninrevolt.net.au/>, has scanned copies of Percy Laidler's pamphlet "Arbitration and the Strike" and of the magazine *The Proletarian Review / The Proletarian* that he produced with Guido Baracchi.

John Sendy, *Melbourne's Radical Bookshops: History, People, Appreciation*, International Bookshop, 1983, has a chapter on Andrade's Bookshop, with information about, and photographs of, Percy Laidler.

Jeff Sparrow & Jill Sparrow, *Radical Melbourne: A Secret History*, The Vulgar Press, 2001, also has a chapter on Andrade's Bookshop.

Jeff Sparrow, *Communism: A Love Story*, MUP, 2007, is a biography of Guido Baracchi, and includes several references to Percy Laidler.

And in fiction...

As mentioned in *Solidarity Forever!*, "Percy Lambert", a minor character in **Frank Hardy's** *Power Without Glory*, was based on Percy Laidler.

Percy Laidler appears, under his own name, as a character in **Jenny Pausacker's** *Can You Keep a Secret?*, Angus & Robertson, 1989, a novel for young readers set in Richmond during the Depression.

Further Reading about Bertha Walker

David Hudson, "Walker, Bertha May (1912–1975)" in *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, MUP, 2002. Available online at the Australian National University website at <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/walker-bertha-may-11936/text21389>.

Bertha Walker's papers are held by the State Library of Victoria. They include unpublished manuscripts of her book on the Great Depression, an article on the history of women in the Australian labour movement and a draft of the first chapters of her autobiography, covering her childhood and early teenage years.

Bernard Smith, *Noel Counihan: Artist and Revolutionary*, OUP, 1993, includes information on Bertha Walker's times in the Swanston Family circle and in New Zealand.

Alan Laidler Walker, June 2012

Acknowledgments

The author thanks the many people who assisted in compiling this work, and is grateful for the patience of the people interviewed, who are named in the sources listed at the end of the book.

Thanks for early reading of manuscript and advice to Judah Waten and Eddie Callard. Acknowledgment is made to David Hudson and Alan Walker for their great assistance in proof-reading, and advice.

Special thanks to Eddie Callard for his exceptional encouragement.

Bertha Walker
1st May, 1972.

Solidarity Forever Lyrics

(Tune: "John Brown's Body")

When the Union's inspiration through the worker's blood shall run,
There can be no power greater anywhere beneath the sun.
Yet what force on earth is weaker than the feeble strength of one?
But the Union makes us strong.

CHORUS

Solidarity forever!
Solidarity forever!
Solidarity forever!
For the Union makes us strong.

Is there aught we hold in common with the greedy parasite
Who would lash us into serfdom and would crush us with his might?
Is there anything left for us but to organize and fight?
For the Union makes us strong.

It is we who ploughed the prairies; built the cities where they trade;
Dug the mines and built the workshops; endless miles of railroad laid.
Now we stand, outcast and starving, 'mid the wonders we have made;
But the Union makes us strong.

All the world that's owned by idle drones, is ours and ours alone.
We have laid the wide foundations; built it skyward stone by stone.
It is ours, not to slave in, but to master and to own,
While the Union makes us strong.

They have taken untold millions that they never toiled to earn.
But without our brain and muscle not a single wheel can turn.
We can break their haughty power; gain our freedom when we learn
That the Union makes us strong.

In our hands is placed a power greater than their hoarded gold;
Greater than the might of armies, magnified a thousand fold.
We can bring to birth the new world from the ashes of the old,
For the Union makes us strong.

By Ralph H. Chaplin.

PROLOGUE

In 1884, in a small gold mining town, 25 miles south of Ballarat, named Corindhap, Thomas Percival Laidler began his unusual life. His mother, Annie, was born in Australia and his father, William, brought from the coal mining country of County Durham, England at the age of six weeks, was essentially an Australian.

A small mining cum pastoral township and politically conservative, economically-safe parents would seem the most unlikely background for a man who devoted fifty years of his life to revolution. Yet by the age of 23 Percy Laidler was leading the unemployed of Melbourne, with J. W. Fleming, anarchist, into Federal Parliament House and Parliament had to adjourn for one and a half hours during what was described as a "riot". In 1909, key industrial town in Australia, Broken Hill, saw the unemployed with Laidler at the head threatening to take over the British Mine. It hit the headlines in London papers and annoyed the Government as embarrassing to its hope for greater emigration. In Broken Hill the unemployed threatened to march on Sydney pillaging on the way.

Leaving school at the age of 14 years did not prevent Laidler from becoming the manager of Andrade's bookshop in Bourke Street, from which he published the first marxist literature in Australia. Reprints of standard pamphlets flooded the Commonwealth from 201 Bourke Street. Larger works like *Das Kapital* were imported. Shortly after the Russian Revolution he published huge quantities of literature about the revolution. He aimed at one new pamphlet every month. In 1919, with Guido Baracchi as editor, the first marxist theoretical journal named *The Proletarian Review* and later, simply *The Proletarian*, was published by Laidler and when Baracchi left Australia Laidler acted as editor.

In 1921 Laidler wrote and published the first worthwhile pamphlet on Arbitration. It sold to 25,000 copies in several editions, initially called "Arbitration and the Strike" in later editions it was titled "Arbitration". Its arguments are still vibrant.

He was active, and usually held positions, with the Victorian Socialist Party (VSP), Industrial Workers of the World Clubs, the anti-conscription campaigns, the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), the IWW Release Committee, Communist Party, the Shop Assistants'

Union, Trades Hall Council, Eight Hours' Day Committee, May Day Committees, Trades Hall Band, Labor College, Labor Propaganda Group. He was also mentor and counsellor, though not a member, of the Communist Party. He worked with the Movement against War and Fascism, Friends of the Soviet Union, Soviet Friendship League, Spanish Relief, Unemployed Workers' movement, and in strikes (notably the Police Strike 1923 and the British Seamen's Strike 1925). He spoke at, and chaired meetings in city theatres, cottage meetings and on the Yarra Bank; he delivered hundreds of educational lectures to the unemployed groups during the depression; and during the war, under the auspices of Army Education delivered lectures to units of the services on "Our Ally—The Red Army".

He was an all-rounder—a lecturer, teacher, speaker, orator, pamphleteer, editor, publisher, organiser and leader, completely indifferent to self-advancement, unique in his early years which might be termed to have cradled one of the best crops of personal opportunists in the labour movement. He scorned the suggestion of becoming a parliamentarian or trade union official. His greatest assets were that he had great objectivity and his life was integrated with humanity.

When Laidler came to Melbourne in 1906 and in many subsequent years, all revolutionaries were described by the establishment as "foreigners". The Laidler family were as pure Australian as Australians can be, short of being aborigines.

His paternal grandfather started work at the age of six in Durham, England. His father would carry him to work in the coal mines to work a ten hour day opening a gate for the skip to pass through. The pay was 1/- per week. When they set out for work in the dark early hours, the child would be in one arm and on the other a lantern to light the way. As they reached the pit mouth there would be seen two or three dozen bobbing lights—all representing babies being carried by their fathers to work. Child labour was not abolished until 1870. Percy Laidler frequently described this scene at propaganda meetings.

His paternal grandmother was in service as a nurse-girl when very young and received the sum of 6d. per week.

Chapter One

BREAK O' DAY

CORINDHAP

Corindhap was the last of the alluvial gold diggings south of Ballarat. Two miles away is the township of Rokewood, where a few deep shafts were sunk. Corindhap had an open-cut mine. The township is on a rise overlooking forty miles of plain stretching down nearly to Geelong. Corindhap is an aboriginal name. Aborigines of the Woodyallock tribe hunted unmolested until 1836 when the first white men arrived and took possession in the name of the "Clyde Company", domiciled in Glasgow. Sir Charles Fitzroy landed as Governor General in Sydney in 1847 and carried Imperial instructions to sell the Victorian country lands by auction. About 1856 the Clyde Company was dissolved and the lands were bought by people who became the squatters of the district. Elders were big squatters who included in their holdings what was known as the "front paddock" and "back paddock"; these were ultimately bought by Bill Laidler, father of Perc.



Corindhap, after the gold rush.

In 1852, two years before Eureka, rich gold was found at Boundary Hill. A Mr. Hines and Mr. McGaan found a 24 ounce nugget and

decided to keep it secret but at Giblin's pub at Spring Creek, Hines told the story. First thing in the morning the rush began and because of this the township was renamed "Break o' Day". The first shaft was sunk in Elder's front paddock to a depth of 90 feet and 60 oz. was obtained. The lead which was followed through two paddocks was said to be the richest in the State for its size. From one shaft between the hours of 8 a.m. and 10 a.m. eleven hundred ounces were brought to light—£1300 for landlord-squatter Elder without lifting a finger (the miners gained the right to mine on the squatter's land by agreeing to pay a royalty of thirty percent for all nuggets 20 oz. and over, and all finer gold twenty percent). Elder kept a record of every nugget found, in the Station diary. Replicas of several nuggets were on view in the Ballarat Mining Museum and in the Geological Society, Melbourne. Most famed was "The Little Highlander" found by Rory Menzies and weighing 365 ounces, another weighed 300 ounces. Claims measuring twelve feet square yielded over £1000. An Irish miner swung his pick into the surface of the ground and pulled up a nugget so heavy that the momentum of the back swing swung him off balance.

In its heyday the town had 5000 people, four pubs, three bakers, three tailors, two blacksmiths, two drapers, four butchers, two bootmakers, two grocers, two general storekeepers, a tobacconist and numerous "grog shanties". There was an Oddfellows' Hall, two churches and a school. The town even had a brass band.

When a decent strike was made the men working in the mine concerned would signal the whole population by tolling a bell at the office in the front paddock. The sound of the bell either meant good fortune or bad. It was also used to call for help when a shaft caved in and men were trapped. Everyone, including the women (who dropped their housework), rushed to the office and if it was good news there would be general rejoicing. Everyone knocked off for the day and joined in celebration in the various hostelryes.

The 1857 rush, four years after Eureka, must have attracted many Eureka men to Break o' Day field as it was known—possibly some progressive seeds were sown in the district and on the petering out of the fields some may have remained and settled as farm labourers or even pastoralists.

The township did not become a settled community until gold was almost exhausted and the itinerant citizens, miners, their various camp followers—prostitutes, entertainers, card sharps, etc., moved on for

pastures new. Sheep and wheat farming became the main occupation of the permanent settlers. Like all gold-mining country there are many to say there is more in the ground than was ever taken out. Indeed, a nugget worth £600 was found by Bert Cookson in March 1936. The various economic crises proved that there was still some gold to be found. There was activity after the 1890s crash, when people came looking for deserted houses and lived by shooting rabbits, and on what gold they could pick up. Again the postwar crisis of 1921 brought a small revival. In the early 1930s there was another revival. People came, living in tents, as the empty houses had mostly collapsed. An interesting personality, Professor Emcke, pitched an outsize tent and lived for several years, nearer to Rokewood than Corindhap. He was trying out a new treatment method which used centrifugal force—the idea being the heavier gold would fly to the outside, leaving the lighter earth at the centre.

The Professor had radical political views and being of German origin, was lucky not to be interned during the war. His skill as an engineer was such that the Government had him making vital engineering parts for defence purposes. It was strange to come onto his isolated tent, well away from sight or sound (other than the birds), and find a great stack of components marked C.A.C. (Commonwealth Aircraft Corporation).

The Horseshoe Case

There was one event during the mining days that put Break o' Day in the headlines of the Melbourne and other dailies. Thomas Burke, a popular manager of the Bank of Australia at nearby Smythesdale was shot in the head and robbed, when making a tour to collect gold in the district, in May 1867. The miners and other citizens were incensed as Burke was a very popular man. Immediately suspect was Searle, a hated publican, and his employee, Ballan. The police questioned others but they had alibis and it was only with great urging from the miners that attention was paid by the police to Searle and Ballan. A small boy found a bag full of bank notes hidden under a tree, and later two revolvers were found in a hollow log in the front paddock, about fifty yards from the hotel. All pupils of the local school were given a half holiday to search the paddocks for the gold which was thought might be hidden in a shallow shaft.

The case became known as the “horseshoe case” because Searle, on the morning of the crime, had asked the blacksmith to shoe his horse so that the hind feet would be like the forefeet, apparently to leave confusing tracks. The smith refused as it would lame the horse.

When questioned Searle confessed in the hope of a King’s Evidence pardon but both were hanged on August 7th, 1867, in Ballarat. The gold was found in a copper in the stables, as indicated in Searle’s confession. Their two effigies were on view at the Waxworks in Bourke Street, opposite where Percy Laidler was eventually to live and work most of his life.

THE FAMILY



Percy Laidler’s grandfather, William Laidler (1827-1905), the lay preacher who had worked down the mines as a child in England.

Perc Laidler’s mother and father were vehemently conservative in politics and believed that the city people lived on the backs of the farmers. Nonetheless their personalities and intelligence don’t leave them “blameless” in turning out a revolutionary son. His father William (“Bill”) Laidler sometimes known as “Black Bill” for his neatly pointed, jet black beard, was something of a personality, a “character”. Bill’s

father, the one who spent his toddler years in the English mine, became a lay preacher for the Methodist Church and an elder of the Presbyterian Church. Perhaps he had some ideas on social conditions as Methodists in England did quite a lot of preaching in favour of trade unionism. Anyhow as a young boy Bill was one of the “lads of the town” who used to sit in the back bench of the Presbyterian Church making it as uncomfortable as possible for the preacher. The lay preacher, Bill’s father, would sit in the back seat with them trying to discipline them, alternating his prayers with thumps on the seat. One night these boys locked the whole congregation in the church and barred the door up.

When Bill Laidler grew up he didn’t share the old man’s views on religion. Perhaps he got too much earbashing at home. At any rate he got great pleasure from picking arguments with believers. An old Irishwoman lived next door. She was rather primitive, having her pig and fowls sleep under her bed as in Ireland. Bill had fiendish pleasure in arguing with her—“You don’t mean to say you think God created the world when you haven’t the slightest idea who created God?” was a favourite with him.

All his life he hated humbuggery, snobbery and the English Test Cricket team. He was a thickset, dependable man; quiet, little-talking, but when enraged he made everybody “sit up”. He had keen twinkling eyes mirroring a sardonic turn of mind which could be best exemplified by the following incident. As a well-respected town dignitary he was asked to be President of the Temperance Society and agreed to this request, but annoyed the members when the local football team won a match, by taking a demijohn of whisky to the boys in the team. That sort of thing amused him.

Bill, who with the advent of his own family and grand-children became known to each generation and most of the townspeople as “Dad Laidler” didn’t drink much himself but if he had a few at a social or reunion, would oblige with “Little Brown Jug” and “My Grandfather’s Clock”. He worked at the open cut mine and then ran sheep and wool. After buying the front and back paddocks from Elder he was the inheritor of the royalties from gold found on the land. The percentage had by this time dropped to five percent—“five percent from those who felt like paying it”, in the words of an old miner.

Although a conservative, he was proud to have a son written up in the papers as an extreme radical—such was his family loyalty.



Percy Laidler's father, Bill Laidler (1856-1933) with friends at Corindhap. Bill is the bearded man in the centre of the picture.

Bill married Annie Greenwell, whose mother had previously been married to a Ross. Annie Greenwell had a number of half brothers. She was volatile, dynamic and unconventional. She was unique in her day as instead of staying home as most girls did, or going out to service, she became a schoolteacher (untrained). Her father George Greenwell was the Chairman of the Board of Advice.* John Howarth was the Head Teacher with an assistant, Lizzie D. Allen. Bill Laidler's brother Jim and Annie Greenwell were listed as pupil teachers when the school opened on June 29th, 1877 under the aegis of the Minister of Education, W. C. Smith, Esq. M.L.A. Sisters of Bill, Elizabeth and Mary, were part-time music and sewing teachers, respectively. Compulsory education had been introduced in 1872 and there was a big enrolment necessitating the leasing of the Church of England as a school prior to a new building being built and opened as above. The first school was built by the diggers in the early sixties. The schoolteacher received fees from attending children.

* Records indicate that Annie's father was actually her mother's first husband, Murdoch Ross, who died in 1864 when Annie was three. Annie apparently used her stepfather's surname before she married, which may have led Bertha Walker to believe George Greenwell was her father. Both Annie's parents, Murdoch Ross and Ann Campbell, migrated from the Isle of Skye in the early 1850s. They were married in Geelong in 1855 while living on the goldfields, at the unpromisingly-named Mount Misery. (AW)

Miss Greenwell was somewhat unorthodox in her disciplinary methods. One particularly obdurate boy was called out and put in a corner, where Annie arranged a pile of sticks around him. She then informed him, "One more word out of you and I'll set you on fire".

As a married woman with a number of children, she became Postmistress in charge of Corindhap Post Office on September 15th, 1915. The name Break o' Day had been changed to Corindhap on September 21st, 1876. After the 1914-18 war she acquired the butcher shop for her returned soldier son. He died and from thereon she ran the shop herself, independently of her husband. She also ran her family and later tried to run their families in matriarchal fashion. She was capable of vicious sarcasm but was a humane and generous person. As postmistress and butcher she knew everything going on in the town and through the party-line system, what was going on in every other nearby township. No urgent call could go out or come in to any individual in the district without her monitoring it. No call for doctor, ambulance, undertaker, fire fighters, search parties or police without she heard it and propelled herself into some activity on the sidelines. Laidler's place would be a centre for organising assistance when needed. Without personally participating she was always there by proxy playing a part in the dramas of pioneering townships, making suggestions and sending sons, sons-in-law or employees to do something useful. She saw to it that everyone with a degree of eligibility was getting a pension during the 1929-39 economic crisis. In the main, the Government kept the town at that time.

Although "Mum Laidler" (as she was known) believed that it was right for her to organise a business and look after a post office, she never encouraged her three daughters, May, Nell and Jean, to get out of the home though she did make Nell an assistant in the Post Office and she eventually became the Postmistress. The Post Office has been conducted by Laidlers for 56 years and continuing, Mrs. Lloyd Laidler (nee Jean Bethune, of the well-known Colac family) being presently the Postmistress.

Mum was so conservative politically* that after an election she remarked of a son-in-law, "He's no good, I believe he voted Labor at the Election". So small was the electoral roll at this time (late twenties) and the conservative vote so heavily weighted, that there were only ten Labor votes and people like Annie Laidler could, and did, count the heads to account for every Labor voter. With one more vote than the open Labor supporters she picked on her son-in-law as the subversive.

Dad Laidler spent all the daylight hours in hard graft. As a hobby, as it were, he personally planted an acre of potatoes which were the best ever. He ate them three times a day in huge quantity, fried at breakfast with cold mutton, roasted or boiled in the jacket with roast mutton at dinner time and fried again with cold mutton at night. Meals were free and easy affairs but Mum had one rule, "No swearing at the table". Which command was qualified with "swear as much as you like, in the yard".

Dad loved football and cricket and had a special interest in Test Cricket. When young he played with the local team, and his own sons and grandsons were all good players, with the exception of Perc. A calamity was averted by Mum's intervention, when Dad Laidler had wanted to call Perc for "W. G. Grace" the cricketer. It would have been a great humiliation for Dad to have the only son in the family that couldn't care less about cricket (or football) named after the great W.G.

George, Perc's brother, for years was captain of both cricket and football teams. He was selected to play in Ballarat District Cricket and once played in Melbourne during Country Week. George's son, Lloyd Laidler, played 20 years in local cricket without missing one match.

Perc's brother William, known as "Son" Laidler, was the only one to be given higher education and he attended Grenville College, a Wesleyan College in Ballarat. Then, as now, the gaining of education was not always the reason for attending public school. Some went for status, some to mix with a class where they would be enabled to pick up a rich wife. Son was sent in the hope that he would be selected for

* Annie Laidler may not have been quite as conservative as Bertha Walker believed. An 1891 petition for votes for women in Victorian parliamentary elections was signed by an A Laidler of Corindhap, presumably Annie, and at least one other family member, an M Laidler of Corindhap, perhaps Percy's grandmother, Margaret, or one of his aunts. See website <http://www.parliament.vic.gov.au/about/the-history-of-parliament/womens-suffrage-petition>. (AW)

the Australian Cricket side. Son was a very good cricketer and Dad thought sending him to College would bring him into prominence on the cricketing fields. However the only team he was selected for was the British Empire vs. the Germans. He was badly wounded and although he came home, died at a young age after suffering great pain.

A younger son, Neil, was killed at the front.

• • •

The Laidler family was not the poorest in the district. There was always someone employed to do the rough work. Without any effort at planning Mum seemed to imagine the boys would have slightly better class employment. In harvesting season extra hands, who had to be good cricketers, were employed.

Laidlers had a buggy drawn by a fine pair of ponies and this proclaimed a certain status in society. People had gigs, spring-carts, phaetons and buggies. It was very flash to have a buggy drawn by a pair of ponies. Laidler's pair made themselves famous by bolting at a funeral and jumping a deep gutter to the footpath. Dad had some vanity about his ponies. Nevertheless conditions of living were primitive—there was no bathroom. A weekly bath was taken in a laundry tub filled with muddy dam water.

Bill Laidler thought the country carried the city on its back and the worker in the city was a parasite working eight hours a day whereas the farmer worked from daylight to dark seven days a week.

This was one of his favourite subjects for more than half a century. One day, at the age of seventy, he was persuaded to go on a visit to the city where he was a guest of friends who owned a clothing factory, and lived on the premises. There were forty women and girls working at the power machines.

Accustomed to the dignified and leisurely pace of work in the country, Dad came down from the living quarters, opened the door to the factory and gaped as he saw the wheels of 40 machines flying as though pursued by a thousand devils, and tied relentlessly to them by every nerve and muscle the forty female slaves, unable to halt and pass a common civility. It passed his comprehension. When all clatter ceased, some of the older women would sigh exhaustedly and some would fleetingly give a smile or wink to the aged, bearded patriarch of the land whose illusion of a lifetime lay suddenly shattered. He looked—he said nothing—what could he say? Perhaps he understood the activities of his son Perc for the first time.

BALLARAT

Perc left school at the age of fourteen; he had had some slight illness which the doctor diagnosed as "a too active brain" and advised that he have a rest from school. Shortly after, he left altogether. His experience at this stage was simply that he did not share the sport fanaticism of the rest of the family and that he liked to read books.

The Mechanics Institute housed a library of two rooms full of books, mostly trash and pious trash at that. Perc read every book in that library and assisted the librarian, Miss Carrie Smith. A neighbour, Henry Neil, also read every book in the library. Unfortunately the miners did not have in their midst any appreciator of serious literature, unlike the Walhalla Library which, owing to the benefaction of some fortunate miner, had thousands of books and classics in it, probably not to be found in Melbourne at that time.

Corindhap was already a ghost town but Perc acted as deputy for Walter McDonald as correspondent to the *Rokewood Reformer & Corindhap Chronicle* in 1901, in which task he learned to use the large vocabulary he had picked up in the Mechanics Institute Library. His biggest scoop was when a very fierce storm blew a house off its stumps and over a fence, several yards into the next paddock.

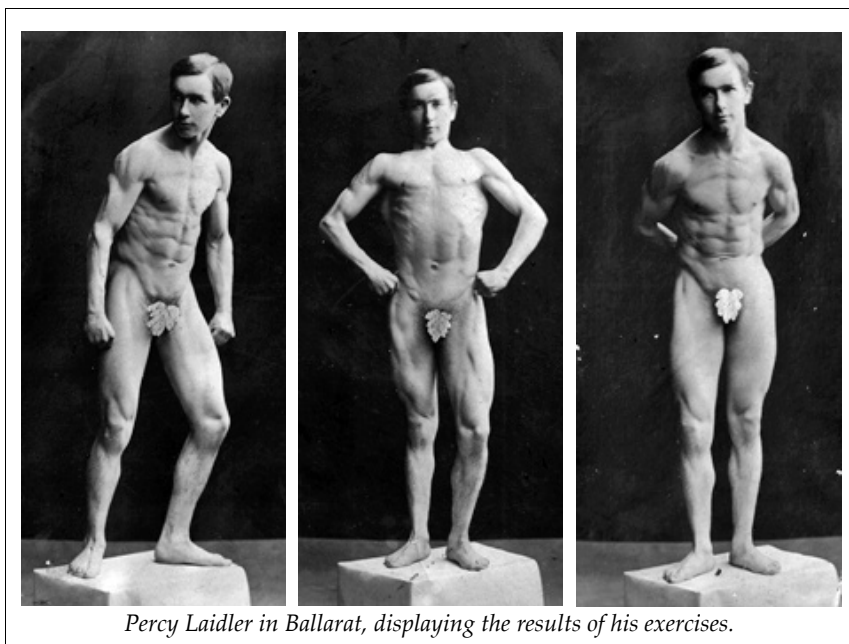
Reports otherwise were of the Quadrille Club, Sparrow Club, Brass Band, Lodge, fires, yields of gold (September 6th, 1901, 36 oz. nugget of solid gold found), wet weather interfering with the work of carting out of the deep paddock at Laidler's freehold and similar items. The Rev. C. F. Seymour arranged an Irish Night at the Mechanics with a lecture "St. Patrick and the land he dwelt in" and promised a Scotch and English night before leaving the district.

Perc also had some experience as assistant to the Mining Registrar, Walter McDonald, who was the local schoolteacher.

Since September 1851, all miners, had to take out registration known as the Miners' Right. Anyone evading this payment of fee to the Government was brought before the Court. The Mining Registrar would produce the book of registrations in the Court at Rokewood as proof or disproof of registration. When the Registrar, through illness or other considerations, was unable to attend he sent his fourteen year old assistant. The visiting magistrate expressed bewilderment at his youthful appearance but still accepted his evidence.

Perc had also learned to play the piano, and used to teach the other boys of the district. Only one tune remained in his mind so that he could still play it in his late years: that was "Oh dear, what can the matter be!"

Had he remained in Corindhap the only thing he could have done was go into the mines; instead his mother arranged for him to go to Ballarat and work in a mining office, the headquarters of a group of mine-owners, at 5/- per week. He remained three years at this job. His main interest in Ballarat was physical culture. He became an exponent of Eugene Sandow's body building exercises* which consisted chiefly in developing independent activity of every muscle in the body. This has



* Sandow was an American and books written about him circulated in Australia and other countries. "The Gospel of Strength", price one shilling, contained two art supplements:

"I. A Life-size Photo of Sandow's Arm, 2 ft. 6 in. long.

II. Seven Beautiful Photographs and 126 pages on Physical Culture, written in Australia"

and was well advertised.

[footnote from original edition of *Solidarity Forever!*]

been brought forward for astronauts and is nowadays known as isometric exercises. Perc continued this form of exercising all his life.

He enrolled in Trekardo's Gymnasium, which held public exhibitions every Friday night, and Percy was often on display.

Though short like his father and all mining stock, Perc was often put on display for his perfect muscular development.

He used to do marathon walks—once fifty miles in one day, confirming that he was eccentric to his kinsfolk by walking from Ballarat to Corindhap and back to Ballarat again in one day, with two companions Wally Grainger and Charlie Gibson. They started at 5.30 a.m. and arrived back at 1 a.m. next day. Another Sunday they walked the 21 miles to Pigoreet and back.

In the thirties long after Perc had abandoned the "Health first" creed he was approached by E. J. Price, who travelled the world as a health "professor", speaking on the Yarra Bank, Domain and in private halls, and asked to come along with him. He told Perc "you and I together could make a fortune". He tapped Perc on the stomach and said, "You'd have to get rid of this. You want to get into this racket! The best racket of all. With your development of muscles and your honesty you'd be the right one. You'd get to America." He wasn't worried about whether Perc carried out any of the principles he espoused but appreciated his appearance and ability to orate.

Whilst working for the mining company he had some reason to query the economic system. He would be told to notify the mine manager at some particular mine, Pitfield, Berringa, &c., that a visit from the Inspector of Mines was impending. This gave the manager ample time to see that everything was in order for the inspector's visit. In this job he observed the iniquitous tributor system which meant that when a miner brought in £10 a week, the manager gave him £5. These men were not on wages and were paid simply by results.

Old grandfather Laidler died and naturally, in country fashion, Perc intended to go home for the funeral. When he told the manager, this gent gave him some new values to think about by saying—"He's only your grandfather, isn't he! What do you want to go for?" He didn't go!

The distance from home enabled frequent visits by coach and horses. The halfway house was at Jack Egan's Little Hard Hills hotel at Enfield, and here the horses were changed and passengers refreshed. It was a great thrill to leave the big town of Ballarat where you were hardly a person and arrive back in the small townships to be greeted as

a person. On arrival at Egan's someone would call out excitedly "Here's Tot" (Perc's nickname alluding to his height, about 5 ft. 4 in.). Egan would get on the phone and ring Corindhap (listened in to by Dereel, Rokewood, etc.), and announce "Tot's on the coach".

After three years he decided to leave, having met Harry Brennan, a brother of Frank Brennan, M.H.R. Harry Brennan was the Ballarat representative of the *Argus* and he secured for Perc a job as his assistant junior reporter.

Harry Brennan took his mind beyond physical culture as he was the first Labor man that Perc had met.

Frank Brennan made a great name for himself during the anti-conscription campaigns of 1916-17 and for most of his life was a supporter of liberal ideas. His brother Harry was a quiet man (compulsory for a journalist with labor ideas in those times) but apparently he spread the word privately because he first aroused interest in the young Laidler.

Perc did the usual reporting work including police rounds. One of the highlights was covering the story of a woman found dead, chopped up by a tomahawk, in Lydiard Street, a few doors from the Police Station, at midnight. He viewed the body on a slab in the morgue. This lurid spectacle may have confirmed a taste for detective literature.

The job only lasted four months. The *Argus* and *Ballarat Courier* worked together in a reciprocal capacity and it was decided that the *Argus* would simply use the services of the *Courier* journalists and dispense with its own representatives.

Journalists were inclined to be gentlemen in that period and on most occasions Harry Brennan wore striped pants and a top-hat. Ballarat quite occasionally has a fall of snow and it was a great pleasure to the children of Ballarat to aim snowballs at the top hat of Harry Brennan and every other top-hatted gentleman.

A goodly throng of Ballarat top-hatted journalists waved Harry Brennan off at the station as he left for Melbourne. Perc left for home.

At Corindhap he worked in the open-cut mine for four months. In Rokewood he organised some boys into a physical culture class. Reading of a special patent food which was supposed to supply all necessary vitamins and was recommended by Eugene Sandow, he decided to try it out. He had it for breakfast, went to work at the mine and by lunchtime broke down and went to dinner at the nearby house

of his Aunt Liz, to the great amusement of the family and his fellow-miners.

After four months he was offered a job in a Mining Office in Queen Street, Melbourne. He accepted this with alacrity and furthered his socio-political education in that job. The employer was discovered, a few months later, to have embezzled money from the Company and he committed suicide. This ended another job.

In Melbourne Perc lived with the Neils. The Neils, father, mother and six children had lived in Corindhap and naturally took Perc in because their family had received some kindness from the Laidlers.

They were poor and lived at five different addresses in Carlton while Perc was with them. Evictions were common and employment scarce. They lived in Leicester Street near the University, Newry Street, Station Street (where there were bugs and they stayed only one night). He was introduced to bugs, eviction and the moonlight-flit. One son was out of work for nine months. The whole family were anti-capitalist and it was Jack Neil who introduced Laidler to Socialist meetings. His aim was to destroy any remnants of the Laidler in him (regarding this as the zenith of reaction). They always walked from Carlton to the city, never dreaming of paying tramfare on the cable tram for a distance of a mile or two.

The Victorian Socialist Party used to hold a meeting at Bouverie Street, Carlton, one night a week and Jack would take him there. After Perc joined the Socialist Party he used to speak on this pitch and Jack was very happy to hear him paraphrase, "The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof", to "The earth is the Landlord's and the fullness thereof".

Jack took him to hear **Tom Mann**, the British Socialist, and that determined his future. From that moment on he decided to devote his life to socialism.

He soon became assistant secretary, acting as Tom's secretary at 30/- per week.

Chapter Two

TOM MANN

Two days before Polling day in the Victorian State Elections of 1902, an Englishman who was to leave a greater impact than any other Englishman, came to Melbourne. He went from the boat and addressed twelve meetings before the Poll, in support of the Victorian Labor Party. The labour movement was won by his personality, ability as an orator and the downrightness of the principles he enunciated. His name was Tom Mann and he stayed in Australia from September 1902 until December 1909 and those seven years left so big an impression that in 1936 (27 years after his departure) on the occasion of his eightieth birthday, large celebrations were held in Melbourne to coincide with other celebrations throughout the world.

He was born in 1856 in Foleshill near Coventry in Warwickshire and was aged 46 when he reached Melbourne. He had already won a big reputation which was to be even bettered after his visit to Australia.

His formal education lasted only three years and at the age of nine he started work on a colliery farm and thence in a mine itself, clearing the ventilator shafts and the coal face waste. He became a toolmakers' apprentice and worked a 60-hour week, and often two hours overtime per day without pay. Small wonder he took a leading part in the agitation for an eight-hour day. However, in his early years he was mainly influenced by religion and temperance. He became interested in



Tom Mann

ideas of militant trade unionism and socialism, which crystallised by 1885 when he joined the Battersea branch of the Social Democratic Federation (SDF). He urged the SDF to adopt the eight-hour campaign as a means of making contact with trade unions and to combat the growing unemployment. Henry Hyde Champion, a middle class socialist and owner of a printing works encouraged him and printed his first pamphlet in 1886, "What a Compulsory Eight Hour Day Means to the Workers".

Mann was prominent in many strikes and with Champion, Tillett, Burns and Thorne, led the Dock Strike in 1889 for the docker's tanner (6d. per day). He was president of the newly formed Dockers' Union of which Ben Tillett was secretary. One reason Mann came to Melbourne rather than other cities in Australia was that H. H. Champion came to live in Melbourne permanently a few years after the dock strike, and he kept up a close correspondence with Tom Mann and urged him to come here. The other influencing factor was that when the dock strike was almost starved out, Australia came to the rescue with a gift of over £30,000 of which £20,000 came from Victoria. The spirit of Melbourne epitomised in this gesture must have had some influence on a number of visiting Labour Party celebrities, viz. Ben Tillett in 1897/8 and again in 1907/8; Sidney and Beatrice Webb in 1898; and more briefly George Lansbury, Keir Hardie and Ramsay MacDonald.

Australia's total of £30,400 to the dockers compares to the total collection from all sources in the world, of £48,700.

At the end of the Dock Strike John Burns eulogised Australia and said he was ashamed of the American public. He said he would be happy to visit Australia, for the sake of his health and to thank the Australians personally. The victory demonstration marching to Hyde Park was headed by the Australian flag in recognition of the generous and practical sympathy shown with the men, in the dispute. There were four funds in Victoria, the Trades Hall Council, the Chamber of Commerce, the Salvation Army and the *Age*.

Businessmen, church leaders, politicians and workers all combined. As one capitalist A. D. Hodgson wrote in a letter attached to his £50 cheque, . . . "Why should not our capitalists and employers join with the workmen in such a cause of common humanity? Here is a golden opportunity for our own capitalists and employers of labour in Victoria to show an example to their English brethren." Laidler pondered over the lists of donors and felt that the catholicism of the Victorians had

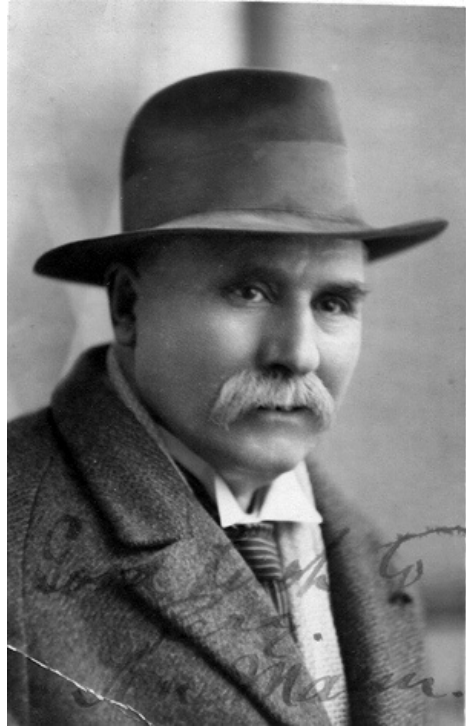
some specific lesson for united front and popular front work in the Victorian labour movement.

An even more important strike in which Mann engaged was the Liverpool Transport Workers' Strike in 1911, after his return from Australia. Tom was the Chairman of the Strike Committee. The strike lasted 72 days. There was great police brutality and two gunboats were anchored in midstream in the Mersey off Birkenhead with their guns trained on Liverpool. 7000 troops and 80,000 specials were organised against the strikers.

Nonetheless the strikers won. Tom was called the dictator of Liverpool during the strike, because of the concentrated organisation of the strike committee. As a result of his work he was gaoled for six months in 1912 on an "incitement to mutiny" charge, for reading out on the platform a "Don't Shoot" leaflet calling on the soldiers not to shoot their brothers. He was gaoled many times and served three months at the age of 77 for unemployed agitation during the Great Hunger March of 1932 and, in 1934 was tried at the age of 79 with Harry Pollitt for sedition. During 1932-4 he was deported from both Canada and Ireland.

He visited and was active in Sweden, America, South Africa, Australia, New Zealand, China, Ireland, Canada and the U.S.S.R.

(where he was the most popular of English men, particularly with the young people). A truly remarkable man! Only a book or rather several volumes could tell of his life. His effect on Australia is the main concern here.



Tom Mann later in life

• • •

Graeme Osborne of the Research School of Social Sciences, Australian National University, is presently writing a complete book on the life of Tom Mann.

TOM MANN IN AUSTRALIA

Accompanied by his wife, Elsie, and their two children, Tom spent seven years in Australia, mainly in Melbourne. Immediately prior he had been about eight months in New Zealand, which country was

being described in England as something of a utopia, a "land without strikes", etc., with the aim of enticing immigrants. He toured New Zealand, doing propaganda work and organising for the Socialist Party, which was formed in 1901, and he studied the industrial legislation of the country. He was soon sending back to the English press exposures of the legislation and especially the workings of the conciliation and arbitration acts.

On his arrival in Melbourne and activity in elections mentioned above, the impression he made was so great that he was invited, by the Political Labor Council to accept the



Tom Mann in Auckland

position of paid organiser of the Labor Party. He accepted, and kept the position until 18th January 1905 when he resigned. During this period he travelled and held meetings in every country town of any size. Many branches of the A.L.P. today existing, were founded by Tom Mann. He faced hostile audiences where no labor speaker had ever been before and where not even a chairman was obtainable. He would then arrive

in the town, put up posters advertising the meeting, ring a bell around the town just prior to the meeting, take the chair, speak, sell literature and win over the audience finishing with an ovation. Usually he gained sufficient members to form a branch of the Labor Party.

He resigned because he felt that the Labor Party was a dead end as far as socialism was concerned.

After his resignation he spent some time touring Queensland for several months. Returning to Melbourne he began Sunday night lectures in the Bijou Theatre and from this grew the Social Questions Committee. Early in August 1905, Tom Mann, G. A. Carter and Dr. Tom McDonald met at the home of J. P. Jones and formed the Social Questions Committee.

THE SOCIAL QUESTIONS COMMITTEE

The office bearers of the Committee were J. P. Jones, Tom Mann, H. H. Champion, G. A. Carter and C. Gray. Its purpose was to persistently advocate socialism and collect information on the social conditions of the people. "Australia for Socialism and Socialism for Australia" was its aspiration.

It investigated conditions of the unemployed, making a house to house survey, which it claimed was the first ever carried out; held public meetings in the Gaiety and Bijou Theatres as well as open-air propagandist meetings. It established a choir, speakers' class, and orchestra. Committee meetings were held at Furlong's Studio, Royal Arcade.

By April 1906 the SQC had evolved into the Socialist Party of Victoria, subsequently changed to the Victorian Socialist Party (VSP). Tom Mann became its paid official and on the founding of a paper *The Socialist* on the 2nd April 1906, became its editor. Frank Hyett was the first secretary of the VSP. The organisation of the VSP became such in size and ramifications as had never before been seen in the Australian Labour Movement.

In twelve months the VSP had a membership of 2000. It published *The Socialist*, conducted approximately sixteen outdoor meetings per week and had forty to fifty men and women on the speakers' roster. The weekly speakers' class was attended by fifty. It held a meeting on the Yarra Bank every Sunday afternoon, a high tea in its hall Sunday evening and a meeting in its hall at night with attendance 600 to 800

and eventually held its Sunday night meetings in the Bijou Theatre where 1000 attended. It had a brass band, orchestra, choir, dramatic club, gym, teenage groups, a Sunday School; and a variety of classes were held. The anniversary celebrations were held in the Melbourne Town Hall and huge picnics were held at Greensborough, Mordialloc, Heidelberg and similar places. This was a time when the Labor Party was on the ascendancy and a great number of people with ability came forward and were either members of the VSP or were closely associated. Membership of the Labor Party was no barrier to membership of the VSP and vice versa.



The 1906 May Day demonstration in Melbourne, being addressed by Tom Mann.

Some were honest, others had already decided on the path of personal opportunism and from Tom Mann's knowledge and experience they saw a means of perfecting their skill at furthering their own careers at the expense of the working class. Many of his pupils were soon to grace and disgrace seats in the House of Representatives, Legislative Assembly, Legislative Council and Senate, and of course, some became trade union officials.

Jack Cain, Tom Tunnecliffe, J. P. Jones, Jack Curtin, Angus McDonnell, Frank Anstey, Frank Hyett, Don Cameron, Alf Foster were a few that were prominent in the VSP.

Harry Scott-Bennett was on the credit side, serving one term in Parliament from 1904-7; he announced that he could do better for the workers outside Parliament, and he declined re-election. Laidler scorned politicians (the “pollys” as some called them) and those who sought trade union paid positions at this particular time in history.

THE PARTY

The Socialist Party aimed at fulfilling the requirements of its members in every phase of life’s activities and was more successful in this respect than any other party. Tom set out to make it a family party —wives, women, girls, children—all were welcomed and there was something to cater for the interests of each one. Like the Church, he “baptised” them and buried them.

Sectarianism, the evil that has restricted socialist organisation everywhere, was non-existent in the VSP and this accounted for much of its influence. Without being members, people like Maurice Blackburn, Arthur Calwell, J. W. Fleming (the anarchist), felt just as at home at the VSP as did its members. Anybody who thought he had the panacea for society’s ills would come along and air his views—vegetarians, theosophists, pacifists, fabians, syndicalists—everyone was treated as a brother.

The campaign that really put the VSP on the map as a serious, courageous political party was the Free Speech fight.

THE FREE SPEECH FIGHT OF 1906

It was common practice in the City of Prahran for various organisations to hold public meetings in side streets off Chapel Street, mainly in Chatham Street. The police ordered a Socialist speaker to stop and on his continuing he was arrested and fined 40/- or 14 days. Over twenty were fined or imprisoned (half refusing to pay the fine on principle) during the next three months. Four were women and each woman elected to go to gaol. Tom Mann served five weeks as he was arrested on two counts.

It seems right to detail the names as they represent many respected people, most of whom continued to work in the labour movement, in some form or other and especially in the anti-conscription campaigns.



Free speech campaign postcard featuring the four women arrested during the campaign.

Joseph Swebleses, Frank Hyett, Messrs. Marsh, Beck, Summers, Baxter, Jack Quaine, Brooks, Walker, Alf Wallis, Mrs. Leah Jarvis, Mrs. Anderson, Miss Liz. Ahern, Mrs. Emma Edwards, Thomas Hart, Edwin Knight, Will Thom, J. R. Davies, W. P. Jones, B. G. Oakes and C. Hughes, Mrs. Anderson and Miss Ahern were fined 30/- or 10 days. Mrs. Jarvis and Mrs. Edwards, arrested late in the campaign were fined £5 each or one month. Two women went to the Melbourne Gaol and two were sent to Pentridge.

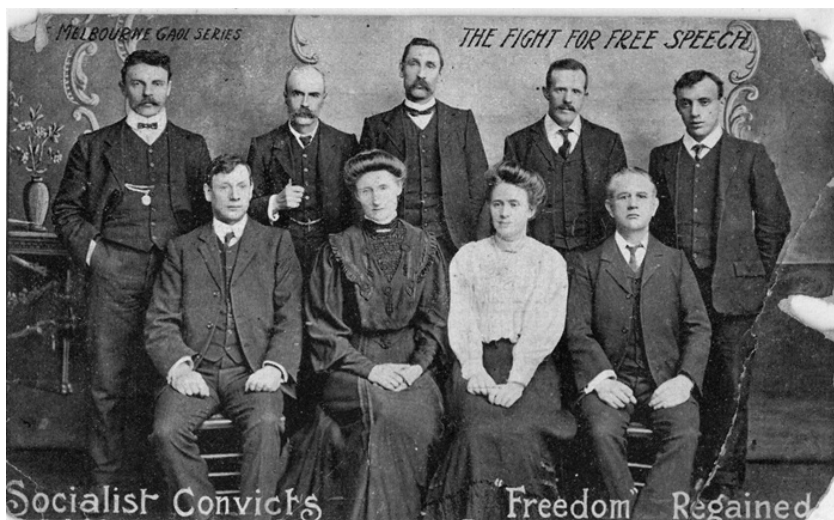
Mrs. Ida Robson, daughter of Mrs. Anderson, related at the age of 74 how as children they used to attend the Free Speech meetings in Prahran but when their mother was to speak they were not allowed to attend. They wept and pleaded to be allowed to see her arrested but were made to stay home.

The meetings were well attended by large audiences and up to thirty police and six troopers, as well as plain-clothes men, detectives and pimps.

The speakers would gather around their platform, which was a box made with great artistry by Moysey Callard (who won four prizes at the Royal Show for his great coachmaking abilities). A ring of socialists formed round the box and the speaker ascended. After saying only three or four words, he or she was seized and taken to the Police

Station, and charged. The performance would be repeated until the quota of speakers for the night was exhausted. At a propitious moment, before it could disappear, Ted Callard would grab the box and toss it over the fence into a private property by pre-arrangement, and would pick it up next morning ready for the next affray.

The Salvation Army, Temperance advocates, hawkers, vendors of patent medicines, and evangelists, went on their merry way unhindered whilst the socialists were given the treatment.

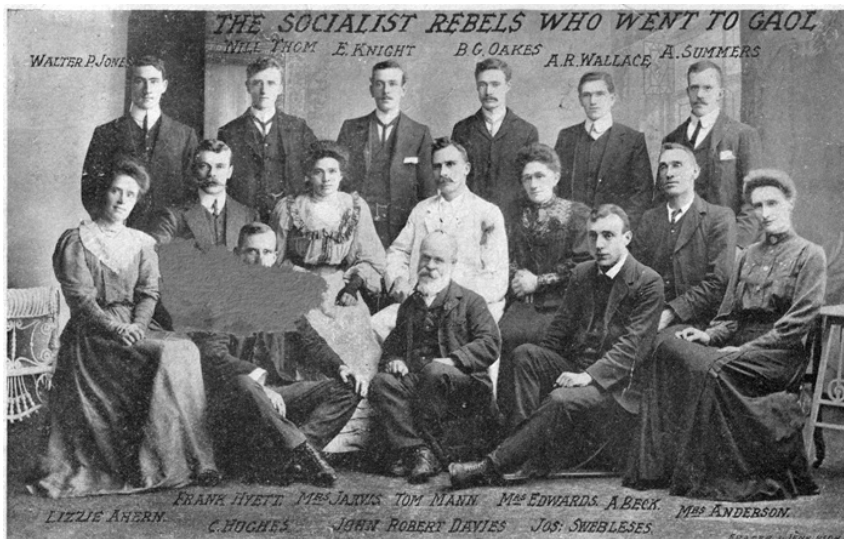


Free speech campaign postcard - "Socialist Convicts"

The chief instigator of this persecution was Councillor Miller, the owner of a well-known landmark in Melbourne on the corner of Bourke and Swanston Streets, known as Miller's Feathershop. He was a Councillor on the Prahran City Council. Socialists were told they didn't have a permit to speak but when they made efforts to obtain permits these were not given.

Indignation meetings were held all over Melbourne and beyond. At the Prahran Town Hall (an overflow meeting had to be arranged) Mrs. Bruce presided and speakers were Emmett, Angus McDonell (later Northcote Councillor), John Curtin (later Prime Minister), Jack Gunn (later Premier of South Australia) and Joe Swebleses. A meeting in the Zion Hall, City had as speakers Frank Hyett (later Secretary of the Victorian Railways Union), W. J. Baxter (in prison attire) and at Port

Melbourne Town Hall, Tom Mann in the chair and speakers Miss Ahern, Mrs, Anderson, and W. J. Baxter. Tom Mann commented from the chair that nothing was more remarkable than the way in which these three speakers had sprung into first class orators during the campaign. Meetings were held at Yarraville, Williamstown, Collingwood, Brunswick Town Hall, Geelong Market square (2000 present) and Geelong Pier (Sunday afternoon), Richmond, Moonee Ponds, Kerferd Road Jetty, South Melbourne.



Free speech campaign postcard - "The Socialist Rebels who Went to Gaol"

Harry Scott-Bennett was at the time an M.L.A. and raised the matter in Parliament to no avail.

Directly out of the Free Speech Fight a Prahran branch of the Victorian Socialist Party was formed with sixty members.

The Prahran Free Speech fight became such a by-word around Melbourne that when a fire broke out in Swan Street, Richmond, about one and a half miles from Prahran and somebody called out "Where are the police?" a wag replied, "Oh, they are in Prahran tonight to look after the socialists."

Photographs of the free speech fighters in prison uniform were widely sold. Naturally the Penal Department did not give the prisoners uniforms on their departure but Melbourne's first time-payment tailor, J. P. Jones., then a member of the VSP, provided each man and woman

who had served a sentence with a uniform decorated with broad arrows and a cap to match. On December 15th, 1906 it was reported that three thousand sets of cards were sold within three weeks at 6d. a set of six. By December 22nd five thousand sets were sold. The funds were to help families of the imprisoned.

When Tom Mann was first arrested and locked up the people were quite amazed. He seemed so omnipotent to them that they didn't believe it possible. It took a large number to arrest him and the subsequent charges were causing obstruction and resisting the police.

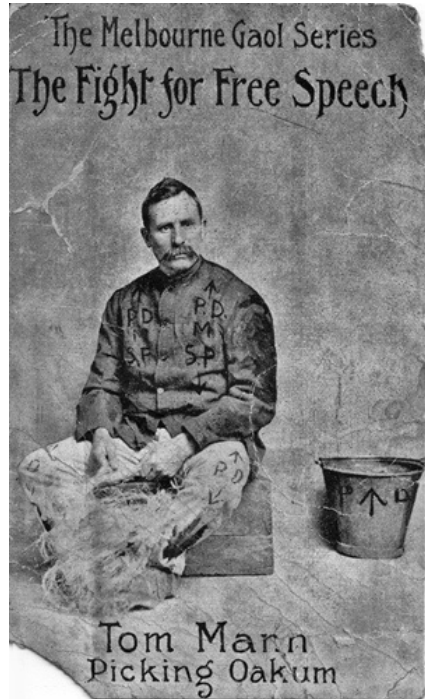
While Tom was in gaol Ramsay MacDonald (later Prime Minister of Britain) and his wife visited him. MacDonald received an enthusiastic reception at the Socialist meeting and said on his return borne he would refer in his presidential address to Victoria.

After release from gaol Tom Mann made his first appearance at a packed-out Melbourne Town Hall on Tuesday, December 19th. The public was invited to come and see the "Sensational Socialist

march when 20 socialists would parade in gaol costume". Speakers were H. Scott-Bennett MLA, E. J. Russell (later Senator) and Tom himself. Rousing songs and choruses were advertised on the programme and admission was 6d. to any part of the hall.

Change in Tactics

According to the *Socialist* of December 22nd the executive of the VSP instructed that tactics be changed. The report reads that a little after eight o'clock a number gathered at Chatham Street. At a quarter past eight Percy Laidler began addressing the people. The Sergeant in



Free speech campaign postcard featuring Tom Mann

charge, Sgt. Williams, came forward to Laidler and said "Move on". Laidler said in tones that could be heard for a considerable distance "Come comrades, we are all going down to Commercial Road to hold a meeting". The police didn't know what to make of it. Laidler led and he was followed by a crowd which at intervals gave three cheers for the social revolution. "The police were non-plussed—outwitted." Laidler explained the reason for the change of tactics, which was simply that the Socialist Party couldn't afford to be deprived of so many of its speakers indefinitely and it was felt they had made all the gains they could in this fight.

An aftermath of the prison terms was a deputation of Mann, Hyett, Swebleses and others to the Chief Secretary on the insanitary conditions in the Melbourne gaol.

The campaign put the Socialist Party well in the forefront of the Labour movement at that time in showing a fighting capacity, in having members prepared to make sacrifices, and all in all, the organisation came out of it strengthened and enriched in experience.

THE SOCIALIST SUNDAY SCHOOL

The Sunday school commenced with nine pupils and by the third anniversary in 1909 averaged a regular attendance of a hundred and continued for several years, even into the twenties. At times it had up to two hundred members. It first met in a cellar in Collins Street, and then met in the socialist halls in Elizabeth and later Exhibition Streets. It was divided by age into various classes, all of which combined for concerts, the Socialist Party anniversary and May Day.

May Day was the big event, and the children were trained in maypole dancing and would be taken by drag drawn by horses, to the Yarra Bank where they would be part of the celebrations. A May Queen was chosen and there was intense rivalry over this.

Miss Long, sister of Dick Long the poet, was the superintendent for the greatest period of time and a Miss Hayes was superintendent in the early period. Her place was taken for a short time by Chris Gross, who later became the wife of Percy Laidler.

Conduct was similar to a Church Sunday School in that the pupils recited ten commandments as follows:

The Ten Commandments of Socialism.

Taught in Socialist Sunday Schools.

(Cut out and paste on your bedroom wall)

Love your school-fellows who will be your fellow-workmen in life.

Love learning, which is the food of the mind. Be grateful to your teacher as to your parents.

Make every day holy by good and useful deeds, and kindly actions.

Honour good men, be courteous to all men, bow down to none.

Do not hate or speak evil of anyone, do not be revengeful, but stand up for your rights and resist oppression.

Do not be cowardly. Be a friend to the weak, and love justice.

Remember that all good things of the earth are produced by labour, whoever enjoys them without working for them is stealing the bread of the workers.

Observe and think in order to discover the truth; do not believe what is contrary to reason and never deceive yourself or others.

Do not think that he who loves his own country must hate or despise other nations, or wish for war, which is a remnant of barbarism.

Look forward to the day when all men will be free citizens of one fatherland, and live together as brothers in peace and righteousness.

They saluted the red flag, sang Socialist songs (some being set to the tune of hymns). A plate was taken around for the pupils to put a penny in—some would pretend they didn't have one, having spent the penny on lollies, again like any Sunday School. There was a Socialist Reader with short stories painting a moral. The classes covered a wide variety of subjects—mythology, history, esperanto, elocution, gymnasium (Percy Laidler), calisthenics, club swinging (Chris Gross). Victor Kroemer, a Theosophist, was active with the Sunday School. In October 1906 the Sunday school was divided into groups bearing names, Red

Flag Group, International, Liberty, Freedom and Democratic. Its aim was to teach ethics and the principles of socialism.

Pupils up to the age of 16 were eligible and they had to subscribe to:

1. I am very sorry there is so much suffering through poverty.
2. I believe socialism will cure this evil, and make it possible for all to be happy.

At the end of that year there was a Xmas party with a tree, and 900 young people and 400 adults came along to the Zion Hall.

Branches were set up in Prahran, Hawthorn, Footscray, Preston, Trafalgar and Wonthaggi.

Many pupils later became well-known figures in the labour movement—Roy Cameron (son of Sen. Don Cameron), Secretary of the Miscellaneous Workers' Union, Lloyd Edmonds and Ron Hurd, members of the International Brigade in Spain, Ron later secretary of the Seamen's Union in Western Australia.

The Sunday School in Melbourne came through into the twenties and faded out as the Socialist Party itself faded out.

Dedication

With his belief in catering from cradle to grave, Tom dedicated the babies to the Socialist cause.

In the dedication ceremony, the proud parents brought the baby to the platform prior to the Sunday night lecture. Tom placed a red ribbon, inscribed in gold lettering, on the baby. Six young children and babies of Socialists were dedicated in April, 1907 and in August, 1908 during the absence of Tom, H. H. Champion did the honours and another seven were dedicated. Champion asked the parents—"Is it your desire that your child shall be dedicated to the socialist cause?" The parents in reply said, "That is our desire". As with baptism it does not always work out as the parents intended, and names are not mentioned here with the exception of Grace Aanensen, dedicated by Tom Mann, who has led a good life-time for the cause as have her brothers and sisters; and Grace still treasures her dedication ribbon which is inscribed:

Berdina Grace Aanensen
July 21st, 1909
Socialist Party
Melbourne

THE SOCIALIST BAND, ORCHESTRA AND CHOIR

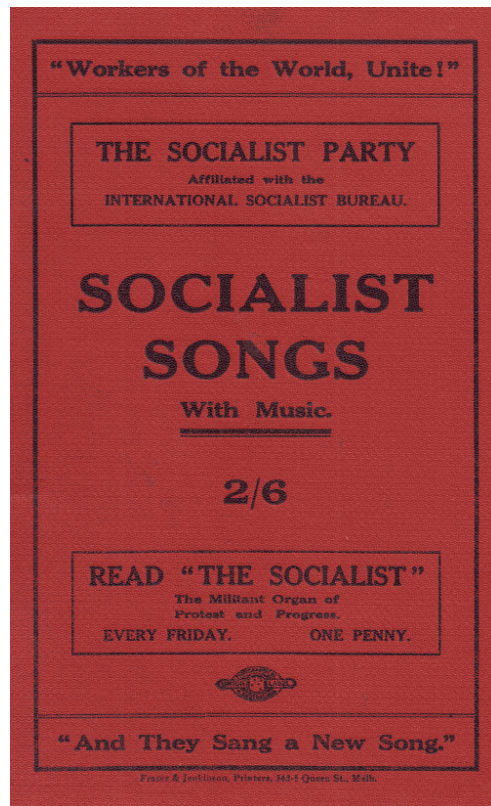
The idea of a socialist band was already started in the Social Questions Committee and on July 6th, 1907 the band officially came together. In 1909 a fund was opened for new uniforms. It attracted the young men, who had to be members of the Socialist Party to be accepted in the band.

Many became talented musicians, the band itself won the B Grade Competition at South Street in 1920. Individuals who won medals for solo work at South Street were Arthur Arnott and Theo Farrall, for their cornet playing. Eddie Canard played the tenor horn and Bert Henley the cornet. Members owned their own instruments and Bert Henley relates what a struggle it was to save £23 to buy a silver cornet.

The Band Association of Victoria split and there were two organisations, one of which was organised by socialist Bert Farrall. Two competitions were held at the M.C.G.

The socialist band first practised in a room in Royal Arcade and then on Sunday mornings in the socialist hall. It played at Sunday night meetings, anniversaries in the Melbourne Town Hall and headed May Day and other processions.

At times it played for the Rationalist Association which met in a small theatre in Bourke Street, the Empire. The band used to play in the



Front cover of Socialist Song Book

dress circle because there was no orchestra pit. The pneumonic plague of 1919 hit all musicians hard because gatherings of people in theatres and elsewhere were forbidden. People walked around with four inches thick gauze masks. Out of work musicians combined to play in the gardens across Princes Bridge, Princes' Park, and picked up a few coins in collections.

As the Socialist Party waned the band managed to survive by becoming the Trades Hall Band. The THC provided it with financial assistance to get badly needed uniforms. At this time Harry Lester was the secretary. The band led all May Day and Eight Hours' Day (later Labor Day) processions.

In the early twenties Laidler tried to help the band by organising Sunday night concerts for the public at Wirth's Circus across Princes Bridge. A collection was taken. Attendance was insufficient to sustain performances. The programmes were repetitious and few Melburnians wanted Sunday night entertainment. Three of the band leaders were W. Paxton, C. Banks and Bert Farrall. There was a socialist orchestra which played at dances and before meetings under conductor J. W. Greene.

The choir was organised and conducted by Elsie Mann, who had an English musical degree. She was an enthusiastic singer, as was Tom, and had large numbers in her choir which also performed before Sunday night meetings.

It was an unconventional choir when it led a march on Parliament at its opening on June 27th, 1906. "RIOT IMMINENT", wrote the *Argus*. The demonstration, mainly of unemployed and with Tom Mann in charge, succeeded in forcing its way into the Exhibition Gardens (State Parliament then being in the Exhibition). Police reinforcements arrived and women called out they were "merely in their own gardens". The Governor had been hooted on his arrival. As the Governor's carriage returned, Sub-Inspector Davidson remarked "the first man who hoots will be arrested". The moment he turned his head towards the Governor, a young man with a boxer hat on the back of his head cried "A good hoot for plutocracy". A 39 year old miner, a Mr. Pitt was arrested, and a Mrs. Kirk of the choir called out, "Liberty or Death" as the crowd tried to rescue him.

CO-OPERATIVES

Establishing co-operatives was another way of catering for all needs of members. Co-operation was not introduced by Tom Mann as already in 1895 there existed:—

The Victorian Co-operative Society at 643 Drummond Street, Carlton (founded 1889); the Victorian Railways Cooperative Store (formed in 1894) and intending to start at that date was the Public Service Non-Clerical Men's Co-operative Organisation.

In 1906 a J. C. Johnston tried to form a Workers Club & Co-operative at 193 Bank Street, South Melbourne. The aim of the club was to have a room with a library of wholesome and educational nature, games and an out-of-work benefit fund.

In the issue of *Socialist* June 30th, it was announced that a Socialist Co-operative Trading Society was now in existence and that debentures of 10s. each payable as convenient were available. Information from H. H. Champion.

By the end of August 5/- shares were offered and the Socialist Co-operative Store was opened at 298 Coventry Street, South Melbourne. On the 16th December the Co-operative Bakery opened at 234 Coventry Street, South Melbourne with Percy Laidler as manager.

There was a clothing club in connection with the co-operatives and a boot store with E. J. Holloway in charge opened on Saturday afternoons at 283 Elizabeth Street, next door to the Socialist Hall.

£100 was donated to start a socialist farm but after some exploration the money was returned as it was decided a farm was impractical. The donor then gave £50 to the library.

A Socialist Savings Bank was opened for deposits of one penny upward and was open Friday 7 p.m. till 8 p.m.; Saturday 7.30 p.m. till 9 p.m.; Sundays 5 p.m. till 6 p.m. The directors were H. H. Champion, W. H. Emmett and Charles Schmidt.

There was some suggestion of a co-operative bicycle factory.

The following circular was distributed on behalf of the bakery:

WHERE DO YOU GET YOUR BREAD?

Most of us from a baker who will give "tick" when we have little money. We know that really means that we pay more in the long run. And we cannot insist upon good, sound, cleanly-made bread. Some of us decided to have a Bakery of our own. We put

down 5/- apiece and started. At the end of nine months we found, after paying the best wages and the cost of two carts and three horses, that the Bakery is paying well. That is, while we are baking ONLY A THIRD of the amount we could do.

The concern is called "The Socialist Co-operative Bakery". You can deal with it and your 5/- entrance money will be paid out of the profits declared every six months. The cart will call on you as soon as you say so. You must buy a loaf at the trade price and take a ticket from the carter. At the end of six months you hand over the tickets to the office and upon them your share of the profits is declared. You can take it in cash, or leave it with the Bakery to be drawn out when required. The rules, balance-sheets, etc., are at your service.

You are under no obligation to deal with the Bakery a moment longer than you wish. If the price is higher than is charged by other bakers, if anything is wrong with the baking, if the flour is not of the best—you can stop at once.

This circular will be left at your house. It will be followed by a call from a representative of the Socialist Co-op. Bakery. Think it over and be ready with any question you may wish to ask.

PERCY LAIDLER, Secretary, S.C.S. of Victoria.

234 Coventry Street, South. Melbourne.

September, 1908.

It was an ambitious venture trying to cover all inner suburbs and it soon had to be announced that more carts and horses would be needed if they extended too far. The Co-operative was forced to cut back to nearby suburbs. When asked about the ultimate failure of the scheme, Laidler replied succinctly "too much tick". Co-operative ventures have not been successful in Australia and this is one reason—it is hard to refuse credit to people you know really can't pay.

It is successful in the United Kingdom, where it is impersonal and run on strictly capitalist lines.

SOCIALIST EDUCATION

A great number of educational classes were held and the most popular was the speakers' class which numbered up to sixty. Debating

classes were well liked. Some members were undoubtedly already oriented to the goal of politician or trade union official and the practical speakers' class gave them more joy than the theoretical classes. No matter how "pure" their original intentions the ease with which colleagues (many ill-equipped) achieved seats in Parliament in these early years of the twentieth century tempted them from their original course.

In the days before T.V., radio, amplifiers, etc., an ambitious man had to cultivate a physically powerful voice and a readily-flowing line of propaganda.

Speakers, lecturers, orators were held in great esteem—the more polished the speaker the more votes he polled. The only aids at the street meeting usually were megaphones and a portable platform, but Dick Blomberg had a portable acetylene light which was much in demand. The services of Harry Hansen, the signwriter, were an aid to meetings and processions. He produced hundreds of signs, posters and banners.

A result of having large numbers of speakers in training was that it was possible at short notice to put a large number of speakers in the field of street meetings. A. W. Foster (later Judge Foster) was in charge of debating. John Curtin tutored speakers at one time. "Value, Price and Profit", by Karl Marx was used by Harry Scott-Bennett in his economics class. *Das Kapital* was also used. Rev. F. Sinclair of the Free Fellowship Church was tutor in English (a subject also of aid to budding politicians).

In 1909 a teacher of Mathematics and Logic advertised his willingness to form a class.

The Sunday night lecture was the big event of the week and followed on the afternoon meeting at the Yarra Bank and a high tea at the Socialist Hall. The highlight meeting of the year was the anniversary held in the Melbourne Town Hall. Once a sit-down dinner was held. Some subjects and speakers are listed here to give an indication of the type and breadth of subjects that were attractive and the wide number of people prepared to speak at socialist meetings.

The Bijou theatre with stalls, dress circle and gallery seated 1000 and Sunday night meetings were held regularly for years. Jack Cain and Don Cameron would spruik outside the theatre calling people in. Jack Cain later became Premier of Victoria. As a result of his spruiking he

was given a job as a professional spruiker, before he became a State Parliament spruiker.

On Wednesday nights mid-week meetings were held in the Socialist Hall. Amongst non-member speakers were:

Rev. F. Sinclair, "The Shame of our Streets" (i.e. prostitution).

Pietro Baracchi, Government Astronomer, on "The Moon" with lantern slides.

Professor W. A Osborne, Science and the Scientist.

Walter Murdoch, Melbourne University, Henrik Ibsen. Professor Ernest W. Skeats, Melbourne University, Recent Earthquake in San Francisco.

Dr. Charles Strong, John Ruskin as a Socialist Reformer.

Dr. J. R. M. Thomson—Alcohol in its scientific and social aspects.

Barrister George A. Maxwell (described as a well-known hard hitter) spoke for the VSP.

Archibald T. Strong spoke on Francois Villon: His poetry, life and times.

The lectures of Tom Mann were many and varied as exemplified by titles:

At Christmas he spoke on "Peace on Earth, Goodwill to men from a Socialist Standpoint";

"Leaders of Socialism: Saint Simon, Robert Owen & Karl Marx";

"Ruskin, Tennyson and Morris";

"Moses and the Prophets—Christ and the Apostles";

"Sociology, History, Ethnology and Mythology";

"Marx: what he taught and why he taught it";

"Decisions of the International Congress just held in Germany (1907)";

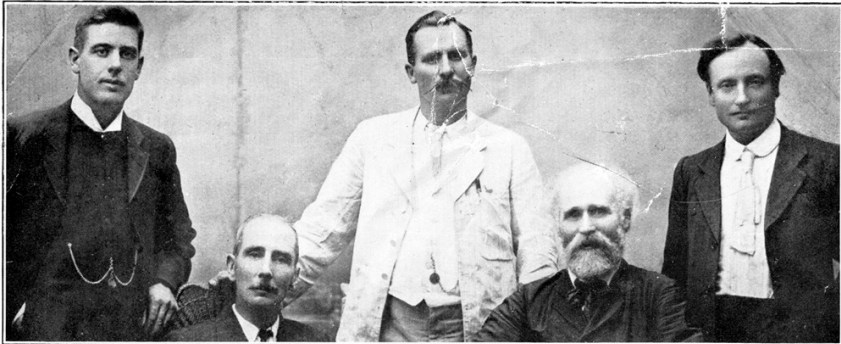
"Jesus Christ the Communist";

"The Execution of Von Plehve—the Russian Tyrant 1904".

During the Broken Hill lockout in 1909 Anderson spoke on "If Christ came to Broken Hill".

The visiting socialists all spoke at the Bijou—Keir Hardie, January 19th, 1908, and Ben Tillett, January 26th, 1908.

January 25th, 1908 *Socialist* reported—“Ben Tillett, Keir Hardie, H. H. Champion and Tom Mann—the big four of English socialism all on the one platform at the Bijou in Bourke Street.” What exhilarating times!



J. P. JONES H. H. CHAMPION TOM MANN J. KEIR HARDIE BEN TILLETT
MELBOURNE, AUSTRALIA, 1907.

The “big four” in Melbourne, with J P Jones of the VSP. (Photo from Tom Mann’s Memoirs, London, 1923.)

Tom Mann directed the VSP towards Marxism. At one period members wore a button with a photo of Marx emblazoned thereon. The January 1st, 1909 issue of *Socialist* proclaimed that the socialists were the descendants of Karl Marx and the internationalists.

Socialist ran a series of articles titled “The Materialist Conception of History”—an interpretation of its study, written by “Dogmatist”. Marxist students were not lacking. Ernie Houston writing under the name of “Radix” for *Socialist* had pamphlets printed and then attempted a summary of Vols. 2 and 3 of *Capital* (not published)

THE SOCIALIST AND PUBLICATIONS

The Socialist, organ of the VSP, started as a fortnightly paper on the 2nd April, 1906 but by September 1906 it had become a weekly. With Tom Mann the first editor, the paper was more dynamic and more related to working class activities than earlier papers. *The Tocsin* preceding the *Labor Call* was more pedantic.

When Tom Mann was in Broken Hill in 1908-9 H. H. Champion took over as editor. He was experienced in that he founded and edited

his own paper *The Champion* and was later to found and edit *The Booklover*. R. S. Ross took over in 1909 and continued into the twenties with the exception of a period away in New Zealand, March 1911 to April 1913. Don Cameron was its final editor. As the VSP weakened, the paper was kept going by combining with the Clothing Trades Union (Alf Wallis, former VSP member, was secretary of that Union) and also with the Marine Stewards and Pantrymen's Union (Don Cameron's union).

In the period Ross was in New Zealand Mrs. Anderson was for a time editor.

The VSP issued various notable leaflets and a Socialist Song Book (first published by the Social Questions Committee). Prominent leaflets issued in 1908 were "Empire Day"—Marie Pitt's "Salute the Flag" which was distributed to children around the schools. Marie Pitt was a poet who wrote much verse for *Socialist*. The other leaflet was "Our brothers of the American Fleet—A Socialist Welcome". When the American fleet visited there was quite a campaign around it.

Other publications were: "Down with organised Scabbery", by Harry Holland, price one penny (Sydney 1909) and "What life means to me", Jack London, September 1908. The VSP established its own printery at 47 Victoria Street, with Freddy Holland

SUBSCRIBE TO

"The Socialist"

THE MILITANT ORGAN OF SOCIALISM AND INDUSTRIAL UNIONISM.

1d. Weekly. 1/- per Quarter.
TRY A SAMPLE.

EDITED BY R. S. ROSS. Order from 184 Exhibition St., Melbourne

If You Buy Books

Send an Order to

Socialist Party Literature Depot
184 EXHIBITION ST., MELBOURNE.

Socialist Books a Speciality.

JOIN THE

Socialist Party of Victoria

Headquarters: 184 EXHIBITION ST., MELBOURNE.
Gents, 1/- Monthly; Ladies, 6d. J. SWEBLESES, Secretary.

Publications advertised on the back cover of the Socialist Song Book

(son of Harry Holland) in charge. This printery did sterling work during the anti-conscription campaigns.

From time to time *Socialist* was able to print articles by famous overseas socialists. George Bernard Shaw recalled the days of the English Dock Strike when interviewed on H. H. Champion. Writings of Upton Sinclair and Jack London appeared in its columns. *Socialist* was given the right by Jack London to publish *Martin Eden* as a serial.

The paper came out on Friday nights and was so popular that by 1907 it could print a long list of newsagents handling the paper, as follows—11 City, 31 Suburban, 20 Country and 5 Interstate.

LITERATURE

There was firstly a literature department in the socialist hall and later when the headquarters were established in Exhibition Street, a bookshop was opened next door.

Some literature secretaries were George Ovenden, Maurice Callard (later secretary Clothing Trades Union), A. E. (Bert) Davies and in the shop Beryl Glenie (nee. Bruce) worked as secretary and bookseller for Bob Ross and Don Cameron.

Beryl, known as Bobbie, says that the private subscriptions to *Socialist* were between 400 and 500. Bundles from one dozen to thirty copies were sent to various centres. Seven or eight socialists helped with the dispatch each week.

There was an excellent library behind the shop, but books gradually disappeared, as they do in the best circles. George Ovenden remembers seeing a book of Rousseau's donated by Monty Miller—a copy which originally belonged to John Pascoe Fawkner.

A sample of literature advertised in the Socialist bookshop in 1909:

Origin of Family, Frederick Engels, 1/6

Right to be Lazy, LaFargue

Essays on the Materialistic Conception of History, Labriola, 3/3

18th Brumaire of Louis Napoleon, Karl Marx, 6d.

Value, Price and Profit, Karl Marx, 6d.

Socialism, Utopian and Scientific, Engels, 6d.

Commonsense of Socialism, Spargo

Labriola's Essays.

SOCIAL LIFE



Socialist picnickers, Tom Mann in white jacket

Tom Mann, in his aim to cater for all the waking non-working hours, introduced the highly successful Sunday night tea. This meant those who went to Port Melbourne Pier meetings in the morning, and the Yarra Bank in the afternoon, could go to the socialist hall for tea and then attend the Sunday night meeting which opened at 6.30 p.m. with the band, choir and musical items. People did not have to go home to the suburbs after the afternoon meeting, they could make a day of it. Ida Robson (nee Anderson) said, "We children used to live for the week-ends, Friday night the dance, Saturday afternoon practising for concerts at the socialist hall, staying in town for tea, going to the dance in the evening. [Frank Hyett and Jack Curtin were popular with the children, they taught the young girls to dance.] Sunday morning we went to mass, socialist Sunday school in the afternoons, tea at the socialist hall and meeting at night." The IWW in later years followed this plan with teas of its own.

A number of people, mainly women, prepared the tea which, reminiscent of an English “high tea” consisted of sandwiches, cakes, huge plates of salad—lettuce, radishes, spring onions and tomatoes (in season) spread around the tables. The salads were of the best and fresh because Jack Cain and Charles Wesley Green earned a living by driving around with horse and cart selling cabbages and other vegetables obtained from the early morning market. Miss Ethel Wayman, known to everyone as “Auntie Wayman”—probably because she was real auntie to several young socialists, Jack and Ethel Gunn and the Bruces, Yatala, Bobby and Jennie—presided over the tea. Apart from regular dances there were theatre parties, nature excursions, picnics, moonlight trips on the “Hygeia” which all helped to keep the youth organised. There was also the Red Rovers’ Football Team, The Jokers and the Gay Gordons, (so named from a dance set).



This badly deteriorated photo may be from a socialist picnic. Percy Laidler is sitting in the middle of the front row.

The Gay Gordons were inclined to be looked on as the rebellious young by the socialist “establishment”, as they used to go off on their own to picnics, breaking away from the general family atmosphere. The Gay Gordons held a camp in Sherbrooke Forest on one occasion. The

Jokers were a group of young male socialists who had a camp at Chelsea.

The desire for camping prompted George Ovenden and his mother



The Jokers

to buy five acres of land at Emerald where a permanent camp was established for the benefit of VSP members and was regarded as a socialist camp. It could cater for about forty people. There was a centre building made of slab and sapling log sides. The roof was of iron 15 ft. x 12 ft. in size and it had a fireplace inside. Small tents on levelled sites were grouped around it and there was a dining marquee and kitchen. Three permanent huts were eventually on the site and these had names, one named Bradlaugh House after Charles Bradlaugh—Asa Mayall, uncle of Mrs. G. Ovenden, senior, so named it because of his admiration for Bradlaugh, the free-thinker.

The campers would arrive on the Puffing Billy, their baggage coming on by a wagonette driven by the local carrier, as the camp was one and a half miles from the station. The trip on Puffing Billy would add to the anticipation, and once they had the added adventure of losing the engine attached at the end of the train. (It had an engine back and front.)

A natural platform was used for items and debates. One waterproofed section was known as the fly-paper, as the buzzing of

conversation never stopped—this was where the Bruces and Ovendens congregated.

There were two tables in the marquee, a 12 ft. x 4 ft. one was known as the “mobs’ table”, the other 8 ft. x 4 ft. (where the Bruces and Ovendens sat) was known as the “Gods’ table”.

Diners wanting a piece of bread asked for it by “express” or “ordinary”. Express was thrown and ordinary went the long way round the whole table.

There were rosters drawn up for all work.



Socialist picnickers

2/6d. per day covered three meals and supper. The Emerald Camp flourished for about ten years and during the anti-conscription campaigns it was a hide-out for some men on the “run”.

A Mr. Butcher, Mayor of Emerald, was a vindictive opponent. He got police to the camp on the night of the referendum on conscription.

Belgrave

At Belgrave, another group came together at the house belonging to the Reverend Frederick Sinclair. In this group were mainly intellectuals with socialist ideas, Louis Esson (poet), Vance and Nettie

Palmer (writers), Marie Pitt (poet), Bernard O'Dowd (poet), Dick Long (poet). Yatala Bruce attended the church at Upwey and averred that she learned more about rationalism from the Rev. Sinclair than she ever learned from the fanatical rationalists. Maurice and Doris Blackburn (nee Hordern) also went to his church.

The Essons had a cottage in Belgrave which was taken over by the Palmers and later lived in by Katharine Susannah Prichard.

The Rev. Frederick Sinclair was a fine man who was victimised for being a true Christian and standing up for his principles. He, together with Reverend Charles Strong, began as a Presbyterian. The Reverend Strong preached at Scots Church but disagreed on points of doctrine and after long arguments with the Presbyterian Church founded his own church, the Australian Church, in 1885. It was dissolved in 1957.

The Reverend F. Sinclair formed his own church, the Free Religious Fellowship. These two churches were not affiliated although Strong was a frequent contributor to *Fellowship* edited by Sinclair, and Sinclair preached and lectured for Strong in the Australian Church. Strong edited a paper called *Commonweal*. The Australian Church was in Russell Street, near Flinders Street (now theatre) and the Quakers were on the opposite side of Russell Street. Both Strong and Sinclair were in the forefront of the anti-conscription struggle.



Socialist picnickers

Strong was thrown out of his living. As for Sinclair, he was refused appointment as Professor of English at Melbourne University although he had been recommended for the post by the resigning Professor,

Walter Murdoch, who was going to Western Australia. Normally the recommendation of the chairholder was automatically confirmed. He was born in New Zealand and gained appointment to the Chair of English at Canterbury College, Christchurch, New Zealand, and in New Zealand ended his days. Australia owes a debt to him and should honour his name. He did not wear clerical garb but wore black clothes; this, with his pale complexion and reddish hair, made an impressive figure. Sinclair had a good turn of sarcastic wit and according to Frederick Macartney made a wartime reference to William Morris Hughes—"everybody in the community from Mr. Hughes upwards", and again, a politician, dropping ostentatiously fatigued into a chair complained of having been "up at the house all day". "House?" said Sinclair quietly, "what house?" "Why—er—Parliament House, of course." "Oh," came the innocent response, "do, they still run that?"

His wife was both beautiful and intelligent.

Sinclair issued a journal called *Fellowship*. Amongst contributors were Vance Palmer, Furnley Maurice and Louis Esson. Meetings were held in Room 14, Scourfield Chambers, 165 Collins Street. The Hon. Secretary was a G. Byrne.

All-night balls and fancy dress balls were a great feature of social life. A girl went as "Socialism" to a country fancy dress dance at Corryong. She wore on her frock a rosette with button of Karl Marx, Ben Tillett named on a sash and wore a head-dress of the Sun with "Let there be light—Socialism" across it.

The type of songs sung at Socialist meetings were not propaganda by any means, viz. Bertha Gross (later Tunnecliffe) would sing "The Carnival" and "Tit for Tat". Mrs. Harry Sterne sang "Annie Laurie" and a modern gallery number "Hampshire Molly". Mr. Renton sang "Anchored" and "Waiting at the Gate". H. Perry recited "The Mikado at Billygoat Flat".

There were also coffee suppers and card parties.

PERSONALITIES

Some say "the family that prays together, stays together". On the other hand there seems to be a stronger case that the family that shares progressive political ideas has strong family bonds. In 1971 George Ovenden was able to declare proudly "with children and grandchildren there were 17 of our family at the Moratorium".

If all the descendants of the families influenced by Tom Mann's work were counted at the Moratorium the figure might be quite astounding.

However, the early Ovenden influence was Charles Bradlaugh. George's father was an anti-socialist: he didn't believe in politics. He was union secretary of the South Melbourne Tramways Depot.

Mrs. Elizabeth Jane Ovenden was a Miss Dyson, sister of Will, the famous cartoonist. She was a socialist, active during the Tom Mann days of the VSP. The children, Jane (Mrs. Lottowitz), Daisy (Mrs. Wallace), Joe, George and Dick all have a blending of the artistic and political. Dick served on Labor papers as a cartoonist for many years and is now a painter. The Dysons married into another family of artists; Will married Ruby Lindsay and Lionel Lindsay married Jean Dyson. Will Dyson was really "Will 2" and there was a "Will 1" who was shot in an accident on the Ballarat goldfields. Will worked for years as cartoonist on the *Daily Herald* (Labour Party) and came back to Australia to work on *Punch*. When it was taken over by the *Herald* he could not work with Keith Murdoch. Will was used to doing "Dyson" cartoons but Murdoch expected "*Herald*" cartoons, Will returned to London and independence.

George worked for years helping with *The Socialist* and during the anti-conscription campaign handled the circulation of the *Ballarat Evening Echo* in Melbourne.

• • •

Another well-known socialist family was that of the Bruces. Mrs. Sarah Bruce (nee Wayman) was a radical, first active in the Social Questions Committee then in the VSP. Her husband, J. V. Bruce, was a highly respectable man but was regarded as radical by his sisters because he read the *Bulletin*.

Daughters were Jennie, Yatala and Beryl (Bob), Beryl (Mrs. Glenie) was the youngest of the Bruce family and remembers herself as being little, always dragging on the skirts of her mother in the socialist hall. She was too young to bother with dances but her greatest delight was sitting on the floor playing "jacks", or jackbones for full title, with all the future political labor luminaries. She played with Jack Curtin (Prime Minister), Jack Cain (Premier), Jack Gunn (Premier, S.A.) and many others. Yatala (name for a white native wild flower which blooms in Yatala, S.A.) married George Ovenden,

Alf Wallis, active with the VSP became Federal Secretary of the Clothing Trades Union and continued to carry out some socialist principles in this position.

Space prevents the mention of all the fine people who remained dedicated throughout their active lives. Bob and Alma Stenhouse (nee Beck) have been active in the current anti-war movement; as also, Mrs. Edith Taylor (nee Tilley). Harriet and Alan McPhee played a great part during the depression, Joe Swebleses remained true and active till the end of his life.

SOCIALIST NATIONAL ORGANISATIONS

The Circolo Democratico Garibaldi

Social life outside the Socialist Hall was often at the Cafe Bohemia. Regular advertisements appeared in *Socialist*. In 1908 the advertisement read:

Pension Suisse—Italian and French Cuisine, late of Preston, Reservoir. Camusso, 108 Lonsdale Street.

In 1909 the advertisement was more explicit:

Cafe Bohemia, 108-110 Lonsdale Street, L. F. Camusso, proprietor. The only place in Melbourne where you can enjoy a good meal and feel at home with the many good folk that frequent the cafe. And if you like to amuse yourself, come along on Wednesday night—you have a chance to see the Melbourne bohemians enjoy themselves a la Continentale. Lunch 1 o'clock. Dinner 6.30. Meals 1/-. Coffee 3d. extra.

Members of the VSP, artists, writers and poets liked Camusso's Cafe Bohemia. There was a painting and the motto "Light Hearts and Empty Pockets" over the door. A piano in the room was used to accompany the singing, and someone would bring along a guitar. The 1/- meal consisted of hors-d'oeuvre, spaghetti, meat and vegetables, and there were bowls of several kinds of salad and fresh fruit on the table. Wine was supplied with the meal.

The Cafe Bohemia was also the centre of Italian socialist organisation. The VSP held annual Garibaldi meetings at the Bijou

where the choir under Mrs. Mann sang the Garibaldi Hymn in English and Italian. On the 7th July, 1907 the centenary Garibaldi celebration was held at the Guild Hall. The orchestra rendered Verdi's "Trovatore" and the Garibaldi Hymn was sung in Italian.

Tom Mann spoke and said that only socialists celebrated Garibaldi, and that bourgeois Italians ignored him. Enrico, a well-educated Italian, wrote in the *Socialist* that within eight months the VSP had given three splendid lectures on Ferrer, Mazzini and Garibaldi. He wrote that many Italians were present and that we had the spectacle now of the miner boy of Warwickshire (Mann) commemorating the cabin boy of Nice (Garibaldi).

During his lecture Mann said that the Australian, Dr. Embling M.L.C., had joined the Garibaldi Legion and possessed a medal. The Italian socialists told Tom Mann that it was owing to his inspiration they had come together and formed the Circolo Democratico Garibaldi. Signor Rovida was President, E. Scolari Vice-President, L. Camusso Honorary Secretary and Treasurer. Other committee members were L. Rondano, G. Fossati, T. Negri and C. Langella. When Tom Mann left Australia the Circolo Democratico Garibaldi made a presentation to him at the Cafe Bohemia.

Australia still attracted political refugees in these years and one such was Francis Sceusa. He had been an organiser of the International in Sicily and was forced to leave the country in 1879. He came to Australia and with the aid of some French Communists tried to form a Socialist group in Sydney. He became a founder of the International Socialist Club and had in 1893 represented Australia at an International Socialist Congress in Zurich. Tom Mann visited him at his home at 134 Church Street, St. Peters, Sydney in 1907.

Dr. Omero Schiassi

Dr. Omero Schiassi was one of the best known and most respected Italian anti-fascists in Australia from 1924 until his death in 1956. He was a barrister and city councillor of Bologna, and member of the Socialist Party. He was forced to leave Italy when Mussolini came to power. In Melbourne, where he settled, he was a lecturer at the Melbourne University. The Italian Consul organised a boycott of Italian pupils and Dr. Schiassi had a struggle to live because he was paid according to the number of pupils he was tutoring.

He lived in a room in Clarendon Street, East Melbourne, and every Sunday night could be found sitting in the front row at the Empire Theatre listening intently to the Rationalist speaker. He attended other meetings of a radical political nature and was always up near the front, a very familiar figure indeed. His outstanding politeness marked him out from most of the comrades. An attempt was made by Italians from an Italian ship, in port, to kidnap him and take him back to Italy, where of course, he would have been executed. Fortunately they failed.

On his death a commemoration meeting was held at the Unitarian Church, Cathedral Place, Melbourne at 2 p.m. on January 22nd. Prominent speakers who paid tribute were the Rev. Victor James, Brian Fitzpatrick, Ralph Gibson, Mrs. Lodewyckz (who substituted for her

husband, Professor A. Lodewyckz), Mrs. Maurice Blackburn, Mr. Clem Christesen, Mr. Percy Laidler and Mr. W. Johnston, as well as Italian speakers. An invitation had been issued in Italian and English. A speech made by Dr. Schiassi in the New Gaiety Theatre, Melbourne on the 10th June 1929 was published in English and Italian, the Australian title being "Fascism Exposed".

The Matteotti Club

In Italy following the election of May 30th, 1924, Giacomo Matteotti, a Socialist Deputy, spoke out courageously against the fascists. On June 10th he was kidnapped and assassinated by five fascists. Italians in Australia founded a Matteotti Club in Melbourne and this thrived for

At Myrtleford, on the 2nd January, 1956, the death occurred of

Dr. OMERO SCHIASSI

He was born in 1876 at Bolonga, Italy, where he later graduated in Law. Because of his outspoken democratic ideals he was forced to leave Italy and in 1924 he left for Australia. From 1925 until his death he was Lecturer of Italian at the Melbourne University.

His activities and interests in Australia were many and varied and many organisations benefited by his work.

Obviously a man of such integrity as he, did not make only friends; but he was loved by most and respected by all who came in contact with him.

You are invited to pay tribute to the memory of this
great Scholar and Humanitarian.

A COMMEMORATION RALLY will be held on
Sunday, 22nd JANUARY, 1956, at 2 p.m.
at the Unitarian Church, Cathedral Place, Melbourne
where the following prominent people will be speaking:

IL REV. VICTOR JAMES
Mr. BRIAN FITZPATRICK
Mr. RALPH GIBSON
Prof. A. LODEWYCKX
Mrs. MAURICE BLACKBURN
Mr. CLEM CHRISTESEN
Mr. PERCY LAIDLER
Mr. W. JOHNSTON

Notice for the Omero Schiassi memorial meeting

many years. It was mainly a place where lonely Italians could find social life, chiefly through the splendid dances they ran. It was also political and issued leaflets in Italian. The secretary, Frank Carmagnola, was famous for his action in shaping up to the Fascist Italian Consul in Queensland. On the occasion of a banquet to commemorate the march on Rome (when Mussolini took power), Frank with a band of anti-fascists broke up the banquet. The ladies in their best gowns had hysterics, blows were exchanged, the band played revolutionary songs and Carmagnola was credited with landing one on the Consul himself. In 1929 the Matteotti Club members attended at the Temperance Hall in Russell Street, where the Mussolini worshippers were also celebrating the march on Rome.

This was the third fascist parade of the year in Melbourne and took place on the 27th October. It was estimated one hundred were dressed in blackshirts with black ties, the Mussolini uniform. The anti-fascists took them by surprise and escaped before the alarm could be given the police. Several fascists were injured, some (it was alleged) slashed with knives.

No one was arrested. The *Argus* of the 28th October claimed that knives, iron bars and pieces of wood were used. A fascist interviewed said, "We know who they are—exiles from Italy."

Some leaders in Melbourne were Frank Carmagnola, George Zammarchi (who is well known throughout Australia—he worked in Tennant Creek for five years as well as many other places), Paul De Angelis, a jolly barber who for years had a shop in Little Bourke Street, opposite the side entrance of the Princess Theatre and handy to the situation of International Bookshop, then in Exhibition Street.

The Verein Vorwarts

German socialists had an association of their own, the Verein Vorwarts (Forward Association) formed as far back as 1885. In Sydney it was German cigar makers who played a big part in founding the International Socialist Group, in fact Heinrich Borax, a German, was secretary for many years. The members of Verein Vorwarts were Germans who fled from "Prussianism". They mainly organised some social life and received, passed round and discussed, socialist papers from home.

Verein Vorwärts held an anniversary celebration and its 23rd one on May 28th, 1909 was held at the Oddfellows Hall, La Trobe Street. Dancing followed a concert and speeches. The VSP was sent an official invitation to send two of its executive members. The price, 1/- gents, 6d. ladies. Amongst the speakers were Chris Gross and her father, Louis Gross. In January 1910 the Verein Vorwärts sent along three representatives to the VSP and arranged to merge with it, while retaining its own library. Mr. C. Mitscherlich was secretary during the organisation's final years.



Members of the German community at a socialist picnic

There was another German organisation, the Turn Verein. This was run more on physical culture lines, it was less political and more national with a picture of the Kaiser on the wall. Nevertheless socialists would go to its all-night balls and other social functions.

Later there was a club called the Tivoli, mainly social. When it entertained Count Von Luckner in 1938 it became the target of a huge anti-fascist demonstration. Mounted troopers charged the crowd with batons and several demonstrators were arrested. Another social club was the Concordia. Bourgeois Germans had the "German Club" emulating the "Melbourne Club" and situated only one block away, in Alfred Place off Collins Street. The war naturally affected all these clubs.

The Russian Association

A large number of political refugees came to Australia after the unsuccessful 1905 revolution, some with the death penalty on their heads. Most settled in Queensland where they organised and issued a paper *The Echo of Australia*. They were well represented in Broken Hill. There were also a sufficient number of Russians in Melbourne and Sydney to form an organisation known as "The Russian Association". This organisation in Melbourne combined with left organisations, the VSP, later the WIIU and the CP although many of its members were not politically minded but solely in it for social life.

During the 1909 lockout at Broken Hill the blowing up of a railway line and derailling of a truck was credited to the experienced Russians, although in truth all miners were familiar with gelignite. The Russians were well liked by the unionists of the Hill, a feeling reciprocated. Some went as far north as Darwin. Most Russians came in the years 1910 to 1914, and of those that were not politically minded many became so, because of the war, the activities of the Australian workers—particularly against conscription, and finally because, of the Russian revolution itself. The great majority supported the revolution because they knew how bad czarism was and they felt revolution was the best thing that could have happened.

In 1922 there were 200 members in the Melbourne Russian Association. Their club met regularly at premises in South Melbourne and here they discussed events at home. They founded a library of Russian language publications, with literary works as well as political. They held lectures with an attendance between sixty and seventy—the whole family came. They also organised dances. The Russians who came to Melbourne were mainly of the artisan class, skilled workers and some professional men. There were a few doctors amongst them.

Kanevsky, a manufacturer in Elizabeth Street, City was a leading member and in later years played a part in developing trade with the USSR and was active in organising the "Sheepskins for Russia" campaign during the Second World War.

Vassilief, a skilled engineer, who owned a ball bearing manufacturing business in South Melbourne, gave the association a place to use as its headquarters.

J. Maruschak was a gentle, quietly spoken man active in the VSP during the 1914-18 war and a foundation member of the Communist

Party. He returned to the Soviet Union early in the twenties. Some who returned to the USSR from various states were Cooke, Boldin, Sommers, Zuzenko, and Simonoff (also spelt Siminov), as well as numerous others. F. A. Sergeev (known as Artymon, and Artem), was already famous in the Russian revolutionary movement during 1905 and he returned home as soon as possible in 1917 and became a member of the Central Committee. While in Queensland he was active in founding the Russian Workers Association and was active in the Australian movement. He took part in strikes, was arrested in a free speech campaign, and was a member of the Waterside Workers' Federation, the Australian Meat Industries Employees Union and the Australian Socialist Party.

Alexander Michael Zuzenko was a man using several names also. He was deported from Brisbane in 1919 as a result of the soldier riots directed at the Russians. He came back here in 1922 on a false passport under the name of Tony Tolagsen. He used too, the name of Nargan. He travelled to the various capitals stimulating the organisation of the CP. Someone informed on him and he was deported for the second time.

Peter Simonoff, who became Consul General for the USSR, did a very good job here. He originally settled in Queensland, then went to Broken Hill where he became a member of Labor's Volunteer Army. From Broken Hill, he visited Melbourne where he made contact with the VSP and met Bob Ross, whom he impressed favourably. On returning to Brisbane Simonoff took over the editorship of the Russian paper and became secretary of the Russian Association. When appointed Consul General his appointment was endorsed by a cable from the USSR signed by Trotsky. His work as consul will be referred to in another segment of this book.

The Russians were all notable for their speedy integration in the Australian radical movement. Maruschak in the VSP tried to form a Communist Party in 1919 and 1920. The Russian Revolution was celebrated jointly between the Russian Association and the WIIU and later with the CP.

With the Communist Party the celebration was usually in St. Peters Church, Eastern Hill and took the form of speeches, concert items, supper and dancing.

The Russian Association gave support to the formation of the Australia-Soviet Friendship League.

In Queensland where the Russians tended to be manual workers and many of them cane-cutters there was a more vigorous movement than in the capitals.

During the last world war some Italian cane-cutters managed to hoodwink the authorities into believing that they were Russian to avoid internment.

The last active link in Melbourne, with the old Russians, is Nicholas Antonoff. He came here in 1914 and lived in Adelaide, N.S.W., Tasmania, Queensland and finally settled in Melbourne. He worked in the mines at Lithgow and participated in the general strike of 1917. In 1917 he sold *Direct Action* for the IWW and in 1928 the *Workers Weekly* for the Communist Party, which he joined in 1931. Now in his seventies, he visits every Russian ship in port and acts as an interpreter. When a Russian seaman was rushed ashore for an appendix operation, Antonoff went every day to the hospital to cheer him up. He is one of the fine type of old Russian Communists who were a credit to the movement.

Active in the VSP, later the WIU and in the anti-conscription campaign was Victor Petruchenia.

Miscellaneous

In July 1907 *Socialist* was pleased to announce, "One of our comrades, P. Schmitz, went up to Bendigo on the 6th July, a Saturday, and walked off with two prizes in the heavyweight and middleweight competitions." Schmitz was an Austrian.

A famous political refugee living in Sydney was Francisco Ferrer, a Spanish anarchist using the names of Jones and Smith. Police in Barcelona were looking for him. The *One Big Union Herald*, organ of the Workers' International Industrial Union, claimed his name in Europe was as potent as Lenin's, and that he was the most notorious anarchist in Europe. He was a mild looking man with a beard, who spoke on rationalism, in a room in Castlereagh Street, Sydney. He returned to Spain and in 1907 was tried for his life and acquitted (on a charge of the attempted assassination of the King of Spain). He was executed in 1909 as a sequel to an attempted insurrection in Barcelona. The object of the insurrection was to establish a new anti-Catholic State in Catalonia. There was considerable agitation in the working class press in Australia over his execution.

Undoubtedly Tom Mann had a big impact in developing internationalism. Already in 1906 an advertisement appeared:

Comrades, other than Australians or British origin, receive a specially hearty welcome, and are asked to remember we are Cosmopolitans and delighted in learning from comrades of other nationalities.

In February 1907 a Cosmopolitan Committee was set up. This Committee arranged a lecture by Henry Cordes of Meeniyah, on German experiences and Enrico spoke on Italian experiences. A dance held in Cathedral Hall on July 19th, 1907 advertises: "Servian, German, Italians, French, Scandinavians, Russians and British cordially invited."

Eddie Callard recalls that Tom Mann once M.C.'d an International Night at which there were about twenty different nationalities, each one was introduced on the platform and Tom made comments on the countries of origin. There was huge applause for an African who worked as a bootblack in Bourke Street.

CONFERENCES

There were three Interstate Conferences during Tom Mann's period. The first was held in Melbourne, in 1907.

Delegates were H. Holland and Hillier from the International Socialist Club, Sydney; J. O. Maroney and T. Batho from the Socialist Labour Party, Sydney; H. H. Champion and W. Marsh, Social Democratic Federation; J. P. Jones and V. Kroemer, Queensland Socialist Vanguard; R. Ross and Hawkes, Broken Hill-Barrier Socialist Propaganda Group; J. Thom and A. Gray, Social Democratic Association, Sydney; Tom Mann and Harry Scott Bennett, Socialist Party of Victoria.

It was decided that Sydney would be the headquarters of the Socialist Federation of Australia and the executive to consist of a delegate from each of the bodies. Those in Sydney were to constitute a working committee. Probably the most important decision of conference was that secondary importance was attached to parliamentary work—the aims were socialism and they should stand clearly on their own feet as socialists.

Socialist reported that development includes separation and specialisation, "and those who deliberately proclaim the class war (as

we do) should, as a matter of principle, and always declare in favor of revolutionary socialism, and should be too dignified to seek election by the machinery and finance of organisations, a large majority of whose members, do not believe in the class war, and never declare in favour of Socialism". When this report was given to Melbourne members the hall was nearly full and only five voted against it.

The second interstate conference of the Socialists commenced in Sydney on June 12, 1908.

Represented were: Adelaide Socialist Group, O. W. Jorgenson and H. Gray; Barrier Socialist Group, R. S. Ross and A. K. Wallace; International Socialist Group, Sydney, Mrs. Lynch and Harry Scott Bennett; International Socialist Club, Sydney, H. Borax and Price; Victorian Socialist Party, E. F. Russell and Frank Hyett. There were ten delegates with H. E. Holland as Secretary and A. Borax, Treasurer attending ex officio.

Word of a decision of the New Zealand Socialist Party to affiliate with the Federation was received with cheers.

The desire to start a campaign in the political field and run candidates wherever and whenever "it strikes us as worthwhile" was expressed by all delegates with the exception of the Melbourne delegates.

A long statement of principle includes "to win economic freedom, the non-owning working class must organise on the lines of the IWW, and they must force the struggle into the political field, and use their political power, the ballot, in conjunction with their industrial organisation, to abolish capitalist class ownership to set up the Socialist Republic, and thus revolutionise, in the interest of the working class, the entire structure of industrial society".

THE INTERNATIONAL DELEGATE

The 1907 Congress discussed the International Congress to be held in Stuttgart with 900 delegates from twenty-five countries. Victor Kroemer was accredited as delegate for Australia.

Kroemer was a Theosophist and a food faddist. Socialism possibly took third place. He offered to attend at his own expense. He was a handsome six-foot tall man very much admired by the female members of the VSP.

He was reputed to be the first Australian-born delegate to represent Australia at an International Socialist Conference. A send-off was organised and refreshments supplied were "of the hygienic non-flesh kind, our comrade, amongst his many other qualifications, being a vegetarian".

He left on board "The Kleist" and arriving in Stuttgart exploded the news on the Conference under the presidency of August Bebel, that the world revolution would start in South Australia. Kroemer was born in that State, and parochial patriotism must have been another of his "qualifications". Reuter cabled: "Kroemer extraordinary mixture of blasphemy and inconsequence. Prefer not to translate." *Socialist* commented Kroemer spoke in English and there was no need to translate.

There was some hint of what was to come, in his speech made at his own send-off. It was reported that he "had a conviction that serious efforts would soon be made in that State [S.A.] to apply revolutionary socialist principles".

Syd Toohey, member of the Social Democratic Federation (later Secretary of the Printers Union) received a letter from Henry Hyndman, famous British Socialist economist and a founder of the Social Democratic Federation in 1881. He was a journalist on the *Pall Mall Gazette* and had worked in Melbourne on the *Argus*. Hyndman demanded to know why Australia had selected a stupid dreamer as its delegate. It is also noteworthy that when the Socialist Party received a report from Kroemer it did not rush into print in big headlines. South Australia has some premier achievements to its credit, possibly this influenced Kroemer's ideas, i.e. Franchise for women (1894) and Land Settlement.

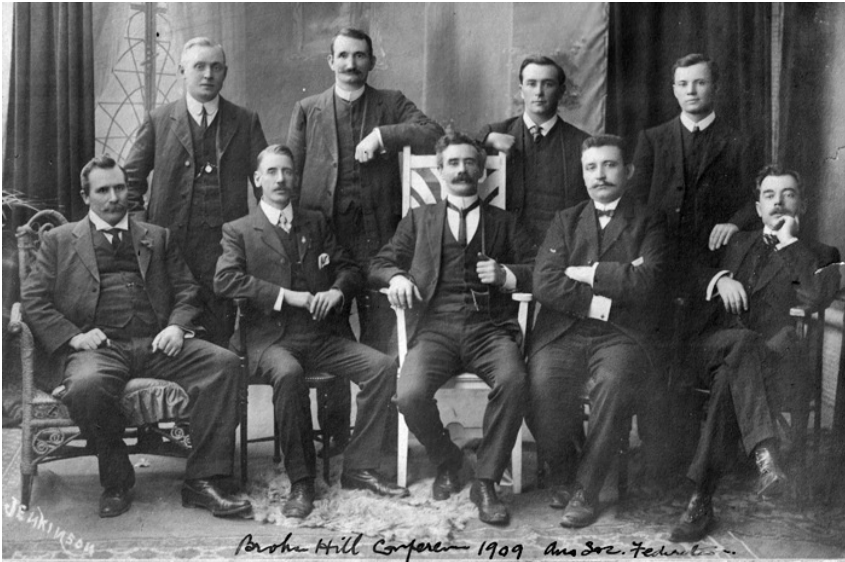
THE THIRD SOCIALIST CONFERENCE

The third Annual Conference was held at Broken Hill commencing June 12, 1909.

The industrial activity in Broken Hill in 1908-9 made it eminently suitable as venue for the third annual conference.

Delegates were: S.A.: Tom Mann and Percy Laidler. Barrier: E. A. Giffney and V. Cogan. N.S.W.: H. S. Bennett and E. H. Gray. Victoria: R. S. Ross and A. McDonell. Giffney was elected chairman and Borax of Sydney attended as secretary.

Conference was in session for several days and covered reports on activities since the second Conference, carried resolutions for the future, conducted street meetings, lectures and debates for the benefit of the Broken Hill citizens.



Delegates to the 1909 Australian Socialist Federation conference at Broken Hill, including Angus McDonell (standing, far left), Percy Laidler (standing, second from right), Tom Mann (seated, far left), Bob Ross (seated, second from left) and Harry Scott-Bennett (seated, far right).

Efforts to extend to Newcastle and Queensland had been unsuccessful. The Socialist Sunday School now had new branches in Sydney and Broken Hill. There were special reports on the Broken Hill Lockout and gaolings. Victoria reported it had stood two candidates against official Labor candidates. Socialists had led the unemployed agitation, and an anti-militarist agitation had a fillip from the visit of the American fleet. A pamphlet "Sedition in New South Wales" was published. Sydney had assisted in strikes of tramwaymen and rockchoppers. Both Sydney and Melbourne were pleased with Jack London's visit and his delight with the Socialist organisations.

It was reported that two resolutions of the second Conference were not endorsed by all individual branches, one on religion, the other on IWW Clubs.

Resolutions Adopted

1. To work for the freeing of imprisoned workers.
2. The SFA declares its uncompromising hostility to all forms of militarism recognising that whilst the present class state exists, the armed forces will be used to buttress up capitalism and to hold down the workers. The Federation further recognises that all the energies of the working class can be most profitably utilised in building up their industrial and political organisations, which shall finally render war impossible, and which organisations by international affiliation and alliances between the working class of all nations are at present the chief guarantee of the peace of the world.
3. From Sydney—That all Socialist papers adhere strictly to the policy of the Federation.
4. From Victoria—That any candidate running on the Socialist ticket for Parliament after being selected by the party, shall before entering upon his campaign, sign and hand to the party responsible for his selection his resignation as a member of Parliament to be used in the event of him swerving from his socialist policy.
5. More attention to be given to education of women and that women comrades be induced to train for propaganda work.
6. SFA endorsement of the IWW preamble to be withdrawn and that the Federation only declare for the broad principles of industrial unionism.

One of the chief points of discussion was around the question of “palliatives”.

A resolution was put by the Sydney International Socialist Group “that conference reaffirm the adherence of the SFA to a program free from palliatives”.

Tom Mann urged the advisability of making a declaration in favour of paying attention to feeding the children, provision for the unemployed and shortening hours of work.

It was contended that the advocacy of palliatives would cause neglect in the concentration on the abolition of capitalism. Nonetheless in practice the Sydney organisation had assisted in local strikes. The following somewhat ambiguous resolution was carried—

That whilst agreeing with the wisdom of not having a political program of palliatives this conference heartily endorses the necessity for persistent and vigorous agitation to provide maintenance for necessitous children, adequate provision for the unemployed and universal agitation, industrial and political for a reduction of working hours.

Objective Amended

The object of SFA was amended to read "The socialisation of the means of production, distribution and exchange".

A lengthy statement of principles included:

...the workers of Australia must without delay take up their position along with the organised class-conscious workers of all other countries. There is no escape from the baneful effects of capitalism short of its complete overthrow, and this can only be achieved by the class conscious industrial and political strength of the working class.

Final Day of Conference

Conference resolved to invite Eugene Debs to undertake a campaign. Fraternal greetings were sent to organisations throughout the world.

Protest was lodged on Judge Pring's verdict (re Harry Holland). Support was declared for a petition and activities of the Release Committees.

Admiration was registered of the leaders of the proletarian movement in Mexico now in prison and the American comrades, and especially comrade Debs and the *Appeal to Reason*.

Conference declared "we cannot believe the US workers will allow Diaz [President of Mexico] to violate all principles of liberty and decency by a continuance of such diabolic oppression".

"The Red Flag" was sung and three cheers given for the Social Revolution.

Chapter Three

LAIDLER IN THE VSP

Within the VSP Laidler did not push forward in his first year, as he was absorbed in learning all he could from Tom Mann—how to speak, organise and write.



Percy Laidler in 1908

In February 1907 a number of committees were set up to extend the work of the party. He was elected to the “Industrial—or 6 hour day Committee” and the “Paper Committee”. The building workers had struck for a 44 hour week and a banner was carried in that year’s May Day procession, for a 6 hour day. The Paper Committee (*Socialist*) had as other members, John Curtin, H. H. Champion, Tom Mann and Harry Scott-Bennett (secretary). It was proposed to enlarge the paper.

There were other committees: Municipal (places for speaking and playgrounds for children); Young Comrades; Band; Cosmopolitan and May Day. It is interesting to note in that year there were sixteen women compared with four men on the May Day Committee.

Laidler's name began to appear in speakers' lists, and Port Melbourne pier, Prahran and South Melbourne markets became his usual stumps.

At the half-yearly meeting a special vote of thanks was tendered Percy Laidler and E. J. Russell "for so efficiently discharging the duties of auditors".

ELECTIONEERING

The Victorian Labor Party was critical of the VSP even before it stood any independent candidates. In Melbourne it only did so on three occasions. It supported Labor Party candidates before and after these particular contests. In Sydney, the Socialists more frequently stood candidates.

A country member, Councillor Miles of Port Fairy, was elected to Council and won the position after a long hard fight.

In July 1907 it was decided to put into effect the resolution of conference by standing E. F. Russell as a socialist in the Port Melbourne Municipal Elections, to be held in August. The results were:

A. V. Renowden	959
A. Rogers	936
J. H. Morris	857
E. F. Russell	834

Russell as a straight-out socialist was within 125 of the highest of the list and the socialists were very pleased. The Labor Party was very annoyed at the entry of the socialists into the electoral field although according to the *Socialist* the rank and file did not share this bitterness.

W. O'Connor, Secretary of the Coal Lumpers' Union in Sydney, was elected an Alderman of the Sydney City Council and was the first success of a socialist in an election since the conference decision. Victorian State elections were held on the 29th December 1908 and the VSP decided on the 14th December to nominate as candidates Angus

McDonnell for Melbourne and Percy Laidler for Collingwood on a straight-out program for socialism, in opposition to Labor Party candidates.

McDonnell contested with three other candidates, one Labor Party and two described as "Anti-Socialists". Laidler had as opponents Labor (well-known Martin Hannah) and two independents.

A joint manifesto was produced and in it **not one** promise is made the electors. It was a program truly free of "palliatives", a strong point of criticism of the Labor Party on the part of the socialists.

John Curtin Supports Socialist Candidates

Angus McDonnell held his first meeting, 24 hours after the decision that he should stand. H. H. Champion chaired, speakers were the candidate and P. Laidler, Mrs. Katz, John Curtin, Frank Hyett, E. J. Russell, Frederics, Bob Ross and Anderson.

At Laidler's first meeting with Frederics in the chair were speakers E. J. Russell, Frank Hyett, Mrs. Katz, Bob Ross, E. J. Holloway, John Curtin and Mr. Leitch.

The *Socialist* reported — "Then came Curtin in a rousing review of the Labor Socialist situation, his speech being a magnificent justification of separate socialist action."

It described Laidler's speeches in the campaign in this way: "Those who know him best would be surprised at the vigour and clearness of his speeches."

In the first week of the campaign meetings were held with 600-700 present. The second and final week, three and four

TO THE ELECTORS.

Manifesto of the Socialist Party of Victoria.

The Socialist Party of Victoria has decided to run candidates for Parliament. Among existing parties it sees none more representative of the workpeople than it seeks to supply the need.

Formed as a propaganda party, it is still for propaganda, merely adding Parliamentary activity to its educational system.

From the workpeople standpoint the old parties have failed. None of them knows the way over if such desired, to cure the misapprehension of the workers. The Socialist Party both denotes and knows.

Workpeople may be defined as the entire body of men and women of industry and commerce, and the labourers in them or the employees of all. A Socialist is one who believes in the interests and necessities of his class for as the basis of the national economy that do not exist objectively and independently.

In carrying out this goal the Socialist Party declares that the essential deed is the overthrow of a capitalism, which is based on wage-slavery and exploitation for profit, and based on the system of poverty and unemployment. Until the working class organization is established production for use as social and economic conditions will not be improved.

In overthrowing capitalism will necessarily be a revolutionary act. It must be the capture of Parliament in order to

with no advantage to the producers of all wealth, the workers.

The Socialist Party further asserts that the introduction of municipal socialism is a huge step of "bribe-giving" the capitalist class and being an economic betrayal to the workers, even if it were profitable.

The Socialist Party has no programme of "palliatives" which aims to soothe the mind and ease of evil, but insists instead that the hour is historically ripe for achieving that Social Revolution which will alter the prevailing order and give to humanity a new evolution.

Palliative measures have been tried and found wanting. They are, in any case, the parties of Capitalism as from the demand of the workers.

The workpeople must concentrate on the fundamental if it is to be brought about.

The Socialist Party offers the people workpeople organizing under capitalism, workers' demanding direct state control of the means of production and control of their labour. The Socialist Party offers an aim for genuinely "socialist" handling—

REVOLUTIONARY SOCIALISM.

STATE CONTROL OF INDUSTRY.

That is to say, the Socialist which seeks a complete change from wage-slavery to a system which confers per se interest rather than profit, and scientific organization to control the economic process.

For candidates and propositions will speak fully of these great aims. They mean emancipation. It is to help to meet the needs of some other direction the objective and destiny of the workpeople.

In the Socialist Party, the test of politicians and parties in their attitude to emancipation, or desire from sympathy. This is as true to the other parties, and they are, therefore, to be honestly discarded as unworthy of workpeople trust or attention. To those who wish to do so, work with us on the Labour Party (in part), the proposed aim of achievement will be found the logical and it begins something back to certain considerations.

As to the idea that "complete" municipal and "city" Socialism help the workers, the Socialist Party asserts that these "city" Socialists create the need for further legislative restrictions and are a "subterfuge" with a problem only to be solved by direct action. These things are wrong-headed measures in spirit and action, and can only prove detrimental to the industrial welfare and class interests of the masses. They lead to such measures as the extension and differential industrial discipline of the South Wales, which indeed have been shown that social and class issues produced in the workers' though

the basis of self-reliance fostered by Anti-Trust.

In seeing the workpeople to rally to the Socialist standard, the Socialist Party emphasizes that a new political tactic and method will evolve as a result of this. Socialism in the House of Parliament will be obstructive and destructive. Until such a time, and children have been, stolen and stolen, a truly civilized country should not be



PERCY LAIDLER
Socialist Candidate for Collingwood.



ANGUS McDONNELL
Socialist Candidate for Melbourne.

emphasize that Socialist Republic change will not be achieved for the people by the people and of the people.

Such Socialists are necessarily serious.

The Socialist Party asserts that Nationalism is a capitalist class and not means Socialist class, indeed, nationalization is a larger scale than any other order which has already been tried in history

Socialist Party 1908 election manifesto - no "palliatives".

meetings were held each night. Electors were canvassed door-to-door. Headquarters for Laidler were at 214 Wellington Street, Collingwood and Joe Swebleses was his campaign secretary. Again the *Socialist* opined "From cheering and street demonstrations from admirers, one would think that Laidler would top the poll."

J. Hughes and C. Delalande were joint secretaries for McDonell.

The candidates were enthusiastically endorsed at the Bijou Theatre at its Sunday night meeting and a special issue of the *Socialist* with photos of the candidates and the manifesto, headed "Let New Blood In" with footnote "VOTE FOR SOCIALISM", was printed and 700 extra copies run off. Other slogans were "To the Polls for Socialism"; "Capitalism on to Socialism"; "Have done with Palliative Piffle".

An article declared "Palliatives blur the path, obscure the goal, delay emancipation. Laborism grows increasingly reactionary, socialism increasingly revolutionary. They are economic poles. No compromise. No political trading."

Laidler was then 24 years old but looked a good deal younger. Viv Crisp retails a story that during the campaign he, with Laidler and others were in a hotel, when the barmaid turned to Perc and said, "Sonny, would you mind slipping out for a pound of tomatoes?" Naturally he obliged, and whilst out, Viv confounded the barmaid by saying, "Did you know that is the candidate for Collingwood you sent out for tomatoes?" The fact that Perc's drink was lemonade and cloves when the others were drinking beer would add to the illusion of youthfulness.

The results so far as Labor and Socialist were concerned, were:—

In Collingwood there was a total vote of 2,450 from a Roll of 4,407 (voting not compulsory)

Hannah (Labor)	984
Laidler (Socialist)	85

In Melbourne 2,192 voted from a Roll of 5,636

Rogers (Labor)	781
McDonell (Socialist)	82

In New South Wales socialist candidates had stood for election in August. Harry Holland was a candidate for Darling Harbour where many coal lumpers lived and the socialists had aided them in a recent strike. The outcome of the poll was:

John Norton, Independent Labor	1666
Daley, Labor	1146
Holland, International Socialist	746
Whatmore, Liberal	650
Jones, Independent Liberal	440
Green	6

Holland in 1901 had polled 34 votes in Lang so his vote of 746 was regarded as a gain of 2000 per cent.

The International Socialist Review (Sydney) summed up the results —“In each case there was a middle class labor party candidate in the field so that the vote in our case was a straight out expression, and Victorian comrades are to be congratulated accordingly.”

BEN TILLET

Ben Tillett, General Secretary of the Dockers' Union in Britain, and a co-leader with Tom Mann and others of the Dock Strike of 1889, visited Australia in 1897-8 and again in 1907-8. In 1898 he spoke on the Yarra Bank on May Day and told the crowd, “It was like Hyde Park save for the smell of the Yarra”. The attendance was estimated to be 25,000. He had earlier spoken on Federation.

Laidler acted as organiser of Tillett's meetings during his 1907 Victorian tour. They travelled to Trafalgar in Gippsland by train. Tillett didn't feel like speaking at the meeting, he wanted to get away. He couldn't be bothered with the country and wasn't concerned with getting the message to a few people. He was concerned with the effect he had on big meetings.

The following day, Perc and, others, went half a mile from the centre of the town and held a meeting. Tillett didn't come. Socialists and others had come big distances, expecting to hear the famous Tillett, but

he'd had enough. It was City and Suburban Town Halls and the Yarra Bank for him.

Tom Mann, of course, would speak without a chairman, to two men and a dog after acting as crier of the meeting.

Ben Tillett was considered a great orator—some thought even better than Tom Mann. Laidler's comparison was—Ben could get his audience to weep! Tom could get them to fight!

Laidler was again auditor in 1908. On September 1908 he was elected to the executive, made assistant secretary and was paid 30/- a week for his services. This was the date that Tom Mann departed for Broken Hill to assist in union organisation in that city.

UNEMPLOYED STRUGGLES

Some people today imagine that there was only one big period of unemployment in Australia—and that during the economic crisis which began in 1929. Prior to the second World War crises of unemployment were regular and a degree of unemployment perpetual.

Laidler first gravitated from education, study of theory, and propaganda work into the active struggle when he got into the van of the unemployed movement and led this with J. W. Fleming, the anarchist in 1908.

Earlier Struggles

Fleming was no stranger to unemployed struggles. He was active in 1889-1890. The unemployed then met on a vacant block of land next to the Workingmen's College (R.M.I.T.) fronting La Trobe Street. Processions were illegal unless authorised by the Mayor. The unemployed were not favoured with the Mayor's authorisation and illegal processions were frequently organised. Rosa, one of the leaders, would call on the men to parade the "block". Rosa drew the attention of the men to the use of dynamite, nitro-glycerine and melinite as elements likely to aid them in their struggles against the plutocratic classes. The men descended on ministers, the Bishop of Melbourne, the Chamber of Commerce and on an historic occasion marched to Government House. The police had thought the destination to be the Town Hall and when the men passed the Town Hall there was some panic and a telephone call to Russell Street brought numerous horse-

cabs loaded with police scurrying after the unemployed. The Governor, Lord Hopetoun, received a deputation and promised what assistance he could. He gave a donation and surprised Melbourne by sending 300 bottles of champagne to Fleming for the unemployed. The Shamrock Brewery exploited the situation by adding several 18-gallon barrels of beer. There was a great turn up from all over Melbourne for the distribution. Hopetoun later went on strike—he demanded £16,000 a year extra, and when he didn't get it, "walked out", and returned to England. In 1893 an Unemployed Workers Association was formed in Richmond with anarchist David Andrade as secretary. The aim of this organisation was to conduct a Labour Bureau, hold meetings, assist in land settlement and, to favor all rational attempts at carrying on co-operative production, manufacturing and distribution.

Tom Mann was always concerned with the unemployed and in 1906 the Social Questions Committee made a survey of Carlton, Collingwood, Fitzroy, Footscray, North Melbourne, Port Melbourne, Prahran, Richmond and West Melbourne. 1967 houses were visited and living in these were 408 unemployed. It was claimed that nearly all able-bodied men were unemployed.

The organisation concentrated on involving the churches.

In June 1906, 250 men marched to St. Paul's Cathedral. The Melbourne Archbishop, Clarke, heard about it and sent word that they would be welcome. They were treated with courtesy and good seats were roped off for them. The Archbishop preached "If any man have not the spirit of Christ, he has none of His." There were interjections which the *Socialist* claims were not harmful but clearly all in the right tone. Clarke preached thrift when in work and that low wages should be accepted. He also told them English conditions were worse. He was told by an unemployed spokesman that this was not the point. There were 2,500 men and 2,500 boys out of work, adding to this figure 1,000 women and 2,000 children there were at least 8,000 suffering.

Visits to the Australian Church and Scots Church were in contrast. At Scots Presbyterian Church (Dr. Marshall), the unemployed received a hostile reception. Interjections were strong, "Why talk about after death—why not tell us how to keep alive?" Dr. Marshall was requested to address them after the service, which request was declined. The service ended with three cheers for the social revolution.

On the other hand at the Australian Church there was not one interjection. The Rev. Charles Strong asked them to stay after the service

and have a special meeting on the subject of unemployment, and asked them to make definite proposals. This was done and it was suggested the church make a house to house survey on poverty.

Rev. S. Pearce Corey, of Collins Street Baptist Church, extended an invitation to the unemployed. Nearly half the seating in the church was reserved, suitable songs were specially printed and hearty refreshments were given after the service.

In organising a church demonstration the unemployed inserted this advertisement:—"Unemployed Church Parade Sunday morning. Swanston Street 10.15. 'God save the people'. Meanwhile let us save ourselves."

The unemployed gathered at the opening of Parliament, the Governor was hooted, troopers charged into the crowd, one man was arrested and in court his case was dismissed.

It was in October 1908 that Laidler the socialist joined forces with Fleming the anarchist and set about organising some spectacular events to focus attention on the unemployed.

The Treasury Gardens came to be the meeting-place of the unemployed (possibly because Fleming as a bootmaker had taken a prominent part in a big strike of the bootmakers and it had been their custom to meet at the Treasury Gardens). They would call a meeting by means of inserting an advertisement in the "Meetings" Column of the *Age*. From here, there would be demonstrations to ministers at nearby Parliament House and officials in the Treasury Buildings. Usually only a deputation would get in to see the person concerned.

There was no formal organisation of the unemployed.

The dole was unheard of and the purpose of the deputation to the Chief Secretary, Public Works Department, etc., was to ask for work. The only time work was given was in order that the most active of the unemployed could be deployed to country towns.

When Parliament had to Adjourn. Melee on the Mosaics

The biggest achievement of the Laidler-Fleming leadership was headlined in the *Argus* of October 21st, 1908, as follows:—

THE UNEMPLOYED.

RAID ON PARLIAMENT.

REFUSED ADMISSION.

DOOR HANDLE WRENCHED OFF.

LABOR MEMBERS HOOTED.

When Mr. Reid (Leader of the Federal opposition) had been speaking about an hour in support of his want-of-confidence motion in the House of Representatives yesterday a burst of cheering from somewhere outside the Chamber made members wonder. The Speaker leaned forward in his chair in alarm. The Sergeant-at-arms and the Clerk rushed out of the House to see what was happening. It was the cheering of 50 or 60 unemployed outside in the vestibule.

A score of their number had at the moment leapt at the doors and tried to force a way into the Queen's hall.

It was reported the unemployed had been standing quietly from two o'clock until four o'clock (they had expected to be shown to places in the gallery) when they were finally refused admission. The *Argus* continued, "Their desire to reach the chamber was fired to white heat by a call from their leader (Mr. Percy Laidler). He is the assistant secretary of the Socialist Party. The three doors leading into the Queen's hall were attacked, and for a moment it seemed that the men were to succeed. But the officers of Parliament and a handful of police locked and barred the entrances, the last being made secure just as one big fellow clean wrenched the massive handle off. . ."

" 'Look at those murderers and parasites up there,' said one man (sweeping his hand around the balconies)."

The *Argus* goes on to report that Mr. Percy Laidler removed his hat, stepped to the middle of the hall and started to harangue the crowd in loud tones. He attacked the Labor members for not coming out and supporting them. He said, "We have only attempted peaceably to get into our own Federal House"... "Dr. Maloney ordered me out." He suggested they would stand a candidate against Dr. Maloney at the next elections. He said they would go to the conservative members in future, a remark cheered by the crowd. "The Labor men will be knocked out of the road (men—'lazy loafers'). They don't represent us. They only represent the middle class" (cheers) . . . Laidler went on, "Fisher said, 'For God's sake, men, don't make a demonstration in the galleries, I am in sympathy with you.' (laughter). Yes, Mr. Fisher, but sympathy will not feed us."

He then addressed the politicians, "If your wives and children were starving would you not try to get through the doors of Parliament? (loud cheers). If they refused to let you in what would you do? If you were sensible men you would blow the place up."

The *Argus* went on to report that it was awkward in Parliament for an hour or so—every door back, front and side was locked. People could only come and go through a closely guarded entrance. About eighty police had been called but they took no action. Members of Parliament panicked and next day the member for Barwon, one Crouch, demanded more police protection. Guards were added in order that the unemployed could not get so close to the parliamentarians again.

The *Socialist* reported, "Comrade Laidler deserves high praise for his behaviour, and the coolness which prevented an outbreak. The police, too (numbers of which are in sympathy with the unemployed), ought to be thanked for their kindly treatment. Orders have since been



The demonstration received nationwide coverage. This clip is from the Adelaide Advertiser. (Image via Trove Digitised Newspapers, National Library of Australia.)

issued that no police may leave the barracks during the afternoon, which practically means keeping them on all day and night. This is very hard lines, and it is to be hoped that this sort of senseless panic will subside."

Laidler was banned from the precincts of Parliament House for life but he, of course, ignored the ban.

£5 for the Baby

On another occasion a minor riot was staged at the office, of Tommy Bent the Premier, over a necessitous unemployed case. Nothing was done. The Socialist Party at its Sunday night meeting at the Bijou Theatre took up a collection of 23/-, a fairly large sum in those days.

Later Laidler met Bent in the street and the latter asked if he had obtained relief for "that case". Laidler told him the Socialist Party collected 23/-. Bent said, "For a sick woman, was it?" "No," he was told, "the woman was going to have a baby and all she had was a slice of bread and butter which she kept near her bedside, keeping it to eat when in labour, to give her strength to bear the child."

Some time afterward Laidler met the father of the child and asked him how it was. He was told that they gave it to someone for £5.

A Visit to the Stock Exchange

Two to three hundred unemployed filed into the Stock Exchange and took possession of the public hall. They refused to budge. The usual business of the Stock Exchange was brought to a standstill. One man referred to the Stock Exchange members as "a body of parasites which batted upon labour".

Four delegates, Laidler, Frank Hyett, Walsh and H. H. Champion were taken upstairs to confer with the Committee of the Exchange. On returning, Hyett as spokesman, informed the men that Mr. Noall of the Stock Exchange said that they would be willing to act with the unemployed in putting consolidated pressure on the government so that relief works may be instituted. The delegates were to return in the afternoon. Apparently there had been a discussion at the 'Change because the delegation was informed by D. J. Gilchrist (Chairman) that the Stock Exchange never directly or indirectly had taken part in politics. While they were sympathetic they felt it out of place for the

Exchange to dictate to the Government in matters of that sort. Hyett then particularised and asked for assistance in retaining furniture of an unemployed man in Fitzroy. Gilchrist replied he would speak to members personally about it.

• • •

There were frequent marches on newspaper offices requesting publicity and support.

Ways to defeat obstruction were novel. Jack Chapple said "the first time I met Laidler he was walking backwards". A march had been banned so walking backwards was regarded as a way round it.

INTERVIEWING JACK LONDON

While still assistant secretary, in January he had the proud task of interviewing celebrated Socialist author, Jack London, who came to Australia to report the Burns-Johnson heavyweight championship of the world fight.

Jack London was one of the most popular authors in Australia as well as in his native America. His outdoor, rugged stories appealed beyond the labour circles but he was specially esteemed by socialists for his social writings and his allegiance to the cause. He was especially revered for his definition of a "scab". The announcement that he was coming as a reporter to cover the fight caused great excitement in the socialist camp. He did not attend any meetings as his health was poor, and after a brief stay on the mainland he went to Tasmania to rest.

The *Socialist* of January 15th, 1909, reports:—

Comrade Jack London, traveller author, war correspondent, and many other talented things, arrived in Melbourne on Saturday. In an interview in the *Herald* he spoke out straightly and unambiguously as to his allegiance to revolutionary socialism. Mrs. Mann saw Mr. and Mrs. London on Saturday, and secretary P. Laidler and H. H. Champion had a yarn with the pleasant pair on Sunday. Mr. and Mrs. London are more than delighted with the socialist activity in Melbourne and wish it long life and early triumph. They sent a message of greeting and good will to the Bijou meeting on Sunday.

Laidler interviewed London at his hotel; the room was full with sporting men, journalists, fellow-passengers. The atmosphere was free

and easy and London treated all as though they were his friends. London smoked incessantly, handed round drinks, and was a good talker, but he said he hated addressing public meetings.

Laidler did his best to cajole him into attending the Bijou Theatre, but he was adamant.

A couple of weeks after their arrival the Londons spent an afternoon at an informal picnic in the hills. London said to Laidler, "You couldn't get me to your meeting", then turning to someone else said, "He put up a hard fight to get me, but I'm not keen, I don't like meetings," Then to Laidler, "After you'd gone I had a real reason for not going to your meeting. Some Melbourne resident came along and took me in a buggy and pair to Brighton Beach."

He asked the gathering in general, "Don't you think you'll spoil the working class movement by putting forward reforms of a softening nature, that will sap the fighting spirit of the workers?"

The special interview by Laidler appeared in February 5th issue and was headed:

LABOUR LEGISLATION AND SOCIAL EVOLUTION.

About Books and a talk with Jack London.

Socialist Special.

In the interview London said that he was once arrested at Oakland for free speech in a socialist campaign.

He thought it could be possible that the triumph of socialism might involve physical force but only if the capitalist class refused to surrender. He discussed the scab and the tramp. He said that the surplus labour army is an economic necessity. Without it the present construction of society would fall to pieces. In discussing his literary work he said his preference would be to write pamphlets and poetry but that he wrote fiction for a living. He felt that his *The Iron Heel* might be his best contribution, and *The Game* his most literary work.

In Australia *The Iron Heel*, *People of the Abyss* and *Call of the Wild* were best sellers in the labour movement.

The Burns-Johnson Fight

"A record gate of £26,200, nearly double the world's previous record —doubtful if equalled since Colosseum in Rome was crowded to witness gladiators in combat in the times of the Caesars," quoth one

newspaper. Jack Johnson indisputably thumped out his victory in the Sydney Stadium.

Some of London's masterly reporting on the Burns-Johnson fight was disquieting to his internationalist fans.

He wrote, "Personally, I was with Burns all the way. He is a white man, and so am I. Naturally I wanted to see the white man win." Further, "No black living could have taken the punishment Burns did" . . . "If grit. and gameness should win by decree of natural law, then Burns I dare to say, would have won on Saturday, and in a thousand additional fights with Johnson he would win." He is also reported to have said, "I would have sacrificed my right arm to see the white man win."

Chauvinism was rife and to his own surprise, Burns was treated as though he was the victor. He was presented with a medal. *Socialist* criticises Randolph Bedford's article on the fight as being partisan and an incitement to passionate prejudice, but does not appear to mention London. Most of the socialists were for Johnson. Laidler thereafter regarded London as a chauvinist.

Hugh McIntosh (who arranged the fight) was entertained at the Australia Hotel and present were Hughes M.L.C., Tommy Burns, Jack London, W. A. Holman M.L.A. and Alderman Lindsay Thompson. Mrs. London helped make history by being quoted as the first woman to attend a prize fight in Australia.

An amusing incident was connected with Mrs. Charmian London while in Sydney. The Labor Women's Organising Committee discussed whether they should entertain Mrs. London.

London said, "If this discussion took place in the Women's Organising Committee and they declined to entertain my wife on account of her husband being a socialist, it seems parallel to a Protestant declining to give me a cup of tea because I am a Methodist when I didn't ask for a cup of tea at all." Had he known the W.O.C. he may have realised Mrs. London's attendance at a prize fight would affect their hospitality as much as London's socialism.

LAILLER MOVES OUT

On January 15th, 1909 the *Socialist* stated that it was likely Laidler would relinquish the position as assistant secretary at the end of the party year in February as, "Our young and able colleague has run

himself down and needs a spell. Few there are who will not regret the loss of Percy's secretarial services."

In the issue of February 19th an advertisement appeared for "applications for position of Assistant Secretary, to be lodged with the undersigned by 6 p.m. Monday next. Percy Laidler, Asst. Sec., 283 Elizabeth Street, Melbourne."

Socialist reports on April 9th, 1909: "Dragged before the magistracy on Thursday of last week for the heinous offence of distributing handbills in Yarra Park on the Sabbath, which isn't the Sabbath, our comrade Percy Laidler, was fined 5/- or three days. He elected 'to take it out' and was wrath when released through the party paying the fine."

In April Perc left for a "holiday at home on the farm" and was then to proceed to Broken Hill by request of the socialist group there. His departure was announced to the Bijou audience and it expressed its good wishes in a shower of clapping. "hello"

A week later he wrote that he was "loafing" at home and reading with profit, but felt the itch to be agitating. Soon after this he wired for 10 dozen *Socialists* much to the consternation of his conservative parents, and then took them to Berringa and began holding meetings and selling the *Socialist* to the 2,000 miners there.

Mid-May he was back in Melbourne resuming duties as an honorary Socialist Party organiser. He and another member named Blenck were arrested for addressing the unemployed in the Treasury Gardens. Perc was discharged and Blenck fined £1.

June 4th, 1909 issue of *Socialist* has a photo of Perc with caption "Socialist agitator who has gone to Broken Hill to organise for the Barrier Socialist Group".

With a report reading that Comrade Percy Laidler accompanied the Broken Hill groupists on Monday. "He goes to do what he can for the cause at Broken Hill, and as what he can do is much because of his experience and tact he should accomplish worthy things in that detailed organisation so necessary in successful activity. We expect to hear excellent reports of our comrade's work, and congratulate the group on securing his cooperation." The 20-week lockout in Broken Hill had attracted the eyes of all Australian revolutionaries and Laidler was eager to go to the Barrier (as it was usually called).

Chapter Four

BROKEN HILL

Broken Hill was the hub of radical-industrial Australia—a town rich in history and as unique in character as it is geographically.

In 1883 the first discovery of minerals, other than gold, boomed Australia still higher on the Stock Exchange in London, to which city Australian business interests were closely allied. Silver, lead and zinc founded the dynasty of the Broken Hill Proprietary Company to be the main power in the Australian economy in the future. The yield of silver was 800 oz. to the ton whilst lead and zinc were part of the sinews of war.

The pioneers of Broken Hill were similar to those workers who gravitate to any mining town—adventurous men of initiative, many of them, non-British migrants experienced in political and industrial struggles. There was sufficient common experience of the class struggle for workers in the mines to achieve a better standard of wages and conditions than other miners. The isolation of the town from other centres gave a bargaining advantage, just as the isolation of Australia itself, from the rest of the world, gave the workers advantages in gaining economic and political victories.

In 1907 Broken Hill was declared a city. The new baby cut its teeth in 1909 in a stormy year of conflict which sharply bared the class struggle.

The Great Lockout of 1909 was prologued in 1908 when the bosses decided through the voice of John Darling, Chairman of Directors of B.H.P. that wages must come down by 12.5 percent, i.e. from the minimum of 8/7½ to 7/6 per day.

In December 1906 an agreement lasting two years was signed with the Companies and it came to an end on December 31st, 1908. In September, delegates of unions came together and estimated there were only 60 percent of the workers in unions. They sent an invitation to Tom Mann to come from Melbourne and organise Broken Hill. The members of ten unions were involved in the threatening dispute and for the purposes of the campaign they formed a Combined Trade-Union Committee.

Tom inspected the mines, addressed special union meetings, meetings of women and street corner meetings to reach those that were not likely to attend union meetings, and three or four times a week mass meetings were held. Mann had arrived at the Hill on September 30th. In a few weeks he could say that it was hard to find any qualified person outside the union. In three weeks 1,600 were joined up. He went to Pt. Pirie where conditions were scandalous. Smelters on eight-hour shifts worked seven days a week and did not even have a break for Easter and Xmas. After two or three weeks Mann achieved 98 percent organisation there. Although he found the men were all enthusiasm for the pending struggle at Broken Hill they were not so keen on doing something about their own conditions.

THE LOCKOUT

Broken Hill ushered in the New Year with the usual festivities tempered with an undercurrent of disquiet.

Pickets going on duty at midnight added a serious note. The lockout was to last twenty weeks and bring great hardship and poverty to the people of the Hill. Three mines, B.H.P., The British and Lock 10 locked the men out. Other mines renewed the old agreement.

On November 3rd, 1908 it was announced that fifty police were leaving Sydney for the Hill. The City Council and Chamber of Commerce carried resolutions of protest. It was felt that the sending of police would jeopardise a peaceful settlement.

Another contingent of fifty left Sydney on January 7th and a very large contingent of 103 police and truckloads of horses arrived on the 9th January.

Mann pointed out through lack of union solidarity these men could come a distance of 1,300 miles without let or hindrance. They passed through small towns and the big cities of Melbourne and Adelaide.

The Combined Unions' Committee became a Disputes Committee. The lockout was conducted on similar lines to the 1892 struggle. Comments in the *Argus* of January 5th were, ". . . Shocked by system of picketing—worst there ever was in Australia . . . unparalleled system of picketing."

One of the union leaders, speaking, repeated Dick Sleath, leader in the 1892 struggle saying "picket so closely that not even a rabbit can go through". Seven hundred pickets were enrolled in 24 hours and Mann

said he hoped there would be three times as many on Sunday. The scabs had to reside in the mine for safety. The changing of pickets three times a day was quite a ceremony. Those going on duty were played to their positions by the Amalgamated Miners' Association (A.M.A.) Band with most of the townspeople marching behind it. The march was headed by a banner, "Behold The Workers Think".

John Darling, who, of course, was not in Broken Hill, and could equally be called a Pall Mall miner as a Collins Street miner, was quick to announce "If the police could not maintain order and ensure respect for the law, then the military should be called in. Either that or the Government should give the mine-owners power to protect their own lives and property." Prime Minister Andrew Fisher said "the remarks of Mr. Darling are ill-advised. He is too early in the field . . . much too premature in his observations."

The strength shown by the combined unions in this lockout laid the basis for today's powerful Barrier Industrial Council.

In 1892 the Unions and Management dealt directly with each other as they do today, but in 1909 the Union decided to try arbitration. The results were completely disillusioning. The men had their case prepared in November 1908, thinking that it would be heard in time to prevent any disruption of work. Mr. Justice Higgins presided, and it was ten weeks before the award was given in favour of the men. The proprietors had said they would not hold a conference unless Higgins demanded the pickets withdraw. Higgins replied, "It is not for either litigant to dictate conditions."

Before the Broken Hill case was heard the employers had already announced they would not open up operations underground unless the award suited them. Once again employers showed that they were only prepared to accept decisions of the court when it acts as an agent for the employers.

The award for Pt. Pirie gave the men a six-day week. The Companies' lawyers appealed to the High Court and it upheld the appeal—the Pt. Pirie claim was quashed.

Tom Mann wrote, "This experience of the admittedly most perfect Arbitration Court in existence, with a Labor Government in power, damped any enthusiasm I might have felt for such an institution."

The Workers Rally

There was good support for the workers—the local Shop Assistants & Warehousemen employees undertook to support the men and struck a levy. The Sydney Miners' Federation sent £100. The Coal Lumpers Union, Sydney, Bendigo Trades Council, and Adelaide Council pledged support. By January 9th between £15,000 and £16,000 was collected. The Prime Minister, Andrew Fisher gave £12, Mr. Cann M.L.A. £10, W. A. Holman M.L.A. and deputy leader of the N.S.W. State Labor Party donated £1.10.3. The English dockers sent a donation. A Co-operative Bakery was formed with reduced bread price.

Boycotts

The Locomotive and Engine-drivers refused to carry passengers and goods to the mine. Messrs. Crossing Bros., wholesale and retail butchers, issued the following notification

To whom it may concern

We, the undersigned firm, declare that we will not supply the Proprietary mine with any meat, in any shape or form either directly or indirectly while the present trouble continues.

Crossing Bros., Broken Hill.

Messrs. Kidman Bros. issued a similar notice.

A mine official boarding at a hotel came in for his one o'clock meal and another boarder, a municipal employee, refused to sit down with him. The combined unions threatened to declare the hotel black. The mine official had to move into the mine to save trouble.

The coachman of G. D. Delprat (President of the Mine Managers' Association) had driven officials for twenty years. He was stopped by pickets taking Delprat's wagonette up to the mine. He was allowed through but came back on foot and was cheered by the crowd. He joined the A.M.A.

Municipal employees decided that no sanitary carts would go up to the mine, Operative Bakers—no bread to be delivered. A consignment of coal was supposed to come to the mine from Cockburn. It was decided there was no use sending it as it would not be possible to get men to unload it. Two hundred attended a meeting of foreign employees and resolved to stand by the Combined Unions and warn all

foreigners not to accept employment; and to write to the Melbourne Syrian Association and warn them. J. Lyons presided and the meeting was addressed by Sarich, Roderich and Mousally.

A woman who found her husband was in the mine threatened to send in the baby for him to look after. She sent a message to him that she would not have his blood money. A daughter-in-law of a scab said she would share in inflicting punishment on her father-in-law if the men decided on it. A railway line was blown up and also an old water main. Telephone wires between Block 10 and the Proprietary were cut to prevent communication. A number of scabs left the mine and some left town.

The Police

It was reported that there were 350 police there on January 9th. They were armed with carbines and revolvers.

At a meeting of 4,000 to 5,000 at the Trades Hall, Tom Mann said that several police were ashamed of their job. Some had told him themselves in the Post Office that afternoon.

He said, "Today we have witnessed some amusing sights along the line of lode. We have seen blue tunics and white helmets jumping about like kangaroos and wallabies, jumping and bumping along the lines of lodes and over the dumps."

The Arrests

On Saturday, January the 9th there was a huge number of people marching behind the band, union officials and pickets going on duty. On reaching Sulphide Street, it was found there was a line of police across the road and one of them shouted, "You cannot pass here. Go right or left." This was taken to mean that the police wanted them to go down Crystal Lane instead of crossing it. As they turned right the police blocked them and laid into them. Tom Mann was seized by a large number of policemen (some reports say six on each arm). The police grabbed the union banner, tore it off the poles and used the latter on the heads of the men, including the bandsmen. Mann and twenty-eight other men were arrested.

As in the Prahran free speech fight, the people found it difficult to believe Tom had been arrested. Those that did not see him being taken

off by a squad of police thought he was in the Court House arranging bail. A large crowd assembled outside the lockup and sang socialist and union songs to encourage the prisoners, who were not allowed bail until Monday. George Dale claims that news of the assault spread like wildfire and 15,000 marched around the city streets and finally over the same route as earlier, for the 8 p.m. picket changeover. There was no interference.

Even the *Argus* of January 11th reported that there was close on 10,000 at the march and meeting.

There were sixty in massed bands and at the rear of the march was a regiment of women with three red flags, followed by hundreds of young girls and children. Dale writes, "Next came the women, and their numbers—how many, Christ only knows, for although marching about twelve deep these mothers of Australia's future manhood covered at least four hundred yards of ground. The women appeared more incensed at the cowardly official assaults committed earlier in the day than did many of the menfolk."

". . . The womenfolk that evening at least got some of their own back, for wherever a 'cop' was observed during the march he either received a 'back-hander' from a woman on passing or was spat upon. This happened not once but hundreds of times during that memorable tramp through the city's streets."

Girls who waited on the imported police were asked to neglect them. There was a message from Tom Mann. The socialist group sang "The Marseillaise" and many versions of "John Brown's Body". Cinematograph pictures were taken of the demonstration. Three cheers were given for Tom Mann and his comrades in gaol.

Some stirring speeches had been made, when a fire broke out behind the police station, and everyone rushed there, thinking the arrested men might be in danger. It turned out to be a place three hundred yards away and it was thought later that the police deliberately lit it, to break up the meeting.

On Monday, the Mayor, Alderman Ivey, went bondsman for Tom Mann. Holman had sent a wire, "Picketing as such no offence known to British Law."

A wire came from Bob Ross, "Will do everything possible. Socialist Party with you. Fight on."

Tom Mann wrote to the V.S.P. after being bailed: "I am in splendid health and spirits, and full of activity, in short I am living and a few

know it. You tell me not to get into gaol—I reckon that is where I will be by the time this reaches you.” The *Socialist* headed an article “A Big and Deep Movement—Glorious Fight.”

Again Tom wrote: “I am a dangerous agitator and a dangerous man. I am an enemy to capitalism. Knowing what I know I hope to be increasingly dangerous as the years roll by.”

Police Court proceedings commenced on the 18th and were adjourned until the 25th. Tom Mann, Walter Stokes, John May, E. H. Gray and Sid Robinson were committed for trial to the Quarter Sessions, by S.M. Arthur N. Barnett of Sydney, later connected with the I.W.W. case. Twenty-three were charged in the local court. The main charges were “unlawful assemblage” and “taking part in a riot” as well as the usual charges made on demonstrators. Some got 6 to 9 months and some were bound over.

The general feeling was the fracas was a direct result of police provocation. The largest contingent of police from Sydney, 103, had arrived with trucks of horses on the morning of the fatal day. The bash-up occurred at the 4 p.m. picket changeover.

The Reverend J. Patterson, Rev. John Murray and W. R. Nairn, a big business-man, all testified that it was a deliberate case of provocation on the part of the police. The Rev. John Murray said that Tom Mann was going quietly and was brutally maltreated. The business-man said “. . . you know on whose side my sympathies are, but I think you know me sufficiently well to be aware that I am not biased or a bigot. The entire demonstration of force, on Saturday was undoubtedly pre-arranged and pre-conceived provocation, or at least irritation on the part of the authorities . . .”

These three opinions were publicly made and published.

A Mrs. Gibson, wife of the City Librarian, was subsequently charged with insulting the police. Her alleged remark is a classic: “Wade’s never sweat bludgers from the slums of Sydney go back and live on your prostitutes!”

She was bound over in a sum of £20 to be of good behaviour for a year, in default one month’s imprisonment.

She chose gaol.

There were frequent meetings with singing outside the gaol to keep the prisoners cheerful.

• • •

At the quarter sessions Stokes and May got two and three years respectively and Robinson and Gray were bound over with £50 recognisances because of disagreement on the jury.



The Broken Hill defendants, tried at Albury. Back row: May, Robinson, Stokes. Front row: Holland, Mann, Grey, Rosser. (Photo, The Leader, 1st May, 1909.)

Sid Robinson, well known in Melbourne, had attempted to assist Tom Mann and was struck over the head by one constable, two plain-clothes men upended him, a dozen police set upon him and he was frog-marched to the lockup where two burly thugs held him with his hands behind his back, while a third bashed him several times on the face (according to George Dale in "The Industrial History of Broken Hill".)

Immense assistance was given the workers by the fact that on November 2nd, 1908, the "Barrier Daily Truth", paper of the Barrier Labor Federation, became a daily. It was the first Labor Daily in the world. Another paper which did sterling service was "The Flame", a Socialist journal edited by Bob Ross. It closed down shortly after the lock-out.

HARRY HOLLAND

Harry Holland, Secretary of the Socialist Federation of Australasia and editor of the *International Socialist Review*, arrived in Broken Hill

from Sydney on the 14th February. On the 20th he was awakened from his bed at six o'clock in the morning and arrested for a speech he had made outside the gaol on the day he arrived. He was charged with sedition and inciting to violence.

He was alleged to have said: "We read of thousands of you men, who call yourselves unionists, being there and allowing Tom Mann to be arrested and taken to gaol and not one of you attempted to rescue him, and only 300 policemen in Broken Hill. You have the position in your own hands, geographically. Why, how long would it take you to stop supplies to the gaol? Refuse to allow your daughters to wait on the police; stop supplies to the Broken Hill mines, and send Wade's criminals back. If you are going to fight, put a little ginger into it, or to be plain-spoken—dynamite. That's the way to win. Do you mean to say that three hundred police are going to frighten you? Why if they hit you with a baton, hit them with a baton; if they hit you with a pick-handle, hit them with a pick; if they shoot at you with a revolver, then shoot at them with a revolver, and if they use a rifle on you—well, if you have a gatling gun, turn it on them." ("Sedition in N.S.W. What is it?" Harry Holland's Trial at Albury. S.F. of A. Pamphlet No. 5, Sydney 1909.)

The charge and case hinged on the word dynamite. The use of such word did not appear in local newspaper reports. Holland himself believed that he was really charged because of an article he had written in the *Flame*.

"Get ready to take the mines and to hold them!" was the heading to this article.

It prompted an editorial in the *Sydney Daily Telegraph*, which he felt was the direct cause of his arrest. The editorial in part: ". . . Where is the Law? Coincidentally with the visit of Mr. Holland to Broken Hill, as the apostle of what he calls 'revolutionary socialism', there has been a recurrence of dynamite outrages. Whether the two things are directly related, there is nothing to show. This much however is certain: unless Mr. Holland's mission has stirred up the elements of violence and disorder it has failed in its openly-avowed purpose. If there is such a thing known to the law of this country as incitement to crime, Mr. Holland has been flagrantly guilty of it."

Another factor was that the moderate unionists in Broken Hill were embarrassed by his visit and would not permit him on official platforms. He spoke at outdoor meetings only. This attitude would have encouraged the authorities to take action.

The legal defence hinged on whether the word "dynamite" referred to actual dynamite or figure of speech dynamite. The evidence of the reporting constable was shot full of holes by Holland, who conducted his own defence. The police informant admitted that he took no notes but wrote out a report from memory one hour later. An interjector could have called out the word "dynamite" was the contention of some.

Whether it was used or not Laidler and Swindley showed they took it to be literal as they both repeated it in speeches without being arrested.

The venue of the trial was Albury, where the foreman of the jury held 70,000 acres of land and had contributed £500 to the Dreadnought Fund (frowned on by socialists).

Judge Pring officiated as he did in the Peter Bowling, Newcastle mining case, the Tom Mann trial and the IWW frameup. He was a professional "political cases" Judge. The Crown Prosecutor was Ernest Lamb K.C., also a professional political prosecutor. He was used in the IWW case. Holland was found guilty, and sentenced to two years.

The visiting socialists in Broken Hill were active in forming a Release Committee for Holland, and others sentenced at Albury. By early June 560 bundles of petitions for clemency had been sent all over Australia, and socialists in all parts of the Commonwealth formed Release Committees. At an open-air meeting at the corner of Sulphide and Argent Streets, Laidler announced they were selling photos of Harry Holland and copies of the speech he made in court at Albury, in pamphlet form, for the benefit of Holland's wife and eight children, whom the Socialist Party had decided to maintain whilst he was in gaol. At a meeting outside the Trades Hall in June, Angus McDonell said the workers were fools if they did not use dynamite or anything else if they could in that way, better their conditions.

A Mr. Speirs of the Electrical Trades at the Sydney Labor Council said that if the 80,000 workers of this State were properly organised they would not bother about petitions for the release of the men sentenced at Albury but would march down and pull the gaol to pieces.

Holland was released in October, 1909 after serving only five to six months. He announced "Either I was rightly imprisoned, and am now wrongly at liberty, or I was wrongly imprisoned and am now rightly free." Many believed he had been released by Wade because Wade hoped that he would split the labor vote in a contest with Hughes in

forthcoming elections. Holland had stood as a socialist on two previous occasions.

He ultimately went to New Zealand and became leader of the opposition.

TOM MANN COMMITTED

Police Court proceedings started on January 18th and on the 25th Tom Mann was committed for trial to the Quarter Sessions. The assizes were not due until April and the only way Tom could get bail was by undertaking not to hold any meetings or take part in the dispute at Broken Hill. The Committee endorsed that he make the undertaking and a lecture tour was arranged for South Australia and other States. On tour he had with him film pictures of scenes of the Broken Hill troubles. Tom could not go to Broken Hill so Broken Hill came to Tom.

The town of Cockburn was less than forty miles away, a town on the S.A. and N.S.W. border.

The Tom Mann Train

This device not only gave the populace of Broken Hill a means of expression but stirred every country town along the line, as well as Cockburn and neighbouring S.A. towns.

On January 31st and again on April 11th the Tom Mann train steamed down the track to South Australia. Forty-odd overflowing trucks and six carriages, a brake van, two engines, one fore and one aft, the front one bearing the banner "BROKEN HILL LOCKOUT 1908" comprised the train, on January 31st. An estimated 2,000 to 3,000 were on board. More came than the Combined Unions anticipated and there was a delay in obtaining more trucks. Thousands who could not go, came to the station to cheer the train out.

Everywhere along the line people waved and cheered from cottage, church, Sunday school and wayside station.

Reaching Cockburn at 2.45 p.m. there was a rush to spread out the picnic lunches in a gigantic picnic.

Tom Mann addressed the crowd from a buggy and pair at 7 p.m. and the train took the inspired people home very late indeed, through the moonlight night. The whole scene was unique.

Again in April the Tom Mann train ran. This time the trip was enlivened with music from an excellent band and the residents of Cockburn prepared lunch and boiling water for the Hillites. An amusement committee had been set up by the combined unions and it provided refreshments. At 2.30 p.m. Tom commenced speaking and spoke for an hour and a quarter.

The president of the Combined Unions, Mr. Nulty, chaired and the Federal Postmaster General, Josiah Thomas (Labor Government) spoke. Tom received an ovation and asked the audience to sing one of his favourite songs, "When the Worker is at the top of the tree, and the Loafer is somewhere down below."

In his speech he told them he knew what cheeseparings were necessary to get the fare to Cockburn after being locked out fourteen weeks and said some sturdy characteristics had brought Barrier people there. He said men in Broken Hill were worse off than Egyptian slaves, and that their work "entitled them to a monetary advance on 8/7½—namely 10/-." "Some men crawled through life without a fight—'only let me get into that hole'."

He joked about his writ "The King against Tom Mann"—"a fat lot the King knew about Tom Mann. The dirty rascals were trying to hide behind the name of the King." He ended calling for three cheers for the international workers of the world.

The Hon. Josiah Thomas said he was glad to appear on that platform and urged them to fight on. He said the sympathy of the Federal Government was with them.

At 5 p.m. the train steamed out with its passengers enthusiastically cheering Tom Mann, now a conspicuous figure on a water tank, as the train travelled past him.

THE TRIAL OF TOM MANN

In April, Tom Mann was informed that the N.S.W. Attorney General had decided to change the venue of the trial from Broken Hill to Albury, more than a thousand miles away and which could not help but produce a jury dominated by farmers. This same manoeuvre had been used by "justice" before and has since been used. In the 1892 Broken Hill strike men were tried at Deniliquin—also a rich country centre. The shearers of Barcaldine were tried in Rockhampton in 1891 and during

the depression in June 1932 the Tighes Hill (suburb of Newcastle) eviction fighters were tried in the farming community of Singleton.

The cases of Rosser and Lyons preceded Tom Mann's charges and they were acquitted. Against Mann there were five charges including sedition and unlawful assembly. Mann came into Court wearing a bright crimson flower in his buttonhole. Mrs. Mann was in Court with a bright red tie and red trimmings on her hat.

The Prosecutor, Lamb (also in IWW case and later a member of the fascist New Guard) referred in his opening remarks to the colour "red" being affected by Tom Mann's followers in Broken Hill as a sign they belonged to the same section.

There was a bunch of crimson dahlias in a vase on the barristers' table, Judge Pring was clad in robes of scarlet and ermine. Tom's counsel, J. C. Gannon, parried "we use the colour 'red' in other places besides Broken Hill". Reassembling after lunch it was noted that the red dahlias were missing. Gannon spoke for two hours and Tom for one and a half hours.

The farming jury voted for acquittal. Tom was carried shoulder-high through a tumultuous cheering by excited crowds whom he addressed from the balcony of the George Hotel, with Mrs. Mann beside him. There were cheers for barrister Gannon and solicitor, Justin McCarthy, and for the emancipation of the workers of the world.

UNEMPLOYED STRUGGLE AT THE BARRIER

Tom Mann left Broken Hill at the end of June and it was decided by the Socialist Group to secure the services of Percy Laidler for organising work. His work was to conduct propaganda (open air meetings on Wednesdays and Saturdays), organise the party and chiefly to carry out unemployed agitation. Unemployment and poverty were great owing to the lengthy lockout.

It had become his policy since the experience of leading the unemployed in Melbourne to seek means of agitation that would result in cables being sent to London. As *Punch*, October 29th, 1908, said: "...English emigrant hears stories of unemployed battling in Melbourne he cannot reasonably be expected to be enamoured of Victoria as his future home." Laidler reasoned in 1909 that the potential emigrant

reading of unemployed activities in Broken Hill would not be enamoured of Broken Hill as his future home, either.

Laidler threatened to take possession of the British mine, with unemployed running it themselves; loot shops; shake hell out of Broken Hill, startle the whole of Australia; and lead a march of unemployed on Sydney, skinning and eating the squatters' sheep on the way, in the form of a pillaging expedition; put the fear of God into the hearts of the capitalists; set fire to stations of some of the Albury jurors; drain the streets with the blood of the capitalists; blow up the city within a fortnight and take over the Adelaide express.

These wild threats set off a great stream of wires back and forth between the Mayor of Broken Hill and Premier Wade of New South Wales, and achieved the object of getting into the London cables. There were hurried discussions in Cabinet with requests from Sydney to "please check wild language". If none of the violent things were carried out at least the result was great publicity, a degree of amelioration of economic privations and the further enshrinement of Broken Hill citizens in the hearts of frustrated workers elsewhere in the Commonwealth. The campaign stimulated unemployed activities in Melbourne, Sydney and Adelaide, and it became a saying in Sydney that they should "Broken Hill" things.

• • •

Laidler's aim for the cables is clear from a speech made July 5th: "What a pretty thing for them to cable home if we took the British [mine]. Why King Ned would wake up, rub his eyes and ask for a cave in which to hide for fear we should go over there. Rosebery or some of the others would shout 'Where are our Dreadnoughts? Send them over to Australia at once to quash rebellion.' But they would not dare to do that because William of Germany would say 'Go ahead Ned' and when the ships had left he would order his fleet over to take possession of the British Islands. If you men are willing we can do a lot. What should be done would be the unemployed of Sydney, Adelaide, Melbourne and Broken Hill to rise as one man and go into open rebellion and demand the right to live."

What may sound wild and reckless now, was attuned to the bitterness felt by the people of Broken Hill. The police had returned to Sydney and with the "uniformed scab protectors" out of the way, they could make their voices heard.

Laidler, Swindley and Wood were the leaders of this unemployed agitation.

At the initial mass meeting Swindley suggested they would have to burn down the hovels of Broken Hill in order to get work rebuilding houses. Wood said after they took possession of the British mine they would be able to exchange their products for the products of the cockies.

Laidler said "Only by striking fear into the hearts of the capitalists had any reform ever been gained. They should not submit to starvation. There were hundreds of men in Broken Hill capable of turning the town upside down if work was not given to them. If they delivered an ultimatum that within a fortnight they would blow up the city, they would find that work would be found for them immediately."

A deputation to Council was welcomed with a statement from the Mayor, Jack Long, that "he saw they were going to shake hell out of Broken Hill and shake the British and shake the abattoirs. If he was going to shake anything he would do it without telling anybody, take not talk." He advised them to go outback for work as he had done, which of course was precisely the advice of the capitalists. In actual fact there was no work outback.

With fine disregard for costs, Wade commenced a series of wires with:

Oxford Hotel Sydney.

Mayor of Broken Hill:

Your wire received. Representations will be placed before cabinet and answer will be given possibly on Monday. In the meantime I would urge on you as head of municipality of Broken Hill to use effort to check wild language that is being indulged in.

Wade Premier.

Wade Sydney.

Your wire received. Will do all I can restrain men. Do what you can. Language of unemployed not surprising when their condition realised. Council helpless re employment, owing to lockout rates not obtainable.

Long Mayor.

Swindley, evidently close to the Laidler policy commented on Wade's wire at a meeting of the unemployed:—

Fancy a bloodthirsty reptile like Wade saying that we should not use wild language. The man who sent the police to baton down women and children. This man would not hesitate to send police and have blood shed in the streets. I think it is time for the working class to rise and have no more of the go-slow-keep-cool methods.

Rev. E. Schafer gave a long address on the unemployed in his church using as his text II Thessalonians 3, verse 10. "If any would not work, neither should he eat." No doubt in response to this Swindley remarked at a meeting that he regarded parsons as parasites like the police.

Apparently the Reverend was annoyed at a rumour that the unemployed were going to march on his church.

The British Mine

The suggestion of taking over the mine was emphasised by Swindley seeking applications for a manager and underground foreman.

The *Barrier Daily Truth* of July 3rd, 1909, reports—

BUSINESS MEANT—BARRIER UNEMPLOYED MAKE SOME DRASTIC PROPOSALS TO GET WORK—including a proposition to work the British Mine. Slow suicide objected to.

It reported 600 to 700 present at a meeting presided over by the Mayor and addressed by H. Swindley, P. Laidler and H. Wood.

Laidler stressed the international existence of unemployment—in Glasgow bayonets were used to keep the crowd back—"If the capitalists ignored their claims let them beware lest the issue be bread or blood . . . did the workers get one reform by begging it? It was only by making the capitalist class afraid of the consequences that the workers could obtain any redress. If the ultimatum were given that if within a fortnight work were not provided, the whole town would be blown up, Mr. Wade would soon find work such as proceeding with the Umberumberka Water Scheme. The capitalist class was worse than the common street bludger in the mean methods adopted towards the

workers." He advised them to put ginger into their agitation, and referred to a report that an immigrant threatened to assassinate Wade. He had been sent to New Zealand for work and came back to find his wife had died. Laidler suggested all immigrants take similar action. There would be no starvation of children while there were shops from which food could be stolen, he declared. He referred to the action of the unemployed in England in the first half of the last century when the people whipped the Duke of Wellington in the streets.

At meetings the full ire of the unemployed was directed towards John Darling. Said Laidler referring to Darling—"Where is he now? At one of the most fashionable hotels in London." He ended his speech by saying, "If the Government did not do something effective by Wednesday they would do something that would startle the people of Australia from east to west, from the Gulf of Carpentaria to Hobson's Bay."

Swindley followed up that it would be something to wire around the world and give the shareholders a shock. "The shareholders would then demand of Wade, 'Where then were these police? What is the use of them taking notes, why don't they take out their guns?' " He then went on to say that the unemployed could use guns as well, and there were plenty of guns in the city. They had to oppose force with force.

The manager of the British, one Sampson, when interviewed by the press said he believed the unemployed would not interfere.

Barrier Truth: "It would be something out of the ordinary for you to cable your directors if they did make their threat good, would it not?"

Sampson: "By Jove. Yes. I wonder whether it would have the effect of putting the shares up or down."

While the wild words flew at the mass meetings, into the Australian press and across the overseas cables, the more sober educational work went on.

On Sunday night, Laidler lectured in serious vein on "Unemployment—its cause and effect" at the Trades Hall. Here he described the effect of the introduction of machines in England, described labour power as a commodity and related these things to Broken Hill.

He said, "We are revolutionists not because we are in love with revolution, but because revolution is forced upon us by the economic and social conditions of our day."

“Before there can be any real chance of grappling effectively with the capitalist system in Parliaments, the organisation of the workers economically on a basis better and firmer, and with a more virile spirit than has hitherto been the case, is vitally necessary. We hold the socialists of America and Europe are correct but declare that industrial organisation is at the present of greater importance than political action, as the workers have no hope of getting ownership and control of industry until they have the sense to demand it and organise in the industrial field, to use it. When they are thus ready, they may utilise Parliament to give legal effect to the workers’ cause in the shops, factories and mines; and then, parliaments as we know them (i.e. capitalist institutions to enable them to govern the workers) will have completed their work and parliaments of industry will be formed by the workers, by which the industry necessary for a real co-operative Commonwealth will be carried on.”

On July 4 a further wire was sent to Wade from a large mass meeting of 1,000. It read: “A big meeting has just been held of a thousand unemployed, who are desperately anxious for a favourable reply.”

On July 5 Wade replied: “Government instructs police Broken Hill give immediate assistance to destitute workers. Tramway extension will be completed almost immediately. Some months before Umerumberka. Contract Clear Hills just let—Government will arrange transport.” A further wire on the 6th July from the Minister read: “Job will last 12 months, wages 8/-, Government will advance fares of men to obtain engagement. Will interview directors tomorrow as to their willingness to engage and on what conditions.”

The outlook seemed rosier but the reality was bleak.

The police had not been instructed to act in giving relief. It was rumoured some men were to be transported to work on the railways between Lockhard and Clear Hills with their fares to be taken from wages. The unemployed rejected the proposal for work unless fares were paid. They needn’t have discussed the question because Arthur Griffith, member for Sturt, tracked down this promise of Wade and found that no railway men were required—his wire to Broken Hill on July 12 read: “Have ascertained from contractor Clear Hills Railway no men required. Have informed Premier. Griffith.”

The Wade wire which proved a spurious gesture was greatly welcomed by the newspaper editors. The *Sydney Morning Herald*, July

6th, congratulated Wade on giving work and commented that on all grounds Mr. Wade is justified in giving a much larger measure of help than at present disclosed. Melbourne's *Argus* in its editorial said that the "rank and file of the men are far more reasonable and temperate than the leaders. They know exactly what value to place upon the utterances of all leaders like Swindley, Laidler and Wood.

"It is surprising they allow such to pose as their leaders. It is impossible not to sympathise with the women and children brought to destitution and even with the men whose infatuation and folly have reduced them to their extremities. Under the present conditions the wisest thing they can do is seek employment elsewhere or do what they can to restore that confidence which means work in the town they have brought so low."

Another senseless manoeuvre was rejected by the unemployed when the Barrier Council was said to be discharging some employees to make room for the unemployed. When taxed the mayor said they were misinformed, four single men were being "asked" to stand down for a month to give some deserving cases the month's work.

Meanwhile, the Sydney unemployed held a big demonstration to Parliament House on their own behalf, and in solidarity with Broken Hill. The *Barrier Daily Truth* with fine sense of alliteration headed its report "Workless Workers Worry Wade".

The Combined Unions of Pt. Pirie sent congratulations. In Melbourne 200 to 300 unemployed were reported to have demonstrated on tram lines and stopped traffic.

March on Sydney

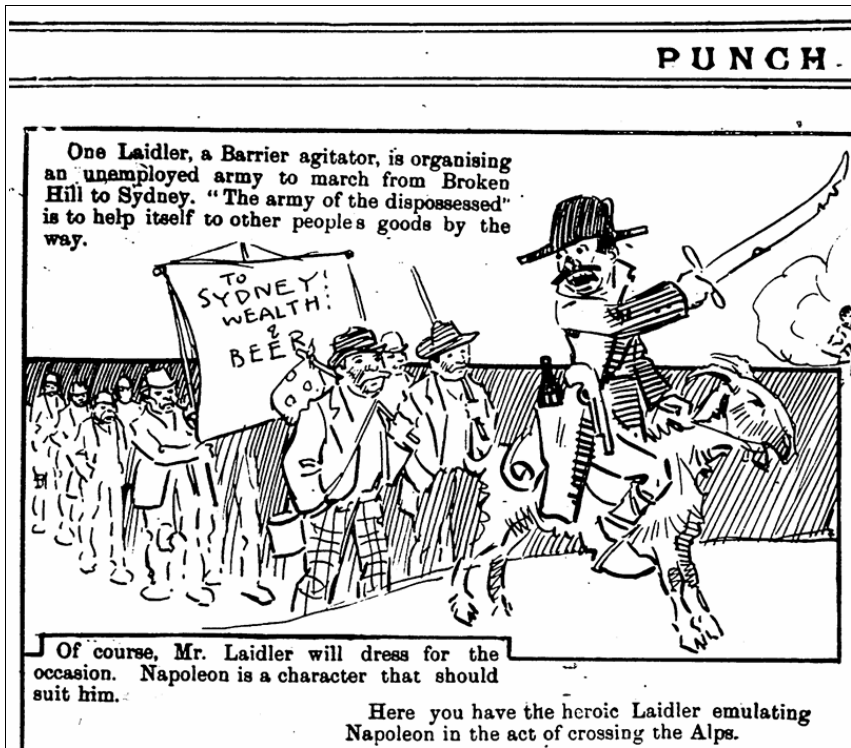
Meanwhile with all these empty promises the unemployed then discussed a march on Sydney and recruiting opened on July 14th. Immediately fifty-three names were forthcoming.

Laidler said the march to Sydney should be in the form of a pillaging expedition. If a station owner refused to give anything, there was the little invention of the match which could be used. They should make a track to Sydney similar to that made when Napoleon came back to France from Russia. In Sydney they would amalgamate with the unemployed. They should get their swags together and it would not be a bad idea to take some of the other substance they kept in their homes, which seemed fairly persuasive. People would then keep away from

them as it was too dangerous to go too close. They should go by Albury and the jurors would hesitate before bringing a verdict of guilty, in such cases. In Sydney on the 15th July the unemployed were refused assistance by Wade and the suggestion was made that they get banners and meet the unemployed from Broken Hill. By the 16th eighty-five had enrolled in Broken Hill.

If the threat to take over the mine had been big news, the threat to march on Sydney aroused the ire of the reactionary press still more.

Punch of July 22nd in Melbourne gave over considerable space to an article and a page of nine cartoons which characterised Laidler as Napoleon and referred to him as "One Laidler, Barrier Agitator, is organising an unemployed army to march from Broken Hill to Sydney. 'The Army of the dispossessed' is to help itself to other people's goods on the way."



The proposed march on Sydney by the Broken Hill unemployed amused the Melbourne *Punch* (22 July 1909).

Punch suggested that “No doubt the fiery Mr. Laidler of Broken Hill has been reading London’s [Jack] flamboyant description of the pilgrimage of tramps, scamps, wolves and careless adventurers, and it has fired his imagination.”

Jack London was referred to as “the Socialists’ pride and joy, who had made a fortune by rampant individualism”, who had somewhere described “a grand march of an army of American unemployed, who went through the country about 500 strong in the command of one man . . . possessed itself of whatever it wanted ... went down the Mississippi, terrorising miles of river”.

Punch suggested that it was more than probable that “the General of the Grand Army of Cheerful Brigands would meet with organised opposition by the way. The people in much of the country between Sydney and Broken Hill area fairly tough lot, with fixed ideas about the rights of property, and crude, old-fashioned opinions of sheep-stealers and cattle-lifters and it is certain that here and there these hardy dwellers in Dim Distance would organise and arm to give the impecunious tourists a hot time. General Laidler who blandly assumes the right of his comic contingent to grab whatever goods they want, must admit other people’s right to hold whatever goods they have.”

However, the march never came about, nor does it appear that it was intended to be other than a means of agitation. Swindley and Wood had already left Broken Hill for Menindie (Menindee) in search of work and with four hundred copies of “The Will to Win”, a pamphlet by Tom Mann, to sell on the way. On the 15th Laidler intimated he would be probably going to Adelaide the following week for a possible job. On the 18th he departed for what the “Socialist” described in its report as “The City of Shuffle and Snuffle”.

The total result of the agitation was that blankets and relief could be obtained on application to the police and Wade provided £2,000 for municipal relief work, for which work 100 men were to be balloted, and of course, the socialist organisation was strengthened numerically and in experience.

Broken Hill a Magnet

Broken Hill was a magnet to class conscious workers. Amongst Victorians who worked there, or came on organising tours, were: Charles Wesley Green, Norman Rancie, “Brummy” Flanagan, Charles

Webber, Bert Davies, Liz. Ahern—who married A. K. Wallace at the Barrier, with Tom Mann as one of the witnesses in what was described as a “Socialist Wedding”.

Adela Pankhurst was a popular visitor in the 1916 anti-conscription campaign.

Michael Patrick Considine came from Sydney to Broken Hill, but finally settled in Melbourne.

Australian film makers looking for rich material could not do better than look to the history of Broken Hill for a story ranking with the best in the world.

Chapter Five

DECLINE OF VSP

Leaving Broken Hill, Laidler stopped off in Adelaide for a couple of weeks and whilst there spoke on Sunday, July 25th, on the Socialist Party platform in Botanic Park.

He spoke on "Unemployed and Poverty". The *Advertiser* of the 26th July reported that Mr. Laidler of Broken Hill spoke and Mr. E. A. Anstey M.P. moved a vote of thanks to the speaker. Laidler also addressed a meeting of the unemployed. On his return to Melbourne "he was welcomed home in a round of handclasps and handclaps" at the Bijou Theatre meeting (*Socialist*). He resumed propaganda meetings and spoke at a "first rate" meeting at Port Melbourne with Curtin and Mann.

At the Speakers' Class in September he was appointed organiser of open-air meetings and was in charge of the speakers' list. He addressed union meetings and was well received. Another field in which he was energetic, was the campaign for the release of Holland. In Melbourne, already in March, the VSP invited other working class organisations to unite in an agitation of protest against the arrests and trial at Albury of Broken Hill industrialists. At the initial meeting held in the Socialist Party Hall were: THC—C. J. Bennett and J. H. Gregory; Political Labor Council—R. Solly MLA, L. Cohen and Mrs. Felsted; Socialist Labour Party (SLP)—Phil Halfpenny, J. K. Wilcox and E. A. McDonald; Industrial Workers of the World Club (IWW Club)—J. F. Solano, A. Gray and Mrs. Roth; VSP—Joe Sweblese and R. S. Ross. After Holland's savage 2-year sentence was inflicted, this group formed the nucleus of the Release League.

The Collingwood Council refused to let the Town Hall to the Release League so a meeting was held alongside the hall. Speakers were: J. W. Fleming, M. Miller, R. S. Ross and Mrs. Jarvis under the chairmanship of Percy Laidler.

The socialist band drew a crowd and a resolution of protest at the Council's refusal was carried.

A meeting of 2,000 was held on the Yarra Bank on Sunday when the VSP and anarchist meetings were dropped to give full support to the Release League. The socialist band assisted. Speakers were P. Laidler, R.

Ross, T. B. Frederics, T. P. Mottram and W. Ford, under the chairmanship of J. W. Fleming.

These meetings continued on a monthly basis. Money was collected for the upkeep of Mrs. Holland and children until Holland's release in October. Donations came from England.

Tom and Elsie Mann depart

Towards the end of 1909, Tom announced he intended going home. He had some idea of going a year earlier, when the invitation arrived from Broken Hill and he decided to take it up.

There were a number of official farewells and a purse with 50 guineas in it was given them.

A huge crowd came down to the wharf to see the Manns off on the Blue Anchor liner, "Commonwealth". Departure was delayed and the VSP held a meeting on board ship at 4 p.m. Speeches were made and songs were sung to the astonishment of passengers.

Finally the ship sailed on the 30th December and Tom and Elsie waved goodbye to a large emotional crowd, many of whom were in tears.

Tom tried to come back in 1918 and again in 1923 and on both occasions the Government refused permission. It will be noted that he had not been deported, and left of his own free will in 1909.

There was considerable agitation over the embargo placed on Tom Mann in 1923. The Socialist Party and Trade Unions were particularly concerned. The Trades & Labour Council, New South Wales guaranteed £150 for Mann's expenses here. The Cycle Trades' Union gave a notice of motion to suspend ordinary business of the T.H.C., Melbourne, to discuss the refusal of a passport. The Timber Workers' had a similar notice.

A Committee to arrange his tour in Melbourne consisted of J. P. Jones MLC, A. Foster, W. Smith, D. Cameron and R. S. Ross.

A motion was moved Riley, seconded Chandler: "That the Council co-operate with the ALP in a deputation to the Government to request that a passport be granted to Mr. Tom Mann." Carried.

J. P. Jones explained that the Commissioner for South Africa in London had endorsed Tom Mann's passport. The High Commissioner for Australia refused to do so.

The campaign was unsuccessful.

Tom Mann on his return to England

Tom had taught Australia a great deal. He had pioneered mass organisation, emphasised theory, showed that socialism was not purely “continental” but applied to all countries; he broke down chauvinism and introduced internationalism; he taught them the necessity of militant class struggle in a class war. Above all he taught them not to fear the word “revolution”.

He also gained a lot in Australia and learned much. It is a debatable point whether he would have seen the inadequacies of “pure labour” or social democracy so quickly if he had not been in the intimate position that he was in Australia, to see it operate.

The quick response of the Australian workers, with a fairly militant trade union tradition and the similarity of their conditions with that of the American workers, to the ideas of syndicalism, reacted on Tom Mann. It is noteworthy that in writing up Tom Mann, the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* puts him under the subheading “Syndicalism” in its piece on the General Strike in Britain. In Australia he would be regarded as a great socialist. In the *Britannica* his claim to fame is that he was a syndicalist.

Widespread support for the general strike began to develop in Great Britain after the return from Australia of Tom Mann—one of the leaders of the great 1889 dock strike. . . Mann came back to Britain inspired by the doctrines of Syndicalism which had spread from France to America, later being adopted by the Industrial Workers of the World (founded in Chicago in 1905), and re-exported to Europe and Australasia. Mann established in 1911 the Revolutionary Syndicalist league and had a hand in most of the large-scale strikes which occurred in 1910, 1911 and 1912.

Thus his Australian experience helped mature him.



Laidler and many of the other young men soon departed from the VSP after Tom Mann left and several joined the IWW Club and later the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW).

Under Bob Ross the VSP soon became emasculated of its revolutionary content. Eddie Callard remembers Ross complaining,

“These young chaps who would do nothing in the VSP work like billyo in the IWW.” The vigour of other organisations attracted them and Ross was derisively called “Fighting Bob Ross”.

After Mann left, although *Socialist* reported a year later that the party was stronger than ever and claimed members had proven it was not a one-man party, things were not good.

In September 1910 it had to be reported that the membership was down to 331 financial and 300 slightly under financial. At the half-yearly meeting it was decided to reduce paid officials by one. Ross was paid as editor and all other positions were honorary, J. Curtin being the Hon. Secretary, Alf Wilson in charge of finance and Mrs. Anderson was literature secretary.

Already in March 1910 J. P. Jones had resigned because he had decided to stand as a Labor candidate for the Legislative Council in the electorate of East Melbourne. He thought his candidature might be criticized.

In March 1911, Ross went to New Zealand as he had accepted an offer to edit the *Maoriland Worker*, and returned to Melbourne in April 1913.

Whilst Ross was in New Zealand Mrs. Margaret Anderson, a very fine woman, was both Honorary Secretary and editor of the *Socialist*. It will be recalled she was one who went to gaol in 1906 in the Free Speech fight. She married Joe Swebleses and died at the ripe age of 94½ years, leaving her children faithful to the cause. Ross again became secretary on his return from N.Z.

The VSP was no mean factor in bringing about the anti-conscription victories in the plebiscites of 1916 and 1917. Again Tom Mann can be credited with playing some part in building up the understanding of imperialism, war and the need for a strong morale on the part of the anti-war forces.

However, the contrast between the Mann leadership and Ross leadership of the VSP seems well shown in the following quotation from a pamphlet published by Ross's Book Service in 1920, entitled “Revolution in Russia and Australia”.

If we do not get the right sort of Labor Governments and parties our problem is how to get the right sort—not to destroy parties and Parliaments in favor of a violent and swift cataclysm. It looks to me like this:—On the day that education and events enable us to return to power a party with a mandate to establish the

proletarian dictatorship and overthrow capitalism, on that day it shall be done. I believe it to be practicable to do it.

In 1915 a motion was carried by 17 votes to 11 "that *Direct Action* (organ of the IWW) be not permitted to be sold at any meetings of the VSP."

DON CAMERON

In 1918 the Socialist Party advertised for an organiser. Don Cameron came from Western Australia.

He was born in North Melbourne in 1878. As a young man he had gone to fight in the Boer War, and on his return became active in the trade union movement in W.A. and was elected president of the Trades & Labor Council.

His reputation in the working class movement was built by the leading part he took in the anti-conscription campaign.

Arriving in Melbourne the socialists gave him a great reception, but his was a hopeless task. The great days of the VSP had gone and his role was to try and keep an out of date organisation on its feet. He did this as well as it was possible until the late twenties when the VSP faded out. Don Cameron was well known in trade union and ALP circles and became the assistant secretary of the Melbourne THC, and in 1937 was elected to the Senate. During the war, whilst the Labor Party governed, he was Minister for Aircraft Production until 1945 when he became Post-Master General.

His speeches in the Senate in the last years of his life, were possibly his finest contribution.

The party carried on in gradual decline, and acted as a mildly socialist conscience of the Labor Party. Its V.I.P.s, politicians and trade union officials were in the main of no value, as they were more concerned to hide their beginnings, in the interests of holding their positions. There were some exceptions.

Chapter Six

THE GROSS FAMILY



The Laidlers: "Red Chrissie" and Perc

In 1910 Laidler married a Socialist Girl, Chris Gross. Her father was a Socialist in Hamburg, Germany, which country he left to get away from the extreme oppression then existing. His best friend remained in Germany and was elected as a Socialist to the Reichstag. Louis Gross was a bricklayer by trade. The family consisted of three boys and four girls, one dying during childhood. Some of the children were born in Germany and some in Australia. Chris was born in Australia. Louis Gross was an ear-basher for Socialism and in the words of daughter, Bertha Tunnecliffe, "It didn't matter what subject came up, he turned it to socialism. I didn't take any notice but Chris lapped it up." Certainly Chris was the one in adult life to be most concerned and active. Bertha claims that she, herself, only sang at socialist meetings, but she had a greater interest than that. For a couple of years she was secretary of the People's Hall (a brainchild of the VSP) and for twelve months she worked for H. H. Champion and assisted on his journal, *The Booklover*. She recalls going into the Gas Company to copy the names of the

shareholders—virtually all non-Australian. As articles and lists appeared in *The Booklover* it was not long before she was stopped by the Gas Company.

As children the family were all brought out in their Sunday best to see the May Day and Eight Hours Day processions. Father would not let them join the German clubs, he said they lived in Australia and should become Australians. He himself was active in the Verein Vorwarts. The children went to German balls. Hardship dogged the family and there was much unemployment in the 1880s. It became known amongst the Germans that if they were skilled in the building trade they could get work in South Africa. Gross borrowed the fare to South Africa and sailed away.



The Gross sisters, Bertha, Chris and Alma

The same day, his wife was stricken with typhoid fever and taken to hospital. She was very ill and did not return home for six months. It had been decided by the family to run a laundry and the children carried it on, the eldest girl, Alma, being 17, Bertha 14 and Chris, eight years of age. Bertha left school and began work in service at the age of 11 years. She was paid 2/6d. a week and allowed home one week-end a month. The family she worked for was very religious and Bertha had to attend Sunday School for the first time in her life. She enjoyed it and always topped the class. Chris when six years old began delivering laundry to the Doctors in Church Street, Richmond. At that time the Church Street Hill was as thick with medicos as Collins Street.

She never forgot the effort of lugging big parcels up that hill. After twelve months in service Bertha was apprenticed to Mrs. Villard, a hairdresser and wigmaker, whose son Charles became a fashionable hairdresser in the 1920-40 period.

Louise, aged 11 years, became seriously ill with a heart condition and Bertha (now 90 years old) recalls to this day her horrible experience of asking permission to go to the Children's Hospital to see Louise and on getting there finding that although still alive she was in the mortuary. She had turned blue, but when Bertha came to her, was sensible enough to ask after each one of the family in turn. Next day the children were told Louise was dead, and a German lady arranged the funeral for them. They were taken out to the cemetery where Louise was buried in a pauper's grave. The whole family trooped in to break the news to mother in hospital—she didn't need telling. One look at their faces and she said, "Louise is dead, isn't she."

Experience adds to embitterment. Louis, the father, must have endured torture with the knowledge he could not help. Coming back he poured out onto the table 300 golden sovereigns—poor solace.

Louis Gross built his own monument, the clock tower at Bryant & May's factory in Richmond. It was this job that killed him. He had worked there earlier and was 72 years old when persuaded that his good workmanship was essential to do the job proficiently. He became ill with pleurisy and died in 1924. It was good workmanship—it still stands today, for those who wish to salute it.

Chris became an active member of the VSP and spoke at street corners, taught Sunday School and for a short time was Supervisor of the Sunday School. The *Bulletin* on one occasion wrote her up as "Red Chrissie". *Socialist* reported on 16th July, 1909—"Mrs. Wallace (nee Lizzie Ahern) and Miss Gross not to be beaten as regards a Collingwood meeting went on Saturday night and simply electrified the passers-by."

She sang in the choir and was a member of various subcommittees, and on the executive itself at the time John Curtin and Perc Laidler were executive members. At a presentation dinner to the Manns in April 1909, "John Curtin and Miss Chris Gross spoke for the executive of the Socialist party, Frank Hyett for the membership and Bernard O'Dowd for the sympathisers, E. H. Gray for the Barrier Socialist Group and H. E. Holland for the Internationalists of Sydney. H. H. Champion also spoke. Mrs. Mann was given a small silken purse with 10 sovereigns in

it." "Tom Mann leaped from point to point as the tornado leaps" so reports the *Socialist*. On November 2, 1907 *Socialist* reports that Miss C. Gross presided at a meeting, "The Glorious Message of Socialism to Women"—the meeting being a reply to a certain anti-socialist, Lady Downer, and her colleagues. Tom Mann spoke at this meeting.



Chris and Percy Laidler with their daughter, Bertha, who would become the writer of Solidarity Forever!

Feeling against socialism was so great that a Commonwealth conference of “women’s anti-socialistic organisations” was held at “Cliveden”, East Melbourne, on the 24th October, 1907. There were 300 to 400 present, representing various organisations in all States. Australian Women’s National League, People’s Reform League, Women’s Liberal League, Women’s Electoral League, Women’s Branch of the Farmers’ & Producers’ Political Union, Mt. Gambier, Progressive League, Hobart, etc., etc.

Lady Janet Clarke (Melbourne) presided and during her absence Lady Downer (Adelaide) took the chair. Lady Downer read a paper written by Mr. Percival Stow of South Australia, entitled “Individualism and Socialism, how can we best foster the former and curb the latter”. The Socialist women were always capable of preparing their own papers and speeches.

Chris Laidler continued to speak occasionally for several years. Before marriage she worked in service in the homes of some of the Toorak toffs, including the Clarkes, and at Woorigoleen, and she became a tailoress and was active in the Clothing Trades’ Union.



House at 290 Mary Street (not 270 as stated in the text) in Richmond, where the Laidlers lived when daughter Bertha was born in 1912. The house is one of a pair built by Louis Gross next to the Grosses’ own family home. Visible in the background, through the tree branches, is the Bryant and May clocktower, also built by Louis Gross, as described in the text. (Photo Alan Walker, 2011.)

The Laidlers lived firstly in a single fronted wooden cottage at 48 Rouse Street, Port Melbourne (still standing), later at 270 Mary Street, Richmond near the Grosses and finally in two rooms above the shop of Will Andrade at 201 Bourke Street, when Perc became the manager of the shop. Here they brought up their two children.

Chris was very hospitable and a fair number of the callers at the shop would continue up another flight of stairs to drink coffee in her kitchen, and have discussions on the politics of the time. She enjoyed "pulling the legs" of the "important" who seemed to be so well protected by their egos that they were never aware.

Her life was not easy by any means, confined to two rooms for several years, and later three. She was a very sympathetic person and always ready to give help. She subordinated her potential to the needs of the family allowing Perc to give free rein to his political activities.

Chapter Seven

SYNDICALISM

In a January 1910 issue of the *Socialist*, Claude Menzies was listed as winning a Prize Essay Competition with his "How will Socialism be brought about?"

The gist of the essay was that Australia would lead to Socialism, Parliaments would be gone and Industrial Committees would be labour's first Government.

Tom Mann, now imbued with Syndicalist ideas, had "Dialogues on Industrial Unionism" published in the *Socialist*. In March it was announced that P. Laidler was one who did not seek re-election to the Executive and in August Claude Menzies resigned from the Executive. By mid-1912 they were working together as a team, propagating syndicalism.

"Syndicalism" comes from the French word "syndicalisme" and means simply "trade-unionism", as Mrs. Elsie Mann wrote back to Australia whilst Tom was serving his sentence for the Liverpool strike. According to the *Britannica* what is known in English as "syndicalism" the French call "syndicalisme revolutionnaire", in other words, "revolutionary trade unionism".

In 1911 articles appeared in the *Socialist* and although signed "Industrialist", they appear to have been written by Laidler. These were on Industrial Unionism, one being titled "Industrial Unionism and the Referenda" and another "Industrial Unionism, What it is!" Also in January of 1911 a paragraph appeared in *Socialist*, "Comrade P. Laidler is communicating with all the Trade Unions asking same to hear a socialist speaker on the subject of industrial unionism. This is part of a plan to repeat the successful industries campaign of the year before last."

The first article begins:

Industrial Unionism is that unionism which organises the workers, employed and unemployed, regardless of trade or occupation, into one organisation for the purpose of taking common action in industrial troubles, and with the object of being ready to carry on industry in the interests of the people, when the time arrives for the change from capitalism to,

socialism. The old forms of unionism known as trades or crafts unionism, wherein the workers are organised in scores of different societies, a Society for each craft, has become almost obsolete as a fighting weapon. . . . The new unionism will obtain for the workers all that could be obtained under capitalism, but its ultimate aim will ever be the organising for the taking possession and carrying on of industry when the capitalistic system is abolished.

In June 1912 he spoke at the Gaiety Theatre on "Socialism and Unionism". Laidler gave a general account of the beliefs of general strikers, syndicalists and industrial unionists.

He referred to the movement degenerating and said the Syndicalists believed the situation could be saved by withdrawing socialism from Parliamentary channels and putting it in the union movement and that the union was the nucleus of future society. He quoted a prominent syndicalist in France as saying "Syndicalism in its essence is action. It does not wait for history, it wants to make history." He went on to say that Industrial Unionism was slightly different. It was strong on organisation by industry. Syndicalism was not so constructive as industrial unionism. The industrial unionists believed they were building up the Socialist Republic within the capitalist system. Industrial unionists generally also emphasised the necessity for political action. They believed that political action would greatly lessen the possibility of suppression by the capitalist Government, as it would render it impossible for the capitalists to work up feeling against industrial unionists on the grounds of conspiracy.

Political action, they believed, would open up a great opportunity for propaganda which it would be folly to neglect. He again spoke in October at the Amphitheatre—the subject "Industrial Syndicalism".

He expressed the feeling that there was nothing doing in socialism in Australia and said socialism was divided into about six divisions. Each was doing good work, but they were fairly remote from the working class movement and the every day class struggle. Even with the trade unions and political labor party things were dead. He said, "the political labor party was the child of working class defeat. In spite of labor majorities, the position of labour is determined by economic forces for which the politicians are not responsible, and which they cannot change As each class has gained industrial power it has gained political power. On this foundation the case for industrial

syndicalism is founded . . . Thus let us build up a rival Government, and at the same time send working class representatives to the other Parliament to harass the other side and get what they can for the workers.”

In 1913 a controversy occurred with Maurice Blackburn who attacked Laidler and Claude Menzies as critics of the proposed Industrial Relations amendment of the Commonwealth Amendment Act to be voted upon in a Referendum on May 31st.

In reply to Blackburn, Laidler wrote in the May 23rd issue of *Socialist* as follows:—

. . . In the matter relating to the Industrial Amendment, we see no suggestion of any laws, excepting compulsory arbitration to secure industrial peace, which Mr. Blackburn admits is a demand of the capitalistically-minded.

The only legislation mentioned, therefore, is what people with working class minds would not demand. And what legislation, anyhow, may we expect from people with capitalistic minds—legislation in the interests of the working class or the capitalist class? A child could answer that.

Compulsory arbitration—the abolition of the right to strike! Fancy! No matter how bad we feel conditions, no matter how much we object to the wages, hours and other conditions obtaining, no right to strike! No right, as organised men to refuse to work for the capitalists! Surely we could not be more degraded, more enslaved.

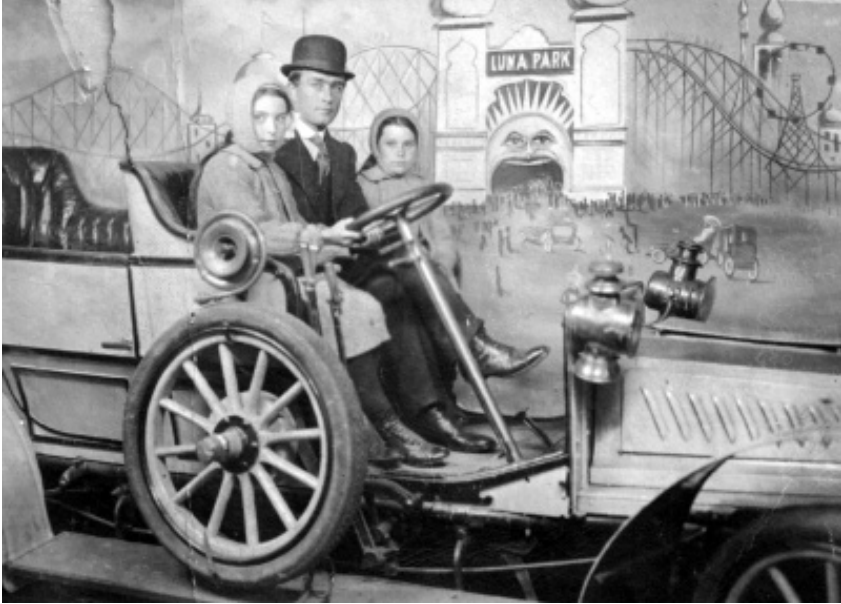
Our solidarity, our ability to strike, is the only weapon we possess to enforce better conditions from the capitalist, to enforce even terms of agreements, when the workers do make them with employers; the weapon without which labor legislation even is a dead letter when the bosses choose; the weapon which has made all working class progress possible against the will of the employers; the weapon which, used in mass action, is the generally admitted necessary preliminary to working class emancipation. This weapon the Labor Party stands to destroy. If compulsory Arbitration is established firmly, we are defeated.

Menzies and Laidler worked together, writing and speaking on syndicalism.

The essence of the syndicalist belief was that the workers could not achieve revolution through parliament but only by the direct overthrow

of the capitalist owners of industry with the general strike as a prelude to workers' control through the unions and factory committees.

The question had been raised in 1866 at the Congress of the International Association of Workingmen.



Percy Laidler took a break from agitating to visit Melbourne's Luna Park with two of his sisters, probably not long after its opening in 1912.

Menzies and Laidler did not cut adrift from the Socialist Party, they began to write a regular column, with the sub-head "A Column of Syndicalist News and Views" under the names of "Gog" and "Magog". This column didn't hesitate to cover the international field, viz., the column in *Socialist* of September 26th, 1913 began "Solidarity in Dublin". "The boys attending the Dublin Roman Catholic Cathedral School have struck because a quantity of books has been supplied by a firm which had locked out the transport workers. The boys attacked the masters with their slates and injured several, two having to be taken to Hospital."

Nearer home, on the 1st August the column is headed "Trade Union Politics". "During the tramway Arbitration case a horse-tram driver was asked how much does the company charge you for the house you rent from them? The reply was 'it all depends—'." When overtime was £1

the rent was 28/- per week; when overtime was 10/-, the rent was 18/8 and with no overtime 8/-.

“Resident employees got a wage rise, but the new scale charge for meals and board increased so that they actually got a reduction. It was said the increase was excessive.”

In October 3rd, 1913 issue of *Socialist* the Syndicalist column attacked Philip Snowden M.P. (House of Commons), in connection with the uprising of Railway workers. The column says that Snowden publicly lamented the trend of the labour movement. “He bewails the influence of the Syndicalists with their ‘wild revolutionary appeals’ and charges them with exerting upon the unions an influence disproportionate with their numbers.” The old policy of the trade unions, said Snowden, was to refrain from exasperating the employers and the public. He advocated arbitration.

A sub-head in the same column reads, “All Politicians Brothers in Effect”. “We were told recently that Socialist Webb of New Zealand had been elected, that he was taking the place of a liberal. This is literally true, all socialist and labor members take the place of liberalists, but that is nothing to boast about.” The next sub-head, “Reform Parties are Chloroform Parties”, and this paragraph finishes with “The only political party for which working class support might be justified would be one with the single proposal ‘Revolution’.”

• • •

The study of Arbitration Court awards for various industries was building up to Laidler writing his pamphlet “Arbitration and the Strike”. The Australian Society of Engineers was attacked for being a craft union, handling scab material, and for being working class snobs whose record was calculated to make more militant members blush. Iron workers’ assistants had spent £400 to defend their award, however after 8 days sitting, all they were able to buy was a reduction of 1/- per day for their £400. Builders Laborers lost their 44 hour week which they won by direct action six years previously. “Since then they have veered around to politics and now they have got all the politics they want.”

Controversy over the A.S.E. raged a few weeks and the column disappeared—perhaps the two things were not unrelated.

The Syndicalist column in *Socialist*, October 24th, 1913, reads—
During this week a conference of IWW men is being held in Melbourne, and possibly an endeavour will be made, before the delegates leave, to set up a local branch of that body afloat here.

The organisation represented is the Chicago IWW, the big half of two pieces into which the original IWW split after the stormy conference of 1908, and as far as it declares for revolutionary unionism and direct action, and is opposed to Parliamentarism and State Capitalism, it and the Syndicalists are sworn brothers.

It is true that IWW-ites are inclined to lay much stress upon the specific form of unionism and upon the ideal of ultimately having one big union, while the syndicalists on the other hand, seek rather education in direct action and the building up of a revolutionary spirit amongst the workers.

Where they disagree is in tactics. The syndicalists work as far as possible within the existing unions. The IWW is traditionally opposed to existing unions unless likely to come over in a body to them. They are out rather to break them than ignore them.

November 14th. The American union movement is analysed and compared with Australian Union movement, pointing out that the American Federation of Labor was formed by the capitalists in opposition to recognised labour unions of the land. Here the organisation is recognised as part of labour movement of the land. The article ends "we should set to work with open minds free of prejudice, and not be carried away by parrot cries from another country which has had a history very different to ours".

The following account of the type of propaganda presented by Menzies and Laidler comes from the pen of Bill Beatty (Queensland), the last of the IWW twelve. (Twelve members of the IWW were arrested in 1916 and served four years of sentences ranging five to fifteen years.)

"Syndicalism was the main subject of a street campaign in Melbourne by Percy Laidler and Claude Menzies, who bravely carried on open-air propaganda for three years or more." (*Labour History* No. 13.)

In amplification Bill Beatty wrote:—

I spoke to Percy a few times in Andrades when buying books there, otherwise I had no personal contact with him or Claude Menzies, but I did attend many of their street meetings and learned a lot from them.

They conducted a very clever campaign in the course of which they explained the position of the working class and the effect of the advice usually given to the workers, i.e. Free Trade or Protection, Temperance, Saving up to buy out the capitalists, etc.,

all leading up to the conclusion that Socialism was the only answer, and that politicians would only help if they were forced to do so by the strength of the organised workers.

. . . After hearing Percy Laidler and Claude Menzies the I.W.W. appeared to me to be the organisation to carry out the programme their analysis of the situation called for, and I joined up soon after arriving in Sydney late in 1914.

According to Beatty the campaign of Menzies and Laidler was carried on in the years 1912, 1913 and 1914, and this rather coincides with their press campaign in the *Socialist*.

Beatty writes:—

They spoke about the remedies for working class troubles recommended by Press, Church and politicians. They said—

Temperance is a useful personal habit, but adopted universally must lead to unemployment.

Thrift is also of personal benefit; when carried to extremes must cause unemployment and stagnation in industry.

Religion is conservative and supports authority, and a casual look at the countries where religion has most power reveals they also have the worst working conditions, for example, Ireland, Spain and Italy.

Politicians at best can only reflect the wishes of their electorates. Powerful sections, whether capitalist or working class will have their needs represented by their member. In short, Parliaments are only mirrors of the power factions in the electorates, also battlegrounds for the personal ambition of many members.

Trade Unions—those which are loudest in their claims and most ready to strike to support them, undoubtedly get better conditions than the tame ones.

Working class action is the only possible force able to defeat monopoly schemes which all mean worse working conditions and more concentration of power.

In short they tried to show that working class unity was the hope of the world.

Chapter Eight

WAR AND THE ANTI- CONSCRIPTION CAMPAIGNS

The war was not a great shock to the advanced sections of the labour movement. Resolutions of Socialist Conferences anticipated the war with Germany, as did Laidler's humorous remark made at Broken Hill about King Ned and William of Germany.

Anti-German, anti-Kaiser feeling had been engendered by politicians and the press for some years.

Australia's sons rallied to the Allied cause.

In November, 1914, three months after war commenced, thirty ships crowded with troops had been sent to war and a constant stream of reinforcements was kept up for nearly two years.

Were they super-patriots?

No doubt a large number were, but there were other reasons for enlisting.

(1) ECONOMIC:

Unemployment was rife, boys and young men of military age had no hope of getting work. Protestantism was supreme and anti-Catholic feeling strong. The close identity of Catholics with Ireland—a country regarded as a sub rosa ally of Germany, made for more discrimination on the part of the mainly Protestant employers of labour against the Catholic workers.

In addition, "eligibly aged men" were sacked.

Although the progressive Australians of that day can be proud in having defeated conscription, they could not beat **economic conscription**.

(2) CONMANSHIP:

Jingoes and the press conned large numbers into enlisting by publicizing "it will be all over before you get there!" Enlisting was described as a free passage to the other side of the world, a happening not otherwise likely to be open to the majority of recruits.

(3) MORAL SUASION:

This was a big factor. Many joined up, not because they personally wanted to do so, but because “everybody else was doing it!” This applied more especially in country towns. Ostracism as a result of failure to enlist would be hard to take.

Reaction in the VSP

The VSP took the news of war very calmly. There were no headlines in their paper. It almost appears as though the paragraphs on the war were incidental news to the ordinary columns of the paper.

News of activities of socialists and peace organisations filtered through, from Europe. Tom Mann made a statement against the war. A pro-neutrality parade was held at Trafalgar Square. German and French socialists planned a general strike.

The *Socialist* did not come out with any directive for members to take action. Possibly by way of explanation of its negative stand, a paragraph in the August 14th issue reads “nearly three years ago the party torn with strife, dissension and desertion, found it necessary to change its methods and adopt a purely educational policy”.

Propaganda meetings were carried on and at its usual Sunday morning meeting in Port Melbourne, speakers Cain and Johnson were arrested and fined £1 each. “The War and its Lessons” title of the Sunday night lecture of 23rd August, speakers A. Frew and R. S. Ross, was hardly evocative.

The previous week the lecturer had been Dr. J. A. Leach, “Birds of Australia”.

The police attention in Port Melbourne stirred up a bit of action—speakers were invited into the Port Melbourne Town Hall to carry on their meetings. Cain, Page, Dixon, Earsman and Farrall spoke. Next week, Earsman and Laidler addressed a big meeting at Port Melbourne. Farrall, Laidler and Rancie spoke on the Socialist pitch at another meeting, but be it noted that these were all IWW men. South Melbourne market meetings on Friday night continued and the speakers were all on the subject of the war.

In September censorship struck forcibly.

Censorship was strict and operated by the Military. Sometimes only a few words were left in an article or at other times the original intention of the article was distorted to mean its opposite.

Incensed by the distortion of a speech by the Premier of Queensland, T. J. Ryan, a great anti-conscriptionist, some members of Parliament made an organised attack on censorship in the Legislative Assembly which was published in Hansard No. 37. Hughes was so annoyed he ordered Federal officers to seize from the Queensland Government Printers all copies. However, many thousands had already been distributed as propaganda.

Frank Anstey and Alf Foster came out strongly against the censorship in articles in *Labor Call*, *Socialist* and *Worker*; and in speeches. One of Anstey's articles was titled "Vultures of Empire".

Socialist of January 8th, 1915 reports "many were glad to see our ex-secretary, Percy Laidler, in the chair at the Bijou on December 27th".

In March Dr. Leach spoke on "The Mosquito, a Bloodthirsty Enemy of Man".

In September the Peace Alliance met at the Society of Friends and at the end of October the unemployed marched to the Yarra Bank. It was estimated there were 10,000 unemployed in Melbourne.

Where the ALP and VSP gave no lead against the war, the almost one-man Anarchist Federation and the IWW did take definite attitudes.

J. W. Fleming at the Port Melbourne Town Hall spoke on "The Rich Man's War and the Poor Man's Fight". Fleming received plenty of police attention. In July, he was again charged with using insulting words. He was defended by the "brilliant work" of socialist solicitor, Marshall Lyle, and the charge withdrawn. Witnesses prepared to give evidence for the anarchist were Miss John, Women's Peace Army; Jack Curtin, Timber-workers' Federation; Percy Laidler and R. S. Ross. Fleming was again charged with "discouraging recruiting". It was alleged he called Alfred Deakin a parasite. He was also alleged to have said, "Why



Norman Rancie, one of the early socialist speakers on the War

should you go and fight? Would you be any worse off if the Germans were in power than with the rotters you have to put up with at present?" Fleming had a proud war record, was frequently arrested, gaoled, threatened with being thrown into the river and on at least one occasion thrown in. In early times he had been grateful to Tom Mann for saving him from the river, and during the war he was grateful to Laidler for saving him.

IWW

The IWW was the only party of any size to come straight out and give virile, fearless leadership. It exposed the war and set out to sabotage it physically, as well as denounce it. The IWW's prestige was raised and it became numerically strong and wielded very wide influence. Testimony to its effectiveness was, that this was the party the authorities outlawed.

THE CONSCRIPTION REFERENDUM – WHY IT WAS HELD

Early in the 1914-18 War the Labor Party was in power in the Senate, House of Representatives and all States with the exception of Victoria. Until the issue of conscription arose the Labor Governments showed themselves to be thorough war Governments. Andrew Fisher as Prime Minister promised "the last man and the last shilling" in support of the war.

At the end of 1915 Fisher was made High Commissioner for the Commonwealth in London, and William Morris Hughes supplanted him as Prime Minister. It seems Fisher was "kicked upstairs" because he was against conscription.

On March 6th, 1916, four days after England began to enforce conscription, Hughes arrived in England and attended the War Conference in London. His fervour for the war increased. He addressed patriotic meetings around the country and was feted.

Before leaving Australia he had given no hint of favoring conscription for overseas service—in fact he had said in the House on July 16th, 1915 ". . . In no circumstances would I agree to send men out of this country to fight against their will."

Excerpts from speeches made by Hughes in London foreshadow Hitler:—

War prevents us from slipping into the abyss of degeneracy and from becoming flabby . . .

War like the glorious beams of the sun has dried up mists of suspicion with which class regarded class . . .

War has purged us, war has saved us from physical and moral degeneracy and decay.

• • •

When Hughes returned to Australia he had no intention of holding a referendum. He first brought forward the question of conscription to the Labor Caucus in the Federal Parliament. Hughes fought for hours, day and night, but the majority opposed the introduction of conscription.

“The Labor Party,” wrote Laidler on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the anti-conscription victory of 1916, “up till then had shown itself a thorough-going War Government. The War Precautions Act—an iniquitous, tyrannical piece of legislation curtailing democratic rights—had been passed by it early in the War. Tens of thousands of Australian young men had been sent by the Labor Government to Europe to fight and die in a war between rival capitalist groups. But Mr. Hughes could not persuade a majority of the Labor Party in September, 1916, to endorse conscription.”

“This was not due to the fact that the Labor members in large numbers had suddenly lost their jingoistic fervour . . .

“It was due to the fact that while Mr. Hughes was still in England the pressure of Anti-War and Anti-Conscription bodies outside, and individuals inside the Labor Party had borne fruit in that the Easter Conferences of the Australian Labor Party in Victoria and N.S.W. had declared against Conscription.

“This victory for the Anti-War and Anti-Conscription organisations paved the way for a very important move. This move was initiated by Maurice Blackburn and it was carried first by the Victorian ALP Executive and later by the New South Wales ALP Executive—Federal Labor members were written to asking them to pledge themselves to oppose Conscription.

"This, then, is why, when Mr. Hughes arrived with 'Conscription in his bag', he found to his dismay that in his absence the majority of the Party he led had been pledged to resist Conscription.

"The result was a compromise. A referendum was agreed to.

"Had it not been for Maurice Blackburn's proposal the people would not have been consulted and Conscription would undoubtedly have been established in Australia in 1916."

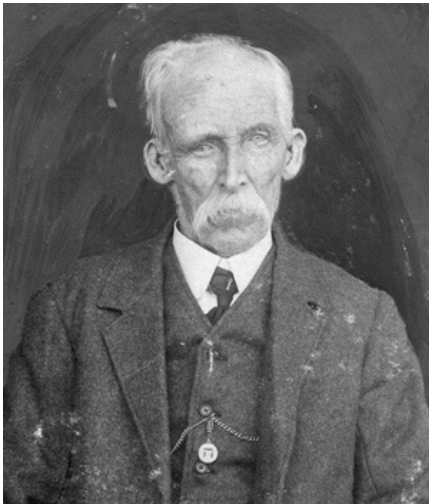
It was decided that the Referendum be held on October 28th.

HOW TO DEFEAT CONSCRIPTION

It was the first and only time that any country in the world was permitted to vote on whether it would conscript its young men for war.

Defeated in the 1916 Plebiscite the Government again called upon the people to vote in 1917 and referring to the Polling Day of 1916 as a black day for Australia, Hughes said, "It was a triumph for the unworthy, the selfish and treacherous in our midst."

Who were the "unworthy", the "selfish" and "treacherous"? From the ranks of those active in the anti-conscription army came many people who were significant in later years. Three became Prime Ministers, twelve became State Premiers, one an Attorney General of the Commonwealth and one a Judge.



Monty Miller, gaoled at 83

The anti-conscription army was sufficiently diverse to include Archbishop Mannix, the Coadjutor of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Melbourne and Eureka veteran Monty Miller, who was gaoled in Western Australia at the age of 83 and struck off the pension. In Melbourne it had the first woman to graduate from the Melbourne University, Mrs. Bella Lavender M.A. (1883) and Vida Goldstein, the first woman to stand for Parliament in the British Empire (1903).

It had the support of soldiers at the front, of whom the Director General of recruiting, Mr. Donald Mackinnon, said:—"I am certain, too, that the attitude of the soldiers who are abroad—as disclosed by their vote—has influenced public opinion, and renders any proposal to resubmit compulsory service to a popular vote impossible."

The Russian writer, Ilya Ehrenburg, commented on seeing ballot boxes brought to Australian troops in the front lines.

The anti-conscriptionists were labelled as shirkers and cowards but they suffered arrest, bashing, gaol sentences, sacking, dousing in the University lake, immersion in the River Yarra, tarring and feathering and deportation.

Never before or since have the people as a whole been stirred to such spontaneous demonstration in Australia. Two mighty armies, one under the NO banner, the other with the weight of the Government and bulk of the Press behind it, under the YES banner, were soon locked in combat.

The Yarra Bank was filled to overflowing Sunday after Sunday, with attendances up to 100,000. The Exhibition Building was crowded with an estimated 50,000 people, addressed by politicians and trade union leaders from ten platforms and attended by 50 police, several detectives and plain-clothes constables.

Country and suburban meetings were held where they were never held before. Many women for the first time left the domestic circle to take part in a political movement.

Men and women who were in the thick of the campaigns comment today that the greatest single feature of the campaigns was the way in which people of the most diverse interests combined together on this special issue. Catholics, Protestants, Atheists, Trade Unionists, Labor Party members, Socialists, Industrial Workers of the World members, Pacifists, some war supporters all worked wholeheartedly for the common goal. Those who believed in refusing to fight in all circumstances (the pure pacifists) were able to work with IWW members and Socialists who believed they might support a different type of war at some future date.

The No Conscription Fellowship, an organisation existing in England and brought into being in Melbourne by Bob Ross had a pledge made by thousands which included the words—"We refuse to take human life". After some months a resolution was carried that this part of the English pledge be struck out. An opposition had grown

declaring that the time might come that they felt justified in taking human life.

Boy Conscription

The Australian public was prepared by earlier events for a fight against conscription. By operation of the Defence Act 1903-10, the first army formed under compulsory training in the British Empire was brought into existence. Training covered the ages 12 to 26.

Opposition was widespread and organised mainly by the Society of Friends, especially in South Australia. Twenty-five ministers of religion signed a manifesto against the Act known as Section 125.

Prosecutions for non-compliance averaged 266 per week in 1912/13 and 269 in 1913/14. During the first three years 27,749 were prosecuted.

Reminiscent of the early convict days, lads were put in military fortresses and if in "solitary" for such an offence as refusing to drill, they were on bread and water, slept on the floor with one blanket in a cell to which they were confined for 22 hours per day. This was suffered by lads as young as 15 years.

The Churches During the War

There was an entirely different situation in the religious community from that existing today. The Protestant ministers who protested on this issue could be counted on the fingers of one hand. Their congregations were conservative—only the courageous followers of Christ opposed them and they were likely to lose their living for their efforts. The Rev. Charles Strong of the Australian Church, whose activities inspired many, was one who lost his living. The Rev. Fred Sinclair belonged to a small progressive Church, "Free Religious Fellowship", and had the support of most of his congregation in his stand against conscription.

The Anglican Synod and Protestant Churches of all kinds declared for conscription. The Society of Friends being a notable exception. It was claimed by some churchmen that God was on their side. They said God was a conscriptionist because He gave His only Begotten Son.

Dr. Mannix

It was a different story with the Catholics. There was a strong Irish vein in the Church smarting from the brutal treatment meted out by the English in Ireland during the Easter Rebellion of that year.

Archbishop Mannix, as the spokesman of the Catholics, played a sterling part in the campaigns. He did not speak on political platforms but whilst performing the ordinary offices of the Church, opening bazaars and laying foundation stones, he made his own attitude clear.

His first statement was made when opening a bazaar in the Albert Hall at Clifton Hill on Saturday, September 16th, 1916:—

I am as anxious as anyone can be for a successful issue and for an honourable peace. I hope and I believe that that peace can be secured without conscription. (Applause.) For conscription is a hateful thing, and it is almost certain to bring evil in its train. (Applause.)

I have been under the impression, and I still retain the conviction, that Australia has done her full share—I am inclined to say more than her full share—in the war. (Applause.) . . . Australians, brave as they have proved themselves to be in the field, are a peace loving people. They will not easily give conscription a foothold in this country (applause) . . . We can only give both sides a patient hearing, and then vote according to our judgment. There will be differences among Catholics, for Catholics do not think or vote in platoons (applause) and on most questions there is room for divergence of opinion.

But, for myself, it will take a good deal to convince me that conscription in Australia would not cause more evil than it would avert (applause) . . . And I incline to believe that those who propose it have misjudged the temper of the Australian people in the mass and their passionate love for freedom. (Loud applause.)

On another occasion the Archbishop said that it was a war to protect small nations, or so he had been told. Well, then, they could start with Ireland. He would not favour the sending of troops overseas as long as the causes and purposes of the war were suspect.

The Archbishop roused the ire of the Protestant Churches, the Press and all forces for conscription.

An Editorial in the *Argus* of September 19th, 1916 referring to the statement of Dr. Mannix that Australia was doing more than its share,

said the burning words upon that point delivered by the Prime Minister should put the Archbishop to shame and compel him to at least be silent during the campaign.

Archbishop Hindley of the Church of England said in a speech "If ever we had the misfortune to have an archbishop whose loyalty could be seriously questioned, we would send him back to England (hear hear) . . . or we would send him back to Ireland." (Laughter and applause.) Other Catholic Bishops were neutral but Archbishop Clune of Perth was a bitter opponent of Dr. Mannix.

There is no doubt that Dr. Mannix played a big part in the campaign. Refused the Exhibition Building as venue for a meeting he spoke at the Melbourne Town Hall on October 23rd, 1917—20,000 people were turned away. Wren owned the Richmond Racecourse and gave it free of charge for a great rally on the 5th November, 1917—100,000 people attended to hear Dr. Mannix.

Trade Unions

The Trade Union Congress in Melbourne in May, 1916, convened to determine the attitude of organised Labor in Australia towards conscription for overseas service, recorded its uncompromising hostility to any attempt to foist conscription upon the people. The Congress issued a Manifesto and Report. In an attempt to suppress this document military squads raided the Melbourne Trades Hall Council and the *Labor Call* printery and seized all printed matter and type related to the anti-conscription Congress.



Ted Holloway, Trades Hall Council Secretary, was prominent in the anti-conscription campaign.

E. J. Holloway, then Secretary of the T.H.C., was awakened from his bed by a Lieutenant in charge of the raiding party and taken to the Trades Hall so that printed literature could be confiscated. Nonetheless a quantity was circulated.

John Curtin, who became Australia's wartime Prime Minister in the 2nd World War, was engaged by the Melbourne Trades Hall Council as a full-time secretary to concentrate upon the conscription fight.

A one-day stop work meeting was called for October 4th, 1916. The *Herald* estimated there were 40,000 present at the Bank and the *Socialist* claimed 50,000. It was showery and the people stood in the rain from 10

Australian Trades Union
Anti-Conscription Congress

THE ONE DAY STOP-WORK MEETING.

Trade unionists of Australia—
Two specially convened and emphatically representative inter-State Conferences of trades unionists have unanimously agreed that Labor's attitude to conscription is one of implacable hostility. For the workers that should be the last word on the subject.

In the fight against conscription of labor and life, the Labor Movement finds itself also compelled to fight certain men whom it put into high places to serve the movement, and not to betray its Unity of action is, therefore, now more essential than at any time in Australia's history.

If the Labor Movement loses, it means that Corruption, Treachery and Reaction win. Fight then you must for your life, your cause, your liberties.

Fighting gamely and greatly against conscription, the industrial movement has realised that the Proclamation of the Government summoning single men to the camps really establishes conscription, and believing the Proclamation to be illegal, as well as perfidious—and for many other weighty reasons—**sung all-assertive Congress of trades unionists has unanimously resolved that a protest must be made.** Your Congress has decided that the protest shall be made by means of stop-work meetings throughout Australia, on Wednesday, October 4th, following the issue of the Government's Proclamation.

Whatever happens—whatever influences may be operated, whatever pressure may be brought to bear, whatever the consequences—attend the stop-work meeting on Wednesday, October 4th.

Your loyalty to the mandate of your chosen delegates will be a demonstration of the determination and power of the organised workers; and not only this, but an action certain to become historical as one of the world's finest displays of working-class solidarity. It may sound the death-knell of conscription.

At all events, it is Trades Unionism or Dictatorship in combat for the control of the lives and liberties of the people, and for the maintenance or annihilation of that "Government of, by and for the people" upon which the eminence of Australia has been based and builded.

On the Wednesday fixed upon, you will be expected to show that, under a strong provocation, willing a general holiday, you shall have it in the teeth of a lying press and a recreant Parliament. Not a cab, bus, tram or again should run, not a ship should sail, not a shop or factory or hotel or theatre should be open, not a newspaper should come out, not a butcher's, baker's or grocer's cart should be seen in the streets, not a man of the all-powerful

UNION OR

Working-class should be at work. Will you, as a unionist, help in the success of this policy? It is a policy for the protection and preservation of trades unionism, with all that it implies in better wages and conditions through the glorious gospel and might of organisation.

On the immortal Wednesday, mass meetings organised by the chief industrial body of each centre will be held all over Australia, and you will do your part nobly and well by attending such a meeting and bringing along everybody you can. **Spread the news!**

At the same time, if you have reason to believe that any will be so vile as to scab on the stop-work call, make sure of effective picketing with your union's sanction. The times are too critical and the issue too grave, to allow meanness or cowardice, or "standing in with the boss", to harass or handicap Australia's biggest achievement in industrial action.

Success is vital. Single, individually, the workers are weak—bound together they are strong. Without unity the workers will be crushed and beaten. United, their class solidarity will break a traitorous Government, agonish and hasten a continent and save the situation.

In the meantime, those affected will wisely disobey the Government's illegal, undemocratic and tyrannical Proclamation. It must be resisted to the last ditch. Its success means your failure, whether you be married or whether you be single. The very making of the Proclamation is an attempt to sell your class and cause into servility. Do not be deceived or deceived into thinking that if married you will save your own skin by sacrificing the single man. Introduced piecemeal, conscription, where coquetted with, has ultimately embraced all.

Therefore, stand together in defiant protest against an infamous, and unconstitutional Proclamation intended to wreck your unionism, lessen your standard of subsistence, terrorise your hearth and home, and mangle you and your children. Refuse to be bullied or tied or voted into the slavery of military control, under which your progress—the admiration of a world—will be stayed and your life made mendurable.

Already behind the scenes the foe is in high glee at the "split" he has successfully manoeuvred in the Labor Movement by breeding an insolent disregard of the mandate of the rank and file. For the rank and file it is now or never that it must justify itself—its rights and its duties.

Fellow workers, Trades Unionism is your trenches, emancipation is your flag, solidarity is your bayonet, and the stop-work meeting your machine gun.

Onward to victory! Stop work and vindicate your claims, and win respect for your demands. Thus, you will march in a deathless army.

DO NOT BE HALF-HEARTED OR DOWN-HEARTED LABOR CONQUERS ALL.

For the National Executive,
J. CURTIN, Secretary

N. G. Anderson, of Victoria St., Melbourne.

Leaflet for the anti-conscription stop work meeting, October 1916.

a.m. until 1 p.m. listening to speakers at eight platforms. Speakers were plentiful. At a signal from Dr. Maloney at midday, a resolution was carried at all platforms asserting that the Governmental Proclamation was an infringement of the Defence Act. The Unions which came out were the Wharf Laborers, Pt. Phillip Stevedores, Carpenters, Builders' Laborers, Rubber Workers and Glass Bottle makers. A well-known

confectioners told its employees they could go to the meeting. The Wonthaggi miners were out. Immense demonstrations were held in Brisbane, Sydney and Broken Hill.

The Politicians

A splendid part was played by many of the Labor politicians—Senators, M.H.R.s, M.L.A.s, and others later to win seats. In Victoria, country members Alf Ozanne (Corio) and Dave McGrath (Ballarat) who were in the AIF opposed conscription. Dr. William Maloney did not



From Frank Anstey

Frank Anstey, a parliamentarian who spoke out about the War.

oppose the war but played a leading part in the anti-conscription campaigns. Special mention must be made of Frank Anstey. He was a splendid and fearless orator and a man of great influence. His books *Money Power* and *Red Europe* were widely read after the war, and helped many people assess the war. Frank Brennan (later Commonwealth Attorney-General) was called “a pigeon-livered man” by W. Watt M.H.R., one of the most bitter conscriptionists, for saying he was not a fighting man and that if warlike people can do the business of war, we peaceful people can attend to other questions.

Watt picked the wrong man. Brennan called his bluff and challenged him by saying he would join up if Watt did too. He named a date and time but Watt did not turn up to the recruiting depot. The challenge repeated, Watt still failed to show up. The important role of Maurice Blackburn is referred to elsewhere. Naturally there were other types of politicians, to some of whom the anti-conscription campaigns were a godsend, because they could put their energies into it and shelter from

the fight against war. The struggle against the war ran independently of the anti-conscription campaigns.

Women in the Campaign

Women in Australia had never before participated in large numbers in any social movement. Many of those who took part in the campaigns were inspired by the efforts of the suffragettes in England.

Three days after the war began the Women's Peace Army was formed, its slogan "We war against war". It ranged itself in the anti-conscription campaign. Vida Goldstein, with electioneering experience (she stood for the Senate in the first election after Federation and was Editor of *The Woman Voter*), was President, Adela Pankhurst (of the famous suffragette family) was Secretary and Cecilia John was Organiser.

The Women's Army had a flag of its own—purple, white and green. Purple for the royalty of international justice, white for the purity of international life, green for the springing hope of international peace. Cecilia John defended this flag by turning a fire hose on soldiers who tried to wrest it away. A splendid contralto, she would sing at meetings, "I didn't Raise my Son to be a Soldier", one of the many songs of the campaign.

On one occasion Vida Goldstein prevented a riot at the Bijou Theatre in Bourke Street, when soldiers were breaking up a meeting.

Another famous woman was Eleanor M. Moore, Secretary of the



At a peace march around 1917, May Boquest, later Callard.

Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, an organisation active before the war and active today.

The Labor Women's anti-conscription committee (Mesdames Gill, E. F. Russell, Miss Sampson) arranged cottage and factory meetings which were addressed by Mrs. Maurice Blackburn in Essendon, Mrs. Titford in Balaclava and Mrs. Mick Killury, Mrs. A. K. Wallace, Miss S. Lewis, Mrs. Webb and Mrs. T. P. Walsh in other localities. Other women well respected in the labor movement for their active role were Jennie Baines, Jean Daley, Muriel Heagney, Adela Pankhurst Walsh and May Francis.

On the 21st October, a week prior to the first referendum, a march and pageant of women was held—the opposition ran a counter-march the same day.

In August 1917 Melbourne women raided Parliament House, in a war against "food exploitation", after a march of several thousand had taken place through the city streets. This resulted in the arrest of Adela Pankhurst Walsh and Mrs. A. K. Wallace (fined 40/- each). It achieved the release of some hard-to-get food products, i.e. rabbits and butter, from storage.

Geelong a Battle Ground

The capitals were not the only storm centres. Geelong, possibly, had more intense campaigns than other towns in Victoria. When the Clerks' Union was deprived of the use of the West Park Theatre at the behest of the Geelong West Council and when the same Council banned Sunday meetings at Cannon Hill, S. A. Gerson of the Clerks' Union spoke to a crowd whilst standing in a boat anchored a few feet from the shore of the bay.

A big scandal in Geelong occurred when its sitting Labor Party M.H.R., A. T. Ozanne, who had volunteered for the AIF at the beginning of the war and was despatched to England, was ill in hospital and unable to go with his regiment to France. Back here probably the greatest campaign of vilification ever waged in Australia took place. Ozanne was labelled a coward, traitor, deserter, shirker, pro-German, and etc., etc. Alf Ozanne had aroused the ire of Billy Hughes because when urged to make a pro-conscription statement in England he made anti-conscription statements. He lost his seat to a recruiting sergeant. The facts were that he was the first M.H.R. to volunteer and was

rejected on health grounds. Despite this, he tried again and was accepted. Finally he was discharged as completely medically unfit. Dr. Maloney and Parker Moloney did their best to get a Royal Commission held in order to vindicate Ozanne but the men who appear to have been the chief organisers of the slander campaign, Hughes and Pearce, were the chief opponents of a Royal Commission.

Propaganda

There was, of course, no television, no radio, no amplifiers at meetings and little use of film in this period. The written and spoken word in its simplest form was relied upon by the anti-conscriptionists to wage the propaganda war.

The small gummed sticker slogans were popular. They could be easily handled and were pasted up everywhere.

Thousands of buttons with "VOTE NO" on them did effective work. A poster—"TO ARMS! Capitalists, parsons, politicians, landlords, newspaper editors and other stay-at-home patriots, your country needs you in the trenches! Workers, follow your masters", got out by the I.W.W. leader in Sydney, Tom Barker, resulted in a six months' sentence or fine of £50.

E. J. Holloway in his pamphlet "The Australian Victory over Conscription in 1916-17" says "I still feel that the most effective single piece of propaganda for our side, which decided the votes of perhaps tens of thousands of women, was W. R. Winspear's poem, illustrated by Claude Marquet, entitled THE BLOOD VOTE."



The recruitment poster that earned a gaol sentence for its creator, Tom Barker of the IWW. (Image from Wikimedia Commons)

THE BLOOD VOTE

"Why is your face so white, Mother?
Why do you choke for breath?"
"O I have dreamt in the night, my son,
That I doomed a man to death."

"Why do you hide your hand, Mother?
And crouch above it in dread?"
"It beareth a dreadful brand, my son:
With the dead man's blood 'tis red."

"Hear his widow cry in the night,
I hear his children weep,
And always within my sight,
O God!
The dead man's blood
doth leap."

"They put the dagger into my
grasp,
It seemed but a pencil then,
I did not know it was a fiend - a gasp
For the priceless blood of men"

"They gave me the ballot paper,
The grim death-warrant of doom,
And I smugly sentenced the man to death,
In that dreadful little room."

"I put it inside the Box of Blood
Nor thought of the man I'd stain,
Till at midnight came like a whelming
flood
God's word - and the Brand of Cain."

"O little son! O my little son!
Pray God for your Mother's soul
That the scarlet stain may be white again
In God's great Judgment Roll."

Written by W. R. Winespear, and drawn by Claude Marquet, St. Andrew's Place, Sydney.

*For the National Executive,
J. CURTIN, Secretary.*

"The Blood Vote", the poem credited with influencing many votes in the conscription referendum. (Reproduced from the back cover of Bertha Walker's pamphlet "How to Defeat Conscription: a Story of the 1916 and 1917 Campaigns in Victoria", published by the Anti Conscription Jubilee Committee in 1968.)

There is no doubt this type of propaganda was influential for an analysis of the results of the two referenda shows that in conservative flag-waving areas where practically no one would openly declare opposition to conscription a large vote was recorded against it. Many in

doubt just could not bring themselves to drop a ballot paper in the box that could condemn a boy to death.

Whilst the conscriptionists had ranged with them by far the majority of the daily, weekly and monthly papers, the anti-conscriptionists had the *Evening Echo* Ballarat, the *Barrier Daily Truth* Broken Hill, the *Daily Post* Hobart, *Daily Standard* Brisbane and *Daily Herald* Adelaide, supporting their case.

Ballarat Evening Echo

This paper had on its Board of Directors James Scullin, later to become a Prime Minister. As the only daily in Victoria against conscription it was rushed to Melbourne each day and sold on the streets to the number of 60,000 copies.

The members of the Australian Railways Union carried the paper (some say hidden under the coal in the tender), dropped it off at Dudley Street, from where it was taken to a stable in North Melbourne and there the work of distribution would be carried out. Under the leadership of Bert Walkinshaw about a dozen men shared the stable with several munching and sleeping horses. If they came out smelling of the stable they thought it worthwhile.

The Worker

A great power all over Australia was the *Worker*, organ of the A.W.U. Edited by a great man, Henry Boote, it attracted the best in intellectual talent—cartoonists, writers, poets—W. R. Winspear, Claude Marquet, Marie Pitt, Bernard O'Dowd, J. K. McDougall, E. J. Brady, Sid Nicholls, Mick Paull, Dick Ovenden, R. J. Cassidy, Francis Ahern and Dick Long, to name a few.

Sales of the paper rose tremendously and the censored bits were immense. Many of Boote's statements were reprinted in other working class papers. He said, "What a tremendous expeditionary force could be made up from those who do nothing but advise others to go."

A whole series of cartoons and propaganda arose around what was known as the "Would to God Brigade", that is the old men who said, "Would to God I was young", and the women who said "Would to God I was a man", the allegedly sick who said "Would to God I was healthy", and others, of similar ilk.

The *Worker* office alone printed five million pamphlets and leaflets, 400,000 "Protests" against conscription, over 100,000 extra copies of the *Worker*, 500,000 "How to Vote" cards, 250,000 stickers, 50,000 *Worker* Specials and 25,000 referendum posters. In all this work the office had to submit to frequent raids and censorship.

Another influential journal was edited by Henry Stead and was known as *Stead's Review*.

Seamen carried literature interstate in their ships.

Violence

The very night the press announced Hughes' statement that a referendum would be taken the No Conscription Fellowship made an early ending to a meeting being held under its auspices in the Guild Hall in Swanston Street and hundreds of people carrying banners marched down Swanston Street and up Bourke Street to Parliament House.

As the procession moved along an immense crowd followed. When the marchers reached the top block of Bourke Street the police began vigorous action. There then took place round the steps of Federal Parliament House and down to Exhibition Street a riotous scene in which military patrols assisted a large body of police to prevent the demonstration reaching the doors of the House.

Processionists and onlookers were batoned mercilessly and a number of arrests were made.

Federal Parliament then met in the State Parliament House building in Spring Street, where it met until it moved to Canberra in 1927.

In effect Melbourne was the Capital City. It was also the headquarters of the military forces and the demonstration therefore was of extreme importance in letting the whole of Australia know that there was considerable and vigorous opposition to conscription. It played a part of major importance in setting the "NO" army in motion.

Soldiers have been mentioned in connection with most of the violence of the campaign. It was the soldier who had never been in battle, the new volunteer and the headquarters' seatwarmer, who were chief volunteers for active service on the home front.

As a procession was going past the Soldiers' Club in Swanston Street the soldiers would rush out and bash into the march. They

attended the Yarra Bank and suburban meetings and generally behaved as larrikins.

Two men were tarred and feathered by soldiers. Fred Katz, Assistant Secretary of the Clerks' Union, was attacked in Little Collins Street and suffered this treatment.

J. K. McDougall, Poet (author of two published books of verse) and Member of Parliament for Wannon, lived at Naroona. He was set upon by 21 soldiers, bound, gagged and taken to Ararat where he was tarred and feathered, then flung out on the pavement and left, still bound and gagged.

An attempt was made to lynch a man near Port Fairy.

Platforms were set on fire. Speakers were thrown into the Yarra; one always had his boots unlaced in case he had to swim for it.

Guido Baracchi, son of the Government Astronomer, was thrown into the University Lake.

White feathers were handed out, to which the recipients often replied, "And did you get yours in the Boer War?" The Boer War was only fourteen years past and many of the jingoes had been eligible but restrained themselves from enlisting.

At the top of the stairs in the Socialist Hall Fred Riley stood guard over a large heap of blue metal which was kept as ammunition for defence against pursuing soldiers.

To defend speakers, Broken Hill formed "Labor's Volunteer Army" and later Melbourne formed its "Anti Conscription Army". These armies both used white handkerchiefs tied around the arm to distinguish themselves from non-combatants. Many a speaker was sound in body and limb purely because of the energetic presence of these armies.

In Broken Hill, 2,500 joined this army whereas the call-up by Hughes in October brought forward only 206 of whom 75 were passed as fit and sworn in.

Soldiers for 'No'

The anti-conscriptionists pursued the policy of having one Returned man speak on each platform and at the biggest of the Yarra Bank rallies one platform was entirely manned by Returned men. Naturally there were more back home during the 1917 campaign and they were a valuable asset.

At attempt was made to use the name of Lt. Albert (Bert) Jacka, V.C. (Australia's first V.C. winner) as a conscription supporter. William (Bill) Jacka, Albert's brother, relates that Prime Minister Hughes met Albert whilst in England. Hughes told him it could be arranged for him to come to Australia and speak on the YES platform. According to Bill Jacka, Albert listened and then "stuck his nose in the air" and said, "Look, Mr. Prime Minister, you can go to sweet buggery". The father of Albert and Bill spoke from NO platforms and repudiated statements circulating that his son supported conscription. Bill Jacka, also at the front, opposed conscription too.

Albert Jacka became a Captain and added the Military Cross and Bar to his name. His promotions and decorations were strictly for bravery as he had much opposition from high circles. He died in 1932 as a result of his unstinting work for the needy during the depression, and no doubt the six wounds suffered at the battle of Pozieres on the Somme had some effect.

Eve of Poll

On the eve of the poll in 1916 the authorities brought before the Courts in Sydney twelve I.W.W. men on charges of treason. The I.W.W. was the only party uncompromisingly against the war itself. During the last days of the campaign much use was made of evidence which later —after the twelve had served four years of their sentences of 5, 10 and 15 years—was proved to be framed evidence and the victims were released. The gaoling removed twelve valuable men from the campaign itself.

Hughes made the incredible blunder of causing a proclamation to be issued on September 29 calling up single men and drafting them into camps in anticipation of a "Yes" victory. His purpose was to make people think the result of the referendum was a foregone conclusion—it had the effect of mobilising people to vote "NO" on October 28. Many thousands refused to obey the call-up. Those who obeyed were dressed in blue dungarees and were called the "Hugheseliers" and the "Bluebirds". In Sydney the day before the poll a battalion of these boys were marching through the city and made themselves known by chanting together "VOTE NO NO NO".

Hughes threatened that eligible single men who went to vote would be challenged at the booths. This was hastily withdrawn in view of the storm it caused.

The Verdict of the People

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
TOTALS	1,087,557	1,160,033

Hughes in his Proper Place

At a Caucus meeting on November 14th, 1916, after the Referendum, a motion was put that Mr. Hughes no longer possessed the confidence of the Party. Hughes did not wait for his defeat but asked all those who supported him to follow him out of the room. Over a score of members followed him and formed the National Labor Party, and became the Government with the support of the former Opposition.

A few months later a fusion took place between the National Labor Party and the Liberal Party. Shortly afterward a special conference of the Australian Labor Party, held in Melbourne, expelled all Federal members who had supported conscription and who were members of any other political party. A split occurred in all States.

The Soldier Vote a Revelation

Hughes had great plans for the soldier vote to be taken early, and anticipating a good result, use it to influence the home vote. Voting in the trenches was to begin on October 16h.

General Birdwood, Commanding Officer of the Australian and New Zealand forces, who was in London, had been pressed by Keith Murdoch and Lloyd George to send a cable to the Australian people supporting conscription in the name of the soldiers. Birdwood refused. He thought it might be regarded in Australia as being an order to his men. Lloyd George agreed.

In a special statement the Prime Minister concluded, "Soldiers of Australia, your fellow citizens, confronted with the greatest crisis in their history, look to you for a lead. Your votes are being taken first. I appeal to you who have gone to fight our battles, who have covered the name of Australia with glory, to lift up your voices and send one mighty shout across the leagues of ocean, bidding your fellow citizens to do their duty to Australia, to the Empire, to its Allies, and to the cause of liberty and vote 'YES'."

At the same time he cabled Birdwood.

Burnie, Tasmania. 14th October, 1916.

General Birdwood,

Headquarters, A.I.F. France

Secret and Personal.

It is absolutely imperative in imperial interest as well as Australian interests that the referendum should be carried by a large majority. Opposition to it here still very strong owing to wilful misrepresentation disseminated by certain sections which include Syndicalists, Sinn Fein and Shirkers.

The first and last, and the second have contrived to capture Labour organisations and consequently hundreds of thousands of loyal patriotic men and women seem likely to vote NO. The overwhelming majority of the Irish votes in Australia, which represent very nearly 25 per cent of the total votes, has been swung over by the Sinn Feins, and are going to vote NO in order to strike a severe blow at Great Britain. If referendum defeated it would be disastrous, not only dishonouring Australia, but would have far-reaching effects on the cause of Great Britain. and the Allies. What is wanted is a lead from the men at the front. May I ask you to use your very great influence to the very utmost to ensure an overwhelming majority of the Australian soldiers.

I know how dearly you value the reputation, the honor, of Australia. In the present crisis I ask you to act without regard to precedent. Reply urgently required.

HUGHES, Prime Minister.

Birdwood felt unable to resist this patriotic plea and he prepared a message to the troops which asked them to vote according to their own consciences but he also told them of the considerations perhaps better known to him than to them which rendered urgent the needs for reinforcements.

The A.I.F. Headquarters in London informed him that they could not get the message through to France that night and Birdwood then ordered the postponement of the Poll for a few days to enable the men to get his message. However, when this order arrived it was found that some units had already voted. Voting was then broken off.

In the meantime several prominent Australians then in England were allowed by Sir Douglas Haig to go to France and address the men.

Sir Frederick William Young, Agent General of South Australia, addressed part of the 6th Brigade (with no officers present on the orders of Haig), and quite frankly put it to the men that he wanted a message from them to send to Australia, at least for reinforcements to be sent.

Hope of securing the desired resolution soon vanished. The soldiers, who had established themselves as great fighting men, were not prepared to draft their younger brothers into the bloodbath.

On November 3rd, a special regulation under the War Precautions Act was issued stating that the soldiers' votes were to be added to their States of enlistment.

Considerable suspicion surrounds the vote as there is much evidence that the soldiers voted NO.

The Truth?

On January 5th, 1917, the *Freeman's Journal* in Dublin issued the following statement:—

It is a remarkable fact that the figures of the voting by the Anzac troops in the Australian Referendum on Conscription have never appeared in the British Press, although two months have now elapsed since the referendum was taken. It will be remembered that when the early figures of the voting in Australia itself were

published and showed a relatively small majority against conscription the advocates of that policy expressed the confident hope that when the votes of the men actually serving and other Australians resident abroad were counted they would be found to reverse the decision of their fellow countrymen at home. The failure to publish the voting of the troops was itself extremely significant, but we are now in a position to give the figures, which were:

For Conscription	40,000
Against	106,000

Finally, on March 27th, 1917, five months after the poll the Prime Minister of the Commonwealth announced that the soldiers' vote was:

For Conscription	72,399
Against	58,894

Mr. Lawson, Chief Returning Officer for Victoria, admitted under cross-examination that the votes of troops on six transports at sea were not included in the total, and that the votes of all civilian staff in London including nurses and doctors, and those at Rabaul, New Guinea and in Egypt were included.

It would appear that the first polling boxes were counted during the cessation in polling. In *The Official History of Australia during the War of 1914-18*, Dr. C. E. W. Bean says: (page 891, Vol. 3) in reference to the Birdwood message—"The Australian soldier was, like most others, resentful of any attempt by his officers to interfere with his free judgment as a citizen, and the experiment was therefore dangerous. Probably it turned a few voters either way, but the early polls foreshadowed a ten per cent majority against conscription."

When seeking reasons for the soldiers' vote it should be borne in mind that whilst the army was theoretically a "Volunteer" army, in reality, there was a good proportion of conscripts—economic conscripts. The employers pursued a policy of sacking the "eligible man". Anyone of war age was likely to be tossed out in the street, and work was far from plentiful. Naturally prospective employers also boycotted the "eligibles". There was not much choice but to join up and kill to live. There was also conscription by moral suasion, particularly in the small country town. It was a strong man or boy who could stand out against the whole population whose sons were joining.

It was unfortunate for the conscriptionists that their best patriots were mainly at home.

1917

The Hughes Government attempted to turn its 1916 defeat into victory in 1917 by holding a second plebiscite. Instead, the Government was more thoroughly beaten than in 1916.

When P.M. Hughes opened the second campaign on November 12th, 1917, at Bendigo, he said:

October 28th, 1916 (date of first plebiscite) was a black day for Australia. It was a triumph for the unworthy, the selfish and treacherous in our midst . . .

If this were so, then on the Prime Minister's reasoning the results of the referendum showed that the majority of Australians were unworthy, selfish and treacherous.

At the Bendigo meeting Hughes also said, "I tell you plainly that the Government must have this power. It cannot govern the country without it, and will not attempt to do so."

The 1917 campaign was even more intense than the campaign of 1916.

To reverse the Poll result, Hughes tried to make conscription more palatable. He promised to call up single men only, and none under the age of 20, to exempt some members of households which already had a member in the Services, exempt certain industries, and he announced that the total requirement would be less than half the stated requirement in 1916.

He disfranchised many voters. Every naturalised British subject born in an "enemy" country and every person whose father was born in an "enemy" country was disqualified excepting in cases where it could be shown that one-half of the sons in a family, between the ages of 18 and 45, had enlisted or been rejected.

The Poll, on December 20th, was held on a Thursday instead of Saturday, thus making it more difficult for workers to record a vote.

A month before the Poll, Henry E. Boote, editor of the *Worker*, was arrested for violating the censorship regulations by publishing an article attacking the proposed method of selecting conscripts as THE LOTTERY OF DEATH. As in the I.W.W. trial it was an attempt to silence a very valuable voice.

The result of the poll was a much greater victory for NO supporters.

State	For Conscription	Against Conscription
New South Wales	341,256	487,774
Victoria	329,772	332,490
Queensland	132,771	168,875
South Australia	86,663	106,634
Western Australia	84,116	46,522
Tasmania	38,881	38,502
Federal Territories	1,700	950
TOTALS	1,015,159	1,181,747

There was a 2% swing in the actual totals of 1,160,033 increased to 1,181,747 of NO voters, that is 22,000 more supporters.

Actually the figure is an understatement because 51,000 fewer people voted, therefore the YES figure was only 93.3% of the 1916 vote whereas the NO figure was 101.8% compared with the 1916 vote.

Victoria played a big part in 1917. It had been a YES State in 1916 with a majority of 25,714 for conscription—this was converted into a 2,718 NO victory with nearly 20,000 less voting.

Hughes had said the Government would not attempt to govern without the power of conscription.

In January 1918 Hughes resigned his office and on the same day reformed his Ministry. NOT A SINGLE ALTERATION in the personnel of the Cabinet resulted from this resignation.

It has been claimed that according to his lights, Hughes was a patriot—and what golden lights! In 1920 he was happy to accept a gift of £25,000 (big money then) from a group of capitalists, as a reward for his war work. There was a public row about it but Mr. Hughes did not donate it to the nation, or for the welfare of Returned men.

White Australia

A factor responsible for some NO votes was the White Australia policy. The idea was spread that as soon as the conscript armies left, the

kanakas would be brought in as cheap labour as they were in Queensland until the Federal Government prohibited the traffic in 1904.

Lending credence to this story, a boatload of Maltese anchored off the W.A. coast, the Government being afraid to let them land on the eve of the Poll.

Jack Lang is said to be responsible for a last minute rumour that kanakas had actually landed at some obscure port.

It is not possible to estimate the extent to which White Australia ideology generated NO votes; it must have had some influence. Photographs of demonstrations show banners, "KEEP AUSTRALIA WHITE—VOTE NO!" In Broken Hill, a banner read "VOTE NO AND KEEP YOUR HOMELAND WHITE".

Some Reasons for Victory

Victory could be ascribed to several factors.

1. Good preliminary work before the actual issue arose. The work of the opponents of "Boy" conscription in the compulsory training scheme from 1910 onwards. The calling by The Socialist Party in the first week of the war of a meeting of peace bodies which formed the Australian Peace Alliance.

2. The early work of Maurice Blackburn and the Trades Councils, Unions and Labor Party Branches anticipating Hughes' change of front whilst he was still in London.

3. The participation of women and young people.

4. Individual selflessness and bravery on the part of political and church people and hitherto non-partisan citizens.

The results cannot be overstated in giving a tradition to the labor movement.

The educational effect of the campaigns was indicated in the large numbers who evolved from being simply "anti-conscription" to "anti-war", and the large number of personnel trained to take leadership in union and parliamentary spheres.

It cleansed the labor movement of many weaklings and opportunists.

Above all it showed that UNITY IS STRENGTH.

Australia, One Bright Spot in a Dark World

The Australian campaigns and victories were an inspiration to others, particularly in New Zealand where the Australian example was used in speeches, and quoted in court in sedition trials. A Mr. Brindle put it clearly when he said in court, "Australia today is the one bright spot in a dark world". Robert Semple (born New South Wales: in successive Labour terms in Government, in N.Z., was Minister of Public Works, Transport, National Service and Railways), in a speech made in Auckland on December 3rd, 1916, began with a message of fraternal greetings from the Australian people. He said, "The Australian soldiers who were fighting in the trenches voted against conscription by a large majority." His Worship: "I hope that you don't expect me to accept that? Because—" Semple: "I know from authorities in Australia, who happen to know what the soldiers' vote was, that they voted against conscription. I am in receipt of letters constantly from the trenches and I know all men I have written to, or who have written to me, voted against conscription. I took the platform with Jacka, the father of young Jacka who won the V.C. in Gallipoli and the V.C. in France, and since his return from a London hospital has won another very distinguished medal. This man has two sons at the front. He took the platform with me and put his views against conscription, and also stated to the public of Australia that his sons were opposed to conscription." . . . "Mr. Russell the other day made a statement to the effect that the Australians voted against conscription because they have a convict taint in them. I am Australian born, and the only personal attack I made on any Minister was on Mr. Russell who so far forgot his place as to make such a reckless insult."

James Thorn, editor of the *Maoriland Worker's* country page and secretary of the Longburn Freezers' Union, was charged with making a seditious utterance on December 10, 1916. He also laid stress on the result of the Australian referendum, the facts of which, he said, were suppressed by the New Zealand press. He claimed that more than two to one of the soldiers were against conscription.

Laidler was active throughout the campaign and was at one time arrested on an insulting language charge, as he had referred to the Prime Minister, W. M. Hughes, as "the blackest scoundrel the working class has ever produced". In Court he refused to apologise but the Magistrate adjourned the case for six months and it was never revived.

Commemoration

In Melbourne, anniversary celebrations were held but faded out until in 1936 Laidler organised 20th anniversary celebrations. There was a great reunion of the old campaigners. In 1966 Jubilee celebrations were held and it was possible to hold a meeting in the Richmond Town Hall with Arthur Calwell MHR (then leader of the opposition) as main speaker, hold other meetings and a social, and publish two pamphlets. In all, about 150 old campaigners were contacted during the Jubilee.



At the anti-conscription 20th anniversary celebrations in 1936: Percy Laidler, Texas Green and Maurice Blackburn.

The Trades Hall Council in November, 1918, decided to erect a plaque “to commemorate the action of the people who voted against the introduction of conscription in Australia”. A plaque was erected in the Lygon Street entrance of the trades hall. December 29th, 1917 is wrongly inscribed as the date of the second plebiscite, instead of 20th December, 1917, and has remained in error all these years. In 1967 the Jubilee committee commemorated the second plebiscite with a ceremony at the plaques in the Trades Hall.

• • •

Reactionaries are prone to say Australia’s part in the war—the Anzac legend, represents Australia’s coming of age. In many respects

the anti-conscription campaign was the coming of age of the Australian Labour movement.

THE RED FLAG CAMPAIGN

The second victory didn't end the struggle against war. Towards the end of 1918 Harry Scott-Bennett wrote an article in the *Socialist* on the Red Flag, telling of its origin and history. This was the prelude to a series of arrests for the flying of the flag (which was forbidden). First victims were Bob Ross and Dick Long, the poet. Long was a Christian socialist, a fine people's poet, and one of the first conservationists, as he, from the age of 13 years was opposed to landboomer Premier, Thomas Bent, destroying natural sanctuaries where the Longs lived in Sandringham. Dick's sister was superintendent of the Socialist Sunday School for most of its life. He attended Rev. Sinclair's Christian Fellowship Church at Upwey. Normally a very shy man, he spoke out during the war and became prominent in this campaign, as he was no sooner out of gaol than up in Court on another charge. In gaol, he told the Governor he was an outdoor man and couldn't stand this type of life. He was given a fairly free hand and allowed to build himself a hut in the yard. Meetings and song-singing were arranged outside the gaol to encourage him.

The Women's Socialist League of the VSP was the main organisation to carry on this campaign. First arrested were Mrs. Jane Aarons and Mrs. Jennie Baines, for flying the flag on the Bank. Mrs. Aarons was fined £2, with £3.5.6 costs in default seven days. Mrs. Baines was fined £25 or fourteen days. A demonstration in Court livened it up.

Jennie Baines was re-arrested in January, 1919 together with Mrs. Nellie Rickie and Mrs. Bella Lavender. Convicted early in March were Mrs. Baines, Mrs. Rickie, Harry Smith and Bob Ross. Maurice Blackburn defended Bella Lavender and the charge was withdrawn. Alf Foster defended the others who had the choice of a bond or a month, but Mrs. Baines was sentenced to six months, as also Dick Long had been sentenced. Jennie Baines was a suffragette in England, and served her prison apprenticeship in Holloway Female Prison in London. She announced that she would go on a hunger strike and addressing herself to the magistrate said, "If I do not obtain a speedy release, my death will lie at your door." She was described as "Australia's first hunger striker". After four days' gaol the acting Attorney General ordered her

release. Next time she was charged she was fined £5. Mrs. Rickie served a sentence. A Mrs. Violet Clarke was charged and refused to plead, and was sentenced to gaol. The second time she was gaoled she too went on a hunger strike and had her sentence shortened. Mrs. Sarah Hales, an elderly woman, paid her fine. Mrs. Nellie Anderson was sentenced to three days' gaol. Mrs. May Sheppard refused to plead, was sentenced and lost her employment. Whilst two of the women refused to plead, Long on one charge pleaded "deliberately guilty". Mrs. Clarke had four summonses served on her at the one time.

The printers, Fraser & Jenkinson, who had rendered great service during the anti-conscription campaigns, were summoned for aiding and abetting the flag flying by printing a dodger referring to the Red Flag Day. They were defended by Maurice Blackburn. Fraser was discharged and Jenkinson given a bond with 8 guineas costs.

It was generally felt that the campaign was badly let down by the Trades Hall which obediently followed orders and refrained from flying the flag.

At a Socialist picnic at Greensborough, Viv Crisp who had been a leader of the Anti-Conscription Army and one of the gamest fighters for the cause, climbed up one of the highest of the high trees and tied the red flag to a topmost limb. As he came down the one local policeman was waiting for him at the foot of the tree, but the other picnickers successfully milled and thronged around the base enabling Viv to leap clear and race away.

In the USA, progressives were under similar prohibition and when 2,000 celebrated the commutation of Thomas J. Mooney's death sentence to life imprisonment, they had no flags, but wore red caps, socks and ties.

Chapter Nine

THE INDUSTRIAL WORKERS OF THE WORLD (IWW)

It is not proposed to go into detail on the work and experiences of the IWW as this has already been done in *Sydney's Burning* by Ian Turner, as well as in pamphlets written in the IWW period.

An IWW Club was formed in Melbourne early in 1908 and Montaigne (Monty) O'Dowd, the son of the poet Bernard O'Dowd, was appointed Secretary. The Club first met at 177 Russell Street and later held meetings in the Oddfellows Hall.

As early as 1906 Phil Halfpenny was reported in *The People* as speaking on "The Objects of the IWW—Industrial Unionism. The futility of Craft Unions and Wages' Boards and Arbitration Courts—and the Class Struggle."

On the 22nd October, 1907 it appears that the first IWW Club was formed in Sydney, although Adelaide has claimed to be the founder in 1906. Clubs were soon established in Newcastle, Cessnock, and Lithgow. H. J. Hawkins was secretary of all Clubs.

In Melbourne the early members were M. O'Dowd, Mark Feinberg, A. G. Roth, Harry Cook and J. F. Solano.

An important recruit was E. F. Russell of the VSP. He was an official in the Agricultural Implement Makers' Union and conducted the famous "Harvester" case for the Union. Other good recruits were E. A. McDonald and A. Gray. J. Solano, succeeded O'Dowd as secretary when he left for Western Australia in December, 1908. E. A. McDonald succeeded Solano. Percy Murphy was the last IWW Club secretary. The first IWW local (Direct Action) in Australia was in Adelaide, formed May 1911, with Ted Moyle as secretary. It received a Charter as the Australian Administration. In 1912 a local (Branch) was established in Sydney with Harry Denford as secretary. The Charter was now transferred to Sydney.

A local was organised in Pt. Pirie in June, 1914.

The IWW was originally formed in America from a Conference held in Chicago in 1905 and it adopted a preamble as follows:

The working class and the employing class have nothing in common. There can be no peace as long as hunger and want are found amongst millions of working people and a few, who make up the employing class, have all the good things of life.

Between these two classes a struggle must go on until the toilers come together on the political, as well as on the industrial field, and take and hold that which they produce by their labour through an economic organization of the working class without affiliation with any political party.

The rapid gathering of wealth and the centering of the management of industries into fewer and fewer hands make the trade unions unable to cope with the ever-growing power of the employing class, because the trade unions foster a state of things which allows one set of workers to be pitted against another set of workers in the same industry, thereby helping defeat one another in wage wars. The trade unions aid the employing class to mislead the workers into the belief that the working class have interests in common with their employers.

These sad conditions can be changed and the interests of the working class upheld only by an organization formed in such a way that all its members in any one industry, or in all industries, if necessary, cease work whenever a strike or lockout is on in any department thereof, thus making an injury to one an injury to all.

Australia did not have a delegate present but a letter was read from Albert Hinchcliffe on notepaper headed "The Australian Labour Federation", Brisbane, and with date 27th May, 1905. It was addressed to W. E. Trautmann, Secretary of the Industrial Union Movement. Hinchcliffe gave thanks for the invitation to send delegates and wrote — "In reply I regret to say that time, distance and want of funds preclude our compliance with this invitation. You will be pleased to know, however, that my Executive are in sympathy with the class-conscious spirit which animates your manifesto, and I am desirous to wish the efforts being put forth in this direction every success."

Already in 1908 at an annual conference in Chicago it was decided to take out the political clause and this resulted in a split. The breakaways became known as the "political IWW" because they retained the political clause in their preamble. They were also known as

the Detroit IWW as they conferred in this town. Those who deleted the political clause were known as the non-political IWW or the Chicago IWW, and also “the direct actionists”.

In Australia, the IWW locals were under the influence of Chicago—they stood for direct action and industrial unionism, whereas the IWW Clubs retained the political clause.

Laidler and Menzies worked with the IWW Club but still spoke for the VSP. Later they worked with the IWW.

It is clear that “direct action” did not thrive on Melbourne soil as it did in Queensland and New South Wales. The itinerant workers in the latter two States made for conditions more like those in America, where the itinerant worker played a big part in spreading the word of the IWW. Victoria, the smaller State, did not have the same conditions. The movement was much more a “family” (a legacy from Tom Mann, and the VSP, whose members tended to marry each other—the Australian Socialist Party used to call the VSP “the matrimonial party”), and far more respectable because of well-known Victorian traditions.

Rooms were taken at 197 Russell Street, and later in Little Bourke Street, west of Russell Street on the south side. Up a steep, narrow, dark staircase the small hall was used for Sunday night meetings preceded by a tea, and on Saturdays a social and dance took place.

Norman Jeffrey was secretary and when he went interstate, the position was taken over by Eddie Callard. Jim Pope sent pithy reports of Melbourne affairs to *Direct Action* in Sydney.

Money to Burn

Irrespective of the official policy of the IWW leadership in Sydney, there were a number of rank and file members who held theories of “destroying capitalism with fake currency” just as Hitler realised he could cause a certain amount of chaos by printing fake English £5 notes and flooding Europe with them, during the war.

One day a Sydney visitor arrived at Andrade’s shop. When in the office with Percy, he showed him a thick wad of fake fivers, handed them to him, suggested he might be being followed and then hurriedly left. Percy called Eddie Callard in, handed him a parcel and told him to be very careful with it, to take it home and bury it in a hole in the garden without looking inside it, and wait for Perc to come out there.

Eddie asked no questions, walked down to the station with Flo Delalande, one of the Socialist girls who had joined the IWW, and said before leaving her, "I don't know what is in this, but Percy told me to be very careful of it—I think it might be a bomb."

However Perc arrived out that night, told Eddie to bring the parcel in, and tell his mother they were going to burn some literature that might get them into trouble. When Perc opened the parcel an astounded Eddie Callard viewed a great thick wad of notes which possibly ran into a thousand or more pounds (had they been real). They set to work and burnt them up, one note escaping up the chimney causing them some alarm. A search around the house next day failed to locate it. Apparently the Sydney visitor divulged that he had brought in a pack of fivers to another member—who later came to Callard and told him "I want some of them—you shouldn't have them all." He made vague threats apparently thinking all men were like himself and that Eddie was bound to have taken them for personal pecuniary gain. When J. B. King came out of gaol Eddie told him what had happened and King said "You did the right thing."

No fake fivers were passed by Melbourne members of the IWW in Melbourne. Similarly they did not take too kindly to ideas of sabotage. Sabotage and go-slow were regarded by IWW men as weapons that could be used to undermine the capitalist system. The IWW men were frequently called the "I Won't Works" by the press. Callard reports that Laidler said to him of the go-slow supporters, "these are the buggers that will cause us a lot of trouble later" (meaning, after the revolution).

Actually it wasn't one hundred per cent true that those who would not work then, would not work later. J. B. King, a famous IWW man (and one of the twelve) was known in Australia as an expert at going slow (he claimed to have introduced the scourge of the Queensland farmer, the prickly pear, to that State) but when he went to the Soviet Union he became a shock brigadier, setting the pace for Russian workers on the Moscow underground. Alf Wilson is another example. He was a big strong man who could orate for hours and work like a machine. When on the wharves in Melbourne, he said to Laidler, "I know I should go slow but I can't possibly do it. I try but before I know what I'm doing I'm, slogging into it." Audley tells of another incident where a member of the WIU, Tom Kohane, was arguing with the Head Gardener in charge of City Council Gardeners working on the Alexandra Gardens, over the IWW. Kohane pointed out one of the

workers (a member of the IWW), and said “What is he like?” The opponent replied, “He’s one of our best workers.”

The Melbourne local would rank amongst the most respectable of IWW organisations. Other members in Melbourne were Bill Casey, who wrote one of the most popular IWW songs, “Bump me into Parliament”, (later Secretary of the Seamen’s Union in Brisbane), the two brothers Stephanski, Viv Crisp, Bert Wall, Bill Acheson, Rose Acheson, Gwen Snow, Bert Sutch and Jim Payne. Young Bob Bessant joined up and went to Sydney—he was one of the twelve men framed in Sydney. In later years he joined the Communist Party and became a full-time worker, however, his gaol term, no doubt, contributed to his death at a young age.

Bob’s brother, “Snowy”, who worked at Andrades for a time and his sister, Violet, were active supporters. Violet married IWW man, Bill Acheson.

It is not clear what relationship Laidler had to the IWW insofar as official membership is concerned. In a published interview in 1937 Laidler said he was a member of the IWW, “Distinct from the political IWW who had formed clubs preaching syndicalism as early as 1907, the non-political IWW based their struggles on revolutionary direct action, the One Big Union, and anti-war propaganda.” This is certainly in accord with his statements and attitude described in the chapter “Syndicalism”. Eddie Callard (ex-secretary, IWW) and Viv Crisp both assert emphatically that he was never a member of the IWW although he played an active part with it. Baracchi, in a glossary to a poem refers to Perc Laidler as “leader of the IWW in that town [i.e. Melbourne].” In the thirties he was frequently regarded as a member of the Communist Party and other organisations, when in fact he was not. On the other hand Tom Audley saw his name in a minute-book (now missing) of the IWW Clubs—a policy which he definitely did not support.

• • •

The Melbourne local held meetings in outside halls, issued leaflets, distributed Sydney leaflets, sold *Direct Action* (150 dozen on the Yarra Bank) and one of its major successes was the gigantic sticker campaigns that were carried out. Laidler, according to Viv Crisp, was a keen organiser of these campaigns. A small handy size, they could be slapped up with ease. One read: “FAST WORKERS DIE YOUNG”, another: “WANTED 1,000 MEN NOT AFRAID OF DEATH OR JAIL—YOU JOIN THE IWW.” This was a paraphrase of the recruiting poster,

“YOUR COUNTRY NEEDS YOU. YOU JOIN THE A.I.F.” captioned to Kitchener pointing an accusing (or threatening) finger at the beholder.

The sticker campaign was then used by the anti-conscriptionists to good effect and in 1934 was a great success with the Kisch campaign, the sticker reading simply “KISCH MUST LAND”. The axe fell on the IWW with the frame-up of twelve of its leading members in Sydney, on the eve of the first conscription plebiscite. The organisation was declared illegal under the War Precautions Act, in 1917. On the passing of the Bill the Melbourne local disbanded to reform as the International Industrial Workers (I.I.W.) This organisation issued a paper *Industrial Solidarity*, edited by Guido Baracchi.

Some remnants of the IWW formed the “One Big Union Propaganda League”, meeting in a room above the Palace Theatre at the eastern end of Bourke Street. Bert Wall and Charlie Dunn were leading lights, and Rose Acheson and Gwen Snow were well-known women members.

The IWW Clubs were not “declared” because they had retained the political clause and apparently that gave them “respectability”. However, they were raided and their literature seized. The IWW Clubs had been supported by the SLP and most members became active in the SLP, which body received the Club’s literature from the authorities some time after the ending of the war.

Andrade’s bookshop was raided and the Laidler family’s living quarters searched, when an exuberant detective ripped up his small daughter’s Teddy Bear, searching for what? Fivers or Bombs.

The Encyclopaedia Britannica referring to the IWW says: “AUSTRALIA.—The I.W.W. locals existed in nearly every industrial country, especially in the ports. In Great Britain they appeared in London, Liverpool and Glasgow. But they only achieved importance, outside the U.S., in Australia between 1911, when the first local (Adelaide) was chartered from Chicago, and 1917-18, when the organization faded away.”

The similarity of background of U.S.A. and Australia as “new” countries must provide the reason for popularity of IWW. In Europe the working class parties were firmly and traditionally entrenched whereas here the ALP was just in its beginning and already had disillusioned thousands of workers—particularly when Hughes betrayed on the conscription issue. It was easier for a new party to arise. The unions were strong, there had been many strikes and the idea of industrial

unionism was logical. It encouraged "Internationalism", even its title helped. The proportion of itinerant members was both a strength and a weakness, the weakness being the greater.

It was a strength in that there was a greater exchange of ideas and information throughout the country. A campaign in any place would be sure to attract other members from all over the country who would arrive to take part. The weakness was that there was no solid, consolidated strength in the unions. Their lack of roots encouraged adventurist ideas and led to anarchism, sabotage, etc., etc., which were not constructive to the organisation. They addressed each other and the audience at meetings as "Fellow Workers". This replaced the Socialist "Comrades". Laidler disliked the term "Comrade" for the rest of his life. He regarded it as "cissy" (a legacy from the IWW). He used the term in later years himself because as the middleclass became progressive, many of the audience were no longer "fellow-workers".

The IWW did not recover from the frame-up, and by the time the men were released (ten in 1920), the success of the Russian revolution was leading to the acceptance of ideas of a Communist Party for Australia.

An effort was made to reform the IWW in the twenties. Noel Lyons, Charlie Reeves, Jack Zwolsmann and Ted Dickinson being amongst its best known members. There was a small group in Melbourne which continued from the end of 1924 to 1931. The basic group members were Jimmy Markland, Dickinson, McCudden (Seamen's Union); three brothers, Albert, Bill and Fred Sharpe, Mr. and Mrs. Philpott and 15-year-old son, Ron. Bob Jones (a poet), H. Wilkinson and Mick Gallagher were also members. Jack Zwolsmann was a well-known Adelaide IWW man who visited Melbourne. IWW (2) used to hold meetings on the Yarra Bank and at the South Melbourne Market regularly for a time and in the end, only occasionally. After a lapse of time, Noel "Ham and Eggs" Lyons arrived in Melbourne and asked could a meeting be organised for him on the Bank and this was done. He only stayed a few weeks in Melbourne. The members still followed the policy of the non-political IWW and its Preamble. Most of them admired the Soviet Union but thought there was no need to get involved in politics. American papers were sold, *Industrial Solidarity* and *Industrial Worker*, as well as literature from other organisations.

The members participated in general working class campaigns. As with the first IWW, many members were itinerant workers and bobbed

up from time to time in Adelaide, Melbourne and Sydney. They still retained their crude uniquely IWW manners. When Fred Sharpe looked up the Sydney Branch on the Domain and offered to speak, he was told, "We haven't got enough time for ourselves; we can't let every bum that comes along speak." Fred's companion protested that Fred was a regular speaker on the Yarra Bank, however the result was a begrudging "if there's time he can speak". There wasn't time! Other working class organisations conformed to certain usual relations, one member with another and to outside organisations, too. The IWW had a peculiar flavour of its own and probably had more in common with the American IWW than with other Australian working class organisations.

Postscript

Although the IWW in Melbourne was very respectable it had some members who, appearing as ordinary, respectable members, decided to try for personal emancipation. One attempted to rob the Treasury. He had left a motor-bike running outside for a quick getaway. Some conscientious character shut the engine off and this possibly caused his capture. He was sent to gaol. Another was charged with robbing the Post Office of a large sum. Notes were missing at the Registration Branch of the Post Office and replaced with small packets that turned out to be paper cut to size. The authorities were able to trace that this man bought paper of the same character from a printer in Sydney. He was tried in Melbourne three times but on each occasion the jury disagreed; the result was "unproven". Laidler felt sure another member had committed a murder, with robbery in view. It was blamed on Squizzy Taylor. The recent excellent documentary concerning Squizzy made by Nigel Buesst, makes it appear that this particular murder was quite out of character with Squizzy's usual efforts.

RELEASE WORK

When men were arrested Laidler took a keen and active part in working for their release and raising financial assistance for their dependants.

He was active for Holland, Stokes and May (Broken Hill) on a Prisoner Release League formed in Melbourne.

On 29th March, 1918, it was reported in *Socialist*, "Mr. Percy Laidler visited Albury last week, for the purpose of seeing Tom Barker, in gaol. He had a good chat with the stalwart agitator, and on his return to Melbourne reported that Tom was looking well and bearing up splendidly." Adela Pankhurst Walsh was with Perc on this trip to Albury. Henry Boote interested himself in working for the IWW twelve and visited Melbourne in May 1918 for the purpose of raising funds. He spoke at the Palace Theatre. Boote was able to take back £150, mainly from collections, for the Release Committee set up by the Sydney Trades & Labor Council. Three of the twelve IWW men, Thomas Glynn, Peter Larkin and William Teen had families. The IWW had been paying each family £2 a week until it was put out of action by the Government. A big Art Union in Queensland produced £50 to each family. The Committee in N.S.W. was now undertaking to raise £2 a week for the families. During Boote's Melbourne visit, a "Melbourne Manifesto of Appeal for Dependants" was signed by Mrs. Nicholson (Australian Socialist Party), Joe Swebleses (Victorian Socialist Party) and Percy Laidler (One Big Union League).

Laidler visited Wonthaggi by invitation of the WIU, to further the appeal. In March, 1919 Percy Laidler, Roley Farrall, Syd. Gower and Gordon Speers were appointed as collectors under the signature of M. Stevens (Stephanski), Secretary of the Committee.

Andrade's Bookshop, with Laidler as manager, proved a great centre for raising money for this fund. Laidler had a great admiration for Judd (Sydney) at this time, as he did sterling work in the campaign.

Laidler chaired the main meeting at the Palace Theatre, welcoming the IWW men in Melbourne after their release.

Chapter Ten

ANDRADE'S BOOKSHOP

In the December 1st issue of 1898 of the *Tocsin*, the first advertisement for Andrade's Bookshop in Melbourne appeared, and the accompanying paragraph gives some idea of the shop.

The opening of a new bookshop in Melbourne is always of interest to the few people in this benighted State who may be described as thinkers, but when that shop boldly displays radical literature in the window, it calls for special notice. Will Andrade, who till recently was a dealer in progressive works in Sydney, has commenced business opposite the Waxworks in Bourke Street, where his effective display of books always commands a crowd. Besides an assortment of general books, he carries a stock of labour literature, and is agent for the *Tocsin*, *Clarion*, *Reynolds Newspaper* and other advanced papers. We note, by the way, that he is the first newsagent to sell our bright English contemporary, the *Clarion*, for the modest penny.

When Perc married, it suited him to get a regular job and it was providential for him and for the movement that there was a man like Will Andrade, who owned a bookshop and who heard Perc speak at a meeting. After hearing Perc speak at the Bijou Theatre one night, he came up to him and asked if he would like to work in the shop at 201 Bourke Street, and Perc accepted.

Andrade was a Free Thinker, Rationalist and Philosopher. He was a liberal in the old sense of the word. In his younger days he was a foundation member of the Anarchist Club, together with his brother David, who became its secretary, in 1886. Andrade wanted to sell radical literature—rationalist, free-thinker, anarchist, socialist and progressive books on all social questions (i.e. contraception, sex, venereal disease, etc.). His manager boycotted progressive literature. Percy soon became the manager of the shop. It was the beginning of a fruitful period of literature importing and publication; the shop became the main radical literature distribution centre in Australasia, with sales to New Zealand and other countries. It also became an organising centre of the movement. The only other big centre for distribution and

publication was also in Melbourne. Ross's Book Service at 184 Exhibition Street, run by Bob Ross, secretary for many years of the VSP, and editor of *Truth and Flame*, Broken Hill, *Maoriland Worker*, N.Z., and *Socialist* in Melbourne.



Will Andrade.

IWW influence was growing and American literature appealed more than English literature. Charles Kerr publications predominated in the imported books. Works of Eugene Debs, Big Bill Haywood, Jack London, Upton Sinclair were in great demand, as were all publications of the American Socialist Party and the Revolutionary Socialist Party of America. There were many subscribers to the Chicago magazine, *International Socialist* and Daniel De Leon's *The People*, organ of the Socialist Labour Party, sold in large numbers.

In the days of strict censorship Laidler was happy to become friendly with the Inspector in charge of Publications in the Customs & Excise Department, Ivo Hammet. He knew he could rely upon him for the best possible treatment and that all books which could possibly be released were released, and speedily. Unsympathetic officers could easily delay until a publication was no longer topical. Ivo Hammet and his brother Rollo are now well known as being amongst the biggest book collectors of Australians.

THIRST FOR KNOWLEDGE ON RUSSIA

Local publication flourished after the Russian Revolution when all members of the many splinter groups, parties and sects, had in common the search for information about the revolution and about its leaders.

Sparse knowledge was not a monopoly of the labour movement—a Melbourne daily paper referred to “General Bolshevik” wrongly interpreting the meaning of a cable containing a message about the movement of the bolsheviks.

In 1922 Andrades advertised—“Send for our list of literature on the Russian Revolution. Its theory and practice. Its difficulties and accomplishments (over 30 titles in stock).” Here are titles printed in Melbourne, and information on some of them.

IN RUSSIA by Professor Goode—an edition of 7,500 copies published by Andrade on March 7, 1920, being a report on a visit in 1919 as special correspondent of the *Manchester Guardian*. Printer, Smithson—Foreword, P. Laidler. (Prof. Goode had difficulty in getting back from Russia, and alleged British Foreign Office agents tried to murder him.)

RED RUSSIA—as seen by George Lansbury. Lansbury was then editor of the *Daily Herald*, the Labour daily paper and this was a report to 10,000 people in the Albert Hall, London, made on March 21, 1920. Published by Ross’s Book Service with foreword by R. S. Ross. Printer, Fraser & Jenkinson.

VICTORIOUS RUSSIA, a verbatim report of a conversation with Isaac McBride—Sociological journalist in U.S.A. Andrade/Smithson. Foreword, Moses Baritz (visiting English debater), published April 3, 1920.

INSIDE SOVIET RUSSIA, being letters of Captain Jacques Sadoul, member of the Allied Military Mission in Moscow, a report made in Moscow on July 25, 1918. Ross’s Book Service/Fraser & Jenkinson, January 1920.

A PLEA FOR RUSSIA. A Boycotted Article by Upton Sinclair. Andrade published and F. A. Holland printed. Foreword by R. S. Ross.

It is difficult to trace the date of the earliest publication after the revolution but it is commonly considered that Maurice Blackburn was the first Australian to write a pamphlet on the subject. It was entitled “BOLSHEVIKS”. Blackburn was then Vice-President of the A.L.P.

(Victorian division) and Editor of *Labor Call* which would suggest the date to be at the end of 1918 or beginning 1919. This was published by Andrade and printed by Smithson.

Overseas pamphlets which may vie for premier publication date in an Australian edition, are:—

RUSSIA—a Report of the Bullitt Mission as delivered to the U.S.A. Senate Committee in September, 1919. Published by Andrade (no imprint). There is no date of publication but there is by way of a foreword “A Comment” by Peter Simonoff dated 27th December, 1919.

THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION by Karl Radek, Ambassador to Berlin, is signed Moscow, September, 1918. “The week in which Lenine, the heart and brain of the World Revolution, fought with death and conquered.”

Again, no date of publication but take note of the spelling “Lenine” making it appear a very early print. Andrade/Smithson.

Another claimant could be “N. LENIN, HIS LIFE AND WORK” by Zinovieff. 2,500 copies published by The Proletarian Publishing Association, Melbourne, printer Smithson Bros. Being a speech delivered on the 6th September, 1918, this edition was on sale before the English edition arrived here.

THE SOVIETS AT WORK, a programme address before the Soviets, April 1918 was amongst the first. A letter in *Tribune* 17th September, 1969 from Tom Feary of Wellington, New Zealand, indicated that he together with Bill Patterson IWW, Alf Coleman IWW later C.P. (Orange) were seamen on a New Zealand ship trading to Pacific coast of U.S. and Canada and in November 1919 they brought in a quantity of Russian works and it was decided by the A.S.P. in Sydney to publish THE SOVIETS AT WORK. The same pamphlet was published by Andrade in Melbourne and a clue to date of publication is provided in the fact that it advertised the forthcoming issue of a monthly marxist periodical *The Proletarian Review* in June 1920.

The Publisher’s note to this pamphlet reads:

This little pamphlet is a working-class classic.

It discusses the problems and difficulties of every kind faced by the Soviet Government of Russia, and which will in the main confront the working class of all countries, after the revolution.

Not so early, but interesting as being a publication of the "Communist Party of Australia (the Australian Section of the Third (Communist) International), 115 Goulburn Street, Sydney, at the Marxian Printing Works, 115 Goulburn Street, Sydney" was "LEFT COMMUNISM: The Infantile Sickness of 'Leftism' in Communism" in May, 1921.

Popular Lenin works were:

THE GREAT INITIATIVE—Speech by Lenin made June 2, 1919, included "Communist Saturdays". Publisher Andrade, printer Fraser & Jenkinson.

BOURGEOIS DEMOCRACY AND PROLETARIAN DICTATORSHIP by N. Lenin, Andrade-Smithson.

THE COLLAPSE OF THE 2ND INTERNATIONAL by Lenin, published by Ross's Book Service.

BOURGEOIS PARLIAMENTS AND REACTIONARY TRADE UNIONS. THE MILITARY PROGRAM OF THE REVOLUTION and WITHIN AND WITHOUT—all works of Lenin published by Andrade.

THE SHOP AS AN ORGANISING CENTRE

The shop became an organising centre. Large sums were collected for the relief of the dependants of the IWW Twelve. It became the meeting place for Melbourne radicals, irrespective of their party beliefs; country radicals and interstate members of the labour movement while in Melbourne. When a Federal Labor Party conference or Interstate Union Congress (later ACTU Congress) was in session delegates would call in and there would be a certain amount of factionalising. Jock Garden was a regular visitor as was the man who got 15 years gaol for uttering 15 words—famous Domain orator, Donald Grant. He became a member of the Legislative Council of N.S.W. When in Melbourne he stayed at Parer's Crystal Palace Hotel, opposite the shop and always came over for a talk. He was a regular visitor around Melbourne Cup time. Jack Gunn as Premier of South Australia called in. The Union leader from Broken Hill, Paddy Lamb, was also a visitor.

Many internationally known socialists, radical writers and others visited the shop. In later years Communist leader J. B. Miles and Tom Wright, General President of the Sheet Metal Workers, were regulars. It

was Tom Wright who said, “Percy, you don’t need to travel anywhere, sooner or later everyone comes to you.”

The shop was raided on several occasions, mainly during the war and anti-conscription campaigns.



The site of the shop in the 21st century. 201 Bourke Street is the left half of the KFC fast food outlet. (Photo Alan Walker, 2011.)

A further raid after the war provided good humour for the employees (all radicals) and the customers. In those days the detectives were exceedingly ignorant—brawn was the only acknowledged requirement—educational standards were far, far below those of today.

The unsuspecting detectives went through the bookshelves to pull out the seditious items. Every title with the word “Red”, “Flame” and other words suggestive of revolution was pulled out for confiscation. As the shop was also a general bookshop a pile of innocent publications, especially of the novelette type were thrown in the heap. *Red Passion* had to go—*Flaming Youth*, although a best seller because it suggested sex, was thought by the constabulary to be a report on revolutionary youth.

On the other band weighty tomes with weighty names like *The Materialist Conception of History*, *Historical Materialism* remained on the shelves with the pristine pure.

The last raid could hardly be called such. When the Communist Party was declared illegal in 1940, raids were widespread and Perc because of his association with the Communist Party expected a visit. Detective Birch, the chief of the Political Squad, with whom Perc was on affable terms, marched heavy-footed up the stairs and was greeted with, "Oh, there you are Birch—I've got it all tied up and ready for you to take away", with which Perc pointed to several stacks of Moscow News (he had never missed an issue since its inception). Birch, turning on his heel, said, "I don't think I'll bother." End raid.

The shop was also a theatrical shop, selling make-up, conjuring tricks, plays, elocution pieces, ventriloquial dolls, masks, wigs, etc., etc.

There was a fairly large staff when Andrade had the two floors, and the shop assistants derived from the VSP. The best known of these today would be Bert Henley, who worked in the bookshop for about thirty years, successively with Andrade, E. E. Davis and M. Stanley. Bert was in the Socialist Band when he started at Andrades and for a few months, he worked for Andrade in Sydney. A genuine reader, he has also tried his hand at fiction writing with some success. He especially recalls from early days with Andrade, as regular customers, Dr. Maloney, Arthur Calwell, Frank Anstey and Jack Holland. The latter spent a lot of time in the bookshop and also at Roy Rawson's bookshop in Exhibition Street. Two well-known socialist families were represented in Eddie Callard and Theo Farrall.

The Farralls

Theo was a youngster in the socialist band, playing cornet and was a regular medal winner at South Street. One year he was champion cornet player in Victoria.

His family were all active in some sphere. Father was an ALP member, and admirer of Tom Mann. A frequent visitor to the Farrall home was Monty Miller, Eureka veteran.

Roley Farrall was a typical IWW man and a well-known identity in Melbourne noted for his sense of humour. He was a member of the Building Workers' Industrial Union. Roley, brother Bert and a very youthful sister, Lillian were all very active in the anti-conscription campaigns. Bert was travelling on the "Southern Cross" when it disappeared. Lillian has been active in peace movements all her life.

Fred, a cousin, elected to Prahran Council at the age of 71 years, in 1967, with active support from the young Monash students, soon set the Council by the ears. He was responsible for winning a reduction of fifty per cent in Pensioners' rates, issues a regular paper reporting on the Council and stood for the Senate as an independent in 1970.

The Callards

Eddie was the youngest boy in the Callard family and vividly remembers hearing Tom Mann speaking at the Melbourne Town Hall, although so young that when seated, his legs didn't touch the floor.

When Andrade opened a shop in Rawson Chambers, Sydney, Eddie was brought over from Melbourne to run the shop.

Moysey Callard, Eddie's father, was an excellent coachmaker—his coaches being regular prize winners at the Royal Show. Mrs. Callard was an active worker in the VSP. Brother, Maurice, became secretary of the Clothing Trades Union and earlier was in charge of literature for the VSP. Brother, Ted, was active in the Free Speech Fight at Prahran. Sister, Amy, was a regular Socialist Party worker and married a good socialist, Leo Bakker. Younger sister, Irene (Rene), was a Queen of the May.

When Simonoff (Soviet Consul) returned to the USSR, leaving his consular position vacant he handed over the Sydney office to Eddie Callard. This office consisted of some correspondence and piles of half-smoked cigarettes.

Eddie was secretary of the IWW in Victoria and, of course, this in no way affected his position working for Andrade.

He eventually went to New Zealand to live but maintains an active interest in the Australian movement.

Popular Works

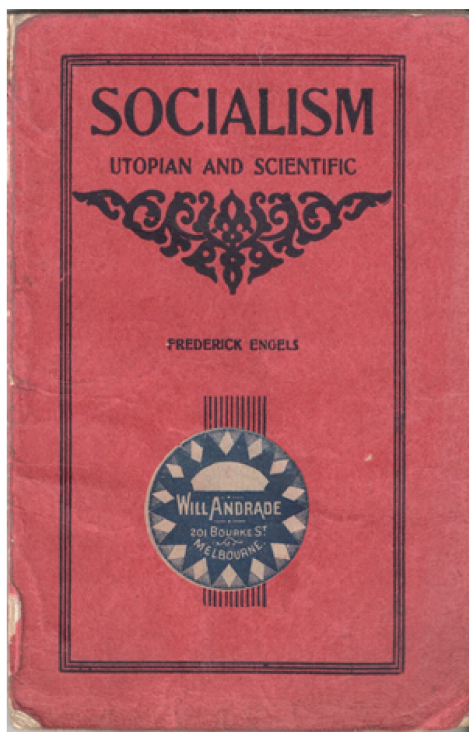
The books which sold in largest quantities were possibly, *Ragged Trousered Philanthropist*", R. Tressall, *The Jungle*, Upton Sinclair, *The Gadfly*, *Jimmy Higgins*, *The Pit* and Jack London's *The Iron Heel*—as novels.

Popular propaganda works that sold in quantity were the books of Frank Anstey MHR, *Red Europe* and *Money Power* and the pamphlet "Arbitration and the Strike", by Percy Laidler. The four marxist classics most publicized and urged on the public at lectures, classes, street

meetings and on the Yarra Bank, by Laidler, were “COMMUNIST MANIFESTO”, by Marx and Engels; “WAGE-LABOUR AND CAPITAL”, by Marx; “VALUE PRICE AND PROFIT”, by Marx and “SOCIALISM, UTOPIAN AND SCIENTIFIC”, by Engels. “CAPITAL”, by Marx, translated by Untermann, was imported mainly in the Kerr edition and sold for a considerable period at the rate of six full sets of the 3 volumes per month. It sold at £2.5.0 a set, £2.6.6 posted. A good many sets found their way to Broken Hill which, as the heart of the industrial movement of Australia in earlier days, was one of the best customers Andrade had. The workers at the Barrier were not only direct-actionists, but they set out to grasp theory and to understand the implications of their own struggles. Queensland, too, was a good book-buying State. A great number of weekly and monthly periodicals published here and abroad, were sold.

Although Andrade had been a idealist, by the time Laidler was fully launched in the publication of radical literature, Andrade was middle-aged and interested in the business mainly as a “business”.

The radical literature had become the mainstay of the business and this provided a good reason for non-interference. In fact, Andrade personally played no part and left it entirely to the judgment of Laidler in regard both to publication and the importing of radical literature. Laidler and Callard regarded the work in the nature of a political task to be fulfilled by them personally, and whilst Andrade religiously went home at 5 p.m. they frequently stayed until after



Charles H Kerr edition of "Socialism Utopian and Scientific" with Andrade sticker on front cover.

the shop was shut and worked on into the night, and sometimes worked on Sundays—all without pay. Proof-reading could not possibly be done during the hours the shop was open and had to be performed in other time. All the socialist employees in the shop were of similar outlook—the job was not just an ordinary capitalist job, some of the work was a labour of love.

By about 1922 Andrade had lost interest to the extent of selling the bookshop, retaining only the first floor as a theatrical shop.

Guido Baracchi

From time to time particular people made the shop their second, or spiritual home, and spent considerable time there every day. Guido Baracchi was one such. He was a young man of independent means with no active connections with the organised political movement until late in the war.

The effort of the Billy Hughes Government to introduce conscription and the successful campaign against it stirred up the biggest movement ever of Australian people against the Government and one stirred up was Baracchi.

Guido's father, Pietro Baracchi, was a distinguished scholar. He was appointed Government Astronomer in 1900. Born in Florence, Italy, on 25th February, 1851, he studied mathematics and astronomy under Padre Antonelli. Subsequently he took courses in civil engineering and, obtaining his degree, served in the Royal Engineers for a short period and conducted survey work in connection with roads and railroads. Coming to Victoria in 1876, he at once received an appointment with the Lands Department. In 1880 he passed an examination and became a surveyor connected with the Melbourne Observatory, and in the same year conducted an expedition to Port Darwin at the expense of all colonies, to determine the longitude of Australia by the exchange of telegraphic signals along the cable between Port Darwin and Singapore. Major Darwin, son of Charles, was the astronomer who took the corresponding observations at Singapore.

King Humbert in 1897 conferred on Pietro Baracchi, the Order of Knight Commander of the Crown of Italy. Guido was born in 1887.

He began to take interest in society around him in 1910 when the Labor Party was first returned in the Federal sphere. He had been a conformist and he remembers standing outside the *Argus* office where

election results were pasted up. A middle-aged man and woman were in front of him. The woman said, "Ooh—what will happen now?" The man replied quite positively, "Capital will leave the country." This incident caused Guido to consider politics. He was a student at Melbourne Grammar School. Co-pupil was Stanley Melbourne Bruce (who became Prime Minister).

Guido used to "wag it" and stand all day in wonderful Coles Book Arcade, which stretched from Bourke to Collins Street, whose owner E. W. Cole was a secularist liberal. In this shop you were never asked to buy and freely allowed to read. It is alleged a greater number of books were stolen there than in any shop in the world.

The young Baracchi came to read George Bernard Shaw and H. G. Wells who influenced him to Fabianism.

At Melbourne University his subjects were Law and Arts. In 1912 he contributed two articles with socialist bias to *Fleur de Lis*, journal of Church of England's Trinity College. In 1913 he was made editor of the paper and secretary of Trinity College Dialectical Society—a debating society.

He soon got into trouble by inviting Dr. William Maloney (the "little Doctor"), a Labor member of Parliament to address the Society. The Warden would not allow such desecration. Baracchi engaged a hall in Parkville. The Warden then insisted on a counter-speaker. Charlie Duffy (Judge), son of Gavan Duffy, Chief Justice of the High Court, was supposed to be the counter-speaker though Guido says he covertly supported Maloney. Fifty students attended to hear the militant Labor leader. Charlie Duffy remarked that Maloney had more oratory in his little finger than "the whole pack of us put together".

The Warden (Leeper) called a meeting which censured Baracchi for publishing material in *Fleur de Lis* which was not in harmony with the tone of the College.

At this stage Baracchi's Law Professor, Harrison Moore, had a talk with him and advised he go overseas and attend the London School of Economics—if only for a term. He told him to mention that Prof. Harrison Moore thought he should have a special short course. Guido did this and during his short time there, changed from Fabian Socialism to Guild Socialism, half-way between State Socialism and Syndicalism.

Trinity College had an annual Prelector Address on social questions in the Chapter House at St. Paul's Cathedral. The Governor was always invited and three or four other speakers were there to discuss the

address of the Prelector. In 1913 Guido was elected to present the paper for 1914. This he prepared on "Guild Socialism" on board ship returning from England. The vessel was in the Red Sea when war began.

The Governor was in the chair; Harrison Moore, Lance Wilkinson (a well-known economist), Frank Carse (well-known lawyer) and Des Duffy (younger son of Gavan Duffy) made the fourth.

Baracchi recalls he began with a slight suggestion of anti-war nature by saying something to the effect that to people who were not born-soldiers this subject was much more important than what was happening in the battlefield.

Privately the Warden said it was one of the best papers ever presented although he did not agree with any of the sentiments. However trouble loomed again for Baracchi.

The Melbourne University paper *Farrago* on June 27, 1969 printed as follows:

In 1917 an article published in *Melbourne University Magazine* opposed Australia's participation in World War I in extremely strong terms. While the government censor considered the article harmless the University's professorial board was angered by the opening paragraph. "The war, whatever the jingoes and pinkers may tell us, is not primarily our affair. Essentially it is an European war, fought by the allies against Germany to maintain the balance of European power. And Australia is not Europe."

The author, Guido Baracchi, was summoned before the professorial board and censured for misconduct. Subsequently he attacked the attitudes of university people in a letter published in the *Argus*. He was again called before the professorial board and under threat of expulsion swore an oath of loyalty to the British Empire. This satisfied the professors but not the students who threw the unfortunate dissident in the lake (which preceded the Commerce lawns which preceded the mud patch). Eventually he was accused of sedition, fined and jailed. It almost makes the current protest against the Vietnam War seem tame.

This report was incorrect in two points, one the word "pinkers" should read "Junkers", a common term used to designate warmongers in that particular war. The second mistake is in saying that he swore an oath of allegiance, this he did not do.

He was carpeted and censured for one article sent to *MUM* (which article had passed the Government censors), and then Baracchi submitted a second article which ended with the words "the trade unions are the hope of the world". The Board decided not to publish it and requested him to apologise for the article which was not published. He thereupon wrote a letter apologising **not** for writing the article but "for submitting it to *MUM* which had proved itself an unfortunate place to publish it because of the illiberalism of the magazine".

The editorial board did not publish this letter but announced that it had received an apology for publishing the article in the previous number of the magazine.

• • •

When the trouble began with the University, Harry Minogue (to become a prominent barrister) suggested that Baracchi go along and get advice from Dr. Mannix and offered to introduce him. Dr. Mannix was one of the leading figures in the anti-conscription campaign and strongly anti-British.

The interview impressed Guido that no man more than Mannix, could by the way in which he said a thing, and the expression of his face and body, convey so much more than the actual words used.

He had been told that Baracchi was accused of disloyalty to the British Empire.

Dr. Mannix said to Baracchi in his own peculiar way, "You don't want to be disloyal to the British Empire, do you?"

Baracchi tried to match him in reply, saying, "No, that is not my direct object."

• • •

It may be asked were there no liberals at the University at this time. It was a period of intense jingoism, equal to that of any other country in the world.

Baracchi was slightly defended by Harrison Moore. Philosophy Professor Boyce Gibson said "Glad to see some of the fellows reading Hegel" (Guido quoted Hegel in article.) Robert Gordon Menzies was a law student: he didn't take part, and is reputed to have said that he was totally opposed to Baracchi's views but thought he should be allowed to express them.

As to the lake incident, when asked if he had no friends or supporters amongst the students, the reply was "Yes, but I don't suppose they wanted to be chucked in too."

Extra curricular life was fairly vacuous—lack of intellectual stimuli amongst his fellows aided his progress to political activities outside the University.

Social life consisted of pub crawls, dinner and supper parties, at popular haunts. The finest flounder in Melbourne could be had at Grundens, Bourke Street (later Elizabeth Street), Hosies was popular for its meats and the beer was drunk from pewter pots. The Savoy in Little Collins Street was for flash occasions. A large grandfather clock adorned the Savoy, and once Baracchi was present when a young grazier of the Fawkner family entered, pulled out a gun and shot the clock. He was not a student. The students thought it pretty hilarious to hurl hard bread rolls at the stiff dress shirts of diners as they came in—it made a fine ringing sound.

Supper parties after the theatre were the thing, and much more so when livened with chorus girls picked up at the stage door. The Francatelli and The Vienna in Collins Street were patronised.

The seal on his acceptance in the broad streams of the labour movement was affixed when in 1918 he was made a guest of His Majesty at Pentridge for three months on a charge of sedition. There he read the second volume of *Capital*.

Despite his rather upperclass background, he quickly became absorbed in, and was absorbed by, the radical movement.

His formal education, knowledge of language, ability to study and leisure so to do, gave him a great advantage over all others. He could have contented himself with the theoretical study of Marx but he went further, he contributed the results of his advantages to the movement, and became an active force in the conditions then existent.

Labor College and Frank Hyett

His first political venture was as a foundation member of the Victorian Labor College in July, 1917. Co-founders were W. P. Earsman (one of the first Australian delegates to the Communist International Congress, in 1921); Maurice Blackburn (who became famous for his independence and honesty as an M.H.R.); Rev. Frederick Sinclair and Frank Hyett.

Baracchi considers that Frank Hyett fathered the Labor College.

Hyett, an outstanding man, who was a member and the first Secretary of the VSP, became Secretary of the Victorian Railways Union

(later Australian Railways Union) in 1910. He was a fine man—zealous and efficient in his work and imbued with indomitable courage. He was almost too good to be true.

He was a thinker, speaker, debater, writer and organiser. His first article after election in the VRU, stated his policy, “one union for each industry”.

Hyett was a member of the Carlton Football Club and Carlton Cricket Team and played Interstate Cricket for Victoria.

Whilst building the union membership from 2,000 to 12,000 in nine years, and representing the VRU on the THC and numerous other bodies, he found time to carry out Socialist Party work and was a leader of the anti-conscription campaign.

He was fatally struck down in the post-war pneumonic influenza epidemic, on the 24th April, 1919.

The whole labour movement was grief stricken at losing its most-loved leader, at the age of only 37 years. He had the greatest funeral of a labour leader, ever witnessed in Melbourne. The cortege with coffin draped with red flag left Unity Hall (founded by Hyett) for Box Hill cemetery. As well as mourning coaches, one hundred cars and cabs, there was a special train for mourners. As the train approached the Glenferrie Sports Ground the driver sounded his whistle. A game of football was in progress and at the sound of the train whistle all players stood to attention and spectators removed their hats. The estimated attendance at the funeral was 5,000. Bob Ross and Harry Smith were allowed out of gaol to attend the funeral.

Pall bearers were Frank Tudor MHR, leader of the Labor Party, G. Prendergast MLA, leader of the State opposition, J. N. Rees, Railways' Commissioner, Messrs. J. Evans, President of the VRU, A. Robins, Harry Scott-Bennett.

Scott-Bennett delivered a great peroration and the Red Flag was sung.

The Football League, Victorian Cricket Association, Carlton Cricket Club and Carlton Football Club were all represented. A Frank Hyett Memorial Fund was opened.

The epidemic killed other ALP and Socialist people, in particular a fine worker, Arthur Roth.

The Railways' Union Gazette put out a special twelve-page memorial supplement on May 22nd, 1919.

Godfrey Bullen, an unwavering socialist himself, wrote in *Recorder*, 1966—“Even now after many moons have passed, when I think of his early demise in 1919, I can easily shed tears of deep regret about it all.”

The Labor College was based on the principle of independent working class education and it combated the Workers’ Education Association which was regarded as a bourgeois appendage, imitating the University and discouraging independent working class thought. Classes were held and a bookstall opened in the Trades Hall lobby. The College still exists more than half a century later.

Classes were first held in the Unity Hall, and later transferred to the Trades Hall, which facilitated union affiliations and attendance. Subjects of classes were Industrial History (Blackburn), Literature (Sinclair), Economics (Baracchi). Earsman was the driving force in organising the College.

Plans to start a magazine, *Australia Felix*, for the second anti-conscription campaign fell through, when a deputation consisting of Baracchi, Earsman and Vance Palmer, to the Trades Hall Council, requesting support was rebuffed.

The Proletarian

Baracchi first heard of Laidler when Lesbia Keogh, the poet, talked about him, saying that she supported Laidler’s syndicalist ideas and was opposed to the ideas of Baracchi and Earsman.

It was natural Baracchi and Laidler should become closely associated, and for them to embark on a joint venture. Baracchi’s opinion of Laidler was expressed in 1968 in a long verse-letter written to Frederick Macartney.

Meanwhile, a Bourke Street bookshop had
A manager who could by gad!
Join realism with revolution,
A concept to its execution,
Whose thinking bold appeared to me
Alien quite from phantasy.
Perc Laidler was a mate of mine:
We hit it off together fine,
On more than most we could agree
In politics and humanly

Speaking, so that he could see a
Prospect for the bright idea
Of a new monthly magazine
Published by him, myself foreseen
As editor, the which would span
Marxism writ plain for Mary Ann
And Mick, **The Proletarian**.

It was the first Marxist Journal in Australia. They decided to call it *The Proletarian Review*, and issue it monthly as a 16 page magazine selling at 3/6 per year posted. The first issue came out in June 1920 and the name was changed in the October issue to *The Proletarian*, which was what everybody called it, anyhow. The content was mainly educational—teaching Marxism but there was some content on current struggles. It encouraged the formation of a Communist Party in Australia.



*Guido Baracchi, second from left, with Chris O'Sullivan and the Laidler family:
Perc, Billy, Chris and Bertha.*

The way in which editor and publisher regarded it could be summed up in an advertisement appearing on the back cover of *Proletarian Revolution*, as follows:—

REASONS why you should read the PROLETARIAN Edited by G. Baracchi.

BECAUSE it is for the Revolutionary Working Class.

BECAUSE it will keep you in touch with Revolutionary thought.

BECAUSE it panders to no sect.

BECAUSE it is a Marxian Magazine.

BECAUSE it will guide you to the best books of the Movement.

It had regular features under headings, "A Proletarian Library" (book reviews) and "Proletarian Comment" (events abroad and at home). Cartoons were reproduced from the American *Liberator*. There were articles written by local people and reprints of European marxists and speeches by Lenin and other Russian leaders.

Sales were approximately 2,000, obtained through all the usual Andrade channels in Australia and New Zealand. Andrade had a double-paged advertisement, which helped finance the journal, despite this, when advertising the forthcoming first issue of *The Proletarian Review* on the cover of "Soviets at Work" (published by Andrade) readers were advised that copies were "Obtainable from Socialist Parties and Radical Booksellers, or from Andrade's Bookshop, 201 Bourke Street, Melbourne." Similarly on the back of Blackburn's "Bolsheviks" (published Andrade) a list of books advertised, has as footnote, "If you cannot obtain the above Books from the nearest Socialist Party or Industrial Propaganda Group, send to Will Andrade."

The journal continued to be published regularly. In June 1921 Baracchi travelled abroad and Laidler carried on as both editor and publisher. In May 1922 it was transferred to Sydney and under the editorship of Carl Baker, became the "theoretical organ" of the Communist Party. Laidler felt that the Communist Party which had been formed in October 1920 (towards whose formation Baracchi felt, *The Proletarian* had done much preparatory work in its few months of existence) was the logical organisation to produce the only marxist periodical in the country, and Baker and the CP were eager to take over.

However, it changed character to a great degree and after the May 1922 issue did not appear again until January 1923. It continued regularly until July of that year and then faded out.

Baracchi went abroad in 1923 and was in Germany during the abortive revolt in that year. He was one of the two English-language editors of Inprecorr (International Press Correspondence). The other English representative was an Englishman named Clarke, who had been in gaol as a Conscientious Objector, along with Bertrand Russell. Guido was also a member of the German Communist Party.

In the postwar turmoil, revolution was very close in the big cities of Germany and in the Ruhr. At a meeting of Inprecorr workers volunteers were asked to go on the streets if the need arose. All volunteered and when they asked for arms were told there were no arms. When things were getting hot it was decided to move the Inprecorr office to Vienna to ensure continuity of world publication. Clarke was chosen to go when only one English speaking man was required. A rising had been planned for the whole country but occurred only in Hamburg as the revolutionaries there did not get the order countermarching the revolt. The results were disastrous. It was suggested to Guido that he pose as a businessman as a cover for a radio station in Scandinavia, but he pointed out he was the worst possible poser of a businessman that could be imagined. He then went to England.

Later he was to return to Australia and play a further part in the movement.

Another regular caller at the shop was H. E. (Bert) Payne. Bert had been a stretcher-bearer during the war and when he returned to Australia was interested in social questions. He was friendly with Baracchi and Asche. He first met Laidler when coming into the shop to buy a copy of *Das Kapital* for the Labor College. The man who served him apparently went to Laidler and told him a strange man was buying Marx. Percy came down to see him and sound him out. Apparently, according to Bert, he would try to organise anyone buying solid literature. Bert was active in the LPG, on the THC and secretary of the Labor College when Laidler was president of the College. He has had a long career in the ALP, was elected a Councillor on the Broadmeadows Council and served a term as mayor. He is a great book collector.

Jim Garvey was another constant visitor. A member of the ARU since 1922, in later years he was president of the Clerical Section at Flinders Street. He was always a keen student and book buyer, and relates that when he went to the shop Perc always introduced him to interesting people. He first met Tom Wright there and Ralph Gibson

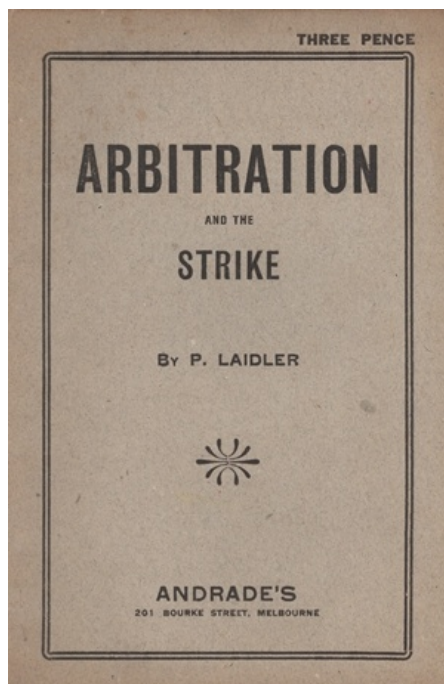
before Ralph made up his mind to join the CP. At this stage Ralph said his heart was in it but not yet his mind.

The chief thing about Laidler that Jim Garvey comments on is that he had no affectation. Jim had been a member of the Aborigines Advancement League for over ten years and was president of the James Connolly Association for some years. He is now a member of the Australian Society for the Study of Labour History.

'Arbitration and the Strike'

Laidler wrote this pamphlet feeling it to be the great need of the trade union movement. He felt that the illusions of the workers had to be exploded and he set about a simple, logical exposition of the subject. He underlined "So, as the Court's awards are according to what is necessary to secure Industrial Peace, it follows that the award possible for any union to secure depends upon its ability to cause Industrial War—in other words, upon its ability to strike." The pamphlet was written in 1918 and first printed in 1919. There were several editions and the total sale amounted to 25,000 copies. The whole pamphlet was published in serial form in the *Railways Union Gazette*, commencing November the 23rd, 1927 and concluding January 10th, 1928. The *Railways Union Gazette* introduced the first instalment by writing ". . . is a critical survey of the system the A.R.U. is now using."

Towards the end of the pamphlet Laidler states "the working man has been deluded into regarding the Court as a substitute for strikes.



Cover of an early edition of Percy Laidler's pamphlet "Arbitration and the Strike".

Thus, he has been encouraged to rely upon what this pamphlet proves is a broken reed. And inasmuch as he does this he fails to rely upon what is reliable, his Union's capacity to strike."

Firstly called "Arbitration and the Strike", later editions were titled simply "Arbitration". There is a copy in the Mitchell Library and also (as Laidler was happy to learn) in the Marx-Engels Library in Moscow.*

The Friday Night Forum

It was natural that the bookshop and its environs became a great meeting spot for all those interested in working class politics. Friday night was a late night for the shops. Closing time was 10.30 p.m. and it became 9 p.m. with the exception of Christmas Eve when the shops remained open until 10 p.m. Melbourne was more of a village in those days and crowds of workers enjoying shorter hours on Friday than the poor shop assistants, thronged the shops and pavements spending portion of the weekly pay envelope. Friday was usually pay day. Whilst the elite did the "block" in Collins Street, the workers promenaded Bourke Street, meeting friends and relations on the pavements in the course of so doing.

So, too, came all the active participants in politics—particularly the rank and file, for an exchange of news, and the thrashing out of policies, on the street kerb outside the shop.

Twenty to thirty men and a few women, representing all shades of political opinion, I.W.W., Revolutionary Socialist, Socialist, Anarchist, A.S.P., S.L.P., S.P.G.B., Rationalist, W.I.I.U. and even plain Labor would thrash out rival policies finally splitting up into two, three or four groups as the arguments grew more heated.

In these times the police were mainly foot-police and they patrolled the beat in twos and fours. On Friday night there would be two together in front and a few paces behind another twosome. They would plod along to 201, calling out "Move along there, now move along!" Eventually a group would appear to break up only to reform and by then the next twosome would be there repeating the performance. The

* A scanned copy of the pamphlet is available on the website *Reason in Revolt: Source Documents of Australian Radicalism*, <http://www.reasoninrevolt.net.au/>. (AW)

“Johnhops” as they were known would walk up to the next block and then turn around and come back and it would be on again.

Some of the regulars outside the shop were: Vic Barber, Jack O’Connor, Jack and Eustace Francis, Ted Dickinson, Bert Sutch, Snipe Aanensen, Stan Willis, Snowy Davis, Paddy Hoyne, Howard Norbury, Bill Downie, L. Pozzi, Ted Protz, A. J. Carozzi, Jack Moran, Viv Crisp, Hill 60, Norman Rancie, Frank and Max Stephanski, Eddie Lyall, Terry Dean, Bill Scott, Lloyd Jones, Bert Wall, Mrs. Blackler, Bert Payne, Phil and Ben Woolf, Jim Grover, Jim Morley, Bill Fox, John Geikie, Cliff Barratt, Roley Farrall, Snowy Bessant, Mrs. Anderson, Jim Bergin, Ted Ford, Jock Bosher, Goff Bullen, George Robson, Leo Bakker, Snowy Martin, Whiskers Hill, Seejam Johnson, Maurie Tilley, Chris Laidler, Jack Temple and Charlie Wardley. A large number were waterside workers—all of whom are dead, and died at a relatively young age. The capitalist press was always describing the wharfies as loafers, but the age of death of the militants seems to prove the heavy nature of their work.

When a fight was on, be it industrial or political, there would be larger numbers come along, and many campaigns to assist the current struggles would emanate from this launching pad.

Especially during strikes, workers of the involved industry would be there. Visitors from other States would know where to go to meet kindred souls. Usually they came into the bookshop during the day and would surely ask, “Do they still meet outside on Friday night?”

After the abolition of Friday night shopping during the last war, there would still be a few lonely stragglers making a nostalgic pilgrimage.

Chapter Eleven

POST-WAR RIOTS

There were soldier riots and unemployed demonstrations after the war, in 1919.

On July 15 an unemployed demonstration of 2000 men and women marched from the Trades Hall, with the intention of sending a deputation in to see Premier Lawson. Batons were freely used by twelve mounted and forty foot police.

PEACE CELEBRATIONS, MELBOURNE

On July 21st there were wild scenes, returned soldiers held a meeting at the Atheneum and 2000 marched to the Treasury Gardens. They streamed in all doors of Parliament, and one man threw a heavy silver inkstand at the Premier and scored a bulls-eye. The Premier had to be helped from the room. The men were protesting at the killing of a returned man, James O'Connor, of Madeline Street, Carlton. At the Peace celebrations soldiers had rushed the armoury at the barracks for guns and ammunition after some of their number had been arrested. Guards with guns fired into the crowd and O'Connor was fatally hit.

The men demanded the dismissal of a well-hated Senior Constable Scanlon. Scanlon was the scourge of the anti-conscription fighters and by now had transferred his hate to the returned men. It took the soldiers to move him. He was charged with using objectionable language and relieved of street duty. The evidence was that he shouted "You are one of those khaki bastards who have been looking for trouble all day . . . Knock those khaki lot down first."

A deputation to Premier Lawson demanded —

1. That an instruction be issued that no policeman be allowed to use a baton in dealing with soldiers.
2. Senior Const. Scanlon be dismissed.
3. That the soldiers arrested in the street disturbances on Saturday and Sunday nights be released.
4. That the fines imposed in connection with these disturbances be remitted.

It was claimed the soldiers left the House with cut glass decanters, marble statues and private papers.

No action was taken by the authorities against the men.

FREMANTLE'S EUREKA

Tom Edwards, a striker, was killed by a shot fired from the Premier's launch during a Lumpers' strike. Fifty men were injured, including 26 police. Most of the men were returned soldiers. Likewise a number of the police who laid into them with fixed bayonets were returned men.

The whole of Fremantle closed down for the funeral and Premier Hal Pateshall Colebatch had to resign. Western Australia had three Premiers in a month and someone wrote, satirically, that the slogan is "Produce, produce, produce" and they were doing this with the production of Premiers. The ships SS Khyber, Wandilla, Benalla and Shropshire with soldiers coming home were near the wharf. Colebatch and a number of invited guests boarded a launch and came down the river towards the wharf.

The Premier apparently regarded the assault as something of a social occasion. A champagne picnic lunch was provided on board. Automobiles with "club-men rather jaded from a long and moist Saturday night" and ladies sped to the scene of the "fun" They met a cordon of lumpers. Lumpers were on bridges picketing, as the launch came down the river. Men, women and children, were hurrying along every road that led to the waterfront and they were armed with boulders, lumps of iron and road metal. The authorities had arranged that a private launch stand by, the Captain quickly retreated when he saw what was happening. Boys and women played an important part.

The battle on the wharf was so intense that the Police Commissioner addressed union leader McCallum saying, "For God's sake do something to keep your men back."

The Sunday morning demonstration ended with the carrying away of the wounded, but a fresh demonstration took place in the afternoon. 5000 citizens headed by 200 returned soldiers marched to the wharf at 5 p.m., raided the pickup station and threw barricades into the river.

As the crowd did this a troopship arrived in the harbour. Her decks were lined with troops. News of what was happening was semaphored

to the troops, and they in return expressed their willingness to come ashore and take a hand.

The returned men virtually took over the town after the first attack. Next morning a meeting of 400 returned soldiers in Fremantle decided unanimously "that this meeting of returned soldiers viewed with alarm and disgust the act of the Government in using armed force in Fremantle, and pledge ourselves to resist any such future act of the Government."

Six police were assaulted by returned men on the Monday following the attack on the lumpers, and two other police were assaulted during the week. Returned men raided a police station. A number of nationalists were set upon by the soldiers, and the Mayor of Subiaco was forced to seek safety in flight. The executive of the Returned Soldiers Association in Perth called a meeting which broke up in disorder. Returned men marched down the streets of Fremantle requesting hotels and restaurants to refuse to serve police. Standing Orders were suspended at the weekly meeting of the Returned Soldiers' Association in Perth, and a motion, "That the Association endorsed the action of the returned soldier lumpers in their resistance to the demands made upon them by the Government, and will assist them in every way" moved by Mr. Maloney (East Perth delegate) was ruled out of order. Similar motions were rejected.

Meetings of support for the lumpers, were held throughout Western Australia.

At a meeting of 1000, a Mr. Corboy moved a motion supporting the returned soldier lumpers and said he had marks on his body of wounds, doing a job of which no workers should have been guilty, and that was fighting for the capitalist rulers of the world. They were now, after five years' insanity only just beginning to get their senses back.

The Leader of the Opposition, P. Collier MLA, together with John Curtin, addressed a mass meeting at Boulder.

Sunday, the 4th May, 1919, became known as "Bloody Sunday" in Western Australia. The *One Big Union Herald* asserted Edwards' funeral was "probably the most remarkable funeral of its kind in Australia." The whole of work in Fremantle stopped. The population was 25,000 and 7,000 attended the funeral in a procession a mile long, with four in a row. The flag at the Town Hall and other prominent buildings was flown at half mast. Trams ceased and trains stopped throughout the whole State for three minutes at 3 o'clock.

Edwards had worked on the goldfields as a fireman on the Golden Horseshoe mine. He was married and had four children.

The coffin, draped with "Labor's colours, blue and white" (*Kalgoorlie Miner*) stood in the Trades Hall from noon till 3 p.m. Workers on the wharves suspended work. The funeral procession was headed by the Fremantle Band, leading members of the Parliamentary Labor Party and all leading unionists.

The sentiment was expressed that it was hoped never such another funeral would take place in Western Australia.

BRISBANE RIOTS

Soldier riots here were directed against the Russians. There were a large number of Russians with a club in South Brisbane. During the war and after, it was illegal to fly the red flag. In Brisbane it was decided to carry the red flag in a demonstration, on March 23rd, 1919.

The march started quietly enough from the Trades Hall and the demonstrators had a permit to march. Although according to reports Russians were in the van, it was an ordinary Australian demonstration. Suddenly red flags were unfurled. When they reached the Domain they found a line of foot police and four mounted men in front of the gates which had been closed. A man (later claimed to be Norman Jeffrey) climbed a tree and began addressing the people. When it became evident that other speakers would follow, the police allowed them into the Domain.

That night a meeting was to be held at William Street, North Quay at 7.30 and as the word of the red flag display spread like wildfire 4000 to 5000 people assembled there, and a large proportion were returned soldiers. The speakers' box was seized and thrown over the bridge into the river, accompanied by the remark, "If you try that on again, you'll go over too" to a would-be speaker. A crowd of mainly returned soldiers, estimated at 500 then marched to the Russian Club headquarters in Merivale Street, South Brisbane, shouting "Down with the Bolsheviks."

The van of the march broke into a run when nearing the club rooms, but halted some twenty or thirty yards from it when three shots were fired from the club-rooms. It was later claimed two were warning shots and the third whistled over the heads of the crowd. Most ran but some stood their ground and twenty to thirty police held them back. A

policeman told them he had spoken with the Russians and said there were fifty to sixty in the rooms and all were armed. They claimed they were entitled to protect their property and they said they would fight to a finish. Eventually the soldiers dispersed. The following day there was an "anti-Russian demonstration" and clash with police. Nineteen people (fourteen Police, four Returned Soldiers and one civilian) were bayoneted, bludgeoned or shot.

The injured included Mr. Urquhart, the Commissioner of Police, and Mr. Archdall, Chief Police Magistrate.

A huge Australian flag was unfurled and a speaker said, "Who let you down at the war?", "What are we going to do with this mob who let us down on the Eastern Front? We are going to put them right out of Australia and their sympathisers are going with them. The whole crowd of them will have to be wiped out."

The crowd were told by a police spokesman that Intelligence Officers had raided the Russian rooms that morning, and that some would be prosecuted. A number of shop windows had been smashed around that quarter.

Next day Mr. Theodore, the acting Premier said the incident was most unfortunate. The press raved saying "the cowardly foreign element had gone from their houses, left their property to be protected by the very police that they had wilfully insulted on the previous day". It was claimed that the "red flag demo." was made up of IWW-ites, Sinn Feiners, Socialists and Russians.

An anti-Bolshevik Society was formed and demonstrations of up to 20,000 occurred almost daily for two or three weeks. The pubs were actually made to close at 2 p.m. one day because of the situation. It was demanded that Russians be sacked from jobs and that they be deported. A huge demonstration took place outside the *Standard* newspaper office, because it was considered to be not strong enough against the Russians. A public apology was demanded, windows smashed and a man who kept his hat on during the singing of the National Anthem was rushed, hit and forced to sing "God Save the King." The anthem was sung repeatedly at all demonstrations and finally one of the organisers suggested it should be dropped because it resulted in too many fights.

A huge mass stood in the rain at Albert Square one night and Sergt. H. Buchanan said: "The question was who was going to govern Australia—the Australians or those dirty greasy Russians? The

imported element before very long, if not deported, was going back to its Maker." They were called "the scum and sore of Society", "a cancer".

Meantime back in Melbourne the President of the Returned Soldiers & Sailors' Imperial League of Australia, Col. W. H. Bolton said: "I regret to learn that amongst the rabble that formed the procession (i.e. Red Flag Demo.) were a few men wearing the returned soldiers' badge." "Bolshevism must be stamped out," Col. Bolton continued, "and must be dealt with as a German spy would be if he was discovered behind the Australian trenches."

Rallies of returned men were held in many Queensland towns including Ipswich and Toowoomba.

A demonstration to Parliament was directed against Theodore who would not come out in a way to suit the soldiers: he was the subject of continuous attack along with the *Standard*. The Trades and Labor Council took a good stand. It supported the Russians and condemned brutality and savage sentences meted out, and the A.W.U. in Rockhampton carried a resolution against the soldiers. Theodore commented that he supported their sentiments. An M.L.A., E. N. Free was target of great abuse because he was a speaker on the momentous Sunday.

The soldiers claimed that the police were taking the part of the Bolsheviks.

Eleven people were arrested, not all of them were Russians. Each one, irrespective of defence was given six months, and two charged additionally with assault were given one month for the assault. Zuzenko was taken into custody of the military authorities as a preliminary to deportation. Alexander Ijusjenko, described as leader of the Russians was deported. All pleaded not guilty.

Norman Jeffrey, a wickerworker who was organising for the One Big Union League, and later for the Communist Party, admitted in Court that he supported the doctrine of industrial unionism, and said that although he spoke from the tree, he did not wave a red flag up there as alleged. Monty Miller gave evidence of his good character.

Jeffrey asked for an adjournment on the grounds of the inflamed state of the public mind and referred to the psychological state. Archdall, the Chief Magistrate said that this was "bordering on impudence."

Although his case lasted over three days he still got the six months. Guss Oranco said he was "proud to carry our glorious red flag and will

do so whenever I wish." He recited verses and ended up "yours for the revolution".

E. N. Free M.L.A., as witness said he was proud of that day, proud of his Russian friends and of Zuzenko. Percival James used the defence that he had not waved a red flag, it was a red handkerchief. He asked for a definition of a red flag. Some official tried to look it up and announced it was not in the dictionary. James got six months.

Others sentenced were Herbert James Huggot, Hermann Bykoff, W. Elder, Edward Cahill, Jerry Cahill, Charles (or George) Taylor (or Taylour), Paul Leischmann, Ludwik Roslan and Steve Tolstoheoff.

Mr. P. Kreslin, secretary of the Russian Association said that over 1000 wanted to return to Russia but they were precluded from doing so by the Federal Government. He asked the leader of the Federal Labor opposition to send a cable to the British Labour Party with a view to having the plight of the Russians in Australia brought before the House of Commons, so that permission may be obtained for them to return to Russia.

On April 9th it was announced in the press that Federal Parliament had decided that a number of Russians would be deported and landed at Odessa, and that wives could go too.

Some Russians were kept in Darlinghurst gaol pending deportation. They protested at gaol conditions and their wives being left without



Monty Miller, who gave character evidence for arrested unionist Norman Jeffrey. The inscription on the photo, from a few years later, reads "Yours for Industrial Freedom".

any provision for their welfare. An appeal in support of them was signed by a number of prominent Russians in Sydney.

TOWNSVILLE'S 'BLOODY' SUNDAY

On Sunday, June 29th, 1919, police fired into an unarmed crowd of men, women and children. Seven men were wounded (one had three bullets inside him), and were taken to hospital.

A meatworkers' strike was in progress, on the issue of preference to unionists. Leaders, Carney and Kelly (returned soldiers) were arrested, and bail refused. It was in connection with these issues that the people were meeting. The day following the shooting a large crowd assembled, and a substantial section favoured the securing of arms. The Strike committee members opposed this and speakers said they believed they could win the strike without rioting. When J. Dash said, "If we went to the Court house or the gaol, what good could we do?", a returned soldier retorted "You are not the sort of man who went to the front!" The meeting broke up and some people raided hardware shops, seized all guns (approximately 200) and ammunition. The police fearing the armed men, then offered to allow bail to Carney and Kelly if the firearms were returned. The offer was ignored but one of the men was given bail, the other being apparently too ill to leave gaol.

The Queensland Government was Labor. It held a special Cabinet meeting and issued a Proclamation ordering the return of the firearms. All available police were despatched to Townsville via Charters Towers. The Proclamation was signed by T. J. Ryan, Premier and Attorney General, June 30, 1919. Two hundred police arrived per special train at Charters Towers and the railway workers held it up, resulting in the suspension of sixteen who were later disgraced.

On July 6th a mass meeting of combined unions decided—"That we the unionists of Townsville, congratulate the railway workers of Charters Towers on refusing to convey the Labor Party's police to reinforce the police at Townsville, when we are standing for our rights as unionists in demanding preference to unionists at Alligator Creek and Ross River Meatworks."

The Strike Committee wired the Premier asking for an enquiry into the shooting and the reason bail was refused Carney and Kelly.

The Returned Sailors and Soldiers Labor League carried a resolution: "That we protest against the police firing into an unarmed

crowd on Sunday night last and this meeting demands a public enquiry from the Minister of Justice."

The Australian Meat Industry Employees' Union repudiated Arbitration.

Six of the seven injured men were still in hospital. Carney (on bail) moved a "protest against the Hunnish police methods in searching houses in gun raids." The searching of houses for firearms caused a lot more hostility and it was claimed that men and boys charged with petty offences were brutally assaulted by the police whom it was hard to identify since they had ceased wearing their numbers.

When Kelly and Carney came before the Court the case was dismissed.

Chapter Twelve

THE WORKERS' INTERNATIONAL INDUSTRIAL UNION (WIIU)

Little has been written about this organisation, which was a strong and influential one in its day. The Australian movement stemmed from the American movement. At the 1915 Convention of the political IWW in Detroit, the name was changed to the Workers' International Industrial Union.

The preamble was amended as follows:

The Working Class and the Employing Class have nothing in common. There can be no peace as long as hunger and want are found among millions of working people and the few who make up the employing class have all the good things of life.

Between these two classes a struggle must go on until the toilers come together on the political field under the banner of a distinct revolutionary political party governed by the workers' class interests and on the industrial field under the banner of one great industrial union to take and hold all means of production and distribution and to run them for the benefit of all wealth producers.

The rapid gathering of wealth and the centering of the management of industries into fewer and fewer hands make the trade unions unable to cope with the evergrowing power of the employing class, because the trade unions foster a state of things which allows one set of workers to be pitted against another set of workers in the same industry, thereby helping to defeat one another in wage wars. The trade unions aid the employing class to mislead the workers into the belief that the working class have interests in common with their employers.

These sad conditions must be changed, the interests of the working class upheld and while capitalist rule prevails all possible relief for the workers must be secured.

That can be done only by an organisation aiming steadily at the complete overthrow of the capitalist wage system and formed in such a way that all its members in any one industry or in all industries if necessary, cease work whenever a strike or lockout is on in any department thereof, thus making an injury to one an injury to all.

This preamble is stronger than any previous one in its reference to "a distinct revolutionary political party."

Following the change of name some members of the Australian Socialist Party decided to form a branch of the W.I.I.U. in Australia. An application for a charter was made to the Detroit organisation. This application was granted and headquarters were set up at Hatter Arcade, King Street, Newtown, N.S.W. Local No. 1 Newtown was formed.

Local No. 2 was formed in Melbourne in 1917 with headquarters at 47 Victoria Street, Melbourne, the headquarters also of the Australian Socialist Party. This move annoyed the S.L.P. who claimed they were double-crossed and declined association with the W.I.I.U. and carried on with the W.I.I.U. Club of Sydney formed by the S.L.P. there.

At this stage both the Melbourne and Sydney locals were weak, the only activities were the holding of local meetings. The total membership of the two locals was between thirty and forty.

The Melbourne Local realised if progress was to be made, printed propaganda was needed, and Sydney Headquarters were approached to publish an official journal. They agreed so Tom Audley visited Sydney to clear up difficulties and the *One Big Union Herald* was launched from Melbourne with J. A. (Jim) Dawson as Editor.

Having only 30/- in cash, finance was an obvious difficulty so printer C. Smithson was approached and his only inquiry was, "Do you think you can sell the paper?"

This assurance being given he agreed to print 2000 copies and hold the type. 1000 were sent to Sydney and the remaining 1000 sold in Melbourne in one day, mainly because a conference on Closer Unionism was being held at the Trades Hall. The first issue reached 5000 copies, and the *O.B.U. Herald* was published throughout the whole existence of

the W.I.I.U. Its peak circulation was 20,000 copies, though the norm was nearer 10,000. Many went to other States and a team of fifty sellers operated in Bourke Street every Saturday night, disposing of some 1000 copies.

This activity did not meet with the approval of the Melbourne *Herald* as both papers were often sold by the same boy. Legal action was threatened for infringement of copyright in the use of the name "Herald". Tom Audley as Manager, interviewed Mr. T. Fink, the Melbourne *Herald's* legal adviser, who ordered a change of name and offered expenses for doing so. Their bluff was called and no further action was taken.

The paper was popularly written with job news, reports of progress of the organisers, current affairs and comment on other organisations.

Jim Dawson was Editor most of the time. Temporaries were Olive Willans and Tom Audley. In 1923 articles appeared which were critical of the Communist Party, then functioning in Sydney. One such paragraph reads: "The WIIU is opposed to the Communist Party's concept of socialism in that it is not democratic. The C.P. relies upon the few leading the mass—a dictatorship by the Communists through a political State (how not specified). This must result in a dictatorship in industry and result in a bureaucratic State—not socialism." The Police Strike was written up, and material republished from the American paper, *Industrial Union News* a banned paper circulating under the counter. A letter from Jack London with the heading, "Why I left the Socialist Party" and signed, "Yours for the revolution" was reprinted. Some long articles by General Secretary, Tom Audley appear, one headed, "A fighting Policy to meet Australian Conditions".

No. 1 issue of the *One Big Union Herald* announced that the paper cost more than one penny and that the organisation relied on donations to keep going. Published monthly the subscription was 2/- yearly posted. "Bundle Order for Agitators"—15 copies for 1/-, 6/6 per 100 copies. This notice was signed by A. D. Dodds. Another paragraph read "Articles for publication urgently requested on matters of labour troubles and constructive propaganda. Never mind the grammar. The Editor can lick matter into shape for the *OBU Herald* is conducted by voluntary labour. Melbourne Oct. 24, 1918." The Post Office rejected an application for the paper to be registered as a newspaper which would have meant much lower postage costs. Tom Audley went to see Dr.

Maloney and the latter took the matter up with the Post Office and finally convinced them to grant the registration.

Researchers reading the files of *O.B.U. Herald*s may be puzzled to find successive issues with precisely the same contents, excepting for the number of issue and "month" of publication. The reason for this is explained by Tom Audley as being that they had to publish each month to keep their registration for transmission as a newspaper with the Post Office. Some months they had no money for type and consequently used the type of the previous month, thus satisfying the rules and regulations. WIIU had its first headquarters in Rooms 29-31 Eastern Arcade, running through from Bourke Street, to Little Collins Street, just below the Eastern, Market.

The Eastern Market headquarters had two shop-fronts and this was an aid to a good bookshop and literature distribution centre. A great number of publications came from Charles Kerr in America and the WIIU were able to sell cheaper than the American price because of the exchange rate. English publications were obtained on a barter system. The WIIU would send over £40 worth of literature and receive the same value back: thus money never changed hands. A large amount of literature came from Laidler at Andrades.

The Australian Administration headquarters were transferred to Melbourne and all work directed from that city. The publication of the *O.B.U. Herald* had advanced Melbourne to the claim of being the main centre.

Pamphlets written by local members were published as well as reprints of American publications. Trautmann's "One Great Union" had several reprints, "Beacon Light", "Job Control", "How the One Big Union Works", "Revolutionary Industrial Unionism" and "Disarmament" are some of the titles. "New Democracy and the State" was financed by W. (Bill) Slater (later an Attorney General in State Labor Government). A series of six stickers were issued, one reading "Knowledge is Power—Join the WIIU."

Leaflets of an agitational and educational nature were published and permission obtained from the Government to issue leaflets in the Italian language. These were used in Timber Camps and at Eildon Weir where the WIIU joined up a large number of workers and were confronted by the AWU which union declared the job "black" and forced the WIIU members off the job. Headquarters were moved to 237 Little Bourke Street, two doors from Swanston Street during 1922.

The organisation was on the basis of industry divided up as follows: Manufacture and General Production, Pastoral Industry, Transportation, Timber Industry, Building and Construction. There was also a Press Committee.

The first General Secretary was Jack Vincent. In 1918 Tom Audley was elected general secretary and remained so for the life of the organisation (it terminated in 1925).

Tom has had a long political career which began as a result of attending Australian Socialist Party meetings at the Albert Park Yachting and Angling Club. These were held on Sunday nights and speakers were frequently Mark Feinberg, Bill Harris and Mrs. McDonald. Without joining the ASP he used to help them sell the *International Socialist* at football matches. On the outbreak of war he joined the No Conscription Fellowship, and then in 1917 the WIIU. After the demise of the organisation he concentrated his attention on trade union activity in the Shop Assistants' Union of which he is now a Life member.

He was active in the "early closing" campaign and represented the union on Wages' Boards and was on the THC for several years. In the early thirties he joined the ALP and is now a very active member of the Society for the Study of Labour History. Other active members in the WIIU, were Alf Wilson, Mark Feinberg, Bill Fox, Victor Petruchenia, Olive Willans, Bill Harris, Bill Chudleigh, George Harrigan, Chris Woods, P. Isaacs, Fred Roberts, J. B. Scott, J. A. Dawson, Alan Shain and Bert Davies.

The work of the field organisers was arduous. They had to live under primitive conditions on low wages, which had to be earned by sales of literature and collections at meetings.

J. B. (Jim) Scott toured and set up organisation in Western Australia, and in Victoria at Eildon Weir and Wonthaggi. His wife, Bertha Scott (formerly a member of the VSP) was a battler who kept the family of three small children going, when necessary. Son Dan, was named after Daniel De Leon, one of the founders of the IWW in the USA. Jim was a popular "mob orator" with a caustic wit. When on the Eastern Goldfields of W.A. he wrote Laidler, "We will have 400 members at the end of the month in Kalgoorlie . . ." He tells of driving in a jinker at 3 a.m. as "cold as a frog", to get to mining and woodchopping camps. He suggested that Western Australia needed five organisers. All working

class organisations in those days, measured their success by the amount of literature sold and much of this came from Andrades.

An order from Scott in a letter to Laidler, dated October 2nd, 1920, was: 40 Communist Programme, 60 In Russia, 60 Victorious Russia, 2 Red Europe, 10 War What For? (banned during war), 2 King Coal, 2 The Underworld, 1 Proletarian Dictatorship.

Alf Wilson was also an indefatigable literature seller, and spent many months organising in Adelaide. Scott was a keen letter-writer and copies of some of his papers are now in the La Trobe State Library.

On September 13th, 1920, Laidler wrote Scott in W.A.:

Dear F. W. [Fellow Worker] Scott,

Pleased to get your letters. I showed them to Baracchi who will no doubt write you. In the meantime I might say the 10 who are out seem lost. [10 of the 12 framed IWW men had been released by this date]. They are not acquainted with the last 4 years' development in political theory but they sense the change in things and are not prepared to state their views of things as they are, until they have studied some. However they have been impressed some with the attitude of the 3rd International and we in Melbourne have also tried to influence Glynn and Larkin especially. There is to be a meeting of the I.W.W. fellows here tonight just to discuss things with them before they return to Sydney. I will write later as developments occur.

What seems quite possible anyhow is a big movement based on the 3rd International. We are printing a manifesto of the 3rd International to the I.W.W. It is a fine document and should influence the boys everywhere. I will send you some. Re literature we sent all the lines in stock and took the liberty of sending some others which you can return if not wanted over there. We also sent 3 copies each of No. 1 and No. 2 Pro Review [Proletarian Review] free of charge. You can pass these around so that all may read them. They are scarce or I would have sent more. Best wishes.

P. LAIDLER

September 19th, 1920 ... Scott to Laidler.

I do wish that the 10 men would hurry up and make up their minds, what they are going to do, not that it should matter much,

for if the working class are waiting for "leaders" they have gone to the pack, if they do not know now where they stand the movements of 10 frail mortals surely cannot influence them.

I heard that Glynn was seriously thinking about throwing in his lot with the Trades Hall OBU. Is there any truth about this? I will be pleased to learn from you Perc what they are contemplating doing and what transpired at the meeting while they were in Melbourne.

September 20th, 1920, Scott wrote to David Humphryie, Kurrawa, telling him he was sending the Preamble translated into Italian and requesting it be pasted on water tanks. He says: "This is the form of organisation that is striking the fear of death into the Master Class of Italy today."

Further from Laidler re the attitude of the 10:—

Larkin is a very tolerant man and is ready for almost any fighting organisation. Grant, I should think is uncertain as to his future. Glynn is still hazy, seems rather to favour the attitude put up in the Manifesto we are printing. We had several meetings of discussion with them in Melbourne. The old I.W.W. will not be resurrected.

The tendency towards a Communist Party seems strong, Glynn has evidently not decided for or against the Trades Hall One Big Union. Generally speaking the unattached fellows here (and there are a good number now) favour something like a C.P. embracing the ASP, or forming a Branch of the ASP here. Baracchi seems to strike the dominant note in the Pro Review. The OBU and Industrial Unionism are not given primary importance by the crowd everywhere, in the same way as members of the I.W.W. and WIUU give to it. However, the Manifesto will speak for that.

September 29th, 1920, Laidler to Scott:

A Communist Party has been launched in Sydney, apparently by Earsman and probably Peter Simonoff has a hand. Here the fellows are not too clear yet as to what to do. There seems too many points of difference to make the track easy for them to do much just yet.

Scott from Melbourne to Cyril Gould, Cwmgwrach, South Wales, April 10th, 1921:

I know that the need for a revolutionary political party does exist and if the Communists came out openly and endorsed that particular school of Socialist Industrial Unionism to which we adhere, and exposed the capitalist nature of the pure and simple craft unions and propagated for revolutionary unionism, I would be a member of the C.P. tomorrow. But with their sleeping endorsement of industrial unionism and their unconcrete position I see no reason why I should divide my efforts when in reality the only real revolutionary propaganda done in Australia at the present time is done by the WIU and its advocates.

A resolution from Kalgoorlie Local for the Convention to be held at the end of 1921, read "that the General Executive Board get in touch with all the loose ends of the revolutionary industrial union movement and immediately call a conference where the position of the WIU can be stated for the purpose of bringing about unity in the industrial union movement throughout Australia, and that an invitation be specially extended to the released 10 IWW men to attend this Conference."

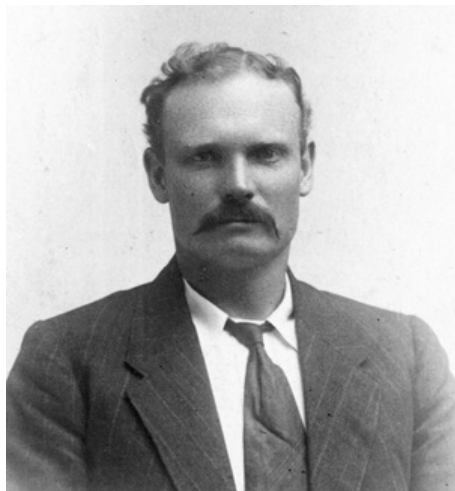
Jim was born in Perth, Scotland and died in 1970. Before coming to Australia he lived in Canada and the USA where he became prominent in the Painters' Union. His son Don, is an organiser in the Painters' Union, Victoria.

Organiser Alf Wilson was also a "mob orator" who could speak for hours and boasted of being as fresh as ever, and ready to go on after four hours.

In August, 1917, speaking on the Yarra Bank, Melbourne, where there was a big roll up, he said, "We could afford to defy the law that was not the law for another 24 hours" (Amendments to Illegal Association Act, which outlawed the IWW). "I suppose you think that this is our last appearance on the Yarra Bank but we will be here the same as ever. We stand for the One Big Union, and neither Hughes nor any other Prime Minister will prevent us. I for one will be on the Yarra Bank next Sunday even if I have to wear a frock coat and carry a bible in my pocket." Wilson joined the WIU and became a fulltime organiser. He was very strong on literature sales and in Adelaide brought the sale of the *One Big Union Herald* up to 100 dozen a month, and sold 400 per week of *International Socialist* organ of the ASP in Sydney.

He went to the bush camps in Western Australia and relates, of a Woodcutters' Camp at Hampton Plains, "It was customary for a notice

to be posted on every tank so that the woodcutters when they went for water would be able to read it. At meeting time someone would beat a tank with a billet of wood. Woodcutters supplied fuel for steam and power to work gigantic machinery that had been erected to crush gold. They lived under slave conditions. Poor food, hessian houses and tents of store calico over a frame.”



Alf Wilson.

Alfred Wilson was born near Warrnambool on 20th September, 1878, the son of a school teacher. He worked at varied jobs, mining in Alaska and British Columbia; in the stokeholds of ships and on the wharves. Wilson had trained as a parson. He preached at Gaffney's Creek and Woods Point as a lay preacher.

A friend took him to the Yarra Bank and he became interested in socialism, and active in working to that end. He died in 1937. His wife

Kathleen Glenie is referred to in Jauncey's book on the Anti-conscription campaigns as the secretary of the Anti-conscription committee in Adelaide at the age of 16.

A. E. (Bert) Davies was secretary of an important WIIU Branch at Wonthaggi. He was for three years secretary to Bob Ross in the VSP. Bert was born in South Melbourne. He was a clerk in the Victorian Railways Union, working for Frank Hyett and decided to go to Broken Hill. First he worked on the *Barrier Daily Truth* while its journalists were on holidays. He got a job plate laying on the railway line at Minindie and worked on the surface and underground in the mine. He was surprised at getting a job with the Zinc Corporation office as he had been rebuffed in other offices when he produced a reference signed by Frank Hyett—one secretary indignantly said to him, "Don't you think we've heard of 'hell-fire' Hyett up here?" In Broken Hill he was active with the LVA. Returning to Victoria he went to Wonthaggi and obtained work in the mine, and was active in the WIIU.

Coming back to Melbourne he worked on the wharf, in 1920 in the Meat Industry union, in 1925 the Clothing Trades Union and in 1928 ceased clerical work in that union and became an organiser. The economic crisis reduced the number of members and there was no job for Bert. He was Mayor of Port Melbourne during the depression. He finished up, until retirement as the industrial roundsman on the *Herald*. At present he is writing a history of the Meat Industry Union and is an active member of the Society for the Study of Labour History. He married Alice Warburton, daughter of active socialist parents.

Meetings were held on the Yarra Bank, the South Melbourne Market and at the corner of Bridport and Montague Streets, Albert Park for which permits were granted by the local Council. This later became known as "Red Square" and became identified with Jimmy Coull.

Mark Feinberg, Jim Dawson and Tom Audley were regular speakers on Friday nights.

The WIU worked with other organisations.

In the anniversary celebrations of the Russian Revolution it participated with The Russian Association and Communist Party at St. Peters Church, Eastern Hill. It celebrated May Day with a meeting on 1st May, in 1923 at the Temperance Hall and in 1924 at the Unitarian Church in Cathedral Place, Melbourne.

Campaigns participated in were for Release of the 12 IWW Men, the Tom Mooney case, Hands off Russia and in support of the Victorian Peace League's campaign against war. It suffered some amount of persecution in regard to selling literature on Sunday. In 1924 two members, John Geikie and B. Salt, new arrivals from England, were arrested by Dets. Saker and Banner for selling papers outside the Bijou Theatre. They were fined 40/- each, with Maurice Blackburn defending them. George Harrington was fined £2 for selling the *OBU Herald* on the Yarra Bank on Sunday. When a Labor Government was in power with George Prendergast the Chief Secretary, Percy Laidler and Tom Audley decided to test the Sunday law. They sold papers at the Bank on Sunday on May 4th, 1924, and their names were taken by Det. Saker—as a result of a deputation to the Chief Secretary, no prosecution was launched.

Early in 1925 the WIU took the initiative (as it had before) in trying to get a new place for Sunday afternoon meetings. It wrote a letter to the THC requesting cooperation. On the 26th February the Assistant Secretary of the THC reported on a deputation to the Minister for Lands

requesting a meeting place on the Domain. Representatives of the THC, ALP, WIIU, VSP and Communist Party were on the deputation. The Minister replied he would submit the request to Cabinet but there were objections to the proposal. Nothing came of this.

The organisation of the WIIU began to wane with the formation of the Communist Party in Melbourne in 1924 and the Workers' Industrial Union of Australia (WIU of A) in both Sydney and Melbourne. The WIIU was absorbed by the SLP in 1925.

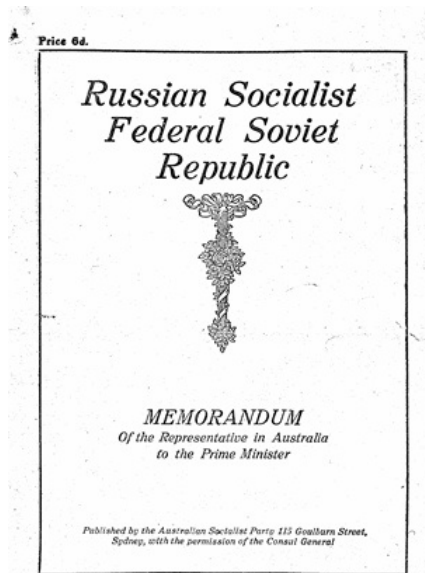
Chapter Thirteen

POST-REVOLUTION

THE EARLY AUSTRALIAN CONSULS OF THE USSR

The Russian Simonoff (Simonov) was the first Consul for the USSR, and was officially recognised by cable signed "Trotsky", during 1918. The Australian Government refused to recognise him. He was energetic in two fields, carrying out normal consular work, explaining the situation in Russia and appealing for trading relations; and in stimulating the development of a Communist Party in Australia. He also continued to participate in Australian political activities. It was rather inevitable that his consular responsibilities would be brief and end in deportation.

On 12th March, 1918, Simonoff came to Melbourne and took rooms at "Loran", 350 St. Kilda Road, which he regarded as a Consulate. In Sydney he had premises in 28 Station House, Rawson Place. He busied himself disseminating information about the Soviet Union and where expedient, wrote under a nom de plume, political articles. He wrote under the name P. Finn in *The Proletarian Review*. However under his own name he wrote "What is Russia?" which circulated widely in the radical movement. Simonoff wrote a Memorandum addressed to the Prime Minister and headed "Russian Socialist Federal Soviet Republic",



Peter Simonoff's 1920 memorandum to the Australian prime minister.

“Memorandum of the Representative in Australia to the Prime Minister.”

A footnote on the front page indicates it was published by the Australian Socialist Party, 115 Goulburn Street, Sydney, with the permission of the Consul General.

The last paragraph in the Memorandum reads:

My country, which has been looked upon as lost to international trade, offers today greater possibilities in this respect than does any other country in the world. Russia is a whole world by itself. She offers things which are necessary everywhere, and she wants things which are found also everywhere. My Government is today the greatest single buying and selling concern the world ever witnessed, and to refuse trading with such a concern is suicide for those who do so. And it is the duty of your Government to arrange the facilities for your people to open trading with my Government as soon as possible, just as it is my duty to point this out to your Government.

PETER SIMONOFF,
Representative of the Russian Socialist Federal Soviet Republic.

From his Sydney address he issued a periodical called *Soviet Russia* and his byline was “Official organ of the Russian Soviet Government Bureau.”

Simonoff announced in Melbourne that he was leaving for Russia in July, 1918. He had at last been able to arrange passage on a Japanese ship leaving the port of Sydney.

A complimentary testimonial was organised at the Socialist Hall, with sixpence the price of admission. £100 was given to the Simonoff Trust Account for publication of his book, *What is Russia*, Fraser and Jenkinson agreeing to risk half the cost.

After a great farewell news came from Simonoff in Sydney that his passage had been cancelled. At the end of October he was back in Melbourne and a couple of weeks later was arrested on the Yarra Bank.

He was charged under the War Precautions Act as an alien. He had addressed a meeting and in doing so propagated Bolshevism, after he had received an order not to address meetings. The result was a fine of £50 on each of two counts in default six months' gaol and costs and was

to enter into recognizances totalling £200 (two of £100 each) to observe the regulations for the period of the war. He served four months.

His consular work was not very “diplomatic” by today’s standards, the following letter shows the close tie-up with the Communist Party.

The Communist Party of Australia,
752 George Street,
Sydney.
21st December, 1920

Mr. Peter Simonoff,
Consul General of the Russian Soviet Republic.
Dear Sir,

I have been instructed by the Central Executive of the Communist Party to extend to you as Consul General of the Russian Soviet Republic, an invitation to be present at any Executive meeting of the Party.

The next meeting of the Central Executive will be held in Room 54, Trades Hall, on Wednesday, December 22nd, at 8 o’clock.

I also have been instructed to ask you if you would be so kind as to lecture for us at the Concordia Hall, Elizabeth Street, next Sunday evening December 26th. We suggest that the title of your lecture should be “Russia. Past and Present”.

Yours faithfully,

(The above copy letter by courtesy of Tom Wright — who says the original would have been signed by W. Earsman.)

Simonoff was deported in 1922. Of him Jack Kilburn, veteran Trade Union leader says “Peter Simonoff I knew and respected as a man able to speak up and out, he was well liked by militant workers.”

Whilst Simonoff was in gaol Michael Patrick Considine MHR, stood in as Consul. After Simonoff was deported, Eddie Callard became representative in Sydney and Z. Markov handled consular work in Melbourne. Only Simonoff was recognised by the Soviet Union.

THE 1ST ANNIVERSARY

The first anniversary of the Russian Revolution was advertised to be held at the Masonic Hall, Collins Street, Melbourne, on Monday, March 25th, 1918.

A leaflet was issued showing it was under the auspices of the Russian Association in co-operation with the ASP, the Australian Women's Peace Army and the Victorian Socialist Party.

The Chairman was the Reverend F. Sinclair.

Speakers:

M. Simonoff, Consul General for Russia and M. Dravin, will explain the Bolshevik Policy.

M. Kanevsky will explain the Social Revolutionary Policy and Why the Bolsheviks are wrong.

Mr. F. Anstey, MP.

Miss Cecilia John (Australian Women's Peace Army).

Mr. H. Scott-Bennett (VSP).

Mr. J. Scott (ASP).

Balalaikah Orchestra under direction of M. Cakse will play from 7.30 to 8 p.m.

Vida Goldstein,

Hon.-Sec. Joint Committee.

However another leaflet had to be produced deleting the name of Kanevsky—according to Jim Scott, the “reactionary Kanevsky was taken off the bill.”

Actually it was not held at the Masonic Hall, as the booking was cancelled by the Hall and the celebration was finally held at the Guild Hall. Neither Frank Anstey or Harry Scott-Bennett spoke—probably there were explanations for this.

Bert Wall and Phil Woolf (IWW and One Big Union Propaganda League) were very active in organising later anniversaries, which celebrated the October revolution.

RUSSIAN RELIEF

Between the years 1921 and 1923 Australia donated in cash and kind £250,000 for the relief of stricken Europe, the majority of it going to Russia. The Government itself, donated £50,000 worth of meat (106 wagon loads) for the relief of the famine in Soviet Russia. 500 bales of wool were donated by the British-Australian Wool Realisation Association. Leading citizens, including a great number of Sirs, Ladies, Dames, Majors and Reverends, formed a committee under the chairmanship of Her Excellency Lady Rachel Forster (wife of the Governor-General). The THC and the Employers' Federation were represented. Muriel Heagney was secretary. Lady Forster was eager to have her in an administrative position because she wanted the unions to take an active part in the relief campaign.

Muriel was well known and respected in the union movement, having been on the executive of the THC. She was the first effective advocate of equal pay and a champion of improved conditions for women workers. She was appointed an investigator in the 1919-20 Royal Commission on the basic wage and gathered evidence in the six capital cities and Newcastle. In 1948 she made a survey of women's wages for the ACTU. She was the first person to bring forward the concept of "the rate for the job." During her active life she wrote many pamphlets and leaflets and in 1936 her book, *Are Women Taking Men's Jobs?* was well acclaimed. She represented Australia overseas—in 1925 she was Australia's delegate at the first British Commonwealth Labor Conference held in the House of Commons and in August 1928 she attended the Pan Pacific Women's Conference in Honolulu and there presented a major report on "The Trade Union Woman". She was an adviser at an International Labour Organisation Conference held in the United States and was to have stayed there to write a book for publication on the equal pay question but the outbreak of war in 1939 prevented this project.

'ANYTHING FRESH? WHAT'S NEW?'

A colourful visitor to Andrade's Bookshop in 1919 was an English Socialist from Manchester. Moses Baritz was a vigorous personality, thickset in build, and unorthodox in behaviour, he made his mark in the Melbourne of that time. He was a knowledgeable man, an authority

on Marx, talented debater, ballet enthusiast, violinist, music lover and critic, theatre critic (E. A. Huckerby, secretary Theatrical Employees' Union kept him supplied with free theatre tickets in Melbourne), gourmet and chef. He was also a champion wrestler.



Moses Baritz, in the middle (others not identified).

Baritz had been deported from England to Canada during the war. The local police investigated him on arrival, his fame preceding him. "Are you here to show the IWW how to work?" they asked Moses. "IWW" he snorted, "No! let me get at them. These are the people I want to chew up. I'll spit them into the ocean. Where are they? Let me at them!" said he as he strode up and down the deck of the ship. "Once I see them I'll annihilate them!" (Although the IWW as an organisation was outlawed, its ideology persisted.)

The police were apparently impressed with this show of dramatic hostility towards what they regarded as the only formidable organisation against authority.

Moses was an ardent supporter of Socialism and as such he was ready to take sword and dagger to the IWW adherents. Apart from a genuine knowledge of Marx he was one of those people who are able to appear exceptionally knowledgeable on Marxist theory because they can recite long passages from Marx verbatim and quote the chapter and

verse. This ability quite amazed and to some extent befuddled the local Marxian students. He spoke at a number of meetings and debated anyone prepared to front him. His stay here was financed from collections at meetings, indicating his splendid draw-card qualities. He was never tired of arguing and did so not only professionally but ceaselessly on street corner and in private houses.

He was insatiable for new ideas, and became well known for his opening address on greeting anyone he knew with, "Anything fresh? What's new?", or at times the reverse, "What's new? Anything fresh?"

He became friendly with Laidler and Baracchi, and it was with the former as challenger and the latter as chairman that he met his match in a debate at the Strand Theatre, Bourke Street.

At this time Baracchi was living in South Yarra and Moses would spend the day shuttling between the bookshop and Baracchi's house, where, on arrival he would give the usual greeting, "Anything fresh? What's new?" and after briefly getting the substance of what was new and fresh from the Baracchi end, he would say, "I must ring Percy". Whereupon he would pick up the 'phone, ask the exchange for Central 2216 and hearing Perc's voice on the phone would say, "What's new Percy, anything fresh?" A short discussion with Guido on the basis of what stimulation Perc's conversation had offered, and he would say, "I must go and see Percy." Arriving there the performance was repeated, only this time he rang Baracchi to find out what was new and fresh. Moses expressed himself picturesquely and of Guido said, "Baracchi thinks the revolution is to hit a scab with a half brick in a toilet." (Which remark Guido is fond of quoting.)

Baritz challenged the VSP, ASP, SLP, WIIU, Rationalists and ALP to debate but the big debate that keyed everyone up was the one with Laidler. It was awaited with great excitement and the period of preparation was a tense one for Laidler, knowing that the eyes of all Australian Industrial Unionists were on him. The Strand theatre was a large one, showing silent pictures. It was packed out from an early hour on a Sunday night in July 1919. Laidler throughout his whole life attacked those members of political parties and groups who get up to speak or debate either unprepared, or sloppily prepared. He affirmed that it was an insult to the audience to fail to prepare your material to the very utmost. He extended himself on this occasion, and could hardly be spoken to for a week beforehand. He paced up and down (the better to think) every waking moment that he was not at work. No

doubt he spent his sleeping hours half-tuned to the arguments to raise and the arguments that would be proffered.

Laidler closely studied Baritz's methods and found that he bamboozled his opponents by using terms and definitions with which they were not familiar.

Laidler cut the ground from under his feet by debating on a common level, using the Baritz definitions as the norm and explaining them to the audience. Hitherto the labour movement regarded the words "political" and "parliamentary" as being synonymous. Moses used them in a marxist sense.

At the conclusion of the debate, Moses, in moving a vote of thanks to the chairman said he thought Baracchi a very good chairman, his only criticism was "he sided with my opponent."

The *Industrial Solidarity* of July 5th, 1919, reported the debate as follows:

Since his arrival in Australia, Moses Baritz has missed no opportunity to attack the Industrial Unionists of this country, and, indeed, of all countries. He has roared like a lion from both Melbourne and Sydney platforms. Anyone who ventured to mildly question him upon any phase of the subject was fortunate if he was not torn to pieces by this "intellectual giant". He has held the field and been allowed by Industrialists to have a fairly free rein.

Eventually, however, the time came for Moses to show his hand, to expose his cards, to defend his attack upon the Industrial Unionists. He was given that opportunity in debate with Percy Laidler, but let it be said without reservation of any kind that the "intellectual giant" showed himself utterly incapable of replying to any single one of the arguments put up by Laidler. In his first attempt to reply to Laidler he displayed all the signs of a man fighting a losing battle. In the first round Laidler delivered him the knockout blow. Not one argument in refutation was put forward by Baritz. He was a beaten man, and seemed to recognise it the moment Laidler made his first point. In vain did he wriggle and twist, he was held as within a vice. Argument after argument, as easily as they fell from the lips of Moses, were with as little effort simply torn to shreds before his eyes, and Moses did not even attempt to pick up the torn shreds. It was a night to be remembered. A complete vindication of Industrial Unionism . . .

The report continues and is signed "H. F." The enthusiasm for the local boy v. the stranger is apparent but unfortunately the actual arguments were not recorded by him.

Another correspondent does mention three of the arguments raised.

Baritz said that the general strike is not effective: that the mass of the workers had first to be educated and then the revolution could commence and that the workers had to capture the political machinery (Parliament) first, in order to be able to control the police and the army, and that we can then bring the social revolution.

The replies of the correspondent were: General strike in Russia 1905 forced Czar to sign abdication; (sic) that if the Russians had waited till 184,000,000 were sufficiently educated the revolution would have been postponed for thousands of years and finally he wrote "don't say it can't be done that way but it was done without capturing Parliament in Russia in 1917. Only 13 social democrats were in the Duma."

FEINBERG DEBATE

One of his other debates was with Mark Feinberg, who commented no-one thought it strange that two Jewish atheists should debate the subject "Can a Christian be a Marxist Socialist". Mark Feinberg has had a long political career beginning in the Social Democratic Party in the year 1903. Later he joined the IWW Club, SLP, ASP and WIIU and finally the ALP. Mark took the stand that religion was a private matter. Baritz said that religion was not a private matter but a public nuisance. In his bellowing style he attacked, saying that it was difficult to believe Feinberg had read Karl Marx and that if he had read him he didn't have the brains to understand him. He asked Feinberg if he missed Marx's statement that religion was the opium of the people to keep them asleep and from rebelling, with a promise of pie in the sky.

He went on—"Feinberg gave us a list of individuals who call themselves Christian socialists—what can I do to stop them calling themselves what they like?"

Feinberg had the right of reply and he sounded off. "My opponent Mr. Baritz has given us a display of abuse and conceit—he says that I haven't the brains to understand Marx—he alone has all the brains to understand Marx. But I don't stand alone. The best brains in the Socialist movement, the Soviet leadership take my stand, not Baritz, on the question in dispute. Churches and Synagogues are allowed to

function and sincere believers are allowed to attend and worship. There's no law against it." Feinberg asserted that any religious person could be a socialist if he didn't take his political and economic views from a Rabbi, Priest or parson (unless they were socialist). Baritz was shocked to hear Feinberg say that he had read *Das Kapital* in the Synagogue. He attended Synagogue to keep his parents happy but would take along *Das Kapital* to read.

Baritz debated J. McKellar at the Strand Theatre on the question "Is Socialism opposed to Religion?" Moses said "Yes" and McKellar said "No."

Jack Cain, MLA, debated with Baritz: subject—"That a White Australia is in the interest of the Australian Working Class". Cain affirmed.

As well as debating, Baritz began a series of lectures on Sunday nights at the Strand Theatre. The series was "Love throughout the ages." His subjects were "Daphnis and Chloe", "Anthony and Cleopatra", "Heloise and Abelard", etc. After hearing some crude remark the respectable Melbourne men took their respectable young ladies out of the theatre and Moses was left talking to space till the lights went out. This ended the series rather abruptly.

THE DINNER

On the lighter side, on one occasion Baritz settled down in Baracchi's place at South Yarra, gave Baracchi a long list of foods to buy and prepared a banquet to which he invited about eighteen people. His cooking was English with a Jewish flavour and it was quite an amazing idea to the Melburnians at this time to have a man (and a political one at that) cook a banquet for them. Baracchi's comment: "He was a dirty cook, there was fat all over the walls and ceiling."

The main value from his visit was that he stressed the importance of socialist study.

He helped broaden the understanding of the local people, many of them with syndicalist cum IWW ideas, by showing them that political action on a broad class scale was something distinct from political action confined to the Parliamentary sphere.

He left Australia in 1920, having been ordered out of New Zealand. Back in England he was for many years a music critic on the *Manchester*

Guardian and finally transferred to the BBC. He apparently became tamed in politics.

FREEMAN REMAINED A FREE MAN

In 1921 the shop had a mysterious visitor. A tall, thin man with dark glasses came in to see Laidler. Dark glasses were not a fashion. If worn it was for reasons of defective optical condition or disguise. Anyhow, the visitor known as Mr. Cox in Melbourne and Mr. Miller in Sydney, was in reality Paul Freeman who had been deported from Australia only two years earlier. He had been a member of the Broken Hill Branch of the ASP and was active against the war and conscription.

During 1919 he made a speech at Dobbin, near Cloncurry, Queensland. After the speech miners went on strike. Three days later, Freeman was prospecting 80 miles from Cloncurry and two policemen and a blacktracker came and collected him. He spent eleven days in Brisbane gaol without any bedding and was given no reason for his arrest.

He wrote letters, without reply, to the Minister for Defence and signed them "Paul Freeman, the victim of a mine owners' conspiracy."

It was alleged that he had said: "Anyone going to war was lower than a dog", and that he was connected with the IWW.

He was then taken to Darlinghurst gaol and subsequently put aboard the "Sonoma" on January 23rd. There is some mystery as to where Freeman was actually born. He had claimed that his birthplace was Mt. Vernon, USA, where George Washington was born.

The "Sonoma" took him to the USA which country refused to accept him saying there was no trace of his birth at Mt. Vernon.

He was shuttled back and forth, crossing the Pacific Ocean four times. The ship was back in Sydney when on 28th May, Freeman began a hunger strike. By June 1st he had been five days without food and a Dr. Clarke issued a statement that he might die at any time, his tongue was swollen and he could hardly speak. Three military men stood watch. In the meantime Sydney was aroused. 10,000 people headed by a brass band marched to Darling Harbour where the ship was berthed.

Percy Brookfield, the heroic member of Parliament from Broken Hill, who was to meet a martyr's death himself, addressed the crowd and threatened a Wharf Labourer's Strike and that they would pull the American sailors out. There was some claim now that Freeman was

born in Canada, however the Acting Prime Minister said that Freeman was registered as an American alien born of German parents.

The Lord Mayor convened a meeting against his further detention, and the Town Hall was packed out. 5000 people marched down George Street to Circular Quay making no secret of their intention to board the ship. The police laid into them with batons. The Wharfies came out on strike and the Firemen and seamen on the ship said they would not man it unless Freeman was taken ashore.

On June 4th the *Argus* reported "Hunger Strike Succeeds" and Freeman was taken off the ship to the Garrison Hospital at Victoria Barracks pending an enquiry. Thousands had assembled. Pressmen, movie cameramen and photographers were on board ship when he was taken off. The demand was made by a deputation of Tudor, Maloney and Considine to Defence Minister, Senator Russell that there should be an open trial.

On October 10th Freeman was taken from Holdsworth Barracks and put aboard the "Valencia" and deported to Germany with 500 Germans who cheered him as he came aboard.

From Germany he made his way to Leningrad and arrived in time for May Day celebrations in 1920.

Freeman came back to Australia on a false passport for three reasons—

- (a) to give a firsthand account of what was happening in Russia;
- (b) to arouse interest and obtain delegates to the World Congress of the "Red International of Trade and Industrial Unions" later known as the Red International of Labour Unions (R.I.L.U.); and
- (c) to stimulate organisation of the young Communist Party.

The front page of the *International Communist* (formerly *International Socialist*) described as organ of the Third (Communist) International published by the C.P. of A. (The Australian section of the Third International), March 12th, 1921, had as headline: MOSCOW CALLS TO AUSTRALIA'S TRADE UNIONS — from Paul Freeman.

The following letter has been received by Comrade P. Lamb of Broken Hill, from comrade Paul Freeman, who is now in Moscow, and who, it will be remembered, was kicked out of Australia in well known circumstances.

Dear Paddy,

The provisional International Council of Trade and Industrial Unions in Moscow have entrusted me with transmitting a call to the "Trade and Industrial Unions of Australia" to immediately send their delegates to the "World Congress of the Red International of Trade and Industrial Unions", which will be opened on the 1st May, 1921, in Moscow. Therefore on behalf of the "Provisional I.C. of T. & I. Unions" I have the honour to extend the hearty invitation to the "T. & L Unions" of Australia to send their delegates with full powers to Moscow. Urgent not to delay in putting it to AMA and other unions in Broken Hill and all over Australia.

The reactionaries of English and Australian Governments, their secret jealous prying into the international communications of labour organisations, with a definite view of preventing a better understanding between the great masses of the world proletariat kept separated by the national, artificial and other invisible barriers in their titanic struggle against world capitalism, necessitated the use of underground methods in order to communicate with the Australian labor organisations. Much as I wished to deliver the message entrusted to me, to the militant proletariat of Australia personally, the reactionary Prussianised Federal Government activities precluded it. Some days ago I forwarded to you the manifesto to organised workers of Australia. Best wishes from Soviet Russian workers and hope to see them as members of the vast proletarian family.

Personal greetings and thanks to those who fought for me at the time of my prosecution. Long live CI, long live RILTU.

Yours with Communist greetings, PAUL FREEMAN.

The Manifesto referred to, is printed in the same issue, taking a full page and signed by M. Tomsy, Russia; A. Rossmer, France; J. T. Murphy, Britain.

Freeman, of course, did deliver the statement in person and the way it was presented in the paper was supposed to help camouflage his presence.

THE MELBOURNE MEETING

"Cox" made it known to Laidler that he wanted to address, and be questioned by, a representative group of trusted and reliable members of the movement and asked him to organise such a meeting. This was

done quite simply and at short notice, by means of the telephone, a visit to the Trades Hall, and a stroll around city streets. In 1921 there was no radio, television or money to spend. Numbers of workers, particularly politically minded men and especially single men, having no money had nothing to do and would walk into the city on Saturday afternoon and walk around the streets, in the hope of meeting kindred souls when they would stop on a street corner, or against a lamppost and have a chat or an argument as the case may be. This gave rise to members of the establishment and their supporters coining phrases meant to be derogatory, such as "Holding up a lamp-post", "Street corner loafers". Suffice to say that when Perc walked down Bourke Street, along Swanston Street, up Flinders Street and back to Bourke Street via Russell Street he had informed a considerable number of people of what was afoot. With his enjoyment of the dramatic, it was with great pleasure that he walked up to a man and after bidding him good-day, hissed to the startled man, "Freeman's here!"

Over twenty people turned up and it is remarkable to record that no police had been informed. During his stay in Melbourne, Perc took him up to Parliament House to have lunch with Mick Considine, member of the House of Representatives for the Barrier electorate (he was one who had worked for Freeman during the deportation fracas).

In Sydney Freeman was known as "Miller" and he was cheeky enough to attend an ordinary meeting in the Socialist Hall.

In Sydney there were two conflicting groups in the new Communist Party. It is alleged that as Freeman did not endorse as the "true" Communists, the group led by Jock Garden, this group informed on him to the authorities. Whether or no, the authorities gave no indication. Possibly they didn't want to show they had been fooled by him arriving and accomplishing his mission, and that they considered the fact that he was about to leave the country and thought it best to ignore the whole operation.

Australian delegates secured by Freeman were Alf Rees, Paddy Lamb, J. Howie and W. P. Earsman. Freeman himself counted as an Australian delegate.

The August 6th issue of the *International Communist* reported to the effect that a cable from Riga gave news of a train smash when a number of delegates leaving Moscow were injured and six killed—two of the latter were Howett of England and Frimack of Australia. The paper comments "it could be Freeman but it may be press lies". However,

later information confirmed that it had been Freeman who was killed, whilst delegate Paddy Lamb of Broken Hill sat by his side. Fortunately Paddy escaped injury.

Freeman's untimely death was mourned in Australia.

At some other time two Russians appeared and arranged to spend the whole of one night duplicating, in a room adjoining the shop. They disappeared as abruptly as they arrived.

Chapter Fourteen

A MAN OF PRINCIPLE

Michael Patrick Considine was another outstanding man who disproved the common idea that “every man has his price”. Mick Considine was a fine stamp of man, over 6 foot, intelligent, studious, a fluent speaker and a man of principle. Considine’s part before, during and after the war was courageous. He was arrested and sentenced on numerous occasions for “disloyal utterances”, “flying the red flag” and similar.



Postcard featuring Mick Considine and others “jailed for protesting against the Coercion Act”. This resulted from a demonstration in Sydney in 1910 against state industrial legislation.

He was born in Ireland and came here at the age of five years. He lived in Kempsie, N.S.W. He was working on the trams and was active in the 1908 strike. For his efforts he got two weeks’ gaol and was barred from the trams for life.

He then proceeded to Broken Hill and got a job as a greaser. He worked underground and above-ground. Active in the AMA he was elected president from January 1915 to July 1917, a record at that time, of 5 half-yearly terms. In the meantime, on May 5th, 1917 he was elected

to the Federal Parliament under the ALP banner. He scraped in with a majority of 13. There was no preference system, but when this was introduced he romped in at the next election.

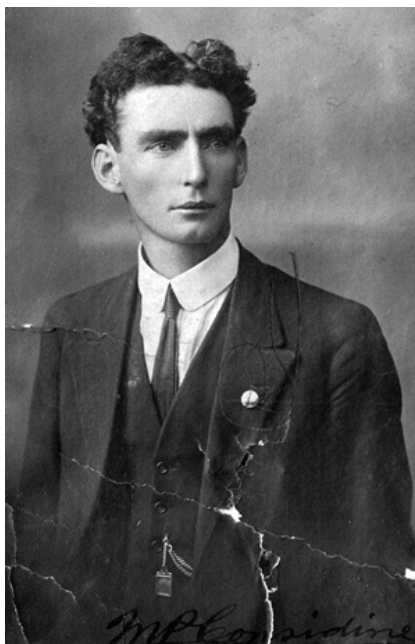
In 1920 three Independent Labor Party candidates ran against three ALP men in the State Elections. Amongst these three was Percy Brookfield who had always been to the left of the ALP. He retained his seat under the ILP banner.

The ALP did its best to involve Considine, as an ALP representative, to fight against Brookfield and the other two ILP candidates. Prior to the election campaign the AMA had asked Considine to go to Tasmania, as a miners' delegate, to collect money for Barrier strikers.

He subsequently received a letter from W. Carey, General Secretary, ALP in the State of

NSW dated 21st January asking him to be at the disposal of the CE for campaign work in the coming State Election. Considine replied that he was going to Tasmania. He then received a letter dated 24th February, signed by Ex-Senator Grant on behalf of the campaign committee saying: "The campaign committee has carefully noted the contents of your letter dated 29th January. It is of the opinion that you should be at least one week in the Sturt electorate before the 19th prox. Kindly, let me know by return mail if you are prepared to do so."

W. Carey under date 25th February wrote: "I am directed by my executive to ask that you proceed to Sturt at the very earliest moment, in order to take part in the campaign there, on behalf of the 3 selected and endorsed labor candidates. Owing to the disturbed state of the political world in Broken Hill it is most necessary that every assistance possible be given to our candidates for Sturt. Trusting that you will give this letter your urgent attention, and thanking you in anticipation."



Mick Considine



Mick Considine, seated (others not identified).

Considine replied: "It is not my intention to take the platform against men whom I believe to be fully bona fide labour men, and whose work in the labour movement in this country constitutes a record of which any member of the party might well be proud. I regret that the disinclination of the executive to take any steps in the direction of healing the unfortunate breach existing in the ranks of labour in the Sturt electorate, forces upon me the very disagreeable task of choosing between participating in the commission of an act of grave injustice on Messrs. Brookfield and O'Reilly, or of placing myself in direct opposition to the expressed wishes of the executive. I have

decided that I will not go to Sturt . . ."

In response to this he received a wire "If you cannot come to Hill, wire wishing success to official labor party candidates," signed "Huckell, Assembly ALP."

On the 19th March, the day before the election Considine received a wire from the *Barrier Daily Truth* as follows: "Huckell has received wire signed Considine Haymarket, Sydney, wishing success official labor party. Wire reply immediately if this is genuine. Urgent."

Reply read: "Any telegram, letter or message from Sydney with my name attaching thereto is a forgery. I have not been in Sydney since January."

Considine had Post Office detectives enquire into the whole matter with the sole result that the PMG Department on 12th August stated: "While suspicion points strongly to one source as that from which the telegram came, sufficient evidence has not been obtained to enable a charge to be proved." The evidence was that an Underwood typewriter

in ALP Headquarters had the same peculiar characteristics as was displayed in the typing on the telegram form.

Considine raised the whole matter in Parliament to the discomfort of the ALP. The *Argus* November 19th announced Mick Considine's retirement from the ALP. He sent a statement to the General Secretary pointing out his dissatisfaction with the ALP's failure to give a decision to his charges. He, like Brookfield, was too radical for the ALP and it was glad to dispose of them both.

In July, Considine had written to Jock Garden, then secretary of the One Big Union:

Dear Comrades,

I desire to tender my sincere congratulations to your Council on launching the OBU and trust that no effort will be spared to endeavour to make it a potent protest instrument in the task of working class emancipation. I am confident that industrialism generally will greet with enthusiasm the new organisation, and hasten to link up their respective departments now that a definite beginning has been made, so that we shall be enabled to build up a working class movement worthy of joining hands with our comrades of the Moscow Third International in waging relentless war on the common enemy, until we also can proudly point to a Workers' Republic, as a worthy member of a league of free peoples. I desire to do whatever I can to aid the cause, I place my services at the disposal of the OBU to be utilised as it deems best in the interests of the movement.

He stood as an independent at the next elections but was defeated.

In 1954 he was guest of honour at Broken Hill May Day. Mick settled in Melbourne and there lived an active political life.

Chapter Fifteen

PERCY BROOKFIELD

When news came through in March, 1921, that Brookfield had been shot dead by a mad man, at the small town of Riverton, South Australia, the instant reaction of the labour movement was “he was no madman, the Government arranged to assassinate Brookfield.” There are still some people to say it today, fifty years later.



Percy Brookfield's killing reported by the Adelaide Advertiser, 23 March 1921. (Image via Trove Digitised Newspapers, National Library of Australia.)

Brookfield was of the stuff that heroes are made from—a big thick-set man who walked into Broken Hill with a swag on his back. He died, as a member of Parliament, representing the Sturt Electorate of Broken Hill in the NSW State Parliament.

When asked to contest the ballot, Brookie (as he was known) said it was a “ridiculous” suggestion, and after thinking it over decided to stand, and was elected early 1917.

He was a magnificent leader of Labor's Volunteer Army at the Barrier and in two years “paid in fines and estreated bonds £700, all because he has dared display in his statements a class-consciousness previously unheard of in Labor-in-Politics in this country.” (George Dale). The Barrier Empire League was the main opposition in the anti conscription campaign and representatives at a combined meeting of the LVA and AMA interjected at Brookfield: “Come down off that table, you cold-footed, big bastard,” and “You are rotten to the core, and have no manhood in you!”

This was the man who rushed in to disarm an individual, shooting wildly around the crowded platform, when no-one (not the policeman nor railway workers) made any move.

Those who claim it was deliberate assassination said anyone would know that Brookfield would be the man to rush in courageously, hence they claim he was "set up."

Four other people were injured but Brookfield was wounded four times, in the chest, stomach and feet, and soon succumbed.

The man who shot him was a Russian named Koorman Tomyaiff. He had lived with two other Russians at the Barrier, and on the walls of their room was a red streamer with "Long Live the Federated Industrial Socialist Republic of Russia" inscribed, and photographs of Lenin, Trotsky and the IWW twelve.

His friends said he was depressed over the recent death of a friend and was on his way to look for work grape picking.

After the shooting he is said to have made a statement, that he was sorry that he shot Brookfield but not sorry about shooting the other people.

In a question raised on behalf of M. Considine in Federal Parliament (May 26th, 1921) it was alleged that the Riverton policeman had made a sworn statement that Tomyaiff informed him that he had received £100 to assassinate Brookfield. An exhaustive enquiry was requested but this was shrugged off.

The coffin, draped in red flag, came into Broken Hill station where some thousand men, women and children waited. As the train drew up the Union Band played the Red Flag.

The workers stopped work. There were 5000 at the funeral, 150 vehicles, and floral tributes from all parts of the Commonwealth, 2,500 were in the funeral procession and thousands lined the two-mile route to the cemetery.

Each corner of the grave had a red flag in it. A choir of women and children sang, "Should I ever be a Soldier 'neath the Red Flag I would fight", said to be Brookfield's favorite song during the Labor Volunteer Army activities.

The red flag flew at half-mast on the Melbourne Trades Hall. Tributes came from unexpected quarters.

Sir Walter Davidson (NSW State Governor) said at a Show luncheon, "I very deeply mourn the loss of a man whom I greatly admired and respected, whose views were not exactly my views but were the views of a man who honestly attempted to make the world better than he found it."

The S.A. Trades Hall Council started a fund and there was some suggestion of a Brookfield Memorial hospital for miners' phthisis.

On April 4th it was announced that a Labor College would be established as a Brookfield Memorial College.

A committee of twelve was set up and a monument erected on his grave.

Chapter Sixteen

PROCESSIONS AND FORUMS



Eight Hour Day procession, April 1914, in Bourke Street, near the shop. (Photo, State Library of Victoria)

The dwelling of the Laidlers, above the shop at 201 Bourke Street was a great vantage point for watching processions, as they nearly all passed along Bourke Street. Relations, friends and customers would come in large numbers to watch a march in comfort.

In May 1920, Edward, the Prince of Wales on Empire tour, was on display in a procession. As it passed up Bourke Street, his carriage, preceded by mounted troopers and followed by the Prime Minister, William Morris Hughes, met with a peculiar reception. The Bourke Street crowd hooted the police, cheered the Prince and hooted the Prime Minister. To the puzzled Prince it must have appeared from this cacophony, that some of the crowd were hooting him.

UNION JACK INSULTED

The Catholic Church was not very popular in the years following the 1914-18 War. In 1921 the City Council decided that every procession through the city must be headed by the Union Jack, as a demonstration of loyalty. This hit two sections, the working class movement accustomed to march behind the red flag, and the Catholics, accustomed to march behind the Irish Republican Flag. Each section tended to regard the Union Jack as representative of its enemy, British Imperialism.

The Irish and Catholic population was seething as St. Patrick's Day approached, and many wild rumours were around Melbourne on the eve of the march.

The organisers decided that no women or children would participate and that was taken as a sign of preparation for battle.

The astute mind of Dr. Mannix coped superbly.

A tremendous undercurrent of excitement was sweeping the waiting onlookers when the approach of the march was heralded by the sound of the Pipers. As it came into view, to the amazement of all, could be seen far ahead of the body of the procession one man carrying the Union Jack. As he approached, it was obvious the flag carrier was one of the city's hopeless derelicts. Much later, as a separate procession came the main body led by the Irish Republican flag. When Dr. Mannix addressed his people at the Exhibition buildings, after the march, he said, "We paid an Englishman fifteen shillings to carry the Union Jack for we could not find an Irishman prepared to carry it."

Father Phelan, Bishop of Colac, said, "I am proud of the fact that no Irishmen could be got to carry the Union Jack. No Irish-Australian would carry it either." He suggested that next year to carry the Union Jack, they would get a criminal who had served seven years' in gaol, dress him up as a "black and tan", pay him £5 and give him a few drinks. There was a big howl from organisations, letter writers to the press and from journalists, on the disgraceful insult to the flag.

1918 PEACE CELEBRATIONS

Bourke Street was a packed mass of human beings giving vent to emotion that the war had ended and many thought it was the end of all wars. The crowd was singing, cheering and throwing fire-crackers.

Laidler, as a masses' man couldn't keep out of the picture, and hung out of the top window a skull mask, which at that moment, represented "war." The crowd responded and seemed in one huge mass to aim its fire-crackers at the death skull.

Under the window was a timber surround with Andrade's name on it — naturally it caught fire. People watching from the window had to run for buckets of water to put out the fire and save 201 from destruction.

FORUMS OF THE PEOPLE

Working-class organisations from the beginning of time picked out good spots for open-air meetings. One of the early ones in Melbourne was known as "The Lawn".

The Lawn was at Studley Park, on a flat further on from the boatshed. Members of the Social Democratic Federation were amongst the speakers who used the Lawn, before the turn of the century. Harry Scott-Bennett is said to have made his first speech there and incredibly, on mounting the box had a black-out. This must be of the greatest encouragement to would-be-speakers because Scott-Bennett went on to make literally thousands of speeches, carried on a speaking tour of the United States and New Zealand, entered Parliament for a term, and taught speakers' classes. He claimed that learning elocution had helped him to overcome his initial lack of confidence.

Meetings were held by socialists in the early days at an open space above the Merri Creek, adjoining St. Georges Road. Henry William Wilmot, father of poet "Furnley Maurice" attended here.

At one time meetings were held outside the Eastern Market (facing Exhibition Street, between Little Collins and Bourke Streets). Speakers were socialists, Liness (Harry) Bueno, Sam Courtney, Ern Harridence, Chris Vallance, Dwan, G. Trenwith and very young John Curtin. The meetings were held on a Saturday night and the authorities tried to ban them. Speakers were selected for the night by drawing names from a hat, the "lucky" ones were arrested.

Alf Foster, then a law student, was to have spoken but the others decided that his career should not be interrupted with a spell in gaol, and Sam Courtney spoke in his place. Mrs. Courtney, with ten children to look after, was not very pleased. (Sam was father of Frank, an official of the Plumbers Union for many years and an MHR). The usual

sentence was 14 days. The campaign was won with the permitted speaking period restricted in time.

Arch Bueno, well known wharf militant, was told by his father Harry that one of the group would address himself in these terms to new recruits, "Don't come unless you've got a pocketful of blue-metal"—this was the passport to joining a demonstration, in those days.

Sunday afternoon meetings were once held at the Queen's Statue (Victoria) and were stopped by the authorities because they embarrassed Regal parties.

For fifteen years the Sunday afternoon forum was on the south side of the Yarra, near the boatsheds.

The Lawn, Statue and Boatsheds all had in common that Melburnians with little money, spent a free afternoon strolling around the vicinity of the parks and Yarra River, and often had a free listen to the speakers. The passing throng contributed many a recruit. The authorities banished the people to the north side of the river to what is known as the "Yarra Bank", or simply, the "Bank", where few people strolled and the adjacent building was the old Morgue.

The Bank was described by John Curtin as the University of the working-class. It turned out some knowledgable "professors". An article written by a journalist on the April 20th, 1946 wrote that Tom Mann was one of the most spectacular of its speakers. He named as speakers, Frank Anstey (Cabinet Minister), Jack Cain (Premier), Ramsay MacDonald (English Prime Minister), J. H. Scullin (Prime Minister), Ben Tillett (English union leader), Senators Russell, Rae, Cameron, M. Blackburn MHR, E. J. Holloway (acting Prime Minister), Dr. Maloney MHR and of course, Curtin (Prime Minister); and Percy Laidler, described as "veteran speaker of the left". The biggest crowds were during the anticonscription campaigns—100,000 the top estimate, and next to those meetings, some of the May Day celebrations had the largest crowds.

Originally the Bank was a desolate waste, but in response to requests for a new site, trees and speakers' mounds were put in to slightly improve the Bank.

Efforts were made from time to time to get permission to return to the other side of the river or the Domain. In 1921 the WIU, Socialist Party and Australian Legion tried the experiment, speaking on the Domain, opposite the Prince Henry Hospital in St. Kilda Road. In 1911-

12 the VSP attempted to rename the Bank the "Democratic Campus", but it was dropped after about twelve months.

Port Melbourne Pier was popular for Sunday morning meetings, South Melbourne Market (and other markets) on Friday night. "Red Square," also known as "Moscow Square" (Cnr. Bridport and Montague Streets, South Melbourne) was kept going as a meeting place by Jim Coull from 1928 to 1960, a total of 32 years. From 1928 to 1934 the meetings were held under the auspices of the SP of A, from 1944 to 1960 under the auspices of the CP and the period in between, without the backing of any organisation.

Another unusual meeting place of kindred spirits was the Albert Park Baths. Anyone looking for a discussion or debate could go along there and be sure of finding someone. Many wharfies went there. Most of the attendees swam as well as talked.

The WIIU held meetings in Russell Street, between Little Bourke and Bourke Streets in the vicinity of where the Salvation Army had a stand. By this means a few people would be drawn into the Sunday night lecture. After the Communist Party formed in 1924 it did the same thing, and drew people into its hall at 217 Russell Street. Early in the depression, police broke up the meeting, and the Communists went into their hall, got out of the window onto the iron verandah and addressed the crowd from there.

Chapter Seventeen

O'CASSIDY, A SUAVE SPY

During his long association with the revolutionary movement in Melbourne, Laidler naturally came in contact with agents of the Police working within the movement.

He regarded John O'Cassidy as the classical case of an agent provocateur. O'Cassidy also known as "Cassidy" was first suspected in the VSP days of Tom Mann but managed to have connections right up until the early part of the economic crisis—an active pimping life of more than twenty years during which he survived suspicion and exposure in the VSP, IWW, WIU and Communist Party.

He was an extraordinarily valuable man to the authorities because he played a threefold role.

(1) His official job was as an interpreter in the Courts. (He was an outstanding linguist, reputed to know some 28 languages.)

(2) The Commonwealth authorities, placed him in charge of aliens groups, where his language knowledge was a great asset to spying.

(3) He acted as the copybook provocateur within the Australian working-class movement.

To sum up, he was an interpreter, spy and provocateur.

No-one knew his actual nationality. Despite his Irish name it was commonly suggested that he was an Hungarian, Rumanian or Austrian army officer. His appearance suggested military training. He had a pleasant personality and exercised a European charm, particularly over women, that enabled him to organise support whenever attacked.

He was a great connoisseur of foods, coffee, cooking and a lover of music with a knowledge of books, literature, art, in short a cultured man of a type very rare in the movement in earlier days in Australia.

He spoke for the VSP but his talk of violence aroused suspicion to the extent that several members of the Party wrote a combined letter to the Management Committee asking that the committee beware of O'Cassidy. O'Cassidy's wife actually warned the Socialist Party to beware of him without giving any specific reasons for her warning. He behaved towards her as an old-time "Prussian." Nothing public was done in the VSP because there was no proof.

When the IWW flourished he joined that organisation. He suggested blowing up buildings, but the idea fell on very deaf ears. Later he collected money for the defence of the IWW twelve, by taking around collecting sheets to foreign cafes—this way he could sort them out and report them. Laidler already thought him a villain from the VSP days.

O’Cassidy tried to cultivate Laidler, his wife (to whom O’Cassidy spoke German) and the Laidler children. He developed a habit of bringing his little girl to play with Laidler’s daughter over the shop in Bourke Street. In 1915 his official job was that of managing Parer’s hotel, opposite the bookshop, so it was a simple matter to bring his daughter across the road. He even bought her soft shoes to play on the roof-yard. Laidler was embarrassed and Mrs. Blackburn had in her possession up until a few years’ ago, a letter addressed to Maurice from Laidler in which he wrote to Maurice before his marriage, explaining his dilemma, and asking him to ask his young lady how to get rid of unwanted visitors.



Bertha Laidler, right, on the roof of 201 Bourke Street, where she played with the daughter of the suave O’Cassidy. (The view is westward, towards Swanston Street. The Palace Hotel has since been demolished.)

With the march of time O’Cassidy began to haunt the WIU and the Russian Association, both organisations having headquarters in the Eastern Arcade. The WIU had a big foreign exchange of radical papers and O’Cassidy kept himself up-to-date with international affairs by reading these. The Russians, of course, could supply information about the Soviet Union. He attended the Sunday night lectures of the WIU and claiming the Constitution was too conservative, suggested that the “use of force” should be written into it.

The WIIU sent a couple of members to trail him and the trail led them to Security headquarters.

Still he had his cover of Court interpreter.

When the CP was established in 1924 he began attending CP lectures and even here when he was denounced there were members to get up and defend him.

How could he last so long? It seemed mainly, he won women over by his sympathy and charm and men over by a direct flattering of their ego. Again, honest people are predisposed into thinking all people are honest.

Laidler recalled that a visiting English Professor, Prof. Goode, who was a liberal, working on the *Manchester Guardian* came to see him en route to the Melbourne University, where he was to lecture. Laidler warned him, "Whatever you do, take care of a man named O'Cassidy, who looks like an Austrian officer and is a police agent."

Laidler, seeing him after the lecture, asked him how he got on and amongst other things, the Professor told him, "I met a very interesting man, named O'Cassidy." Somewhat annoyed, Laidler said, "I warned you against him." "Heavens," said the Professor, "so you did, and now I come to think of it, he took me to a Greek Cafe and he did not ask for coffee, he ordered them to bring it." Such was his manner. He could charm an intelligent man who had just previously been warned against him. His officer-behaviour helped give him way. In the twenties and thirties many refugees came from other lands and from O'Cassidy's manner in the cafes and clubs they frequented, his real self came through. He spoke to them contemptuously and did not bother to pay for his food.

After his departure, when radical Australians were eating in the same cafe or club, one of the waiters or the manager himself, would come up and warn them about O'Cassidy.

What a goldmine he was to the Commonwealth Security Service, yet it was so mean that it allowed O'Cassidy more and more to risk exposure, during the economic crisis.

During the confusion of a huge demonstration of unemployed, a couple of the demonstrators took time off to follow him to a phone box, where they could hear him phoning over a report and asking for reinforcements of police. Frequently during this time an obvious bodyguard of plain-clothes men were around him. Presumably he was there to point out leaders. He still had the nerve to attend a public

meeting of the Friends of the Soviet Union held at the Temperance Hall. D. Lovegrove, then known as Jackson was speaking and Laidler was in the chair. On seeing O’Cassidy, Jackson could not restrain his ire. He drew the attention of the audience of 2,000 to O’Cassidy’s presence and profession and ordered him from the theatre. As chairman of the meeting Laidler rose and repeated the order. O’Cassidy took to his heels midst much abuse. He never again darkened the doors of public political gatherings of the working class. He died of angina.

Laidler used to relate an incident of provocation in simple form. During the anti-conscription period a member of the Secret Service, Plain Clothes Constable Kiernan came into the shop on a Monday morning and had a friendly chat about matters of little consequence. Again on the following Friday, he came in and handed Laidler a £1 note, “as a reward from the Police Department.” Laidler asked him what he had done to warrant a reward from the Government. Kiernan said, “nothing, but just keep it.” Then he said “Look Percy, there is just one thing I want very much, and you can tell me.” Laidler replied, “As long as it doesn’t injure the workers I don’t mind telling you.” He asked for the names of the committee members of the anti-conscription Committee at the Trades Hall. Laidler said, “I can’t do that.” As he was going, Laidler said, “I won’t keep this £1 but I’ll tell you what I’ll do with it—I’ll give it to the Sydney collection for the wives and families of the IWW men in gaol.” He tore off twenty 1/- raffle tickets for that cause and handed them to him for the Police Department.

Laidler informed E. J. Holloway, so that a general warning could be sent around.

Chapter Eighteen

THE TRADE UNION PERIOD

In 1923 Laidler was made assistant editor, later designated as Sub-Editor, of *The Shop Assistant*, described as "A Monthly Journal published by the Shop Assistants' and Warehouse Employees' Federation of Australia, at the Trades Hall, on the 20th of each month."

This is followed up with a brief screed on how MSS should be written, an invitation to divisional secretaries and organisers to send in reports, etc. etc. and ends with the little verse—

For the cause that lacks assistance,
For the wrongs that need resistance,
For the future in the distance,
And the good that we can do.

Laidler, being one of the delegates on the Trades Hall Council frequently reported on the Council activities, and often contributed articles on the issues before Council, viz. "Childhood Endowment. Our Children's Welfare. Why should they be Penalised?" in issue of August 20th, 1923. Here he refers to the Report of the 1920 Basic Wage Commission, of which Mr. Piddington was Chairman, and upon which there were three employers as well as three employees. After thorough investigation, this Commission unanimously agreed that the present basic wage was not sufficient to support a family. They stated that it was only sufficient to provide four-fifths of the necessities of a man, wife and three children. "In that case", wrote Laidler, "we can readily see that the family consisting of a husband, wife, and three, four and more children is hard put to it to make both ends meet. They are undergoing a struggle that no human beings in the 20th century should be called upon to experience. This fact cries out to us for rectification, and by Childhood Endowment we can do it."

The article goes on to explain the apparent anomaly of the basic wage set by the Higgins' enquiry into the cost of living in 1907. Laidler

says it was not deserving of the name of an enquiry at all, and claimed that the Australian wage is a single man's wage, or at best a wage of a man without dependent children.

In the same issue he wrote "An unemployed man should be fed, clothed and housed," as a follow up to a front page article in the previous month's journal titled "The Grim Spectacle of Unemployment. Why are People out of work? The cause of the Evil, and the Remedy".

With a heading "Working Men and Donkeys—Are we Fellow Workers?" he contrasts the workers' lot with that of donkeys and horses, who get enough to live on.

In September issue he reports on the decision of the Eight Hours' Committee re Labor Day—

Resultant from the initiative of the Shop Assistants Union it was decided that the committee hitherto known as the Eight Hours' Anniversary Committee is to be known in future as 'The Eight Hours Day Anniversary and Labor Day Celebration Committee'.

There were some who wanted to abolish the Eight Hours Celebration altogether. These people, we believe, were short sighted. They saw the comparative non-success of the celebration in recent years, and naturally there arose in their minds the conception that the time had arrived for its abolition. We believed these people were wrong. We held that the general depression existing in the Labor Movement was partly responsible for the slackening in enthusiasm for the celebration, but that the strong cause for the situation was the general unfitness of the celebration to call forth the real spirit and enthusiasm of the Labor Movement. We contended that the celebration of the victory of the Eight Hours Day inspired the older unionists, but that a broader demonstration was required to call forth the enthusiasm of the younger generation. So we fought for a combination of the two celebrations. We want to retain all the enthusiasm of the older unionists, and to give adequate opportunity for the celebration of the ideals of the younger men. This should be done by the celebration as now changed.

But the change must be a real one, and not one in name only. The whole celebration must be re-considered from the new point of view. If this is not done, our efforts will have been in vain. The procession hitherto has fallen far short of the requirements of a real Labor Movement such as ours aspires or claims to be. If the

coming year's Eight Hours Committee proves equal to the job of bringing the celebration up to date, it will be a Committee that will establish its right to a place in the annals of Victorian Labor history.

In the same issue under the heading "Catastrophe in Japan" the effects of the earthquake are compared with war and he attacks a certain section in these words: "It has even been urged that we should give freely to Japan in her hour of need, because it affords us an opportunity to establish good relationships with her. Such mercenary donors to Japan will have their hopes shattered. Let us, when we give, do so without regard to whether we get value back for our gifts . . .

In October issue, Laidler heralds as a great victory won by Grocers' Assistants that their Wages Board had acceded to their request and reduced the adult age from 23 to 21. "For a long time the pernicious practice has been developing of increasing the age at which the full adult minimum wage becomes payable."

He claimed delegates had frequently been compelled to fight against the employers' efforts to make 25 the age at which the minimum shall be paid. In the article he pointed out that during the war there was no hesitation in calling a 21 year old a man. He was called upon to take "a man's part", do "a man's job", etc.

In the same issue he deals with "Disputes Between Unions" explaining a resolution put before the Trades Hall Council by Shop Assistant delegates—

That in future the settlement of all disputes between unions be a function of the Industrial Disputes Committee, who, in reaching their decisions, shall be guided by what will add to the fighting strength of the class as a whole, and by the All Australian Union Congress decisions in favor of Industrial Unionism, but shall in no case force men from a craft to an industrial organisation without the consent of a majority of the men to be transferred. Such disputes may be brought to the committee by either the Unions or by the rank and file members in question.

The disputes referred to here were over lines of demarcation, amalgamations and in recognition of the tendency towards industrial unionism.

November issue naturally writes of the Police Strike and tells why shop assistants should support it, and December gives "A Christmas Review—Where are we Going?"

During his active union years he held a number of positions (including President), was on the Management Committee, was elected to Conference and represented the Union on the THC, Eight Hours' Day Committee, Labor Day Committee and various other committees. He was also union representative on the Booksellers' Wages Board.

He spear-headed the campaign for early closing, both in the industry and in other unions, canvassing support for the shop assistants.

THE TRADES HALL COUNCIL AND THE LABOR PROPAGANDA GROUP: 1922-1924

The Labor Propaganda Group began as the "Labor Discussion Group" but soon changed its name. It only existed in Victoria.

The group served as a bridge over the period that the first IWW died and the new Communist Party was born.

Various people came together on the 26th March, 1922 and amongst their number were twelve active trade unionists, some of whom (including Laidler) were on the Trades Hall Council. There was only one woman member, Mrs. Nell Rickie, who represented the Theatrical Employees' Union on the THC. Laidler convened the meeting and it was held at Parer's hotel, Bourke Street. He opened the proceedings by stating—

The reason for the gathering was to be, the getting together of the progressive elements active in the trade union movement in order that each would recognise a member who was engaged in the same work as he was, and in order to discuss Labor Problems as they arose so that some unanimity of attitude may be reached by the progressive elements.

A motion was carried "That the immediate policy of this group be to discuss working class problems as they arise, in order to fit our members for more effective work in the Labor Movement". A motion reading "Members pledge themselves to advertise the Labor College on all possible occasions at working class meetings" was carried.

Further, "That realising the International character of the Labor Movement we ask individual members of the Group to specialise on the activities of different countries, with the view of making available a mass of information of value as propaganda for work here."

It was decided that P. Laidler should act as secretary pro tem and that the Group meet on alternate Saturday evenings. Each meeting to elect a chairman.

The Group issued a leaflet headed "A Labor Program" which ended with the following paragraph: "It is a clear and concise programme, means something, gets us somewhere, and one which will inspire the working class with enthusiasm for the whole Labor movement. It will thus help to throw off the present apathy, and by doing so, remove very many of the evils which now feed upon the movement to its detriment."

It will be seen that the group intended to carry out educational propaganda and also to give a lead in the unions, THC and ALP Branches in an effort to activate them. Some members were Bowers and Moyes (Timber Workers' Union), Jeffries (or Jeffrey) (Carters' and Drivers' Union), Dan McLaughlin (Hospital Employees' Union), E. Pomfret (Butchers' Union), F. Boughton (Shop Assistants' Union), Roote (AWU), Asche (Clerks' Union), Dickinson (Storeman and Packers' Union), Wilcock (Carpenters' Union), Armour (Engine Drivers' Union), M. Hassett (Bricklayers' Union), Bert Payne (Fuel and Fodder Union), H. Partridge (Opticians and Watchmakers' Union), Leo Bakker (Leather and Canvas Union), Deveraux (AWU), Percy Taylor (AEU), Anderson (Engine Drivers' Union), Jennings (Shop Assistants), Denchfield and Ken Moore, C. Wardley (Confectioner's Union), Pain (Bricklayers Union), Wally Mohr (Hospital Employees' Union), Wilkshire and G. Watson (Carpenters' Union), Jimmy Hannan (Liquor Trades' Union) and Wylie (Agricultural Implement Makers' Union).

In all, only about thirty people joined the LPG and not all were consistent attendees. Some held membership in the WIU, VSP, IWW (2nd), SPGB and ALP but of this membership at least thirteen were delegates on the Trades Hall Council for some time during the period of the Group's two years of life. Laidler himself was elected to the THC and his credential accepted on the 1st December, 1921 and was again accredited for 1922, 1923, 1924 and 1925. The LPG members played an important part in shaping the progressive policy of the Council: the Council degenerated rapidly after the LPG disbanded.

An indication of the fairly liberal attitude of the Council at this time is shown in the following resolution carried at meeting held August 4th, 1921.

Lemmon moved, Hartley seconded—

“That we deeply deplore the sad news contained in the cablegram reporting the accident on the Russian Railways resulting in the death of two of the working class delegates to the Moscow Conference and serious injuries to others. We desire to convey our sympathies to the relatives of those who lost their lives and express the hope for the speedy recovery of the injured.” Carried.

This refers to Paul Freeman and Zuzenko, both Communists and attending the Red International of Industrial Trade Unions. The Party and International were both rejected by the THC. At the end of January 1922, Laidler, Roote, Richards, Graham, Maruschak and May Francis were nominated to a Labor College Conference. Laidler and May Francis were elected.

Laidler was also on a committee of speakers to work for the Electrical Trades Union to raise funds for the Installation Section strike. A Wages' Board had cut rates by 7/6 a week in this Section and 6/- a week for others.

1921 and 1922 were big unemployed years. The return of the AIF brought the labour market into a surplus position as it had been before and during most of the war.

Employers took advantage of this surplus labour to launch an attack on wages in most industries.

Laidler stood for the Executive of the Council but polled only 37 at the June Elections. Maurie Duffy who was a past President of the Council polled 92 as top figure.

J. B. Scott (WIIU) and Laidler were elected delegates to the June Congress of the Council of Action.

Laidler was also elected to the eight hours day celebration committee.

Early 1923 Laidler was elected as a member of a Research and Information Committee polling 55 votes with the highest, 73, gained by M. Duffy. P. Laidler and Mrs. N. Rickie were elected to the Labor College Board.

Laidler was elected president of the Labor College and during this time Frank Boughton, Phil Woolf, Eric Asche, George Watson, Bert Payne, Bob Brodney, May Francis and Wally Mohr were prominent.

In January 1923, an adjourned matter, The Motherhood Endowment Scheme as set down in Mr. Piddington's book *The First Step* was up for discussion.

Laidler moved and Wilcock seconded:

"That this Council cannot agree to the re-arrangement of the wages system as proposed by Mr. Piddington in his book 'The Next Step' but we endorse the principle of childhood endowment and urge all labour bodies to place it upon their platform of immediate demands."

This was adjourned until the 1st February, when it was announced that Mr. Piddington wanted to address them. Laidler moved that he be invited to do so and this was carried.

Piddington addressed the Council at its next meeting and a Vote of Thanks moved by E. H. Foster, Vice-President, and seconded E. J. Holloway, secretary, was carried by acclamation. Laidler's motion was again adjourned.

At last, on the 5th April the original motion was put and carried, together with an amendment by Duggan which was accepted by Laidler and Wilcock as an addendum and incorporated in the motion so that it now read "That while we recognise and acknowledge the invaluable effort of Mr. A. B. Piddington towards instituting a system of Child Endowment, this Council cannot accept child endowment based on a redistribution of wages as suggested in his book 'The Next Step' but believes that an acceptable system must be based on payments out of consolidated revenue per medium of taxation."

On the 10th May the Central Executive asked for five delegates to meet with them to draw up a Motherhood and Child Endowment Scheme to give effect to the proposal. Delegates elected were McPherson, Laidler, Holloway, Wilcock and Bowers.

The Labor Propaganda Group felt very pleased with their efforts as number 2 in their program was "Full upkeep of children until the earning age, and motherhood endowment." The Group felt that it had played a big part in securing this essential, when nothing was being done, and Victoria lagged behind New South Wales and Federal Labor; the latter approved it as a plank in 1919, at a Federal Conference and a NSW Labor Conference adopted child endowment during the war. Lang introduced Family Endowment in 1927 in New South Wales and it was the first State so endowed.

Piddington, of course, became a Chief Justice of NSW.

E. J. Holloway, Secretary of the Trades Hall Council was a sincere and honest man, but he was a conciliator. He endeavoured to keep a balance between right and left and please both.

During the four years that Laidler was on the Trades Hall Council whenever anything new was raised in a motion, the policy was to set up a committee, usually of 5, sometimes 8 or 12 to investigate the question and report back. Reading the minutes today it seems evident that the executive was always playing for time.

A fair number of left resolutions were carried after the committees reported back.

Laidler, Rickie and other LPG delegates were nominated for almost every committee, but usually declined, apparently it was a policy of the LPG not to take on more than they could handle, or possibly where they could see they would not command a majority on the committee, they refused to have their hands tied by being minority committee members. Thus they were free to criticize to the full.

In June, Laidler was nominated for Vice President, Executive, Industrial Disputes Committee, and Auditor. He withdrew. Mrs. Rickie also withdrew.

Laidler did accept nomination, and was elected to, a committee of enquiry into a domestic clash between the Engine Drivers and Firemen's Association and the Timber Workers' Union.

It was fairly easy for a visitor with an interesting subject to gain permission to address the Council, although later, it was decided that the Executive vet those who wished to do so. During Laidler's period on Council some of the visitors were Patrick Webb (later, Minister of the Crown in New Zealand), Malcolm MacDonald (son of Ramsay MacDonald), Eric Asche (recently returned from Russia), who delivered an address on "Russia, Past and Present and particularly the work of the Soviet Government", Jock Garden (Sydney Trades and Labor Council) also returning from Russia, who "gave his impressions of Russia", Guido Baracchi (returning from Germany), who spoke on "Conditions in Germany" and Mr. Herscovici, a visitor from overseas organising Russian Famine Relief who spoke on "Workers' International Reconstruction of Russia". Joe Shelley and Ted Dickinson from the Unemployed Union addressed Council.

In July 1923, Mrs. Rickie and Mrs. Rogers moved a resolution on equal pay for the sexes thus introducing Plank 3 of the Labor

Propaganda Group's program which reads "A uniform basic wage for all workers, irrespective of sex."

It was moved and carried (T. J. Smith, Clerk's Union, mover, and M. Duffy, seconder), "that a standing Council of 8 members be appointed for the purpose of propagating the principle of equal pay and opportunity for the sexes."

The result of the work of this committee was the publication of a leaflet under the heading "Statement of THC Melbourne—Reprint of leaflet with Statement prepared by Committee appointed to propagate the principles of equal pay for the sexes and endorsed by the above Council."

Plank 6 of the LPG reads simply "Workers control of Industry". At the beginning of 1923 Cosgrove (not a member of LPG) moved and Bryan seconded "That a Committee of 5 be appointed to submit a scheme for the Council whereby affiliated unions may acquire ownership and control in the industries and callings of their members." This was adjourned and did not reappear until 24th May, 1923, when it was reported that the Committee had held five meetings. A very nebulous resolution was presented, the first part referring to the forming of "guilds". Laidler moved an amendment deleting the first clause but this was declared out of order.

Delegate Taylor moved, Mrs. Rickie seconded "That this Council recognises that the time has now arrived for withdrawal from the Arbitration Court"—this motion was lost. (This was not a plank in the platform).

On 19th October, 1923, the executive reported:— A Conference of the executive of the THC, the Industrial Disputes Committee, and the executive of the Council of Federated Unions at which Mr. Laidler was present, decided on a sub-committee of 3 from each of Trades Hall Council, Council of Federated Unions and Industrial Disputes Committee be appointed to enquire into and prepare report on the following matters:

- (1) Industrial unionism.
- (2) Present position of craft unionism.
- (3) Lines of demarcation.
- (4) Methods of preparation of matter submitted to wages board and Arbitration Courts affecting wages and conditions.

(5) And in matters which would tend to forward the better organisation of the working class.

It will be noted that whilst Laidler declined nomination to various committees he was invited along in an advisory capacity on this occasion at least. Anyone familiar with his writing would recognise that the five points were drafted by him. The immense popularity and wide sales of his pamphlet on Arbitration, plus his knowledgeable and logical debating style would be reason for consultation with him.

In September, Laidler moved and Bowers seconded "that it be the policy of this Council that Labor Day be observed on the first Monday in May". Carried.

Laidler and Bowers again, "that this Council write to the 8 hours committee and endeavour to get them to fall into line" Carried.

The Socialist Party sent a letter asking for a representative of the Council to attend the Russian revolution celebrations on the 7th November—this was agreed and Laidler appointed.

During reports on the Labor College, Laidler announced that a Bookstall would soon be in operation.

During 1923 the caretaker of the Trades Hall resigned. Applications were invited. This was the only time that Laidler was tempted to apply for a paid position in the movement. He had scorned office in Parliament and the position of union official, but seriously thought about applying for a caretaker's job. He was, at this period, completely integrated with the Trades Hall—he went there every night whether he had a meeting or not.

With the job came living quarters, a small cottage in the grounds of the Trades Hall. In many ways it would have been ideal but in the end his old fear, that once in "their" pay his hands would be tied, triumphed and he did not apply.

It had been suggested by executive members that he would get the job if he applied.

With the report on the calling of applications for a new caretaker, was a statement that three male cleaners would be employed. The Miscellaneous Workers' Union created quite a stir when it demanded that the exclusion of women cleaners be remedied.

At the second meeting in January 1924, Laidler announced that Labor College classes would begin on the 4th February and that the Bookstall had been established.

In March the executive recommended "that a May Day Committee be formed on similar lines to pre-war days, i.e., unions be asked to send representatives to form a committee to carry out the May Day demonstration." Russell moved, Rickie seconded endorsement.

Duffy and Lightfoot moved amendment "that a subcommittee of 4 be appointed by and from this Council to carry out the May Day Demonstration and that the ALP be asked to cooperate." The amendment was defeated.

E. F. Russell/W. Russell, "that the executive be instructed to circularise all unions and ask the ALP to cooperate." Carried.

Lewis/McLean, "that a committee of 5 be elected to represent the THC on the committee." Carried.

Russell, Lewis, Rickie, Laidler and Holloway elected.

Plank number 1 of the Labor Propaganda Group read: "Full maintenance on basic wage rates of all workers when not at work through sickness, accident, old age and unemployment."

On the 13th March, 1924, Laidler supported a motion on a Scheme of National Insurance.

On the 8th May, Laidler reported that the May Day procession was a great success.

On the 22nd May, he moved a motion supporting tramway workers in "a most splendid action of solidarity in recent strike."

At this stage he accepted nomination for the executive of the Trades Hall Council and was elected with 63 votes, he was fifth from the top vote, with 8 other delegates polling lesser votes.

In July the following anti-war resolution was moved by Ross and seconded by Laidler.

"That this Council, convinced that with another Great War the horrors and terrors of the last will be eclipsed, and fearing that such another war may be imminent in capitalism itself, affirms it to be the duty of the Labor Movement of Australia to declare that in no circumstances, compulsory or otherwise, will the workers take up arms in the interest of capitalistic rivalries, but instead will join with the organised workers of all countries in striving wholeheartedly for peace by international action directed by the socialisation of industry."

And "that the foregoing be submitted to THC's of Australia with a request that all carry it with a view to presentation to the Federal Labor Convention this year." Painter/Hannan moved an amendment to refer it to a committee of five to draft a policy in regard to war and submit to

Council for ratification, then send to the Interstate Labor Conference in October.

The amendment was lost and the motion carried.

On the 16th October, Laidler announced that G. S. Browne, MA, was to lecture under the auspices of the Labor College on "Education Policy of the British Labor Government".

Laidler/Myers moved "that the executive of the THC be instructed to request the Government to proclaim the 1st day of May in each year as the Labor Day Holiday." Carried.

Painter/Delahuntly "that the TLC's and Labor unions throughout Australia be asked to cooperate to have the day proclaimed a national holiday." Carried.

Labor had been returned in the State Elections in June and Pat Loughnan and Laidler (both Shop Assistants Union) moved "that this Council request State Labor Government to immediately introduce into the House the long promised Shops and Factories' Act Amending Bill on the lines of the amendments proposed by the THC last year at the request of the Lawson Peacock Government." Carried.

In November, Kelly (Shop Assistants) and Painter moved suspension of standing orders for the following resolution: "that all unionists be requested to have their shopping done before Christmas Eve, December 24th and further, that all unionists be urged to refrain from doing any shopping on Saturday, December 27th in any shop that may be open that day."

During December, 1924, Ted Dickinson and Joe Shelley addressed the Council and appealed for assistance for the unemployed and requested that the THC allow the Unemployed Union to affiliate with it. This was declined on the grounds that some members of the Unemployed Union may not be members of their trade union and that the THC could not control it. It was pointed out that the THC had machinery of its own to set up committees. This was another very bad year of unemployment and more and more the question of a 44 hour week was raised as a means of giving work to some of the unemployed.

A report was brought down from the Executive on the 15th January (Dickinson and Shelley took part in the deliberations), and the Trades Hall became a Relief Depot for the unemployed, and depots were organised in several suburbs.

It was around this pre-depression date (when some assume there was prosperity) that the writer, then at school, at Queensberry Street,

Carlton, would be asked for banana peels and orange peels to eat, by children with no lunches. Some of the teachers brought sandwiches from home and fed the most necessitous children, in the babies' class.

Soup kitchens were set up.

In 1925 a similar resolution on May Day was carried as that in 1924, when the celebration had been so successful.

A Committee of five was elected to represent the THC and consisted of Laidler, Duggan, Taylor, Darcy and Jeffrey. By then another member of the LPG H. E. (Bert) Payne had been elected to Council from his union The Fuel and Fodder Workers' Union. He was nominated but declined, to ensure the other group members were returned.

On the 23rd April as Propaganda Secretary of the May Day Committee Laidler outlined what the committee had done, and intended doing.

It was typical of his thoroughness that he arranged that Tunnecliffe, MLA, should address the Council at its next meeting (the eve of May Day), on "The significance of May Day". This would be an effort to sway some of the more conservative elements on Council into attending the celebrations.

Other topics throughout the year were The British Seamen's Strike which the THC supported and the Sale of the Commonwealth Shipping Line which it opposed.

During the British Seamen's Strike Joe Shelley was President of the Communist Party, and a member of the Strike Committee. Under the name of the "Communist Party of Australia" he got out a circular calling militant unionists together at 7.30 on the 10th October, Room 8, Temperance Hall, for the purpose of rendering better aid to the Seamen's Strike. This evoked bitter hostility on the THC.

Gibson and Hayes moved an amendment to the executive report that it was "inimical to the Strike," they recommended his withdrawal from the Strike Committee. The motion was carried 54 to 29.

As an addendum to the executive recommendation Bryant moved and Roote (former LPG member) seconded, "that the Council repudiates the issue of the circular."

Some of the British seamen strikers also repudiated Shelley. However the British seamen on the whole, disregarded the instruction that Shelley be withdrawn from the Strike Committee. The *Argus* of 12th October, 1925, declared this a "Communist victory", and further went on to point out that he was permitted to remain on the Strike

Committee though not a seaman. It was reported that the explanation was that "he had worked hard for the seamen." It was also reported that the THC attitude was that it was the "greatest stab in the back that the labor movement had had for many years." The press hazarded the guess that unions represented at the meeting were Clerks, Builders' Laborers and Carters and Drivers. The suggestion of a Minority Movement in the Unions was put forward at the meeting.

Although Laidler accepted nomination and was elected to the 8 hours' committee at the last meeting in 1925, it was announced at the first meeting in 1926, that J. V. Stout would replace him as delegate to the THC as he had resigned. Stout was to the left at this time but speedily changed to the right. He ended his years in a more mellow frame of mind.

As soon as the new Communist Party was formed in 1924 Laidler urged the disbanding of the LPG. He considered that the LPG was doing work which should be carried out by a Communist Party and that they should stand down to allow the CP an opportunity of developing. Towards this end probably, Joe Shelley and Jim Morley, two foundation members of the CP had joined the LPG. However the LPG members did not join the CP: most simply remained in their old parties, i.e., WIU, SPGB, VSP, ALP. It can be seen from the foregoing that a good deal was achieved in livening up the THC and keeping it on a progressive line.

It is interesting to note the contrasting attitudes of the THC towards the LPG and the suggestion of CP led groups in the unions. In fact, the LPG worked in a factional manner within the unions and THC and it was accepted on friendly terms. As soon as Shelley suggested some similar activity (i.e. Minority Movement) the Council reacted strongly.

It was frequently contended that Shelley's personality had held back the advance of the CP: that he antagonised people. Certainly he was an entirely different man to Laidler. Laidler used logic to make it almost impossible to reject his suggestions. He was also a keen tactician and not only had LPG members initiate motions, but went around and organised other people to take initiatives.

Shelley was brusque, direct and at all times conscious of the "superior" role of the CP, and was one of those who was ready to assert that the CP was always right: "The party is never wrong." He would not hesitate to tell his opponents that they would have their throats cut, after the revolution, and that he would have great pleasure in doing it

personally. He did rather terrorise the timid. However, apart from this personal factor the local organisation of the LPG would seem innocent to the officials of the THC, compared to the International character of the Bolshevik Party.

ERIC ASCHE

Another interesting habitue of the shop was Eric Asche. He was the nephew of Oscar Asche, famous actor, mostly remembered for his part in long-running "Chu Chin Chow".

He had represented Australian Relief Organisations in Russia during the famine, spent two months in the worst regions of Buzuluk and Samara, and three months in Moscow.

He left England for Australia on the Jervis Bay on 30th January, 1923.

On arrival, he stressed that the need for relief on an international scale, was due not to political causes, but to the fact that there had been a three years' drought, and that starvation was inevitable under any Government.

His intentions were to carry on propaganda in Australia, for relief funds, as the need was greater than ever, particularly as the American Relief organisations had ceased feeding adults, and confined their attention to children. The Quakers planned to continue operations until September.

Commenting on the Socialist Government, he said there were many arrests of suspect anti-Bolshevik agents while he was there, in fact he was imprisoned for a week himself, as a suspect. He said that he and other prisoners were all well treated. On one occasion when he was penniless he went to the Communist Party headquarters and was immediately given a free hotel room and one meal a day. During his stay he met a number of famous people, including Anna Louise Strong and Trotsky.

In Melbourne he addressed the THC and joined the Labor Propaganda Group. He worked for the Crown Law Department and became a THC delegate representing the Clerks' Union. He persuaded his boss, Sir Robert Garran, the Crown Solicitor, to speak to the THC on the Constitution, and explain how the Arbitration Court came into being. The LPG got out a leaflet on this address.

Eric had brought with him from Russia, Anna Louise Strong's book—which proved a world best seller— *The First Time in History*. By arrangement, a special edition of the book was published and printed in Australia at a low price. It was the first full-length book published in Australia on Russia, after the revolution. Eric Asche published it in conjunction with Laidler. Fraser and Jenkinson were the printers. He disappeared from the movement after marrying into the “legal” family of Woinarski.

TWO UNIQUE STRIKES

Naturally all strikes were supported by Laidler but two he gave every minute of available time—the Police Strike of 1923 and the British Seamen's Strike of 1925.

His reasons for singling out these two strikes were, that they were more important than some other strikes and they were likely to be “unpopular” with the ordinary workers. All strikes are unpopular with the establishment but these two, he anticipated, would be unpopular with some sections of the working class.

The ordinary unionist had no love for the police, who were always ranged against him in an industrial struggle. It was nice to see them on the other end of the baton.

However, people with understanding knew how important it was to give heart and practical assistance to the police because of their inexperience on this side of the industrial front and because action for sectional advancement of part of the State apparatus is of particular interest and educational value to all sections of the community.

Laidler's reason for singling out the British Seamen was that never before had a big struggle developed on such an international scale, with workers fighting it out in “foreign” countries. The possibility of the strike being unpopular was because Australia then, was far more insular in outlook, and there was a good deal of animosity to British people because they were frequently brought out as immigrants, when unemployment was great, and the indigenous workforce felt its position weakened by them.

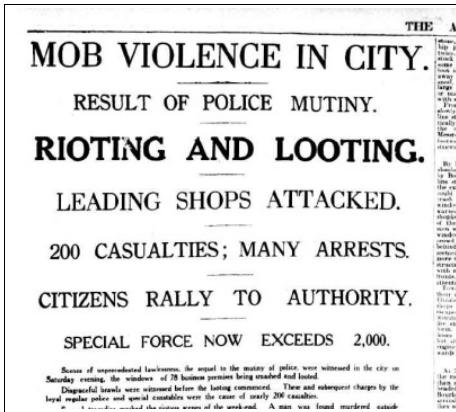
Time proved the organised working class mature enough to give wholehearted support in what proved to be an unparalleled struggle in Australian labour experience.

The British Seamen's Strike is dealt with in a later chapter.

Chapter Nineteen

THE POLICE STRIKE 1923

A police strike is a rare and beautiful thing. The police, who have been impressed that they are in a different category to other workers, and have frequently been called in to baton down workers on strike, suddenly find themselves in the position of an ordinary striking worker plus. Bile and venom there are aplenty for every strike but when a section of the State comes out, then vituperative hysteria really dominates the scene.



Headlines in the Argus on Monday 5th November 1923. (Image via Trove Digitised Newspapers, National Library of Australia.)

When the Victorian Police strike took place, Melbourne was, of course, the centre of the action.

“Disturbances” occurred over six days with “rioting” mainly on Derby night. It was claimed goods to the value of £75,000 had been looted and property damage amounted to another £75,000. 248 people were taken to hospital and 87 looters arrested on Derby night, while many more were arrested during subsequent weeks.

Six hundred “specials” were engaged and volunteers to the number of 8000 were attached to the city. They were organised in squads of light horse, squadrons of cars and others were in trucks. They drove their trucks down pavements wielding chains and batons like stormtroopers, on the citizens. Windscreens were removed and replaced with wirenetting. The light horse spread themselves across the entire width of city lanes and rode through them—woe betide anyone in their path. Some men were armed with guns.

It was instant education for the striking men, in the methods of Governments and in press distortion.

The only place they could turn for help was the Trades Hall.

Crime reporters in the daily press pleased to make out that Melbourne was overwhelmed with hooligan hordes—thieving hordes—an assault of the underworld—an army of toughs “. . . drunken, destructive, and rapacious mob that included almost every convicted thief in Melbourne”.

The actual facts were that discontent was rife in the sorely underpaid police-force. It was the culmination of twenty years of dissatisfaction.

Police Commissioner Sir George Stewart reported that he had made representations to the Government to meet the legitimate demands of the Police. Sir Harry Lawson was Premier and Stanley Argyle, Chief Secretary. Sir George Stewart's pleas were unheeded. He was succeeded by Maj. Gen. Sir John Gellibrand, a former army man, who made repeated efforts to get the Government to listen to reason and finally in exasperation told it, he would no longer continue unless some action was taken, and he stated that in the event of him resigning he would give his reasons publicly. This he did. Alexander Nicholson replaced him and was in charge when the strike occurred.

THE GRIEVANCES

In 1902 Police Pensions were abolished: all efforts to restore pensions failed. The other States had pension schemes. The men objected to four-hour shifts where men were “on” for 4 hours, “off” for 4 hours and then called “on” to do another 4 hours—an 8 hour day spread over 12 hours. Their pay was 3/7d. per day less than that of NSW Policemen. NSW Police had 28 days' annual leave and every second Sunday off—Victorian Police 17 days' annual leave, and one Sunday off in four.

POLICE DIDN'T LIKE BEING POLICED

The final blow-up did not eventuate from all these grievances but from the fact that four “special supervisors”—senior constables in plain clothes, were appointed to spy on them. The men resented “espionage” and called them SPOOKS.

As one of the strike leaders, Const. W. T. Brooks said—“So much of our time is taken up in watching for the supervisors and keeping to our Schedule times that we do not get a fair opportunity to detect crime.”

Two experienced Constables, W. T. Brooks and Larry Pitts were threatened with discharge and brought from country town stations to Melbourne for a second chance. As they were single they were put to mess and sleep with the young chaps, who were influenced by them.

The Police due for night duty in the city refused to parade on Wednesday, Oct. 31st. So sure was Commissioner Nicholson that the men would not strike that two days earlier, on October 29th, he had said, "Police are not like ordinary trade unionists."

Police recruits were brought from the Police Depot but when they arrived at Russell Street they joined the others in the meeting and refused to parade.

The President of the Police Association, H. F. Kroger was dumbfounded and announced the Association was not consulted.

• • •

Earlier in the year Brooks had circulated a petition reading as follows:

Comrades and Fellow-workers,

Are you in favour of an indignation meeting?

Firstly, Restoration of Police pensions in accordance with part 3 of the Police Regulations Act 2709.

Secondly, Conditions prevailing in the NSW Constabulary as regards pay, annual leave and uniforms.

Thirdly, the so-called supervisors be withdrawn immediately from the Prussianism class of duty they are now performing. Senior Constables on plain clothes' duty in the streets to detect any breach of discipline amongst constables on patrol duty.

Five hundred signed the petition.

• • •

The day after the first refusal to parade, the Government proclaimed that the men must immediately return unconditionally or be dismissed.

Pitts was suspended and Brooks dismissed. Brooks took the opportunity to go round all suburban police stations explaining the position. By Friday nearly all police were "out" and a mass meeting was held at the Temperance Hall, Russell Street, near Bourke Street (scene of many union strike meetings). It commenced at 10 a.m. with 500 present and the number rose as country trains came in. At 4.30 p.m.

between 700 and 800 were present. Only about ten country police reported for duty. The country strikers were wildly cheered as they arrived.

At this meeting Const. F. Tucker was in the Chair. W. T. Brooks was elected secretary-treasurer and Committeemen were Consts. E. J. Power, J. Davern, J. M. Burke, J. Heslin and A. M. Pitts.

Sen. Const. Cummins took the chair until the arrival of the Chairman, Tucker. He addressed the meeting as "comrades" and said, "I will admit that I am a bit of a red ragger but what I am I have been driven to by my officers."

A resolution was carried about scabs. They hoped that tramwaymen would not drive past men on duty.

The Victorian Racing Club asked for twenty men to regulate traffic at the Derby—this was refused. A deputation endeavoured to see the Premier, who declined.

As one speaker said, they "would as soon stop out and carry our swags" rather than return to work on the old conditions.

The main resolution of the meeting was: "This meeting of the Police Force of Victoria condemns the system of espionage practised in Melbourne and suburbs in view of the repeated requests for its abolition, and now expresses regret for the need for the present action, and should no victimisation take place and fair consideration be given to just grievances under which the force has been suffering, they are prepared to immediately resume duty, it being understood that the spooks shall not be on supervising duty pending the holding of a conference."

After the meeting, striking policemen went down town and abused police still on duty, calling them scabs and the like. Ordinary people around the city joined in the abuse. A clash between scabs and strikers occurred outside the Police Barracks.

Those who remained at work were mainly sub-officers, members of the Detective Branch, and plain clothes' men.

ORGANISING THE SCABS

The Town Hall Police Depot was quickly prepared to enrol "special" police.

The Returned Soldiers League and Victorian Automobile Club promised assistance. An appeal was made to shopkeepers to look after

their own premises with nightwatchmen. The President of the Chamber of Manufacturers, Sir Robert Gibson, said the Government had a right to regard the strike as mutiny. Lee Neil, Managing Director of Myers announced that they had protection from their nightwatchmen, many of whom were formerly policemen.

Cinemas flashed on their screens a message asking returned soldiers to rally around General Elliott. Some men rose and left the theatre immediately. Between 7 p.m. and 11 p.m. about five hundred men were sworn in and supplied with batons. The Government set up a Citizens' Committee, consisting of Mr. Brunton (the Lord Mayor elect deputising for the Lord Mayor who was ill), the Town Clerk, General Monash (in charge), General McKie, Sir Robert Gibson, and Sir Arthur Robinson. That night a baton charge was ordered on the people hanging around, and a firehose was used against the crowd, fourteen of whom were taken to hospital with cut heads, including a senior constable. Friday night shopping existed then, so there were many people in the city, but they were restrained. One man danced on top of a tram.

DERBY DAY

The main scene of action was near the corner of Bourke and Swanston Streets.

The crowd in town that day was not a "criminal" one, but the usual Bourke Street crowd. Bourke Street was always a racy street. Horse cabs and charabancs plied for hire to take people out to the races. The usual crowd went to the Derby in the usual way.

The only sign that the city was practically denuded of police, was the operation of a big two-up school in Bourke Street in front of the Victoria Arcade (mid-way between Russell and Swanston Streets on the south side). Even the journalist sensationalists had to admit that all was quiet till 5.30. At this time the race crowds were brought back from the course and deposited in Bourke Street. There were always a few drunks around but the measure of ingrained legalism is shown by the fact that the hotels shut at 6 p.m. as usual. Had the crowd been lawless they could have forced the publicans to stay open.

As the streets filled, people rather naturally gathered round the Bourke-Swanston corner where there were a handful of police.

The first window smashed was almost certainly accidental—a large crowd was crushed in the Ezywalkin Building entrance in Swanston Street, where there was an island window. It was easy for this to have caved in under pressure of the crowd.

A drunk pulled out a heavy iron shoe stand and threw it at the next door window of the Leviathan Stores. Four naval men stood in front of the Ezywalkin window and when one man bent to pick up a shoe he was felled by a naval man.

With the smashing of the Leviathan window the crowd quickly realised there was no barrier between themselves and the goods. They interpreted literally, signs in the window “GENUINE CLEARING SALE”, “WHY GO SHABBY”. Bottles were thrown to break other windows—many were hurt with flying glass. From there on it was rafferty’s rules and whilst many calmly tried on clothes till they got their fit and were quite content at this, some of the shrewder ones realised it could be more profitable to take jewellery and made for these shops.

It was claimed twenty-five clothing stores and eighteen jewellery shops were emptied, although, of course the latter would be mainly brummagem in window displays.

Meanwhile, a cable-tram trying to get through the crowd in Bourke Street on the east side of Swanston Street was pulled off the cable and turned on its side and an effort made to burn it. A *Herald* van tried to drive through but on perceiving his van would be turned over, the driver was lucky enough to back out in time.

The clamour and sight of fire engines racing down Bourke Street from Eastern Hill Fire Station caused alarm and loud hooting, which turned to elation and cheering when the firemen saw what was

**The
Leviathan**

**Open for
BUSINESS AS USUAL**

All our Outside Display Windows and Cases have been Smashed and Looted and in consequence we are unable to make our Usual Display. We know we have the support of the Public in this Crisis. Our Windows only have been Looted.

**STOCKS IN ALL DEPARTMENTS
ARE STILL INTACT**

and our Sales Staff are at your service with their usual Courtesy and Attention.

THE LEVIATHAN PTY. LTD.
Cr. Swanston and Bourke Streets.

Leviathan Stores continued trading despite the damage done by looters (advertisement in Argus, Monday 5th November 1923; image via Trove Digitised Newspapers, National Library of Australia).

happening and about-turned to Eastern Hill. People arrested by police scabs were rescued by the crowd.

Living in Bourke Street half a block from the main centre of action Laidler was keyed with fever-heat excitement. It was a taste of "revolution", an arm of the State apparatus had broken down—everyone with an understanding of the Marxist theory of the State was eager to see developments. Evidencing his feeling of oneness with the masses he took his young son on his shoulder and walked down through the middle of the crowd of people.

That Saturday night a Committee was due to meet at Laidler's place. The participants managed to get there by taking circuitous routes. Whilst the others were ready to settle down, and discuss the ordinary business of the organisation, Laidler could not give it attention. He was out on the overhanging roof from which the scene down at the corner could be viewed. When individuals tried to get him in he said, "What's the good of talking about revolution when this might be it now?"

The public were asked not to come into the city on Sunday but naturally huge numbers came out of curiosity, to see the broken windows and empty shops. They also saw the untouched shops being boarded up by carpenters hastily called in for emergency work. In the window of Gaunts, the Jewellers, could be seen two men sitting in full view in the window, with automatics and revolvers, facing the "window shoppers."

The specials drove through the crowds pushing them out of the city. On Sunday the Attorney-General announced that the men would not be reinstated.

TRADES HALL COUNCIL

The strike surprised the Trade Union movement, too. In fact the *Labor Call* of November 15, 1923, wrote that militant action by the rank and file was an eyeopener to the industrial and political labour movement.

The striking policemen went to the Trades Hall for help.

The Police Association which was not affiliated to the THC or ALP did nothing for the men. In fact it was telling them to return when the way had already been barred.

The THC did give support to the strikers by issuing a manifesto to unionists, giving space in *Labor Call*, making an appeal to unions to strike a levy to give financial help and organising two demonstrations to the Yarra Bank. There were 4000 at the Bank on November 18th to protest at the Minister's Policy and H. E. Foster, President of the Trades Hall Council presided. Snr. Const. Cummins spoke and £15 was collected. The Australian Railways Union took a separate collection at a meeting at Unity Hall and marched to the Bank from its hall.



Front page of a leaflet issued by the Trades Hall Council.

THE SPECIALS

Pearce, Minister for Home and Territories cancelled all leave for Army, Navy and Airforce men.

The authorities decided to employ naval, military and airforce men to protect Commonwealth Property, and to call in retired men if necessary.

Farmers heard that the law-abiding citizens of Melbourne were about to be overwhelmed by the underworld. They mounted their horses, bicycles or drove in their model T Fords and horse and buggies to the nearest railway station and came cityward.

Members of the armed services are not permitted by law to participate in civil disturbances but some army men came in civil clothes, giving false names.

The Melbourne University was primarily peopled by the sons of rich men, the scholarship being almost unknown until the Labor

Government introduced Commonwealth Scholarships. Many students rushed in to scab just as did their English counterparts in the General Strike of 1926.

The specials were enrolled for a limited period only, and although many thought their loyalty would ensure them a job in the permanent force they were rejected when enrolment was opened. Their pay as specials was 15/- a day for 7 days a week. Police who had remained "loyal" were paid 12/- a day.

SCABS STOP-WORK MEETING

It was amusing to learn that the specials held a stop-work meeting on Saturday, the 17th November, at the Alexander Avenue Depot.

They refused weekend work and asked for leave (as there was no weekend leave), a mess allowance and no deductions in pay. 4/- of their 15/- pay was being deducted for food.

A deputation was formed to the officer commanding, Sir James McCay. Included in the deputation were two former Army officers. It was agreed to grant married men leave until 3 p.m. on Sunday and single men from 3 p.m. till midnight. The food position was to be looked into. So conscienceless and stupid was the Govt. that it learned no lesson from the police strike and was prepared to antagonise the scabs.

THE CITY SCENE

The city was affected by a virtual curfew. No trams or trains ran after 7 p.m. The sale of bottle supplies of alcoholic drinks was prohibited. Searchlights played continuously all night on the city, from Warships anchored in the bay.

The following article written by Laidler appeared in the *Shop Assistant* November issue.

THE MELBOURNE RIOTS

By an EYE-WITNESS

Readers are bound to be interested in the Melbourne doings of the last few days. It is Cup night. I have just come through from the post office. It is 10 p.m., and though the streets are almost

deserted, there is a soldier, fully equipped ready for action, with bayonet fixed, on duty inside the door of the post office. Armed blue-jackets guard the Federal Treasury, and armed men guard other Federal property. Coming from the post office, a distance of two blocks, fourteen motor-cars containing special police passed slowly by. All night long, through the city streets, scores of these motor patrol cars glide slowly in and out, up and down. Occasionally motor lorries, loaded with specials, pass along. This has been so for three nights now. Guarding the city's property we have also, tramping up and down all night long, companies of specials, batons swinging; and squads of Light Horsemen. Newspaper reports say there are 8,000 specials. In one city block, at the one time, I have counted 200 in company formation, all bearing the armbands and swinging their batons. But the streets are almost deserted. No trams nor trains run after 7 o'clock. Everything now appears as peaceful as could be. But it was not so earlier in the strike.

Saturday afternoon and night Melbourne passed through, for Melbourne, a unique experience. The Government had lost its police force. It had not organised anything to take its place. A few police pensioners and a very few loyalists were to be seen. Towards 6 p.m. the atmosphere in Bourke-street became electric. Men talked to the few police as they liked. They punched them when they cared; and the members of police on duty were so few that they dared not, for their lives' sake, retaliate. The trams were forcibly stopped, attempts were made to set fire to them, to derail them, or to turn them over. By this time, all police but one or two pensioners (who were excused by the crowd) had thought it advisable to leave Bourke-street. Some went to join the strikers. Others went with bleeding faces. A dramatic moment then occurred. The fire brigade was seen sweeping down Bourke-street. Amidst the hoots of thousands, they arrived at the scene of action. The firemen were immediately surrounded, and within a few seconds cheer upon cheer went up as the firecarts turned for home. Then began the window-smashing and looting. Shop window after shop window was broken, until the footpath in the affected area was littered with broken glass and all sorts of fittings, such as dummy bodies for dresses and foot-rests for boots, etc., etc., lay scattered on footpath, gutter and roadway. Right up till late Saturday night excitement continued. Police reinforcements arrived from the country, baton charges and rioting generally persisted until midnight. At 6 p.m., at 7 p.m., at 11 p.m.,

I went through the storm centre. At 11 p.m. I walked a block on broken pieces of plate-glass. The footpath was covered with it. Jewellery shops were specially favored by the looters, but hat shops, boot shops, and clothing shops were stripped of their window contents. Sunday came, and with it 100,000 sight-seers, Specials and Light Horsemen began to appear. Baton charges by specials were numerous in both afternoon and evening. All day Sunday two-up schools played in the heart of Bourke-street, as on Friday night, when a huge gathering surrounded and watched for hours a big two-up game in front of the Bijou Theatre, Bourke street. Monday morning came, and the barricading of shops in the city area proceeded apace. At six o'clock, carpenters were at work everywhere. In the main city block the vast majority of the shop windows were completely barricaded, and city shop-keepers, who had armed themselves during the day, in the majority of cases guarded their shops all night long. But Monday night passed with very few incidents. No large crowds gathered. Specials marched the streets in military order. Light Horsemen and motor patrols formed almost a continuous procession.

Laidler was correct in assuming it would be hard to persuade the ordinary worker to support the police, indeed it is hard to know how wholehearted the THC was in its support, for its manifesto (dated November 14th 1923), recalled the Waterside Workers' Strike of 1917, saying "Police doing duty on the waterfront in the 1917 strike were termed '8 bob a day scabs'." It goes on to say the men loyally obeyed orders, many worked 16 hours a day and several accumulated up to 135 hours overtime. Some of them had not yet been recompensed for the overtime. ". . . The men have been treated as though they had lost their manhood and had no right to claim justice". Hardly calculated to win a levy from the Waterside Workers' Union.

The *Labor Call* possibly summed up the position when it wrote that many trade unions wonder why the industrial movement was drawn into the dispute, and goes on to explain that members of the police force are part and parcel of our present social system and that in past disputes they were used to defeat the workers. It then pointed out they had bad conditions, low rates of pay and they had had driven home to them the power of the press. Certainly there were plenty of diehards who said, "Let them have a taste of their own medicine."

Helping to bridge the gap between the organised Labour movement and the Ex-Police were Laidler and Bert Payne, another member of the

Labor Propaganda Group. They worked tirelessly to influence unions and their officials; they spoke at street meetings with ex-Police, putting the case to the public. By this time Brooks had dropped out and Sen.-Const. Ted Cummins had become the leading figure in the strike.

THE CONCLUSION

The strike gradually petered out with the organisation of large numbers of Specials.

The ex-Police formed a Police Reinstatement Committee to which Laidler was given a life honorary membership for his work for the strikers.

Conditions improved for the Police force—the *Labor Call* commented, that whether the strike was justified or not strike action had moved the Government more quickly than years of “constitutional” agitation.

What the striking police failed to gain for themselves, they achieved for the future members of the police force.

General conditions were improved, the rank and file received better treatment; better accommodation and better equipment were provided, a better proportion in pay increases gained and pensions were created.

Laidler went on a deputation with some of the police to his brother-in-law Tunnecliffe whilst Labor was in office, to try for reinstatement of the men. This was refused but the suggestion was made that Police try to get jobs as City Council Traffic Officers. It is possible Tunnecliffe helped in this regard as a number did secure work in this capacity. Most of the men obtained better jobs than they had in the police force. Some got jobs in the Tramways, as nightwatchmen and in the Penal Department as warders. One, Bill Winterton was a well-known figure spruiking outside the Tivoli Theatre. He later became a hotel manager.

The THC employed ex-policeman Ross as caretaker and he was used, from time to time, to bar militants from conferences.

TED CUMMINS

From the struggle some permanent gains accrued to the labour movement, notably ex-Sen. Const. Cummins became an active recruit to the movement.

He had been twenty years in the force, had an unblemished record and had won a Valor Badge. He stood as an ALP candidate for Hawthorn in the State Elections of June 1924, and gained 6,511 votes from a total vote of 19,153. Later he went to New South Wales.

During the 1924 election campaign, parties of ex-police were very active. One paper proclaimed, "No feature of the present electoral campaign stands out more prominently than the persistence with which small parties of men who were discharged from the Police force for refusing duty, attend meetings addressed by members of the Cabinet, to heckle the speakers."

BARNEY SHANAHAN

Another very fine recruit for the movement was Barney Shanahan. He became a close friend of Laidler.

It had been intended that he be a Priest and several of his brothers in Ireland were priests. He used to go to mass twice on Sundays. The strike completely changed his outlook. A serious, thinking man, he studied Marx and became a Marxist.

His father had been a sergeant of police in the Kelly country—Glenrowan, Wodonga and Albury. Barney became the black sheep of the family. After the strike he became a warder and rose in the Penal Department to Deputy Governor of the Castlemaine gaol, and while there drew up a detailed report on Prison life incorporating progressive ideas. It was submitted to the Inspector-General of Prisons.

Owing to heart trouble he was transferred to Pentridge where he had less responsibility and was close to specialist medical care.

He and a companion warder, who had also been in the police strike, used to call regularly to see Laidler in the shop on their day off. They were responsible for building a fine library in Pentridge.

This great man died on the 11th October, 1946, and it was his request that Percy Laidler should officiate at his funeral. All the warders attended and also high prison officials (Barney was so popular they paid for his funeral). Many of the mourners were Catholic. Laidler officiated at many secular funeral "services" and always endeavoured "to say something to the religious so they wouldn't feel so bad about it not being a conventional priest or parson saying the last words." He did it so well that many religious people broached him later and told him they had never heard a parson or priest speak so well.

AFTERMATH

The absence of a trained, disciplined body of police was felt in the city. In April, 1924, it was stated that in the previous six months there were a great number of cases of police being bashed, because of the poor quality of the police. The old police had been able to handle situations. Two men, said to be specials were killed, one kicked to death near Wirths Circus and the other found in Queen Street.

A Riot Sufferers League was formed to fight for compensation.

Large numbers of people including many women continued to be prosecuted for looting over a period of months—informers must have been very active. The standard sentence whether a man took a handkerchief or an expensive suit was 3 months. Some had boldly taken their loot and put it on sale outside the Stadium, where the queue was offered silver plated teapots for 2/- each and rolls of suiting at low price.

LABOR PARTY EMBARRASSMENT

In June, 1924, a State election resulted in the return of a Labor Government. In opposition, the Party had been critical of the Government and promised reinstatement of the strikers, if office was gained. G. Prendergast became Premier and T. Tunnecliffe Chief Secretary of the Government which had to manoeuvre out of an awkward situation.

It did this by appointing a Royal Commission, sittings of which did not begin until the 8th September, 1924. General Monash (Chairman), John Martin Henderson (Ex-president Police Association) and Charles Stewart McPherson (Public Service Board) constituted the Commission. The terms of the Commission were:

- (1) General state of efficiency and conditions of the force prior to 1923.
- (2) Present standard of efficiency of force and best method of securing efficiency if found to be impaired.
- (3) As to whether further and better police protection throughout the State or any part thereof is necessary; and if so what would be the most effective means for ensuring such protection.

The Labor Government was defeated during the sittings of the Royal Commission and on the 17th November, Allan of the Country Party, reconstructed the scope of the Commission by deleting clauses 2 and 3. The terms of the Commission then were:

1. (a) General state of efficiency of the force prior to 1923.
(b) As to whether any and what grievances were complained of by members of the force prior to November, 1923.
(c) The cause or causes that moved certain persons then members of the force to refuse duty in November 1923.
(d) The consequences arising from such refusal of duty.

A. D. Ellis was Counsel for the Police Department, A. W. Foster instructed by Crown Solicitor appeared to assist the Commission.

The Re-Instatement Association was represented by Sonenberg and Shelton.

Like most Commissions, the result was simply a torrent of words and much expense to the taxpayer.

Chapter Twenty

THE HANGING OF ANGUS MURRAY

Glenferrie was the scene of a hold-up and shooting on the 8th October, 1923.

Mr. T. R. Berriman, manager of the Hawthorn Branch of the Commercial Bank, was held up by two men outside the station and his case containing £1,851 was stolen. Mr. Berriman offered resistance and one of the men shot him in the chest.

The two men ran along the footway and were picked up in a waiting car. There were several people about and some pursued the men along the footway. The leading hold-up man was tall and thin and behind him a short stout man ran, and from time to time turned and menaced pursuers with a revolver.

On October 11th, police made a dawn raid on a house in Barkly Street, St. Kilda and picked up Angus Murray for having illegally escaped from Geelong gaol on August 24th and for having on October 8th at Glenferrie robbed T. R. V. Berriman of £1,851 and a fibrite suitcase, and with having, at the time of the robbery wounded Mr. Berriman.

In the house were Leslie (Squizzy) Taylor and Ida Pender. They were charged with occupying a house at St. Kilda, frequented by thieves or persons who have no visible lawful means of support, and idle and disorderly persons.

It was reported that the police were disappointed that there was no other man on the premises.

On the 13th October, it was announced the Police were looking for a third man and were also anxious to communicate with Richard Buckley.

On the 21st, Berriman died, the charge became a capital one. The Chief Secretary, Dr. Argyle, offered £500 reward for Richard Buckley.

Murray was refused bail, so also was Taylor.

In refusing bail it was pointed out that Taylor had failed to turn up on a previous charge. Now having been before and after, an accessory to the felony, bail was refused.

The refusal was made without prejudice to a future application. In Court, Murray protested against remands and complained of unfairness.

He was not represented by Counsel. He said the remands were against him because information was being given by the police to the press, which misrepresented the facts. He claimed this was insidious propaganda damaging him in the eyes of the prospective jury, and said he did not seem to be able to get a fair go, at all. He stated he had abusive letters from respectable people showing that the public had already found him guilty.

On the 2nd November, Murray was again in Court but had the famous, capable and liberal minded Eugene Gorman as his lawyer. A fresh remand was granted, and press statements were again indicted. On the 16th November, Murray protested again over another remand – “How many can they have?” he asked.

There was yet another remand on the 23rd. The Coroner’s investigation resulted in the verdict, as reported by *Argus*, Victor Berriman died from injuries received from a wound due to a shot fired by Richard Buckley in conjunction with Angus Murray.

The case against Murray was opened on the 20th February, 1924. Witnesses were cross-examined by Gorman.

To Norman Alfred Rattray: You were taken to the gaol were you not? And they told you that you were to identify Angus Murray?

Rattray: Yes.

Gorman: And Murray was the only man presented to you?

Rattray: Yes.

Another witness said: Murray was undoubtedly the taller man of the 2.

Gorman: Did you not say at the Coroner’s Court that you would not swear to him?

Witness: I may have. He is like the man.

One witness had to agree that all attention was focussed on the man with the gun and little attention Paid to the other man ahead of him, yet he and others identified Murray.

All witnesses agreed it was the short man that shot Berriman. A woman living next door to the Taylor house was a witness, claiming she had stood on a box, peered over the fence and watched for several minutes, Murray and Taylor burn what appeared to be a suitcase.

Gorman put an expert asphalter in the box who said there was no trace of anything being burned on the spot the witness had pointed out.

In evidence, G. T. Ryan, assistant clerk of Petty Sessions, Melbourne, testified that he took Berriman's dying deposition. L. Murphy, Solicitor instructing Gorman, Angus Murray, D. M. Grant P.M. and others were present.

Indicating Murray, Berriman said "I think I know this man. This is not the man who shot me. It was the other man. I am too weak to describe the other man now."

Murray, in his evidence, stated that when he went into the hospital room, he said, "Mr. Berriman, I am Angus Murray, the man they are trying to frame for robbing you at Glenhuntly. I want you to be very careful" and Murray said Berriman replied, "Very well, you may not be the man."

Murray claimed an alibi for the day of the crime but this was disregarded.

On February 22nd, the Jury, after two hours, brought in a verdict of guilty.

On the 2nd March an Appeal on the basis of a miscarriage of justice was lodged on Murray's behalf.

Murray's appeal commenced on the 6th and two of the arguments raised by Gorman, were on the faulty identification methods used, and he challenged the summing-up as being a misdirection of the jury.

The appeal failed and Gorman then took it to the High Court.

In judgment were Chief Justice Sir Adrian Knox, Mr. Justices Isaacs, Duffy, Rich and Starke.

Gorman sought to support his contention that the trial Judge Mr. Justice Mann had failed to direct the jury sufficiently or at all.

In addition to arguments raised at the previous appeal, Gorman brought forward the fact that Murray had not shot Berriman and no man had been brought forward who actually did the shooting. He suggested the hypothetical possibility that this man could later be charged—might claim that he had not intended to shoot or that the gun went off accidentally and might be acquitted. If he were acquitted for any reason then it was not possible to claim that Murray had shot him in conjunction with the other man. Also that the man might admit the crime and also say that Murray had not acquiesced to the shooting.

The High Court dismissed the appeal.

The death sentence passed on Murray was considered by the State Cabinet towards the end of March.

As for Taylor, he was not presented on the murder charge, the charge of "harbouring" was withdrawn and he was released. It was alleged that Taylor and four other men had tried to organise an escape for Murray from the gaol, however on the 26th March the five men were acquitted. Once again Taylor was free.

THE PEOPLE REACTED

There was widespread feeling amongst the workers that Murray should not be hanged. It was claimed that it had been sixty years since anyone had been hanged for a killing, done as an accomplice. Many felt that identification being made in the manner it was, Murray may not have been in the hold-up at all.

The Trades Hall Council meeting of the 20th March, received and discussed a letter from the Socialist Party stating that a deputation to the Chief Secretary regarding Angus Murray was being organised, and requesting that Trades Hall Council representatives attend with them. The THC decided to comply.

The Melbourne Branch of the ALP carried a motion of protest against the death penalty being carried out in the case of Angus Murray.

On the 3rd April, the executive reported to Council that representatives of several bodies waited on the Attorney-General (Sir Arthur Robinson), and sought the commutation of the death sentence. George Prendergast, leader of the Labor opposition in the Legislative Assembly introduced the deputation. Speakers said that public opinion was tending in the direction of the abolition of capital punishment in all cases, and that, in the instance of Murray there was a doubt whether he was guilty of murder.

E. J. Holloway said that his Council (THC) believed capital punishment was brutal, and the carrying out of the terrible work was more awful than the act of murder. Don Cameron, Secretary of the Socialist Party said the matter was one for sympathetic and scientific treatment, not revenge. He had received a letter from the gaol Chaplain (Rev. E. H. Davies), who had attended Murray, stating that he was quite in accord with the deputation, and although he could not attend with it, he intended to submit his views to the Executive Council.

The Reverend Ainslie A. Yeates of St. John's Church, Latrobe Street, Melbourne, said he was not attending as a representative of the Church. H. F. Smith, Secretary of the Carpenters' Union said that in the circles in which he moved, Sir Arthur Robinson had the reputation of being a very hard man, with no sympathy whatever for the "bottom dog". He hoped that the decision he would give in this case under review would do something to dispel that reputation.

The Reverend Charles Strong of the Australian Church and member of the Howard Reform League said that capital punishment was immoral . . . the death penalty was out of harmony with the enlightenment and growing moral conscience of mankind.

Mr. H. Foster, president of the THC said that the Labor Party stood four-square against capital punishment in all circumstances. Sir Arthur Robinson said he was not one to shirk an issue, but fortunately for him this decision was one to be made by the entire Cabinet.

At the meeting of the THC held on the 3rd April, word had come that the death sentence was to be carried out.

The executive report was to the effect that in view of the facts, the executive now calls for the co-operation of other organisations at a monster meeting to enter a protest against the Executive Council. It was decided to try and get the Exhibition Building through Trustee R. Solly and to try the Town Hall as well. Meetings were in fact held in both places and the Exhibition building was packed out.

The attendance was estimated by Prendergast to be 12,000 the *Argus* said 5,000.

There was tremendous enthusiasm and the audience was unanimous. J. Scullin (later Prime Minister), said that the strength of the law was weakened by hanging Murray. Other speakers were J. P. Jones, MLC, Bob Solly, MLA, J. Morse, President of the Eight Hours' Committee, H. F. Smith, Secretary Carpenters' Union, Holloway, Secretary and Foster, President of the THC.

It was announced that the Premier would receive a deputation and that the petition would be presented to the Rt. Hon. G. E. J. Mowbray, Earl of Stradbroke, Governor of Victoria.

Colonel Albiston of the Salvation Army said that if Angus Murray were hanged it would be a great blot on the name of Victoria.

This demonstration was followed by a deputation to the Premier and Attorney-General.

Premier Lawson appealed to the combined committee that the agitation should not be persisted with but the Town Hall meeting went on and the big demonstration to the Yarra Bank took place.

A petition with 60,000 signatures on it was to be presented to the State Governor in person, it was announced at the THC on 11th April, and a call went out for a great demonstration to the Yarra Bank on the Sunday following.

Eight members of the Combined Committee visited the State Government House and the Petition, now with 70,000 signatures was presented to Captain Keppel-Palmer, private secretary, for the Earl of Stradbroke.

Several thousand marched on the Sunday from the Trades Hall and there were many women and children present, and a large crowd lined the route of the march.

A banner read "WORKERS, PREVENT THE CRUCIFIXION OF ANGUS MURRAY! REMEMBER THE GALLOWES GOVERNMENT."

About 10,000 were at the Yarra Bank. Speakers were: Foster, President, THC, McNeill, MHR, J. Hannan, THC, Councillor Mary Rogers (Richmond), Rev. Ainslie Yeates, T. Tunnecliffe, MLA.

These activities did not save Angus Murray. He was executed on the 14th April. Asked whether he had anything to say before sentence was carried out, Murray is reported in the *Argus* to have replied from the scaffold, in firm tones: "I have never in my life done anything to justify the extreme penalty being passed on me. I have tried to forgive all those who have acted against me. I hope that all I have injured will forgive me." The Port Phillip Stevedores Union held a stopwork meeting. On the morning of the execution, which took place at the old Melbourne gaol, corner Russell and Victoria Streets, at 10 a.m., people gathered at an early hour and there were several thousand there before 10 a.m. 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 (from the adjacent Trades Hall), to pay their last respects and enter protest.

It would be fairly safe to estimate that the majority there were working-class housewives. They came out of their cottages in Carlton and walked in from the adjacent suburbs of North Carlton, Fitzroy, North Melbourne, West Melbourne, Collingwood and East Melbourne. According to the press a section of the crowd was truculent and sullen towards the police. At 9 a.m. some of them were already down on their

knees praying and some were sobbing. At 20 minutes to 10 the crowd sang: "Nearer my God to Thee". At a quarter to 10, people who had assembled, headed by women, marched to the gaol gates in Victoria Street. The authorities feared a riot on the part of this emotional, near-hysterical crowd.

Forty foot police and ten mounted men forced the crowd back from the gates into Victoria Street. The people demanded the police take their hats (i.e., helmets) off—they did not comply. One woman threw herself at a horse and seized the reins. There was some difficulty in dislodging her. The crowd sang hymns and near 10 a.m. knelt and repeated the Lord's Prayer. At 10 a.m. there was complete silence which one eyewitness claims lasted for fully five minutes.

After this 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 at Andrades and asked him would he come up and address the crowd to calm them. It is noteworthy with the adjacent Trades Hall full of union officials it was Laidler as a "mob orator," who they asked to come along and speak, and this, according to the press, was done in response to continuous demands from the crowd who had gone over to the Trades Hall after the execution, looking for leadership. The *Herald* reports "eventually" Mr. Prendergast, leader of the opposition addressed them together with others. The eyewitness mentioned above 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.

Laidler did succeed in satisfying the crowd and ended by telling them that they must see that this never happened again—that those in Unions and ALP branches must go back into them and work for the abolition of capital punishment.

The only other occasions when there was mass protest at hanging were in the cases of Ned Kelly, when the people marched to Government House in 1880, and more recently in the case of Ryan.

On Friday night, November 5th, 1880, a monster meeting of 4,000, including 200 to 300 women were present at the Hippodrome, Stephen Street, to urge a reprieve for Edward Kelly.

Some 30,000 to 40,000 signed a petition. A deputation for the reprieve was led by William Gaunson, MP, and he, together with a Mrs.

Skillian, Kate Kelly, James Kelly and Wild Wright, led a crowd to Government House. At first they were refused admission, but after a discussion, were allowed to drive their cabs into the grounds. Captain Le Patourel, the Governor's private secretary, told them the Governor would not see them, that he would be at the Treasury up to 2 p.m. and petitions could be sent up till that time.

In the afternoon, Mrs. Skillian, Kate Kelly and Gaunson attended the Treasury to await the decision of the Executive Council, with a supporting crowd of 1,000 outside.

Meanwhile James Kelly and Wild Wright held a meeting outside the Robert Burns Hotel in Lonsdale Street, West, and "were objects of veneration of the mob" according to one journalist.

An attempt was made to hold a mass meeting at the Supreme Court Reserve but the twelve police were reinforced with fifty police and they kept the Reserve clear. Eventually a meeting of 2,000 adjourned to the corner of Queensberry and Madeline Streets.

A final effort was made by Gaunson on November 10th to ask the Governor to exercise the Royal prerogative of mercy.

Ned asked that his body be handed to his friends, but this too was denied him.

(Figures of attendances may be understated as the press was very anti-Kelly.) Each one of the three that evoked public sympathy had in common that they were men of intelligence and that they had some social conscience.

Chapter Twenty-one

THE COMMUNIST PARTY

The Russian revolution was inspiring to class-conscious workers in Australia, as evidenced by the demand for literature on Russia, and the fact of a celebration being held in 1918, on the date of the first anniversary. With disillusionment in the Labor Party and the smashing by the authorities of the IWW, it was inevitable that before long a Communist Party would appear. Maruschak in the VSP in 1919 and 1920 had tried to change the VSP into a Communist Party and actually gained a majority vote at one meeting, but that decision was reversed at a subsequent meeting. Carl Baker supported these moves.

In Sydney, on October 30th, 1920, a conference of interested groups and individuals was convened by the ASP for the purpose of founding a Communist Party. The Party was formed and a provisional executive of twelve members elected (including three ASP members). Carl Baker and Guido Baracchi attended from Melbourne. However, the ASP at a special meeting of its Central Executive held on the 14th December, 1920, unanimously decided to withdraw from the "united" party. It formed a Communist Party of its own: thus there were two Communist Parties, unity being achieved in the middle of 1922.

On the withdrawal of the ASP, the remaining group (mainly OBU supporters) ratified the October decision to form a Communist Party and elected W. P. Earsman as first general secretary.

Whilst October 30th is generally accepted as the founding date, a statement issued by the party of which Earsman was secretary declares:

... We would further say that we represent the original C.P. of A., which was in existence as an organisation before the conference of October 30th called by the ASP. The proof of this is that the ASP adopted, with a few minor alterations, our manifesto and programme, which was later accepted unanimously by the Provisional Executive of the CP, which the ASP now endeavours to disrupt.

This statement was issued by the Provisional Executive of the Communist Party under the signatures: W. P. Earsman (secretary), Tom Glynn, C. Hook, A. Thomas, J. S. Garden, Miss C. J. Smith, Tom Walsh,

Mrs. Adela Pankhurst Walsh, S. Zanders (Trustee), R. Webster (Trustee) and C. Baker [notation that he couldn't sign as in Melbourne].

Under date 29th September 1920, Laidler wrote to Scott, "A Communist Party has been launched in Sydney, apparently by Earsman and probably Peter Simonoff has a hand."

As for Melbourne, a Collingwood Group of the VSP had been organised in May 1919 and its secretary was Charles France. *Socialist* of November 5th 1920 reported that the Collingwood Group had announced its intention to form itself into a Communist Group.

The above referred to, Sydney statement (undated) indicates that Melbourne branch had been formed before December 24th.

. . . We have already formed a branch in Melbourne, one in Balmain, two in course of formation in W.A. and one to be formed in Sydney on Monday night at the Trades Hall, to which all communists are invited. Meetings will be held in the Domain on Sunday afternoon, and the evenings in a Hall to be advertised by hand-bills.

The official organ of the Party, the "Australian Communist", will appear on Friday, 24th December, and will be published weekly thereafter . . .

The first Melbourne meeting was held in the Theatrical Employees' Union Rooms in Lonsdale Street—delegates were invited from the existing workers' organisations. There was a fair attendance, but not all joined. Amongst those who did join were Frank and Max Stephanski, May Francis, Charles France, J. Maruschak, Nellie Rickie, Carl Baker, G. Baracchi and Percy Laidler. This inaugural meeting was chaired by Laidler. Carl Baker acted as branch secretary*. Thirty-nine membership application forms were forwarded to W. P. Earsman in Sydney.

* There does not appear to be a record of Baker being elected as secretary at the inaugural meeting, but he was the representative with Baracchi in Sydney at the October 30th meeting and he was signing correspondence as Branch secretary early 1921. France himself (in later years) claimed to be first secretary but he may have been referring to the fact that he was secretary of the Communist Group derived from the VSP. On the other hand France may have been elected, relinquishing the position to Baker after a short time.

[footnote from original edition of *Solidarity Forever!*]

A hall was acquired at 224 Swanston Street, City. This hall seated about 250 people and the rent was £3.10.0 per week. There was an office and domestic quarters where Baker and his family lived.

Meetings were held on Friday nights, lectures on Sunday evenings and mid-week. A class was organised on Saturday evenings. 250 copies of the weekly paper were ordered from Sydney. The original order was 500 copies but transport restrictions prevented effective handling of this number. Leaflets were issued. Speakers were invited to Geelong. A delegate was sent to a Peace Conference.

Charles France was elected Secretary when Baker was transferred to Sydney.

In October 1921 the branch reported raising funds for famine relief and that D. Rosen had been elected secretary, because France had resigned the position. However, the branch soon ceased to function.

Baker had gone to Sydney as acting General Secretary, replacing Earsman when he went to the USSR. Baker was remembered in Melbourne by a parson who had asked him, "What would you do with me after the revolution?" Baker replied, "Sentence you to 6 months in a Public Library."

The reason for demise was partly due to poor relations with Sydney.

Apparently Jock Garden and his friends were inclined to treat Melbourne with contempt. On the 23rd February, 1921, Baker had written to the Secretary of the Party in Sydney as follows:—

Dear Comrade,

I have been instructed by this Branch to ask the Central Executive to explain why Comrades Garden and Walsh, while in Melbourne, did not communicate with this branch in any way. Comrade Laidler informed Garden that the Secretary wished to see him but he ignored the request.

Further, I am asked to point out that the fact that Comrade Garden lectured on Sunday last for Scott-Bennett when it would have been possible for this Branch to have arranged a lecture for him, and as Comrade Garden is known to all as being a member of the Central Executive, this was used against the party here by its critics with some effect.

In face of the above this Branch thinks that some explanation should be given.

Signed, C. W. Baker, Secretary, Melb. Branch, C.P. of A.

THE SECOND FOUNDING (1924)

Joe Shelley, a German who had been interned during the 1914-18 war in Western Australia, was the prime mover in reestablishing a branch of the Communist Party in Melbourne.

The following list of foundation members is not guaranteed as a full list, but there were not a great number.

Joe Shelley, S. (Bluey) Jeffries, Jim Morley, Bob Brodney, Mrs. Nicholson, Mrs. Peach, Mrs. O'Reilly, Mrs. Jeschke, May Francis, Mrs. Blackler and Mrs. Young (early in the century she was stoned in Collins Street for daring to wear harem pants). Possibly there were one or two from the country.

This group shows the majority were women, and these, with the exception of May Francis, were in the middle-age group, divorced from industry and mass organisations. Most had participated in the anti-conscription campaigns and some had been members of the VSP, but not in any leading capacity. May Francis alone, of the women, had been active in the trade union movement and had led political groups. With the exception of possibly one, the men were not born in Australia.

Looking at this group, Laidler, contrasting it with the mass contact and influence of the members of the LPG, must have really felt what he gave as a reason for not joining—"the time is not ripe in Victoria." Baracchi in Sydney in 1925 resigned for a similar reason and was declared a "liquidationist".

Isolated as it was, the Party fought tenaciously and survived many mistakes and other disasters. It met firstly at 122 Bourke Street and then took premises at 217 Russell Street, consisting of two floors above a barber shop, and here Shelley, the President lived on the top floor. At this period Tom Wright was General Secretary, and he addressed all correspondence to Bob Brodney, the first secretary. S. Jeffries at 23 Gipps Street, East Melbourne, was listed as Group Secretary, in the *Workers' Weekly* in June, 1925.

Classes, lectures, meetings and socials were held on the premises. Meetings were conducted at the Yarra Bank and at street corners. Sale

of the *Workers' Weekly*, organ of the Party, published in Sydney, was an important activity. Dances were held and social functions commemorating the Paris Commune and 7th of November were big events. In July, the CP participated in combined meetings on the Yarra Bank and in the Socialist Hall. Speakers were Don Cameron, Secretary of the VSP; H. Wilkinson, Treasurer of the IWW and Joe Shelley, President of the CP. The issue was to demand the release of American class war prisoners and "give the real reason the American Fleet is coming here."

By 1925 some mass work was carried out in organising the unemployed, and in Morley becoming secretary of the British Seamen's Strike Committee and Shelley being a member of that Strike Committee. A Militant Women's Group was set up, of women who did not wish to join the CP. Mrs. Sally Barker and Mrs. Hilda Wilson led this group. A children's group known as the Young Comrades Club was formed. Shelley acted as a full time worker and there was very little money to pay him sustenance. A very fine ALP member, J. M. Alexander (father of Dorothy—Mrs. Ralph Gibson) bought Shelley a taxi-cab with which, theoretically, he could earn a living and would not be compelled to be at work when important political matters were afoot. It seemed an ideal arrangement—Joe painted it red and hung red curtains in the windows. Alas, whenever the cab was seen it was full of members and supporters, papers and pamphlets, platforms and etc. etc. going to meetings, the Bank and various other places. The CP had a piano which would be dragged out and taken to the Bank every Sunday and used to accompany revolutionary singing. Some other early members were C. Monson, G. Bodsworth, T. McDaid, Tom and Dorry Le Huray, Charlie Campbell, Charlie Wilson, Tom Hemming, Tom Barnaby and Alan McEvoy.

Laidler had dissolved the LPG to assist the CP, and its members leaned heavily on him for advice, assistance and introductions. In every way he was their connecting link with the mass movements of workers and other political parties—it was hard slogging, because of chronic sectarianism, rabid conceit and lack of sense of humor. It was not many years before the Central Executive in Sydney felt that Shelley should leave Melbourne but there is no doubt that he has the credit of establishing the organisation despite his dogmatic bullheadedness.

Joe Shelley was one of the most courageous of men and served time on several occasions. Once he was charged and convicted of "inciting to

murder". When questioned regarding his attitude to violence, he said —"I hold that force, violence and energy are the essence of progress and as such are necessary. I do not believe in individual violence, but in the organisation of workers into defence corps and volunteer armies."

People often came to Laidler and asked him whether he thought they should join the CP (rather strange when he wasn't a member himself). He would judge each case on its merits and sometimes, if he felt they really didn't want to join and would not last long, he would say, "You've got doubts now, so it doesn't seem much use joining." Others, he felt, wanted to join but needed reassurance. In these cases he would tell them to join. On platforms he would frequently end with a call to the members of the audience to join the CP, if this suited them; the ALP if that suited them better, or the FOSU, UWM (he would name whatever were the current organisations)—"but, join some organisation" would be the final appeal.

THE RED FLAG FLEW FOR LENIN

Lenin's death on January 21st, 1924, was marked by the carrying of resolutions at both Melbourne and Sydney Trades' Councils. In Melbourne the following resolution was carried by delegates standing:

That this Council places on record its regret at the reported death of N. Lenin, President of the Russian Soviet Republic and expresses its appreciation of his great work and self-sacrifice on behalf of the people of Russia in obtaining for them their emancipation from Czardom and oppression and winning for them the right of working out their own destinies in accordance with their own desires.

The Red flag was flown at half-mast on the Trades Hall. In Sydney the Labour Council delegates rose and sang the "Red Flag" after carrying a resolution:

That this council mourns with the working class of Russia, the loss of the working class leader, Nicholai Lenin. We appreciated at all times his value to the working class movement. We know of his strenuous fight against the entire forces of capitalism throughout the world. Notwithstanding the opprobrium and calumny launched against him throughout the world since 1917,

he vigorously maintained a working class State, which in itself is a beacon light to the workers of the world.

On February 3rd, a combined memorial meeting was held on the Domain.

In Melbourne, Russians and Australians attended a service at the Unitarian Church and a meeting was held in one of the side rooms of the church.

Chapter Twenty-two

EIGHT HOURS' DAY AND MAY DAYS REJUVENATED



Leaflet advertising May Day 1924.

Laidler made a special effort to revive May Day in 1924 and 1925. The 1924 effort stemmed from the Labor Propaganda Group. This was a united May Day with representatives of all organisations. E. F. Russell was President and P. Laidler Secretary. H. E. (Bert) Payne was very active in working for this. It was the first May Day with THC blessing since 1912. 60,000 leaflets both general and sectional were issued. The main resolution carried, ends with the words, "Remember, that in all lands, they celebrate this day. Come and Proclaim the International Solidarity of our class." It was headed "WORKERS OF THE WORLD UNITE. You have nothing to

lose but your chains, and a world to win!"

The manifesto to unionists was circulated to union meetings and addressed "those who attend their union meetings":

Comrades, you are the life-blood of the Trade Union Movement. You are bulwarks against the wage reducing and sweating

tendencies of the employers.

You are the live wires of the working class. We appeal to you to make the May Day Procession and Meetings a Big Success.

Thousands marching will have a good effect upon our opponents. It will stir interest and stimulate enthusiasm in the Labor Movement.

It will speed up our onward march to power . . .

It was a great success and wider than a purely Labor Party/Trades Hall Council affair. The march was preceded by a huge red flag, with the word "ANARCHY" across it, carried by Melbourne's lone anarchist, J. W. (Chummy) Fleming. Laidler had tried to talk his old friend and colleague of the unemployed days, out of it, but Chummy as an original founder of the May Day March in Melbourne in 1893 felt that he had a right to premier place. He marched about half a block ahead of the procession. Then came the Trades Hall Band and in the first rank of marchers were veterans, Dr. W. Maloney, M.H.R. (a co-founder of May Day with Fleming), George Prendergast, M.L.A., and Robert Solly, M.L.A. The ranks were swelled with ex-policemen and striking tramway men. Speakers at the Bank included the above veterans and Frank Anstey, Frank Brennan, Tom Tunnecliffe and Maurice Blackburn.

The *Age* of May 5th reported, "Maurice Blackburn, appealing on behalf of German workers, made a remarkable statement, that these workers were just as important to those present as Australians. Nationalism, like sectarianism, must go into the limbo of forgotten things. Color, creed, race and tradition should count for nothing."

The three resolutions carried, dealt with:

- (1) Abolition of the capitalist system.
- (2) Fraternal greetings all lands — internationalism.
- (3) Campaign vigorously against exploiting class in our own country.

1925

The May Day procession stretched over half a mile and 10,000 were on the Bank. The march was led by seven drovers on horseback with their dogs and had three brass bands. An international tableau represented twelve countries. Ninety former police marched and a lorry

loaded with children displayed "No More War" posters. Maypole dancing preceded the speeches. There were three official platforms and at a given signal the resolution was put from all platforms simultaneously and carried with cheers. Preliminary Friday night meetings in all suburbs helped build the demonstration.

The total of thirty speakers included J. H. Scullin, Dr. Maloney, Frank Brennan, Tom Tunnecliffe, George Prendergast, Maurice Blackburn, Bob Solly, Jack Cain, A. W. Foster, Jean Daley, Mary Rogers, Jim Sheehan, E. J. Dickinson, and J. Shelley. The latter two speakers, being respectively I.W.W. and Communist. It had not reached the stage where ALP speakers refused to appear with Communist representatives.

Meetings were held at night at the Bijou Theatre and Socialist Hall and these carried resolutions against war and to end capitalism. Dr. Charles Strong made a May Day address at the Australian Church. Laidler was Propaganda Secretary and E. J. Holloway Secretary. Other committee members were Charlie Crofts, W. J. Duggan, Messrs. Taylor, Darcy and R. Jeffries.

Laidler was identified with May Day as President of the Committee for many years.

EIGHT HOURS' DAY 1924

The Labor Propaganda Group had decided to try to revive the waning Eight Hours' Day procession and Laidler was on the Eight Hours' Committee. He threw all his energy into it as did other LPG members, in particular Mrs. Rickie and Bert Payne. It proved successful with 6155 marching. There were fourteen bands including the Scottish Ladies' Pipe and the South Melbourne Ladies' Pipe Bands. A May Queen was at the head of the procession. Motherhood Endowment was featured and demands for women to receive the same pay as men. Striking tramway men and the ex-police made a good section although the *Argus* May 6th stated referring to the police "nor was applause for them so continuous". The Carters' & Drivers' Union put in eight caparisoned greys in their display. The whole march took 45 minutes to pass a given spot. Veterans at the head of march were James Wardley aged 108, a foundation member of the Operative Bakers' Society; R. Honeybone of the Operative Masons and a David Woods and G. A. Stephens who in 1856 had marched as children in the first 8 Hours' Day

procession. G. A. (George) Stephens was the son of 8 hours' pioneer, James Stephens. Dr. Maloney was with the veterans.



The May Queen at the 1924 Eight Hours' Day procession. The author of Solidarity Forever! modestly refrained from noting that she, the eleven-year-old Bertha Laidler, was the May Queen. (At that time the Eight Hours' Day public holiday in Victoria was in May. Later it was renamed Labour Day and moved to March.) (Argus, 6 May 1924.)

The following four-year table clearly indicates that energetic organisation brings results:

Year	No. Organisations	Numbers people
1921	86	5700
1922	84	5045
1923	62	3550
1924	63	6155

On these figures, despite the swelling of the ranks by the tramways' strike there was still an increase of 1,100 instead of what would have been on the normal trend a still lower figure. The celebration was abandoned on the initiative of Vic. Stout, Secretary of the THC. The Moomba Parade is now held on that day.

Chapter Twenty-three

BRIBERY — FITZROY

BRIBERY
STARTLER FROM FITZROY
£25 OFFER ALLEGED MAKING
BLACKBURN OUT A RED

These arresting headlines appeared in the *Sun* 3rd February, 1925.

The background to this story was that Maurice Blackburn had been selected out of 31 candidates to represent the A.L.P. in a State By-election on the death of J. W. Billson who had held the seat of Fitzroy for 24 years.

The campaign against Blackburn was already bitter before his selection. After it one Joseph Boell, standing as an Independent Labor candidate, spearheaded the attack on Blackburn with, behind him, the dregs of the Labor Party from Wren down or up as you see it.

Blackburn's politics were anathema to this gang. His simon-pure character was inexplicable to them and his honesty despised.

Victoria, being a wowser State, always had pressure groups working for liquor interests, gambling interests etc. i.e. Wren interests. For many years J. J. Liston who was prominent in the Labor Party, was a paid secretary for the Liquor Reform Movement which had unsuccessfully tried to get Harry Scott-Bennett, with his eloquent persuasive powers as a speaker, to work for them.

These bodies agitated for more liquor licences, longer trading hours; and the gamblers for more race days per week. They sought to influence the mass of voters through the Labor Party, and the rewards paid to politicians who voted for them were great.

Maurice Blackburn was a radical in politics, and he was also rigidly anti-liquor and anti-gambling, seeing evil in them that harmed the working class. No wonder he became the point of attack.

Jim Morley, a foundation and active member of the Communist Party in Melbourne was approached by a man who was unknown to him, and offered a bribe of £25 to sign a statement asserting that to his certain knowledge Blackburn was a member of the Communist Party.

The A.L.P. Rules stipulate that no member of the Communist Party shall be admitted to the ranks of the organisation. Had Morley signed

such a declaration it would have been the basis to rule out Blackburn's candidature.

Donations received by the Communist Party from prominent people were recorded in the C.P. press as coming from *nom de plumes*. The statement Morley was asked to sign also asserted that Blackburn was "No. 64", a regular donor of large amounts.

Jim Morley was "jobless and flat broke" to use his own terms and £25 was substantial money to him but contrary to rumour all men do not have a price. Morley immediately came to see Laidler, told him the story and asked his advice. Laidler from the description and his knowledge of Fitzroy politics concluded that the contact man was "Sugar" Roberts, representing John Wren. Laidler telephoned Blackburn who came to the shop, and the three men worked out a plan.

Morley had made a further appointment with the contact man when he was supposed to give his decision. It was agreed by the trio that Morley would keep the appointment but that Laidler would go too, secrete himself in the vicinity and be in a position to identify "Sugar" if "Sugar" it be. The meeting occurred with Morley having to get into a car with the contact man and two other thugs in the back seat, in the best Hollywood style. It was a very uncomfortable time for Morley though Laidler carried a revolver. Laidler not only recognised Roberts but noted the number of the car as being 11-536. The trio had decided that Morley should stall for time on the grounds that it was a very serious thing for him to do and he would need more time to make up his mind. This all seemed natural to the thugs who took it for granted that Morley was trying to raise the price, which was in fact raised till it reached £100. Whilst in the car Roberts boasted to Morley of his friendship with gangster Squizzy Taylor, and told him Squizzy would do anything for him. Roberts was in the habit of proudly bragging "I've never read a book in my life". He started to read *East Lynne* but failed to finish it.

A further meeting was scheduled to take place at the Clifton Hill Railway Station, where the letter was to be brought for Morley's signature. It was felt unsafe for Morley to attend, but in his stead came not only Laidler but Maurice Duffy, assistant secretary of the Trades Hall Council, Tommy Richards of the Boot Trades Union and Bert Payne.

The same numbered car drove up forty minutes late and from it came a young man who turned out to be a son of Roberts. He asked a

bystander if he was Morley (the by-stander's name and address were taken by Laidler as a witness). On the following Sunday night at 9 o'clock the son of Roberts came into the Communist party regular lecture, sought out Morley and asked him to come to the top of Bourke Street on the Monday morning, saying that the "old man" was sore about the Clifton Hill mix-up. Morley did not attend, but again Laidler, Duffy and Councillor Tunaley of Clifton Hill were there. The Vice-president of the T.H.C., passing at the time spoke to Roberts and twenty yards further along, when asked by Laidler who he spoke to, he said "That's young Roberts".

The exposure in the *Sun* and other papers was made on the day before the Poll. The real No. 64, a very prominent businessman, made it known that he was prepared to have his identity made public in order to clear Blackburn.

TENSE ELECTION EVE IN FITZROY

The election eve meetings were keyed with excitement helped by two brass bands playing "Solidarity for Ever" round the streets of Fitzroy. Blackburn was accompanied by a hefty bodyguard and the Wren thugs were there in force. Laidler shocked Blackburn by offering him a revolver and telling him he had one, himself. Blackburn remained his imperturbable self, but said the campaign had been marked by treachery and fraud, and that the forces behind candidate Boell were capable of anything. As he dealt with the bribery attempt, open warfare amongst the citizens was very close. Blackburn admitted his views were radical and said that it was no discredit to be connected with the Communist Party but the reports of his connections were fictitious.

The election resulted in a 1517 majority for Blackburn. The Returning Officer, J. J. Denton, said that in his long experience he had never known such extraordinary conduct as had come under his notice and that he felt sure he had sufficient evidence to launch three or four prosecutions for impersonation. Morley lectured at the Temperance Hall on "The Facts of Fitzroy". Laidler got out a widely circulated leaflet known as the "BLACK HAND" leaflet, without imprint and under the name of "Labor Vigilante Committee". Actually it was printed at the Ruskin Press, owned by the brothers, Edmonds, who were members of the ALP, and the work was performed after hours by volunteer labour.



The front page of the "Black Hand" pamphlet about the bribery scandal.

Bert Payne was secretary of the Collingwood Branch of the ALP and said Laidler took out a ticket for twelve months purely to further the fight against Wren. Collingwood was one of Wren's strongholds.

Roberts' statement to Morley that Squizzy Taylor was at his service was, probably, meant as a threat to Morley who knew damn well he was risking his life in crossing swords with this lot.

In fact he was "set up" for a doing over by Squizzy and a couple of his mobsters but was lucky enough to be tipped off, and escape the trap.

It was ironical justice that in a later year, when Morley was a journalist, he had the "pleasure" of viewing Squizzy's shot-up body in a Carlton cottage, before it was removed to the morgue.

Chapter Twenty-four

THE BRITISH SEAMEN'S STRIKE AND DEPORTATION ATTEMPT

Towards the end of August, 1925, a strike began which stretched across the globe. British seamen walked off their ships in the ports of England, Canada, South Africa, America, New Zealand, Australia and wherever British seamen were.

Australia had never before played host to striking workers from another country.

The British seamen had been receiving a pay of £10 a month in comparison to Australian seamen receiving £14 per month and keep. Hours and conditions were deplorable. Havelock Wilson, the General President of the Sailors' and Firemen's Union of Great Britain and Ireland (commonly known as the Seamen's Union) had agreed with the shipowners that this was too much and the seamen should work for £9 per month.

Havelock Wilson was getting £1000 per annum in his life-appointment job, was an O.B.E., belonged to an exclusive liberal club and was attended always by a manservant. He earned the nickname, "Have-a-lot" Wilson.

The shipping industry was one of the wealthiest combines on earth and had made hundreds of millions during the war.

Wilson O.B.E. Celebrates with Champagne

After agreement on the award, which not only reduced the wages but "booked off" at sea, overtime worked in port, the owners and Seamen's Union toasted each other in champagne—a fine banquet to celebrate a wage reduction which brought the British wage below that of the Japanese.

By August 31st forty-four vessels were tied up in Australia with something like 2500 men affected. Havelock Wilson, O.B.E., declared

the only men “striking” in England were unemployed exploited by the Communists. He said the men were freely signing on, and realised that the best bargain had been made in their interests.

However the union members claimed they were never consulted, and this was a big point of grievance.

The Cable that Breached Etiquette

Prime Minister of Australia, Stanley Melbourne Bruce (U.A.P.) received a cable from Wilson urging him to protect British seamen carrying out their contracts and restrain the members of the Australian Seamen’s Union from interfering in the dispute. Labor politicians and Trade Union leaders felt that union “etiquette” would have been preserved had Wilson communicated with official Labor first. It was considered an extraordinary step to communicate direct with a rival political party.

Union officials and Labor politicians did not as a whole welcome the strike but the officials of the Seamen’s Union were wholeheartedly in support, so much so that General Secretary, Tom Walsh and Assistant Secretary, Jacob Johnson were in danger of deportation. The marine transport unions in Melbourne decided to support the strike and it was suggested that unionists in work levy themselves 5/- per week.

It was a fantastic strike which had to be battled from day to day. The Strike Committees formed in the various ports never knew how many ships would be in and how many men would be out.

THE STRIKE COMMITTEE

In Melbourne the main burden of the strike was carried on by a small body consisting of Jim Morley acting as Secretary, Charlie O’Neill who was assistant secretary of the Seamen’s Union (representing the local people) together with two men from each ship. Later Joe Shelley, president of the Communist Party and a member of the Seamen’s Union, was co-opted.

Emergencies were always arising.

Two hundred men came off the “Euripides” in Melbourne, most of them without a penny in their pockets. They had to walk up from Port Melbourne to the city. The men were sent to a cafe under the viaduct in Flinders Street for a meal paid for by the union. Cafe proprietors faced

with keen competition were prepared to reduce the cost to an almost non-existent margin of profit.

Great work was done by local men, Noel (Ham and Eggs) Lyons, his brother Lacey and Ted Dickinson in canvassing waterfront pubs. In one afternoon when need was dire they went out and came back with £90, some of it literally reefered from the publicans who depended on seamen and watersiders for their profits. Noel was so-named for his reputation of holding up his ship for a decent breakfast of ham and eggs. Ted Dickinson was executed in Spain fighting against Franco. Well known for his daring in action, when captured by Spanish Fascists and Moorish mercenaries he made his famous utterance just prior to his execution "If we had 10,000 Australian bushmen here we'd drive these bastards into the sea".

In Sydney, in the beginning, strikers lived on the ships but they were soon locked out, resulting in three hundred men from the Themistocles sleeping out in the Domain. Later men were accommodated as far as a "doss" was concerned on the floor of the Communist Party Hall in Sussex Street.

The Trades Hall in Goulburn Street became headquarters of the Strike.

• • •

The "Cornwall" was the first ship out in Melbourne on August 20th followed by "Euripides" August 25th.

Percy Laidler in Melbourne took it upon himself to find beds, when, at 5 p.m. one night it was found that a hundred men had come ashore.

That great humanitarian-Christian, above politics, organisation the Salvation Army refused his request that the homeless should have the luxury of sleeping on the floor of one of its many halls.

Because of his intimate acquaintance with Melbourne, Laidler was able to secure beds in two hotels in Bourke Street, itself. At this time Eleanor Neil was managing the huge Palace Hotel and when Perc and Eleanor's brother Jack broached her, she quickly agreed to make beds available. Another well-known hotel, opposite Andrade's bookshop, Parer's Crystal Palace hotel was the dwelling place of interstate Union leaders and labor party leaders when they were in Melbourne. The Manager, Jones, was well-known to Laidler and he also agreed to make beds available.

During the progress of the strike many seamen were "adopted" by families. They were housed, fed and given pocket money by those who

could afford to do so. Some people who did this were Fred Riley, a great anti-conscription fighter who became secretary of the Manufacturing Grocers' Union and eventually an intense DLP'er. He adopted a young lad named Tom, who became keenly interested in politics. Mr. Fred Edmonds, an owner of the Ruskin Press and head of a family of staunch supporters of the labour movement, adopted two young seamen. Sally Barker and Harry Barker (bookseller) adopted two men.

The seamen themselves, some little more than children, looked so pathetic, so underfed, so white and unhealthy that it was quite apparent to even an unemployed Australian that these men were greater victims of the system than he himself. If there had been compulsory lung screening, the result would probably have been appalling.

Their conditions on board were wretched. They worked up to 12 hours a day, had poor quarters and poor and inadequate food. Tea, sugar and other food was rationed out to so much per week. There were no facilities for washing clothing, or bathing on at least 80% of British owned ships. Men slept and ate in the forecabin (like a dormitory). In the "Themistocles", they slept in a dormitory approximately 120 feet x 6 feet. There was a table down the centre on which to eat and it had to be put away so the men could go to bed.

Maximum hours were fixed at 84 per week.

There were no medical officers for the men. On some ships the run for coal barrows was one hundred yards long. Conditions on foreign ships were better.

Even drinking water was limited and frequently, crossing the tropics firemen came out of the hold fainting and were denied water.

The men had only two outfits and during stormy weather would be wet through on watch after watch. Of their wages of £2.5.0 per week seamen had to supply their own bed (usually a bag of straw), bedding, eating utensils and special working clothes, and also pay 2d. union dues and 1d. insurance.

From the balance 25/- per week was paid to wife and children. 15/- was reserved for the seamen and handed over for clothes and other expenses as required. The balance (if any) was paid over at the end of the voyage as wages.

Lascars were paid only 30/- per month.

£1 a Day for Perfume

While the slaves, their wives and children eked out existence on this meagre pittance Lord Inchcape the owner of the P.& O. shipping line and British India Companies was spending £1 a day on perfume. Even this didn't make him smell any sweeter to his slaves.

While the men were on strike the allowance of 25/- per week was cut off from their families.

A strong supporter of the strike was A. W. FOSTER, who later became Judge Foster. In an article in *Labor Call* of September 10th, 1925, he set out a table of food cost comparisons to give some idea of the buying capacity of the 25/- family allowance. There is no chicken and champagne on the list.

Prices. England and Australia.

Product	England	Aust.	
Bread	10½d.	11d.	4 lb. loaf
Beef	10d. to 1/6	4d. to 10d.	per 1 lb.
Mutton	11½d. to 1/8½	5d. to 1/-	per 1 lb.
Tea	2/5½d.	2/4	
Potatoes	10d.	1/-	for 7 lb.
Butter	2/-	1/8	
Milk	6d.	7¾d.	per qt.
Sugar	3¾d. lb.	4½d.	

Now a further 5/- reduction.

The strikers' demands were:

- 1) Maintenance of old ratings in every department.
- 2) 48 hour week at sea, and 44 hour week in port.
- 3) Overtime to be paid at time and one half (week days) and double time for Sundays. Work at sea for all hands including firemen. Firemen to receive overtime pay for heaving coal after 8 hours work had been performed.
- 4) Abolition of Sunday work in port.
- 5) Abolition of the PC5.

- 6) Right to form ships' committees—representative of all departments and recognition of duly elected representatives by officials and officers, and no victimisation.

The P.C.5 Order became well known amongst Australian workers. Another man in Melbourne who worked steadily for the strikers was Jack Chapple, the Secretary of the Australian Railways Union, Victorian Branch. Jack Chapple described Wilson as running a profitable employment bureau. Wilson had an agreement with the shipping companies that no-one could be employed except through trade union agency. To get a job a man had to be financial—to be the holder of a "P.C.5 Order" which completed Wilson's monopoly position, and union dues were deducted from the wages of the men.

"Scab-a-lot" Wilson as the English called him had a fine record of ten years' peace in industry but was an "internationalist" in that he encouraged and supported all foreign strikes. This way the British shipowners gained the work. The British seamen had become regarded as scabs amongst the European seamen for the role Wilson forced them to play.

THE SIMPLE TRUTH FROM THE MEN WORTH MORE THAN PRACTISED ORATORY

The seamen themselves played a very active part which kept morale high.

Many men who had never been in front of an audience before, became good propagandists as the strike continued. They addressed workshop and factory gate, lunch-hour meetings by day, and street and union meetings by night. They evoked great sympathy over a much wider area than was expected.

The strike came at the chief exporting time of the year and affected the farmers severely. Refrigerator cargo ship movements were at the height of their season. Farmers were worried about their produce rotting.

The press was never more rabid on the effect the strike could have on the farmers. Yet in country centres such as Bendigo, Ballarat and Geelong the story of shipboard life told by the seamen themselves aroused sympathy and brought substantial gifts of money and food for the strike fund.

Cockney wit went down well.

"They told us in 1914 we were fighting to make England a place fit for heroes to live in. Well, a man has to be a hero to live there now."

"Seamen have to provide their own beds and as a rule they purchase a bag of straw to lie on, that costs 2/6 in England (interjection: 'a donkey's breakfast'). No, the donkeys sleep on it."



Percy Laidler addressing a Yarra Bank rally in support of the seamen.

The Strike Committee organised a weekly dance at Unity Hall, Bourke Street, the hall of the Australian Railways Union. Seamen supplied their own excellent music. Many a function in Melbourne high society would have been pleased to boast three orchestras. Two were professional bands which entertained passengers on two of the ships. One was a string band of the old type and the other a then modern, saxophone band. The third was a self-trained group known as the "kazoo" band, as this was the main instrument together with a second-hand kettle drum procured by Laidler. There were also paper-comb players, spoon players and a triangle player. This band usually headed processions to the Yarra Bank and was once referred to in the press as "a nondescript band of strikers playing a variety of instruments."

Melbourne women were wonderful, exerting their utmost to raise money for the Strike Fund and in providing supper for dances. There was a regular team of Communist and Socialist women who turned up to the supper-room each week at Unity Hall to prepare a supper which was more like a meal for the dancers. Mrs. Blackler, Mrs. Barker, Mrs. Peach, Mrs. Jeschke, Mrs. Nicholson, Mrs. Young to name a few, whilst well-known Port Melbourne figure, Mrs. Jennie Baines was an attraction as a platform speaker.

Meetings and demonstrations in support of the strike were huge, the greatest since the anti-conscription campaigns. Meetings on the Domain rose from 10,000 to an estimated 100,000. The largest of these was addressed by Matthew Charlton, the ALP leader of the Opposition. One speaker declared "Today we think of the bonds of Empire in the terms of the bonds of Trade Unionism". Collections were large, as much as £78 on the Domain and £150 was collected in the Bijou Theatre, Bourke Street, lent free by Fullers (the wellknown theatrical entrepreneurs) addressed by Tom Walsh.

Meetings were held in the Sydney Town Hall with the Lord Mayor as a speaker.

Clothing was collected for the poorly-clad strikers. In Brisbane two clergymen showed interest and Rev. F. E. Maynard of All Saints Church and Dr. Sharp, Archbishop of Brisbane visited the men and gathered material on their conditions.

When Bruce decided to go to the country in elections, Melbourne stepped up its meetings to twenty every night.

Large Bijou theatre meetings were addressed by Bill Duggan (President) THC, E. J. Holloway (Secretary) THC, Frank Anstey, MHR, and George Prendergast, MLA.

Demonstrations drew in the Australian supporters, kept up morale and augmented the bottomless pit of the Strike Fund which in the face of the huge sums of money required was always in debit. In the beginning three meals a day were catered; but this had of necessity to be cut to two meals. There were Sunday night meetings in the Socialist Hall in Exhibition Street.

A camp was set up in Mt. Macedon and of course with men of all callings on board ship there were plenty of skilled cooks, carpenters and jacks-of-all-trades to make a model camp. Lord Stonehaven, the Governor, made an informal visit to the camp and unofficially subscribed £5 to the fund.

329 MEN MARCH INTO GAOL

On September 9th in Melbourne 329 warrants were signed and 107 issued on that date. The rest were issued later. The Masters of various vessels took out writs charging the men with "having refused to obey lawful commands".

A mass meeting of the men decided to co-operate with the police in serving the warrants which otherwise would have been rather impossible to serve.

The reason for the decision was that it would be a great relief to the Strike Fund to have the Government pay for the keep of the men for a while and from the men's point of view the conditions would be far better than aboard ship.

On the 13th September there was a big march to the Yarra Bank in support of the men going to Court the day following. A banner worded, "DOWN WITH TRAITOR WILSON WHO SOLD US" typified the spirit of the march. A contingent of the Former Police Reinstatement Association and Railway Refreshment Waitresses who were on strike marched. Joe Shelley chaired the Bank meeting and speakers were Maurice Blackburn, MLA, Bob Solly, MLA, J. Murphy, MLA, and G. Prendergast, MLA. A big collection was taken up and each donor of a £1 note was greeted with mass singing of "For he's a jolly good fellow". Twelve seamen were paraded on a lorry as the fine type of men who were going to be "degraded and debased in a felon's cell" as one speaker put it. On the same Sunday Laidler addressed a big meeting in Wonthaggi. With its own rich experience of industrial struggle and deprivation, Wonthaggi responded well.

Percy Laidler, Shop Assistants' Union and THC, Chandler, Engineers' Union and THC, R. Beardsworth, President of the Victorian Council of the ALP (endorsed Labor candidate for Flinders), and Rice, one of the members of the crew of a British ship on strike spent the weekend in Wonthaggi.

On Sunday morning they attended the meeting of the local branch of the Miners' Federation. R. Coffey, President of the Union, presided, and Rice, the striker, was received with great interest as he detailed the food and conditions.

The local paper *The Wonthaggi Sentinel* reported, "Laidler was forceful and lucid, and he dealt trenchantly with the inhuman and disgraceful conditions attached to the lives of the overseas seamen".

"Murderers and hardened criminals are treated better, better cared for and fed in Victoria than honest men."

The result of the meeting was a motion of support moved by J. C. Welsh, seconded by W. J. Dowling; a donation of £100, a levy of 1¼ per cent and a £25 collection.



On Monday the strikers assembled at the Victorian Branch of the Seamen's Union and about 9 a.m. the march began from the south side of Queens Bridge, down Flinders Street, Elizabeth Street, Bourke Street and finally turned into Russell Street and up the hill to the City Watch-house. The men appearing that day were from the "Pt. Kembla", "Pt. Brisbane" and "Portfield". Later it was the turn of the men from the "Euripedes" and "Cornwall". The first banner was inscribed "PRISON BEFORE SLAVERY", the second "HEROES IN 1914 SLAVES IN 1925." 99 men appeared and all pleaded not guilty. J. M. Cullity well-known barrister appeared for the men instructed by Solicitor Frank Brennan of anti-conscription fame, later an MHR and Attorney-General. R. Knight was the Police Magistrate who handed out gaol sentences. The magistrate asked the men if they would return to their ships and take them back to England. In response a chorus of seamen bellowed "NO". They were sentenced to three weeks and fined two days' pay and exited singing "Pack up your troubles."

In succeeding days others were charged and sentenced.

The demeanour of the men created a very favourable impression and their treatment in gaol was very good. The warders were sympathetic, got them little extras, shut their eyes to a little tobacco smuggling and in general showed they were real human beings.



The authorities became similarly active in Sydney, Adelaide, New Zealand and South Africa. In Sydney two different magistrates gave, in one case 21 days, in another 7 days.

NEW ZEALAND

The strike in New Zealand, very much a farming country, was more disastrous in its effect on the economy than in Australia. It completely dislocated trade. N.Z. was not only affected by fifteen ships tying up in N.Z. but also by fourteen tied up in Australia that were due to pick up

produce in New Zealand. Banks in N.Z. suspended advances against produce.

The indignation of the Government was expressed in harsh sentences of 6 weeks' gaol and 2 weeks' pay in Auckland and Wellington — regarded as the most savage Tory sentence yet on Britishers in any part of the world.

At New Plymouth 28 men from the "Port Dunedin" were sentenced to one month's gaol.

In Auckland the men from the "Benicia" marched up Queen Street, down Victoria Street and east to the Magistrate's Court under a banner "WE PREFER JAIL TO STARVATION WAGES". They had great sympathy from onlookers. In Wellington 86 men of the "Arawa" marched singing, with 500 supporters to the Terrace Gaol. As each man's name was called he marched through their own lines and was cheered by the crowd as he entered the gaol.

A Comparison

	Hard Labour Rations, NSW Government Gaols	Seamen's Scale of Provisions
	<i>per day</i>	<i>per day</i>
Bread	20 oz.	16 oz.
Oaten Meal	8 oz.	1½ oz.
Meat	12 oz.	12 oz.
Potatoes	16 oz.	13 oz.
Sugar	3 oz.	3 oz.
	<i>per week</i>	<i>per week</i>
Soap	3½ oz.	none
Salt	3½ oz.	2 oz.
	5 blankets, cocoanut matting, hot bath, candles, light, water in cell.	No bed or bedding, no bathing. Water 4 qts. daily. No eating utensils.
	Weekend off. Read to 8.30. 1 visitor a month. Books.	

THE SHIPS

The names of the ships became wellknown as their men were identified with them.

The "Euripedes" became best known because it had the most men in Melbourne, and in Sydney, the "Themistocles" was prominent. In Sydney were also the "Drama", "Beltana", "Port Darwin", "Port Denison", "Surrey", "Tarroa", "Aeneas", "Autolycus", "Hurunui".

In Fremantle the "Orsova" and "Borda".

Melbourne the "Cornwall", "Portland", "Pt. Kembla", "Pt. Brisbane".

"Port Wellington", "Orsova", "Ruahine" as well as the "Euripedes".

In Brisbane the "Pipiriki".

Durban (South Africa) "Durham Castle", "Apolda", "Northumberland".

Auckland, N.Z., "Benicia Kent", "Pt. Sydney" and "Hollinside" (the last named was getting Australian rates in Australian waters but still came out in solidarity).

Wellington, N.Z., "The Arawa".

Men on the ships in South Africa were being paid South African rates which were higher than British rates, but the men were demanding Australian rates.

DEPORTATION

As soon as the first ships came out the Governor-General, Lord Forster, proclaimed that a "serious industrial disturbance exists in Australia." This proclamation brought into operation the Deportation Clause of the Immigration Act. It was directed against any person not born in Australia, who interfered with the laws of the Commonwealth relating to trade and commerce or conciliation and arbitration.

The leader article in the *Argus* of 25th August hastened to point out that this was not a dispute within the meaning of the Arbitration Act. British seamen were not members of a Union registered in Australia nor could owners be brought within the jurisdiction of arbitration laws.

Already on the 27th August a Deportation Board was set up consisting of Algernon Stratford Canning, formerly a Police magistrate of Perth, as Chairman; Frederick James Kindon of Sydney, accountant, and Norman De Horne Rowland of Sydney, Barrister. These men were

described by the *Labor Daily* as three obscure persons, who were to receive £25 a day (for a period of six weeks). Whilst many serious labour people had supported the men from the outset, the deportation threat swung big numbers of leaders and greater sections of the rank and file into action.

Despite the fact that the strike was world wide, and the striking British seamen in Australia had come to the Seamen's Union and asked for help, the Australian Government and press claimed that the Australians had coerced the British seamen into coming out and were using force to intimidate reluctant strikers. The strike had started with the "Balranald" men in Adelaide and spread from Australia to England. Alf Foster said it was dishonest to say the strike was the work of Walsh and Johnson. It was a spontaneous move throughout the world.

The Prime Minister of South Africa, Hertzog, said that the "men's action appears to be entirely of their own volition and they have not been persuaded by anyone in South Africa". This was the truth in Australia too, but there was a complete rapport between Havelock Wilson and Bruce. Havelock Wilson made a great hue and cry to all governments to protect the "loyalists", and Bruce's line of "putting the blame" on Australians suited him. Walsh and Johnson knew nothing of it until the strike began.

A. W. Foster declared the Proclamation signed by F. G. Pearce was a dishonest proclamation. It was made within a day or two of the first intimation of the British Seamen's Strike. He pointed out that no jury, no court or Judge was to make the final decision. It was merely to be made by a Government board and a single Minister.

He said that it would be a tragedy if drastic steps to prevent the deportation of any citizen from Australia were not taken immediately. The whole force of Australian industrial sentiment should be arrayed to meet the danger.

Bob Solly, M.L.A., said that Labor members of Parliament throughout Australia should be urged to work with the Trades Hall Councils.

J. T. LANG

Lang, Premier of New South Wales played a good role throughout the strike and the deportation attempt.

It was mainly owing to his attitude that the Commonwealth Government was compelled to reconstitute a Commonwealth Police Force.

Late in August the Federal Solicitor General waited on Premier Lang, requesting that state instrumentalities set up a Deportation Board. Lang refused.

He said "I regard the Act as one of the most iniquitous and monstrous ever passed in any country and I will firmly refuse to permit city instrumentalities to be abused for the purposes of deporting political or industrial leaders." He went further and suggested that the Federal Government had no power and in his opinion the legality of the act could be challenged.

He said that there was "not the slightest sign of lawlessness in this city [Sydney] . . . the seamen were models of good conduct and have occasioned no trouble whatever."

He suggested that if the Federal Government continued arresting and gaoling the strikers a lot more gaols would have to be built. He was vilified and had to deny that he was providing free meals at Government expense to 500 strikers who ate regularly at the Railway Refreshment Rooms.

HENRY E. BOOTE

Doyen of anti-conscription campaign journalists, Henry Boote came into the campaign, as editor of the *Worker*, organ of the Australian Workers' Union.

His biting pen delighted in descriptive phrases denoting Stanley Melbourne Bruce.

"Bruce, the pet of Flinders Lane", the "Tailor's darling", "Mr. Mussolini Bruce". He wrote "What large lies you have got Grandmother" in exposing Bruce's firm Patterson Laing & Bruce of Flinders Lane selling German goods.

Senator Pearce got his share from Henry Boote: ". . . petty despot like George Pearce, who having absolutely betrayed his own class, is glad to be the tool of another." He described him as a—"Time serving politician who ratted with Hughes and then ratted on the rat." One of his editorials finishes with: "The Deportation Act is a monstrous abrogation of democratic principles. In such a crisis labor forgets its internal differences and quarrels. The sundered ranks close up

instinctively when unionism is challenged. Solidarity forever.” He quoted the wages of British seamen in 1688 as £2 per month and in 1888 as £3.15.0 a month. Claiming the cost of living had multiplied five times from 1888, he accused that the men were being kept on an Elizabethan wage.

The *Workers Weekly*, organ of the Communist Party vied with *The Worker*, when it called Bruce the “Flinders Lane Knut” — “hireling of the capitalist class of the British Empire” — “a political robot in gilded uniform.”

Although the deportation moves appeared to coincide with the British Seamen’s strike the preparation was made over a period of preceding months. The Government awaited the psychological moment to begin legal process. Before the Strike, Anti Deportation Committees existed.

The Australian Seamen’s Union had been active in local issues for which it had been deregistered. The seamen’s main demand was that conditions of labour should be specified in the articles they signed — usual practice in other countries. The owners were no less militant than the men and tried to break conditions by chartering vessels in England. Naturally the Australians preferred the English seamen be paid Australian rates.

All Dressed Up and Nowhere to Go

An incident which infuriated the “Flinders Lane knut all dressed up and nowhere to go” took place in Melbourne.

Thousands of distinguished guests were to go down Port Phillip Bay on the “Weeroona” to welcome the American Admiral when the American Fleet visited Australia in July 1925. Firemen on the “Weeroona”, led by Tom Botsman, objected. They resolved: “We refuse to fire the ship unless Bruce leaves the ship and gives a written apology to be published in the press, for the malicious lies and insults heaped upon us during the strike.”

The guests had to leave the ship as Bruce would not agree.

“An exhibition of class spitefulness”, claimed the *Sydney Telegraph* whilst the *Sydney Morning Herald* regarded it as “National Humiliation.”

The Purpose of the Act

The Act was aimed at trade union militants born overseas.

Tom Walsh born in Ireland, Jacob Johnson born in Holland, Jock Garden born in Scotland, and Bob Heffron, New Zealand. Had the effort of the Government been successful it would then have operated in Melbourne against Charles O'Neill, Jim Morley and Joe Shelley.

Foster from his extensive legal knowledge pointed out that Walsh was not an immigrant. He had been here thirty years and was here before the Commonwealth became an independent entity. He was one person who in the words of the constitution "agreed to unite in one indissoluble Federal Commonwealth under the Crown."

The deportation of such a man with wife and who had three children born and brought up in Australia amounted to exile in a foreign country.

At the end of October the police paid a 2 a.m. visit on Walsh. When asked for the reason one policeman said "We heard you had flitted, I was sent around to make sure." Walsh said "Tell Bruce he is more likely to flit before me."

A taxi driver who had driven the police went to the *Labor Daily* office and gave a full story on their behaviour and remarks in his cab. On returning to the cab the remark was, "Drawn blank, all right. He was there as large as life and he said Bruce would be likely to escape before he would."

The function of the Board was to decide whether to recommend the deportation from the Commonwealth of any person summonsed by the Minister to appear. If the Board recommended deportation, the Act empowered the Minister to make an order for deportation. Failure of a witness to appear made him guilty of an offence. Although the Board was entitled to hold its sittings in camera it decided for open hearing.

The first meeting of the Board was held in Sydney on Saturday, the 29th August. The proceedings from the outset were lively. A sensation resulted when the N.S.W. State Attorney-General McTiernan consented to defend Walsh and Johnson. There was uproar in the Legislative Assembly. R. D. Meagher, Solicitor for the Defence, said that it was not unusual for the Attorney-General to appear in Court. However, Meagher had later to state he regretted that it had been found that the Attorney-General would not be able to form part of the Defending Counsel because his presence was necessary in Parliament for the

debate on the Abolition of Capital Punishment Bill (of which McTiernan was in charge).

Defending Counsel was H. V. Evatt, later to become leader of the Opposition and Minister for External Affairs from 1941 to 1949 and the only Australian of sufficient stature to cut a world figure in the United Nations (he was only 30 years old but well able to handle this defence) and Andrew Watt, KC, who put up a brilliant legal fight. For the prosecution — Lamb KC with H. E. Manning. The Solicitor General, Sir R. Garran, sat beside Mr. Lamb.

The cases of Walsh and Johnson were heard separately and in each case the end was a stalemate. Watt made application for the issue of subpoenas on the Prime Minister Bruce and Minister for Home and Territories, Pearce, to produce documents and submit to cross-examination. The Board opined the issue of Summonses to witness was at their sole discretion and refused to issue them.

DEPORTATION BOARD FARCE

The enquiry commenced on 29th August. Some seamen called to witness refused to answer. One said he did not know anything about Communism—“We are Imperialists not Communists”. The secretary of the Strike Committee in Sydney, one Lydell, had been chairman of the local branch of the Imperial League in England and had thought of standing for Parliament. A witness said “Seamen are proverbially conservative-minded.”

Another witness said “Send Walsh to Jericho and the strike will still go on.”

Witnesses gave striking war records, some torpedoed got no compensation, prompting Counsel Watt to say, “You say, you want to be paid money, and not glory and that is a mistake.” From yet another witness—“We have no bolsheviks. All the few Russians hereabout are followers of the old Czarist regime. The bolsheviks have remained at home.”

Ted Holloway: “Pearce Redder than Walsh”

In giving evidence before the Board, E. J. Holloway said:

About 22 years ago Senator Pearce, speaking at a May Day demonstration was allowed, at his own request, to propose the

usual anti-militarist and international resolution. Conditions then lent themselves to things being much redder than was so under present conditions. The red flag was then carried and occasionally songs were sung. That was in the early years of Pearce's senatorship. Witness has heard Senator Pearce and Mr. Justice Higgins pass certain comments on the Boer War. There would be some men look upon it at that time in much the same way that Walsh was regarded in certain quarters now, as being anti-British. The deportation of Senator Pearce at that time would not have done any good.

The labour people would have objected to his deportation just the same as they were objecting today to the proposed deportation of Walsh.

SHIPOWNERS

The shipowners refused to produce books. Terence Pearson Tronsdale, secretary of the Overseas Shipping Representatives' Association, refused to answer many questions.

Evidence of the captains was interesting, Capt. Allin of the "Beltana" admitted when he brought immigrants, and extra hands were wanted, these were recruited and turned adrift here. Unofficial migrants booked for discharge on his last voyage had been 27 or 28.

Evidence of other captains showed some adult ordinary seamen got as low as £4.15.0 a month. Youths employed as ordinary seamen were rated as low as £3 a month.

• • •

The hearing was referred to in workers' papers as a court martial. It ended on the 10th November when Johnson was on trial and Defence Counsel was again refused service of writs on the Prime Minister and on Pearce. Watt said he wanted to call 600 seamen who attended the first meeting in Sydney. Meagher, Defence Solicitor, stated, "We are hamstrung, gagged and chloroformed."

STRIKE MOVES

Meanwhile there has been another attempt to settle the strike through the Arbitration Court.

On October 14th Mr. Justice Powers intervened calling a compulsory conference.

He stated that the court had not previously intervened because firstly the dispute was world wide and could not be settled in Australia and secondly it was held by the High Court that the Arbitration Court could not make binding awards because the jurisdiction was not within the Commonwealth.

It now intervened it was alleged because the position had altered in that the strike was settled in South Africa and in other places practically settled. Some vessels had left Australia, he asserted. The compulsory conference never advanced because meetings of seamen resolved there be no settlement. The men said they would not submit claims or enter negotiations till all men were released from gaol.

Adjourned to 21st October, Justice Powers said although there was no settlement he advised them to go back to their ships. He said, "If the men were true unionists, they would go back, and he was sure that Mr. Havelock Wilson, had not agreed to the reduction until it could be avoided no longer."

ELECTIONS

Whilst the Deportation Board was sitting, the Government decided to go to the polls in the midst of a great red-baiting atmosphere. The main point in speeches was the deportation and strike. This prompted banister Watt and others to declare that the Prime Minister and Minister for Home & Territories would have been better making their statements in the box than touring the country making statements on the subject of the case.

The result of the poll held on November 14th resulted in a win for the UAP with a gain in seats. Six days later Walsh and Johnson were dramatically seized at 5 a.m. and taken to Garden Island Naval Depot. It was thought that the cruiser "Melbourne" was standing by to take them as it was highly improbable that any merchant crew would do so.

The Solicitor General, Sir Robert Garran, on behalf of the Prime Minister, issued a statement:—

The Deportation Board has found with regard to both Thomas Walsh and Jacob Johannsen, that the respondents have been concerned in acts directed towards hindering or obstructing, to

the prejudice of the public, the transport of goods or the conveyance of passengers in relation to trade or commerce with other countries; that their presence in Australia, will be injurious to the peace, order, and good government of the Commonwealth; and that they have failed to show cause why they should not be deported. The Board has accordingly recommended their deportation.

The Minister for Home and Territories, Senator Pearce, has ordered the deportation of both respondents, and they are now in civil custody awaiting deportation. The Government will be willing to pay the passages of the wives and children of the deportees to their destination, and also to grant them meanwhile a sustenance allowance.

• • •

Counsel for Walsh and Johnson immediately sought a writ of habeas corpus directed to the Chief Officer of the Commonwealth Peace Officers to release them, and the State Court agreed to an Order nisi returnable for argument at the Banco Court on Monday, the 23rd November. However, the Commonwealth Attorney-General, represented by Lamb, KC, and E. M. Mitchell, KC, was successful in an application to the High Court of Australia, that the case be transferred to the High Court for argument, before Justices Isaacs, Rich, Starke, Higgins and Chief Justice Knox.

The High Court sat only one day to consider judgment and reserved its decision on the 9th December. By that time the strike was over.

Extra police were on duty as large crowds gathered round the Law Notices List to see the verdict. Headlines in the press best express the result "SHOCK TO GOVERNMENT", "NO DEPORTATION", "HIGH COURT JUDGMENT".

It was not until the 18th that the Judges delivered separate judgments—which in the opinion of the *Age* editorial of the 21st "seems to be unanimous". The consensus was that the Immigration Act did not apply. Walsh and Johnson were not immigrants and their detention was illegal. The Crown was ordered to pay all costs. The judgment of Mr. Justice Higgins was regarded as a dissentient judgment by the labour movement.

The cost to taxpayers was enormous. Another incidental to Court costs was the wages of 200 men who had joined the Commonwealth Police whose total work consisted of serving two summonses.

Amusing Sidelights

The deportation attempt provided good material for the propagandist speakers, Jock Garden averring that Prime Minister Baldwin was pleading with P.M. Bruce not to send Walsh back.

Then there was a suggestion that Walsh, if deported, would become General President of a new Union of Striking British Seamen, and it was stated that he would get leave of absence from the Australian Union to contest with Havelock Wilson for supremacy in Great Britain.

A wellknown meat exporter and finance magnate interested in racecourses offered to make up the £1 per month, amounting to £10,000 in all, to get the ships moving. It was a one-way offer. Rumour had it that Angliss and Wren were the men involved.

THE END OF THE STRIKE

Before this legal battle took place the strike had ended, and despite the brave fight put up by the men they did not win back their 50 cents a week.

It was an exceedingly difficult strike to win, the Australian Seamen's Union was financially weakened at the outset as it had just concluded a lengthy local strike—hence the speed with which the Government leapt into its deportation manoeuvres. The men were worried about the welfare of their wives and children; of course it was out of the question for sufficient money to be raised in Australia to keep the families as well as the men. Some ships only stayed out a few days and went back and as time went by more ships decided to call it a day. There were many lascars working on ships and none of them came out. For the white British the penalty of strike was serious enough but to the lascar the penalty was disastrous. He would never work again. His wages were only 30/- per month but he could not take action. Solidarity was expressed by a coloured crew on the "Mongolia", as it donated £6.1.6 to the strike fund.

The Masters were aware of the tenuous position of the strikers and were able to move a ship, the Pipiriki, from the Musgrave wharf in

Brisbane, against the will of the strikers. The major break in the strike occurred in Fremantle at the end of November. Officers decided to try and move a ship called the "BORDA", and this resulted in a clash with seamen on the wharf. There were 100 police on duty and many arrests were made. The press admitted that police batons were used freely and claimed the men hurled coal and stones. There were serious injuries on both sides. The strike ended on November 30th, 1925, fifteen weeks after it had begun, and Melbourne was the last port to capitulate. In Australia it had been decided that there should be no sectional settlements, in other words "one back, all back". Walsh, in an endeavour to keep the strike going, failed to inform Melbourne that the men were voting to go back in other ports. Chairman of the Strike Committee, Chas. O'Neill, claimed they were beaten by lack of money. It cost £600 a week to keep going in Melbourne and although £10,000 had been raised, they were now in debt to the tune of £600.

In England the ranks were split due to the activities of Emanuel Shinwell, National Organiser of the Amalgamated Marine Workers' Union, setting up rival strike committees. This handicapped the whole strike.

THE PRESS

In pre-television days the press was omnipotent. Together with the Government it really put the record on and played it again and again.

The press howled—"anti-British", "anti-Empire", "helping the Germans", "driving away European trade", and "crippling the farmers". The reports of attendances at meetings and demonstrations were arrived at by some inexplicable means of calculation—apparently, take any figure and divide it by 10. Throughout the whole fifteen weeks of the strike there wasn't one in which it was not reported, "STRIKE NEARING END". The thousands supporting the strike had as good a taste of the press as could be had in any struggle, and more than in most.

The born name of Jacob Johnson was "Johannsen"—what a howl about that! At one stage the seamen's mass meeting carried a motion that no pressman from any paper referring to Johnson as "Johannsen" would be allowed in a meeting.

Tom Walsh received a great deal of personal abuse in a series written by T. R. Ashforth in the *Age*. His subheads show his bias:—

“Walsh is a destructionist”, “Tom Walsh Industrial Cuckoo”, and “Havelock Wilson Seamen’s Friend”.

One paper referred to Archdeacon Curtis of Sydney, Rev. Maynard of Queensland and Rev. Dean Hart of Melbourne, saying, “The soft headed clergyman who indulges in fatuous sentimentality is a wellknown type”, because they showed some sympathy for the seamen.

The politicians let their heads go: Prime Minister Bruce, “the time has arrived when a sort of dictatorship would be acceptable.”

Nationalist candidate Gullett, told a Henty audience: “If I had been in power, I would have snapped up Walsh and deported him without any trial, and taken him away in the night in a navy boat, and made certain he would never come back.”

Nationalist member Latham told an audience at Kew: “There are some facts that cannot be proved in court by legal evidence, though the facts are known to everyone”. In other words, wrote Laidler in the *Shop Assistant*, “convict a union leader without legal evidence but give the vilest criminal a trial by jury”.

THE GAINS

The gains were great.

Firstly, the men themselves went back in good spirits. They marched to the ships and their oft repeated question and answer slogan was once more declaimed, “ARE WE DOWNHEARTED?” – “NO!” “WILL WE WIN?” – “YES!”

Secondly, it was something of a holiday for the British seamen and they learned that by scrapping lackey union leaders and replacing them with fighting men, they could gain a better standard of living, which poor though it was in Australia, was still far ahead of England.

Thirdly, they learned something about red-baiting.

Fourthly, the original policy had been to transform their union from a Company Union into a fighting workers’ union, and this remained so, despite the suggestions during the strike, to form a new union.

Fifthly, it was learned strikes could be conducted internationally, and that it was possible to raise sufficient money to keep approximately 2,500 men for fifteen weeks.

And lastly, the educational gains were valuable in Australia. Those implicated, in many cases, lost their former “superior” attitude to the British workers, and had to acknowledge they had guts. It dispelled

many of the nasty schisms between workers and cut through some of the local parochialism.

As far as the deportation fight is concerned, a new level of unity of the labour movement was achieved and the resulting verdict became a precedent which has prevented the deportation of working class leaders to this day.

Chapter Twenty-five

EPILOGUE — 1925-1945

SUMMARISED



Percy Laidler in 1940. This was one of the two photographs of Laidler at the front of the original print edition of Solidarity Forever! (The other one was the 1908 portrait appearing in chapter 3 of this electronic edition.)

It had been intended to continue this book to the end of the anti-fascist war, covering another twenty years. There was so much to say that the practicable move was to break it off at 1925. There are others who are writing about various radical activities during the period 1925-45, but the earlier periods are fast becoming irretrievable.

In this chapter the events of the twenty years 1925 to 1945 are briefly summarised.

THE DEPRESSION

Preceded by big strikes in the Timber, Waterside and Coalmining Industries, the first big event was the economic depression. Only those who actually experienced the economic crisis, commonly called the "depression", really know its severity. It is not surprising that that generation is still accused of being "depression minded". The scars are too deep to ever erase and they come through into the later generations.

Unemployment reached a percentage of 29% in Victoria in 1932. Australia, with 6½ million population, had half a million unemployed: add on the dependants and you have some idea of the immensity of the tragedy. The employed had wage cuts of at least 10%, a large section had work rationed and the employed helped to keep their unemployed relatives and friends.

Apart from the capitalist class everyone, almost without exception, suffered privation. The old-age pensioner had to help keep his children and grandchildren from his pension.

Soup kitchens, hand-outs, evictions, starvation, police brutality, gaoling and newspaper slander were the lot of the unemployed. They replied with demonstrations, strikes, organisation of self-help (communes) and fought the evictions.

At first there was no "dole" and the unemployed were given a bag of mixed food as their weekly ration. After an heroic strike of five weeks, when they refused to take the bags, they got a 5/6 order on a grocer. In the end, Victoria achieved the highest dole (called "sustenance" by the Government) in the Commonwealth—but only after several strikes. In 1935 the rates were raised to 25/- a week for a married man, 16/- for a single person, and 3/- for each child. The men had to work on relief jobs, one, two or three days a week, for which they got more than sustenance, but this was not the case in other States. The men called this, "working for the dole". The dole was means-tested. That is to say, if Grandma lived with an unemployed family her pension was taken into account.

If a juvenile member of the family was working the only way the boy or girl could retain his or her wages was to leave home. Men worked on the Shrine, some were winners of the Victoria Cross and Military Cross in the 1914-18 war and their names were ennobled on the walls inside the Shrine, but they still suffered as anyone else. Lads of 15-19 years were sent to farmers to be "instructed" at 5/- per week.

In the middle class suburb of Kew, there were 1,000 known unemployed and amongst the number were Doctors, Dentists, Bank Clerks and Managers of industry. It was harder for them to turn to "navvying", the type of work given to men to enable them to work for the dole.

Muriel Heagney organised centres for girls and women and at one period five nurses applied to enter, one had been a Matron of a hospital, another a sub-matron.

An idea of the scarcity of work can be seen from the fact that a two-line advertisement for a junior typiste in 1930 brought 237 applicants: already at 8 a.m. Little Collins Street was crowded.

An advertisement for 50 vacancies in temporary Royal Show work brought 1,800 women. They gathered four hours beforehand and 17 fainted.

Small businessmen were badly hit. In a two mile stretch from Brunswick Road to Bell Street in Sydney Road there were 31 butcher shops in 1929; in 1933 there were 18 butcher shops and similar reductions in other types of shops. Roley Farrall had a milk round and he said the only ones that could pay were three or four prostitutes.

The Education Department was surprised at getting 10,000 applications for grant of school books at the beginning of the 1931 school year. The usual number was 1,500.

There were strange speculations from the "educated" as to the cause of the crisis—"sunspots" was one suggestion. A Professor said the cure was, "don't talk about it!" L. F. Giblin, Ritchie Professor of Economics, wrote ten letters to "John Citizen" per medium the *Herald*. The simple gist was that the workers should work longer hours and get less pay—or in other words, increase production and decrease consumption, the very condition that then existed.

An American society female urged wealthy people to eat more and cause more employment.

The heroism and sense of humour of the unemployed were tremendous—only these qualities could preserve them.

Estate agents and bailiffs were particularly hated because of evictions. After one eviction the unemployed reciprocated. They tossed everything out of the agent's office. Through the window and door they threw typewriters, papers, furniture and everything in sight. The evictor was evicted.

In Carlton, without warning, a jam handout would be announced and the unemployed had to provide a receptacle. There would be a mad rush over to the cemetery, a quick sluice out of the jam and pickle jars containing flowers and these became the receptacles for the jam hand-out. The dead helped the living.

Gus Marusich was given a sentence of six months for having "insufficient means of lawful support": he was on the dole.

Ernie Thornton, later Federal secretary of the Ironworkers' Union in its militant days, rode a bicycle from Melbourne to Ballarat (a distance of 70 miles) to speak at a meeting. It was snowing at Ballarat and he had to walk most of the way to Bacchus Marsh because of a headwind.

The courage, tenacity and heroism of the unemployed leaders took a toll in premature deaths.

The police in Sydney were more brutal than in Melbourne one of the active unemployed hanged himself in gaol, another became insane from blows on the head.

In Melbourne in one week of demonstrations 100 unemployed were arrested. In the same week 100 joined the Communist Party (not necessarily the same people) and Ralph Gibson says in his book, "My Years in the Communist Party" that there was a queue in Russell Street waiting to join up.

Another Point of View

It has frequently been stated that the crisis lasted till 1933 or 1934 because employment figures started to rise and the number receiving the dole decreased. In the opinion of many of the unemployed battlers, and the writer, the crisis and subsequent depression lasted until 1939 and was solved by the war.

Employment did increase, but at the expense of juvenile labour and cheap female labour. There was no university education for workers' children in those days and precious few went to High School. Leaving age was 14 years but a permit could be obtained in necessitous cases to leave at the age of 12 years. Boys could work in a factory at 14 years and girls at 15 years, but girls could work in other than factory work at 14 years. Work between the ages of 14 and 16 years is listed as "child labour" in the Commonwealth of Australia Year Book. The 1939 Year Book (p. 716) states: "Juvenile employment in factories reached its maximum in 1937-38."

In addition, relief schemes were better organised and workers on these schemes, even if only doing two days a week were taken off the dole and counted as though in the workforce.

The mighty battlers of the depression were still out of work when the war began. At best, they could get a certain amount of casual work. One of the Footscray leaders recently recalled at an ASSLH meeting, how he and his mates were in a queue at the back of the Footscray Town Hall, waiting for the dole, on the Monday that the press announced the war had begun. They solved their economic problem by joining the AIF.

A vast number of the experienced unemployed leaders formed the core of the Sixth Division. It is generally agreed that the Australian soldier was a good soldier. As far as this war is concerned the reason seems plain, that those first in the field were a mature, experienced group of men who had worked and fought together for a period of time up to ten years and they transferred their knowledge and experience to the AIF. A large number knew each other from the past and were better able to combine. As a Carlton unemployed leader said of his experiences during the war—“We had two strikes and won them both.” (Some would call them “mutinies”.)

Fred Farrall served in the 55th battalion during the first world war. In an article entitled “Trade Unionism in the First AIF—1914-18” (*Recorder* October 1971) he states:— “. . . the 1st AIF was an army of a new type. Firstly, it was a volunteer army, and secondly, the most important, within its ranks were a big percentage of trade unionists. It was undoubtedly this influence that made it the most democratic army in that war.”

Again, “In no other army was there so many officers with workingclass background as in the First AIF.” Fred himself was in three strikes in the army and in contact with a fourth. In the last one, on board troopship to return home, an officer named Colonel Cheeseman wanted the men to shift quarters and when they refused he threatened them with the loss of 28 days’ pay. A bushman acted as spokesman for the soldiers and mentioned, “We are a long way from land, the water is very deep and some nights are very dark.”

The men were not moved, and they lost no pay.

When Laidler walked down Bourke Street, many people knew him and he stopped and talked with all and sundry. After the war began he couldn’t walk down Bourke Street without meeting three or four ex-

Unemployed Workers' Movement (UWM) men in uniform. Laidler would say, "God spare my days, I never thought to see you in the King's uniform." More than once the reply was, "We've got to learn to use the guns, you know." Really, they mainly joined as being the only means of providing some security for their wives and families.

Laidler played an active part helping the unemployed but would be chiefly remembered by thousands because of two lantern lectures which he repeated dozens, if not hundreds, of times at the request of suburban and country branches of the UWM. One entitled "Cold and Hungry", and the other, "Poverty and Plenty", well represented the simple type of propaganda which he knew would reach the largest number of people. Most of the unemployed had never before been in touch with political ideas and he set out to educate them in the basics of Marxism. Some branches would ask for the same lecture to be repeated two or three times. Laidler spared no pains in perfecting his speeches and repetition did not spoil them because he always relived them as he spoke.

He spoke at mass meetings and was always on call for bailing out arrested men.

Parallel with the rise of the UWM was an intense interest in the Soviet Union (the land without unemployment). Laidler became one of the sponsors of the Friends of the Soviet Union organisation which met in a hall in a'Beckett Street.

From the time of the Soviet Revolution, which he greeted enthusiastically, Percy made a zealous study of changing conditions in the USSR. His listeners often took it for granted he had spent much time in that country, whereas in actual fact he had never had the opportunity to visit it.

He chaired and spoke at meetings and took collections for the Movement Against War and Fascism, Spanish Relief, Australian Soviet Friendship League, Sheepskins for Russia and many other similar organisations. He participated in campaigns on Abyssinia, Count Von Luckner (the Nazi spy) and many others. When the left was supporting the war, after its "phoney" stage, there were as yet no diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union, although it was our ally. Representatives from most of the allied countries spoke from a platform in front of the Town Hall at lunchtime on December 12th, 1941. National anthems of Britain, America, the Soviet Union and other countries were played. A large crowd heard the speakers who were

mainly consuls of the allied nations. In the absence of a consul, Percy Laidler spoke for the ASFL voicing confidence in an allied victory over Hitler.

In 1934, R. G. Menzies, then attorney-general, attempted to emasculate the Australian Anti-War Congress being held in Melbourne by barring New Zealand's representative, Gerald Griffin, and the World Congress delegate, Egon Erwin Kisch, from landing in Australia.

The peace movement fought for their admission and the quality of the campaign plus the initiatives of Kisch and Griffin themselves resulted in them successfully performing their mission. Laidler worked strongly in this campaign. When the "Strathaird" with Kisch on board arrived in Port Melbourne, Laidler was one of the speakers on the boat deck when a meeting was held with those who managed to get through a police cordon, posing as friends and relatives of passengers. Sympathisers who did not get through hired boats and came around the ship to call out support. It was during this campaign that the first "big" collection was ever taken up in Melbourne, or possibly Australia. It was over £100 at Melbourne Stadium and Laidler took up this collection. Harry Scott-Bennett was so excited that he called for three cheers for the collection.

Kisch became friendly with Percy as Perc was a very good magician, performing every day at the shop, and Kisch was a keen amateur. Kisch learned quite a few moves whilst with Percy for whenever he had a break in his speaking engagements, he would come in for a lesson.

Another big event in which Melbourne demonstrated its opposition to fascism took place in 1938 when an Italian warship, the "Raimondo Montecuccoli" (which had recently been shelling refugees from Franco's terror along the Spanish coast) visited Melbourne. Sailors on board beat up an Italian-Australian. They knocked him unconscious and made him a prisoner with a view to abducting him to Italy. He had an Australian wife and child.

"Wharfies got to know about it and within a few hours Laidler had negotiated with the Italian ship's officers for the man's release." (Ralph Gibson: *My years in the Communist Party*.) That night a gigantic demonstration was held on the pier. It had been called by word of mouth, yet thousands were there. They milled in stormy anger and endeavoured to break through the cordon and get on board the warship, in this they were unsuccessful. Had they done so, there would

have been a bloody massacre. Laidler was again called in to calm the highly emotional crowd, and channel its intense feeling to constructive ends.

THE COMMUNIST PARTY

In its early days the Communist Party was nursed by Laidler. Torn frequently with internal dissension there were times when the leadership felt they could not trust each other but they all felt they



Percy Laidler in the 1930s. This photo was used to illustrate "Meet Percy Laidler", an article in the June 1937 issue of the Communist Review.

could trust Laidler. He became the CP banker—all money went through him, and this continued for some years. Customers in the shop must have wondered at the steady and continuous clink of coins being counted on Monday morning. It was the Yarra Bank collection and often the collection from a Sunday afternoon meeting in one of the city theatres, i.e. Princess, Palace, His Majesty's or the Temperance Hall. Customers were dropped abruptly when money came in.

On one occasion, the party being riddled with police spies during the depression, the three leading members came over to see Percy and one said, "Which one of us do you think is a police spy?" The Communist Party greatly valued the way that he could get them a hearing with Trade union leaders and Labor politicians, who felt embarrassed to turn down any request from Laidler.

As he regarded himself as an equal with all men and had no trace of inferiority complex, which was very common to new people in the CP,

he was usually asked to lead deputations to Sir Thomas Blamey, Chief Commissioner of Police; T. Tunnecliffe, Chief Secretary (his brother-in-law); Premier Jack Cain and other Ministers. He could always secure a good hearing with these people.

Throughout his whole active life he had an intense appreciation of the need for united action and contempt for sectarianism that hindered it. The CP's worst feature was its complacent sectarianism and Laidler hammered the members on it.

His own best achievements at securing united platforms were: the revival of May Day, the organisation of the 20th anti-conscription anniversary and the Tom Mann 80th birthday celebrations at which John Curtin (leader of the opposition) and many of the labor politicians spoke on the same platform as lefts.

During the war, on the suggestion of Prime Minister John Curtin, Laidler did great educational work winning support for Russia by lecturing on behalf of Army Education. His subject: "Our Ally, the Red Army." He came into contact with thousands of soldiers around army camps in Victoria, dispelling their abysmal ignorance of the USSR. He spoke at American camps and found them very unused, and unreceptive to lectures. One of the higher-ups said to him at one camp, "there would have been more here if they knew there would be pictures." In many camps were the UWM men who would come up and remind him, "I heard you speak on 'Cold and Hungry'." At the Frankston P.T. (Physical Training) camp he found no less than seven ex-UWM men were instructors.

• • •

When Percy Laidler entered the working class movement, reformism was rising, and parliamentary seats easily obtained. Many of Tom Mann's pupils used the knowledge gained from him to advance themselves along the path of personal opportunism. During the economic crisis some of these former colleagues were in power—part of the State apparatus. They ordered the baton charges on the unemployed, the gaolings and deportations. Percy unhesitatingly ranged himself against his former colleagues on the side of the workers and unemployed. The behaviour of the Labor politicians and leaders astounded and shocked many, who had great faith in the Labor Party. The cynicism of today did not exist to any degree, at the beginning of the economic crisis.

Laidler's stand lifted up the hearts of many people suffering disillusionment and tending to defeatism: it helped restore their faith in man and in workers' organisations.

LAIDLER, THE MAN

It may be observed that this book is not very much about Laidler, but rather the events connected with him. In fact, he is not even mentioned in some chapters. This would be how he would like it written as one of his best attributes was his objectivity in thinking, he was never subjective. The opinions of others may give some idea of his character.

Tom Mann: "There was Percy Laidler, a shrewd debater, excellent worker, and straight goer."

Ralph Gibson: "This dynamic little man, who helped found the Communist Party, but did not finally join it, had given splendid help to all the progressive movements of his long lifetime, from the old Socialist Party, the Industrial Workers of the World and No Conscription movement onwards. A powerful speaker with a fine organising brain and great courage, he had as important an influence on me as on many others."

Again, *Punch* of 1909: "Unemployed Leader Percy Laidler, who is making such violent speeches at the Barrier, and who nearly got up a riot in the vestibule of Federal Parliament House one evening, is about the best mob orator that has struck Melbourne for many years. He was a quiet sober-sided clerk in Ballarat before he suddenly jumped into notoriety as an unemployed agitator. Possessed of a tuneful, strong and vibrant voice and having a command of a particularly ready flow of unhackneyed figures of speech, Laidler is a very persuasive and powerful personality when addressing a mob."

One of the few "goodies" in Frank Hardy's book, "Power without Glory" is the character "Percy Lambert", who is named for "Percy Laidler".

OMISSIONS

There are a number of people important to the working class movement mentioned in this book but many equally important are not mentioned, not from lack of appreciation of them but the restrictions of

the covers prevent many being given their due. Some have been written about elsewhere. In the main, an endeavour has been made to write about those who have been neglected. At the danger of now omitting good men and women who should be given their due by some writer, a few such are referred to here:—

Jack Chapple, Jim Bergen, Bill Scanlon, Tom Gleeson, Charles Franklin, Bill Turner, Albert McNolty, Jim Coull, Perc Hill, Vida Goldstein, Doris Blackburn, Goff Bullen, the Tilley family, Bella Lavender, Dr. Maloney and many rank and filers.

Laidler was a realist rather than an idealist. On the eve of May Day after the death of anarchist J. W. Fleming, it was suddenly recalled that Fleming had asked that his ashes be scattered on the Yarra Bank on May Day. They did not have the ashes. Said Laidler, quizzically, "Does it matter what ashes they are?" A member of the Butchers' Union took the hint and came along with a large biscuit tin full of ashes. He got up and made a speech about Fleming, punctuating it with the throwing out of handfuls of ashes, which blew in the Melbourne wind all over the crowd.

Friend to all in need (when desperate, unemployed came for money); women came to consult him about the need for abortion; men about their troubles with the police; people came for references and introductions to politicians—he was recipient of all manner of confidences.

He always had a sympathetic ear for workers born in other lands, who had a difficult time before the influx of immigrants. He worked with the Greeks, Italians and often spoke for the Jewish "Gezerd", a workingclass organisation interested in disseminating knowledge about Birobidzhan, the Jewish Republic in the USSR. When the revolution occurred in China the Young Chinese organisation was keenly interested and had Laidler speak to them frequently, in a premises in Little Bourke Street. He went out to the Indian quarter (off Little Lonsdale Street) and got some along to a May Day procession. When the Spanish war began there were no Spaniards in contact with the movement, Laidler went off to the Fish Market in the early hours and located sympathetic Spaniards.

Laidler was closely associated with the aborigines living in Fitzroy, and also got a response when he asked them to participate in demonstrations and meetings. Two families, the Clarkes and the Lovetts

were reliable supporters. Both were large families well known in Fitzroy.



Percy Laidler in the early 1950s, with grandson Alan Walker.

He regarded all men as human beings and quite a few notorious “underworld” men and gamblers used to call in the shop—some interested in conjuring tricks (especially the Three Card Trick, which he taught to Squizzy Taylor). A wellknown man, Barney Cotter, used to bring in his little golden-haired granddaughter to be admired and entertained. Henry Stokes, wellknown gambler, offered money for sheepskins for Russia and respectable members of that committee were not keen to take it. His friend, Gwen Snow (ex-IWW and OBU Propaganda League)

said, “Where is Percy Laidler, he’ll take it!” Stokes warned Perc of an official of one of the organisations, telling him to be careful of him because he was a gambler, “he sits gambling all night at my place.” Bert Payne was introduced by Perc to a racecourse urger. Next time Bert saw him was at the races, but the man recognized him and said, “No, I won’t do you.”

At a time when there was a lot of hostility towards the radical movement one of the “underworld” came in and offered the assistance of himself and friends as a bodyguard. Perc told him it wasn’t necessary.

Laidler was a great standby. Thousands have looked to him as a working class fighter who could not be bought and could not be shaken. “Solidarity forever” was his favorite song.

He died at the age of 73 years on the 21st February, 1958. A secular service was conducted by Mick Considine, and speakers were Senator Don Cameron, A. McNolty (the vice-president of the Labor Party) and Ralph Gibson of the Communist Party.

ABBREVIATIONS

ACTU	Australian Congress of Trade Unions
ALP	Australian Labor Party
AMA	Amalgamated Miners' Association
ASE	Australian Society of Engineers
ASFL	Australia-Soviet Friendship League
ASP	Australian Socialist Party
ASSLH	Australian Society for the Study of Labour History
C.I.	Communist International
CP	Communist Party
CP of A	Communist Party of Australia
FOSU	Friends of the Soviet Union
IIW	International Industrial Workers
IWW	Industrial Workers of the World
IWW Clubs	Industrial Workers of the World Clubs
LPG	Labor Propaganda Group
LVA	Labor's Volunteer Army
OBU Herald	One Big Union Herald
SDF	Social Democratic Federation
SDP	Social Democratic Party
SFA	Socialist Federation of Australia
SLP	Socialist Labour Party

SP of A	Socialist Party of Australia
SPGB	Socialist Party of Great Britain
SQC	Social Questions Committee
THC	Trades Hall Council
T. & L.C.	Trades & Labour Council
UWM	Unemployed Workers' Movement
VRU	Victorian Railway's Union
VSP	Victorian Socialist Party
WIIU	Workers' International Industrial Union
WIU of A	Workers' Industrial Union of Australia
WOC	Women's Organising Committee

SOURCES

Chapter	Publications	Interviews
1	BREAK O' DAY	
	<i>History of Corindhap</i> (W. D. McDonald)	The late Mrs. Elizabeth Carr
	"Corindhap" article by T.H. Nov. 3rd, 1922	
	<i>Forest Lake & Plain</i> Vol. 2, No. 2	The late Henry Neil
	<i>Ballarat Courier</i>	Lloyd Laidler
	<i>Rokewood Reformer & Corindhap Chronicle</i>	
	<i>The Narrative of George Russell</i> , ed. P. L. Brown	
2	TOM MANN AND THE VICTORIAN SOCIALIST PARTY	
	<i>History of Corindhap</i> (W. D. McDonald)	George Ovenden
	"Corindhap" article by T.H. Nov. 3rd, 1922	Beryl Glenie
	<i>Forest Lake & Plain</i> Vol. 2, No. 2	The late Ida Robson
	<i>Ballarat Courier</i>	Grace Patullo
	<i>Rokewood Reformer & Corindhap Chronicle</i>	B. Henley
	<i>The Narrative of George Russell</i> , ed. P. L. Brown	Lillian Ewart
	<i>Tom Mann's Memoirs</i>	Eddie Callard
	<i>Tom Mann</i> (Dona Torr)	N. Antonoff
	<i>Age</i>	P. De Angelis
	Articles by P. Laidler	G. Zammarchi
	<i>The Socialist</i>	Graeme Osborne
	<i>Argus</i>	Mark Feinberg
	<i>OBU Herald</i> (Feb. 1st, 1923)	Roy Cameron
	<i>My Years in the Communist Party</i> (Ralph Gibson)	
	<i>Proof Against Failure</i> (F. Macartney)	
	Theses (1948) (Marjory A. Francis)	
	<i>The Socialist Party of Victoria—Its Growth and Decline</i> (Sen. Don Cameron) (mss May, 1958)	

3 LAIDLER IN THE VSP

Socialist Viv Crisp
Argus
Australian Star (Sydney)
The Barrier Miner
The Truth About the Unemployed Agitation of 1890
(S. A. Rosa)
The Australian Labour Movement 1850-1907 (R.
N. Ebbels)

4 BROKEN HILL

Socialist The late Mrs. Kath
Argus Wilson
Australian Star (Sydney) A. E. Davies
The Barrier Miner
The Truth About the Unemployed Agitation of 1890
(S. A. Rosa)
The Australian Labour Movement 1850-1907 (R.
N. Ebbels)
Socialist
Barrier Daily Truth
Barrier Miner
The Industrial History of Broken Hill (George
Dale)
Argus
Punch
Silver City (Ion Idriess)
Short History of the Australian Labour Movement
(Brian Fitzpatrick)
Sydney's Burning (Ian Turner)

5 DECLINE OF VSP AFTER TOM MANN

The Advertiser (Adelaide) A. E. Davies
Socialist Roy Cameron
T.H.C. Minutes

6 THE GROSS FAMILY

Socialist

Mrs. Bertha
Tunnecliffe

7 SYNDICALISM

Socialist

"Memoirs of the I.W.W." article in *Labour History*, No. 13. (Bill Beatty)
Correspondence (Bill Beatty)

8 WAR AND THE ANTI-CONSCRIPTION CAMPAIGNS

Socialist

Articles P. Laidler

"Meet Percy Laidler" article in *Communist Review*, June 1937 (John Storey)

The Story of Conscription in Australia (L. C. Jauncey)

Dr. Mannix (Niall Brennan)

Archbishop Mannix—Champion of Australian Democracy (Cyril Bryan)

Age

Argus

The Citizen Reader (Aust. edition revised 1910)

Judge Foster's Banned Speech, May 1938 (Council for Civil Liberties)

When Labour Fought Capitalism and sang the Red Flag, published by N.Z. Labour Party 1916. (Reprint 1948 with note John A. Lee, New Zealand)

The Australian Victory over Conscription in 1916-17 (E. J. Holloway)

How to Defeat Conscription (Bertha Walker)

Tom Barker and the I.W.W. (recorded and edited by E. C. Fry for ASSLH)

Against Conscription—Our Last Stand (M. Blackburn, MHR)

Industrial History of Broken Hill (George Dale)

Muriel Heagney

Tom Audley

V. Crisp

A. E. Davies

George Ovenden

The late Doris
Blackburn

E. Callard

Mark Feinberg

Jim Garvey

Lillian Ewart

Lloyd Edmonds

The late Eric Boshier

Arthur Lewis

Bill Genery

Fred Farrall

H. E. Payne

S. Merrifield

Mr. and Mrs. Bob
Stenhouse

Shirley Abrahams

Brian J. McKinlay

Labor Call (October 29th, 1936)
The Official History of Australia during the the War of 1914-18, Dr. C. E. W. Bean (Vols. 3, 5 and 11)
Australian Labour Leader (H. V. Evatt, Q.C.)

9 THE INDUSTRIAL WORKERS OF THE WORLD (IWW)

<i>Workers' Weekly</i>	The late Roley
<i>Socialist</i>	Farrall
<i>Direct Action</i>	Tom Audley
"Meet Percy Laidler"—article in <i>Communist Review</i> , June 1937	Eddie Callard
<i>Proceedings First Annual Convention Industrial Workers of the World</i> . Approved W. E. Trautmann, June 27-July 8, 1905	Mark Feinberg
	Viv Crisp
	Fred Sharpe
	Bill Laidler

10 ANDRADE'S BOOKSHOP

<i>Tocsin</i>	Guido Baracchi
<i>Socialist</i>	H. E. Payne
<i>Recorder</i> (Articles by A. E. Davies and G. Bullen on Frank Hyett and unsigned on David Alfred Andrade) published Victorian section ASSLH, edited S. Merrifield	Jim Garvey
<i>Farrago</i>	E. Callard
<i>Cyclopedia of Victoria</i> , 1905	B. Henley
<i>Argus</i>	S. Willis
MUM '70	
<i>Proletarian Review (Proletarian)</i>	
<i>Railways Union Gazette</i>	
<i>Barrier Daily Truth</i>	

- 11 POST-WAR RIOTS**
- Argus* Viv Crisp
Sunday Times (Perth)
Kalgoorlie Miner
The Australian Weekly (Perth)
OBU Herald
Daily Standard (Brisbane)
Brisbane Courier
- 12 THE WORKERS' INTERNATIONAL INDUSTRIAL UNION (WIIU)**
- Recorder* (Article Tom Audley) Tom Audley
 J. B. Scott papers A. E. Davies
 Unpublished mss Alf Wilson
OBU Herald
Preamble and Constitution of the Workers' International Industrial Union
- 13 POST-REVOLUTION**
- Age* Eddie Callard
Socialist The late M.
 J. B. Scott papers Considine
 Correspondence Jack Kilburn H. E. Payne
Industrial Solidarity G. Baracchi
Argus M. Feinberg
OBU Herald
International Communist (Sydney)
 Muriel Heagney papers
- 14 A MAN OF PRINCIPLE (MICK CONSIDINE)**
- Industrial History of Broken Hill* (George Dale) The late M.
Parliamentary Debates (pp. 6601-6604, 1920) Considine
Argus Mrs. M. Considine

- 15 PERCY BROOKFIELD**
Barrier Daily Truth
Industrial History of Broken Hill (George Dale)
Argus
Parliamentary Debates (pp. 8680-8681, 1921)
- 16 PROCESSIONS AND FORUMS**
Argus The late Ernie Harridence
Furnley Maurice (F. Macartney) Mark Feinberg
Socialist Arch Bueno
Frank Courtney
Jim Coull
Tom Audley
- 17 O'CASSIDY, A SUAVE SPY**
My Years in the Communist Party (Ralph Gibson) T. Audley
The late Doris Blackburn
- 18 THE TRADE UNION PERIOD**
The Shop Assistant H. E. Payne
Minutes Labor Propaganda Group G. Baracchi
Minutes Trades Hall Council
Argus
- 19 THE POLICE STRIKE 1923**
Argus H. E. Payne
Age T. Audley
OBU Herald Tape ("Ginger" Burke)
Labor Call Lecture (Mr. Warren Terry at ASSLH)
Shop Assistant Mrs. Laurie Carmichael

- 20 THE HANGING OF ANGUS MURRAY**
Age H. E. Payne
Argus
 Minutes—Trades Hall Council.
Labor Call
Herald
- 21 COMMUNIST PARTY**
Trades Hall Council Minutes G. Baracchi
Argus T. Audley
Workers' Weekly H. E. Payne
Labour History No. 2—article Ian Turner The late Mrs.
Socialist Jeschke
 Letter C. W. Baker to Secretary CP Sydney Mrs. S. Barker
 (courtesy Tom Wright) Sam Merrifield
International Communist Les Barnes
History of the Australian Labour Movement (E. G. Watson
 W. Campbell)
- 22 EIGHT HOURS' DAY AND MAY DAYS REJUVENATED**
Labor Call H. E. Payne
 Minutes—Trades Hall Council
 Official leaflets
Age
Argus
Shop Assistant
- 23 BRIBERY—FITZROY**
Sun Jim Morley
Workers' Weekly H. E. Payne
 Les Barnes

24 THE BRITISH SEAMEN'S STRIKE AND DEPORTATION ATTEMPT

<i>Workers' Weekly (England)</i>	Jim Morley
<i>I Remember (J. Lang)</i>	H. E. Payne
<i>Labor Call</i>	Lloyd Edmonds
<i>The Australian Worker</i>	Doris Baker
<i>Workers' Weekly (Australia)</i>	
<i>Wonthaggi Sentinel</i>	
<i>Argus</i>	
<i>Labor Daily</i>	
<i>Age</i>	

25 EPILOGUE

<i>Herald</i>	Jack Russell
<i>Workers' Weekly</i>	Muriel Heagney
<i>Recorder, October 1971</i>	The late Arthur
<i>Australian Landfall (Egon Kisch)</i>	Kyle
<i>My Years in the Communist Party (Ralph Gibson)</i>	The late A. Kilpatrick
	The late Roley Farrall

Other material from personal papers, conversations with P. Laidler and Chris Laidler, and from the writer's memory.